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THE MADAWASKA HIGHLANDER OCTOBER 2025 EMBRACE THE PAST ~ ENCOURAGE THE FUTURE ~ ENJOY TODAY

**October
2025**
FREE Vol.23 Issue 6
Next issue November 19

Celebrating Cottage and Country Life in the Madawaska & Addington Highlands of Eastern Ontario

The Derecho storm a couple of years ago turned out to be a windfall for some. There'll be plenty of firewood for winters to come. Pic by Lois Thomson

Frosty mornings are quickly warmed by the Sun in October. Animals are laying on fat and fur or preparing to chase the Sun southward. Pic by Lois Thomson

Welcome!

...To a spectacular short story edition of the Madawaska Highlander at a spectacular time of year as the seasons change. They say the only true constant in life is change, which is terrific, as change forms the basis of so many good stories.

This year, fifteen story-writers put pen to paper and fingers to keyboard to share interesting tales ranging from the reflective to the fantastic. How interesting? Well, you be the judge and tell us which single story in the adult fiction or non-fiction categories appealed to you the most so we can select the People's Choice winner. Every contributor to the Highlander is a winner, but it's really the reader that makes stories come to life, so get set for an adventure!

Scale the highest mountain in There it was - Gone! Experience The Kindness of Strangers in a story about an Algonquin Park adventure. Discover the fantastic ordeals that happened on The Turtle's Moving Day and the ordeals of a Husky who slipped her leash in Alaska, in Qimmiq's Adventure. Man's best friend can do naughty things, as we read in Good Boy. And sometimes mobsters, can do good things, ain't that right Joey Fruitcakes?

Immerse yourself in the stories as we go back in time with Dad Days, My First Shot, The Little Dark-haired Boy, and Bear with Me. And actually try to relive the past in Persons of Interest. We also have A Time Beyond a Time, Beyond a Time Beyond to wonder about. Don't we all wonder about the mysteries of time?

And don't we all wonder about the mysteries of people we see but never meet? Who is Dock Girl? What's her story? Which brings us to the story called Don't. It's called Don't but do be sure to read it. What's that clunk?

Thank you to everyone who contributed a story to the contest and thank you to our regular contributors, Charlotte and Morgana, for connecting us in the tri-county area in GMDV News and Bogie Beat. Thank you to Bill for connecting us with Clans Across the Water - A Worldwide Scottish Kinship in Memories of Vennachar. Read how Scottish immigration influenced our Canadian story. So many stories to enjoy, so cozy into spectacular fall reading and most of all... Enjoy!...

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

Because of POSTAL SERVICE DISRUPTION

The Madawaska Highlander is available to pick up at all the usual places. Since we can't mail you a free copy, we will be putting the same number as we usually mail out in locations near you and replenishing regularly.

