

Elevator Brat

A VANTAGE POINTS FLASHBACK

Hi. I'm Coatstone's elevator brat. I don't really make trouble, but I do live next to the elevator, and, I'm pretty much free to go where I please. So, I'm the brat, I guess. My real name is Mike.

My parents are Alf and Ellen. My older sisters don't enjoy the grain elevator and my younger brothers can't even climb or run, so kinda useless outdoors. Dad lifts me up to help weigh trucks by moving weights along the scale. Mostly though, I just play and explore.

Coatstone's close to Deloraine on the track to Mountainside. It isn't really a village. It has the elevator, and, our house. That's it. Next year I'll go to school in Deloraine. It's a huge town. Mom says, close to a thousand people. We go there, maybe twice a month. Except for sleeping and eating, I pretty much live at the elevator.



*UGG agent Alfred Bass with his children at the Coatstone elevator (1960)
Source: Mike Bass*

Dad runs the elevator. His office is where Coatstone's farmers get together, and drink a lot of coffee. Sometimes they add extra flavour from Dad's desk. And, they smoke cigarettes. But only in the office. Dad says we can't have sparks close to grain dust. The men talk a lot too. Not very interesting to me, but they sure think they're funny. When the air gets too thick, I go outside.

One day I had a huge scare. Actually two scares. You see, one older farmer still hauls wheat with horse and wagon. He unhooks in the elevator and leads the horses outside. Dad lifts the front of the wagon. The grain flows through the floor grate, into the bin below. As usual, after reattaching the wagon, the farmer went to Dad's office So I went to check his horses.

Something I did as I approached, spooked the horses. Well, they took off, hooves flying with the wagon jumping all over the road behind. Missed me by a whisker. I ran to tell the men. They threw me into a car and followed. Fast. Dad offered to crawl out the window and jump onto a horse's back, like in a movie. That was my second scare. Luckily, we caught up as the horses stopped, huffing and sweaty, next to their own barn. Whewh! I didn't tell Dad that I had spooked those horses. But, I have a feeling he knows, and decided not to say anything.

The elevator can be a dangerous place. Dad has one rule. I can't touch anything, even be in the elevator, without his say so. Easy enough. My mom says, she doesn't worry about me, that I can go off on my own, use my imagination, take care of myself and not get into real trouble.

And, I never really do. But, the coffee men need stories to tell. So I'll be the elevator brat, just because I'm always here.

Elevator Brat was inspired by an elder interview.

Vantage Points Flashbacks were written by David Neufeld with help from Betty Sawatzky. They were originally aired on CJRB Radio out of Boissevain, Manitoba in the early 2020s.