**To find out where to pick up a copy, go to
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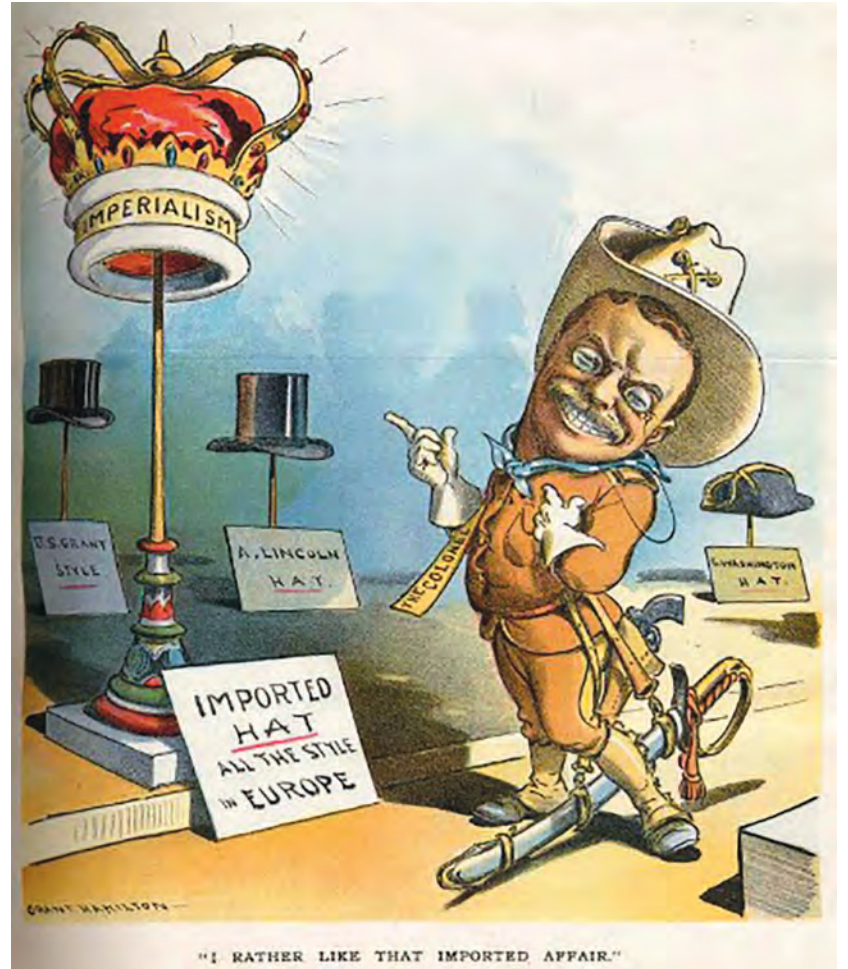
Email: info@reelimpact.tv, call 613-333-9399, or send a cheque for \$39.55 and your mailing address to: 3784 Matawatchan Rd. Griffith, ON K0J 2R0

CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Thank you everyone!

Charlotte Dafoe
Morgana Dillingham

Bill McNaught
15 Short Story Writers



Theodore Roosevelt's presidency from 1901 to 1909 marked a pivotal era in American history, particularly in the context of imperialism and expansionism. During this period, the United States solidified its status as a global power, driven by a combination of Roosevelt's personal beliefs, geopolitical strategy, and the prevailing attitudes of the American populace. The impact of Roosevelt's policies on American expansionism is multifaceted, encompassing territorial acquisitions, shifts in foreign policy, and the lasting legacy of his imperialist ideals. (Info from ushistorytimeline.com "Exploring Theodore Roosevelt's Views on Imperialism and American Expansionism.")

In this Puck Magazine cartoon, Roosevelt is choosing the Imperial Crown over hats of previous presidents, U.S. Grant, A. Lincoln, and G. Washington. "I rather like that imported affair."

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Key addresses: **GRIFFITH:** Griffith & Matawathan Recreation Centre (Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club) 25991 Hwy 41. Ginza Park, Rink and Pickleball Court, 15 Ginza Street. Adams Berry Farm & Market 25761 Hwy 41, Griffith Hilltop Church 25197, Hwy 41 **MATAWATCHAN:** Matawatchan Hall 1677 Frontenac Road. **DENBIGH:** Denbigh Hall 222 Hwy 28. Heritage Park, 48 Lane Street. St. Luke's Church - 188 Hwy 28. Addington Highlands Community Centre and Food Bank 31 Central Street. **VENNACHAR:** Vennachar Free Methodist Church 424 Matawachan Road.

By Charlotte Dafoe



Attention darts players and wannabe "dartists". A new darts league now in Griffith on Thursdays at 7pm.



Exercise group resumed in September at the Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club Hall with over a dozen people in attendance. Activities included toning, balance improvement, bands and weights.

GREAT NEWS

The Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT), in cooperation with the Newlands family, has secured a 308-acre parcel of land in the Madawaska Highlands of North Frontenac Township. The MapleCross Newlands Nature Reserve, located south of Matawatchan Provincial Park, borders several hundred acres of provincial Crown land and features mature forests, rocky ridges, wetlands and biodiverse creeks. The property is also home to at least three at-risk species including the Wood Thrush and Easter Wood-Pewee. The MMLT now protects over 4,000 acres of ecologically significant land in the Mississippi and Madawaska River watersheds.

SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITY

The Denbigh Community Food Bank, located within the Addington Highlands Community Centre is open the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month from 10am-11am. Call Gail at 613-333-2224 for more information.

EVENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Be sure to follow Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club, Denbigh Recreation, Griffith & Matawatchan Fish & Game Club and Matawatchan Hall on Facebook for all the latest information on the events that are happening in our communities!

If you have an event you would like to share, reach out at any time by emailing chardafaoe@hotmail.com.

The Griffith and Matawatchan Fish & Game Club is holding a draw for a Savage .308 AXIS 2 XP rifle (includes scope, hard case and sling). The package, valued at more than \$1,500, is sponsored by Gourley's Outdoors. Tickets are \$5 each or three for \$10 and can be purchased at Gourley's Outdoors, Rosie's Café and

General Store, BMR Griffith, Pine Valley Restaurant, Griffith Corner Store and from any GMFG Club committee member. The draw will be held on November 8th at 7pm at the Club's Fall Festival event. Winner must have a PAL to claim the prize.

OCTOBER

- **The Denbigh Wellness Group** meets on Tuesday mornings at 9am for coffee, tea and conversation at Denbigh Hall. Call Gail for more information - 613-333-2224.

- **Land O' Lakes Community Services hosts Diners Club** in Denbigh the first Monday of the month at Denbigh Hall. Call Betty for more information - 613-333-2366.

- **St. Luke's United Church in Denbigh invites you to join them in fellowship** on Sundays at 10am.

- **Vennachar Free Methodist Church will host Ladies Bible Study** on Monday mornings at 10am.

- **Exercise group** meet at the Recreation Centre in Griffith every Thursday at 9am. You can participate in a variety of activities including bands and weights, range of motion movement and a selection of exercises from the Canadian Diabetes Association. The cost is \$2/week. Proceeds are donated to the Lions Club's annual Show & Shine and Christmas Food Basket initiative.

- **Join the new mixed dart league** at the Recreation Centre in Griffith Thursdays at 7pm. The cost is \$5/person/week. Call 343-943-7676 to register.

- **Non-competitive pickleball** is taking place at Ginza Recreation Park in Griffith on Fridays at 10am (note new start time) until the end of October. Contact Sandy Downs - 613-333-1932 or Theresa Pierce - 613-333-1984 for more information.

- Vennachar Free Methodist Church is



Hilltop Church held a 2nd water baptism service by the Madawaska River on August 31st.



Storytime with Debra: A Prayer Plan Come Alive. On Sunday, Sept. 21, Hilltop Church swapped the usual rows of chairs for tables as Debra led parishoners through "King Jehoshaphat's Prayer Plan" (2 Chronicles 20:5-12). Each table received fill-in-the-blank handouts alongside steaming mugs of coffee and homemade cookies, setting the stage for an engaging morning of learning and fellowship.

hosting a **Ladies Apple Bake-Off** on October 6th at 10am. Call Debbie for more information 613-479-8057.

- Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club **euchre in Griffith** will take place on October 7th and 21st at 1pm. For just \$2 per person, enjoy prizes, snacks, refreshments and a fun afternoon. Contact Sandy Downs for more information - 613-333-1932.

- **The Festival of Small Halls is bringing The Arrogant Worms** to the Matawatchan Hall on October 11th at 7pm. Visit ontariosmallhalls.com for more information and to purchase tickets.

- The Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club is hosting **BINGO** on October 14th and 28th. Doors open at 6:30pm with games starting at 7:30pm.

- The Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club invites you to join them for a **Griffith-style Octoberfest on October 18th** from 3:30-7:30pm. The event will feature a German meal, beer and live music. Tickets are \$25/person and are limited. Call 613-333-1984 for more information.

- Enjoy an **afternoon of music** at Vennachar Free Methodist Church **Open Mic** on October 19th at 1pm.

- On October 24th at 6:30pm, Vennachar Free Methodist Church is hosting an **adult cornhole tournament**. Bring snacks for a fun evening.

- On October 25th from 11am - 1pm, Denbigh Recreation will host a **kids Halloween dance** at the Denbigh Hall. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided and there will be spot dances and costume prizes.

- Denbigh Recreation is hosting a **19+ Halloween Costume Dance** at the Denbigh Hall on October 25th starting at 8pm. Admission is \$10/person. There will be a cash bar and costume prizes.

- The Matawatchan Hall will host a **Halloween Dance** on October 25th from 8pm - 1am. Featuring live music by

The Pontunes, this 19+ event will feature prizes for best costumes and a cash bar. Tickets are \$20/person at the door.

NOVEMBER

The Griffith and Matawatchan Fish & Game Club's **Buck & Doe Contest** will run from November 3rd until November 16th at 11am. Weigh-in takes place at Rosie's Café and General Store, 22353 Hwy 41, Denbigh from 8am - 6pm Tuesday - Saturday and 9am - 5pm Sunday and Monday. Prizes will be awarded for largest buck \$250, largest doe \$150 and mystery weight \$100. For more information refer to the Club's Facebook page or email gmfgclub@yahoo.com.

- Planning is underway for Denbigh Recreation's **Hunter's Supper on November 7th**. Refer to Denbigh Recreation's Facebook page for details as they become available.

continues next page...



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- The Griffith and Matawatchan Fish & Game Club is hosting a **Fall Festival (previously called the Hunter's Ball)** on November 8th at the Matawatchan Hall. The evening kicks-off at 6pm and will include music, food, cash bar and more.

- Township of Greater Madawaska is planning a **day trip to the Hard Rock Casino in Ottawa** on November 19th. Bus pickup at 8am at the Griffith & Matawatchan Rec Centre, the DACA Centre at 8:30, and Calabogie Community Hall at 9. Bus leaves Ottawa at 3:30pm. Must be over 19. 55+ SALC members just \$7. Non members \$35. Must pre-register. Call Cait Norton at 613-752-1129 or email cnorton@greatermadawaska.com

- Denbigh Recreation's **Festival of Lights & Memorial Tree** is scheduled for December 13th. Stay tuned for more

details.

- **Celebrating 45 Years at Hilltop Church** Sunday, November 2 at 11am as they mark Hilltop Church's 45th year of worship, fellowship, and community impact. Guest speaker will be Rev. Jason Luscombe, District Superintendent of the Eastern Ontario and Nunavut District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. (Daylight savings time reminder to move your clocks back 1 hour.)

- Hilltop Church invites all creative women to an evening of art, fellowship, and fun at our next **Ladies Art** on November 24 at 6:30pm. Whether you're a seasoned artist or picking up a brush for the first time, join us for inspiration and community. Email maison_green@hotmail.com to confirm your seat. All supplies will be provided—just bring your enthusiasm & your favourite snacks!

EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Every 2nd Tuesday at 7:30 October 14, 28, November 11, 25 Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club Bingo

Every 2nd Tuesday at 1 pm October 7, 21 Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club Euchre

October 11 at 7pm Festival of Small Halls, The Arrogant Worms at the Matawatchan Hall

October 18 - 3:30pm - Denbigh-Griffith Lions Club Octoberfest

October 19 - 1pm - Vennachar Free Methodist Church Open Mic

October 24 - 6:30pm - Vennachar Free Methodist Church Cornhole Tournament

October 25 - 11am Denbigh Recreation Children's Halloween Party followed by 19+ Halloween Dance at 8pm

October 25 - 8pm - Matawatchan Hall Halloween Dance

November 3 to 16 - Griffith and Matawatchan Fish & Game Club Buck & Doe Contest

November 7 - Denbigh Recreation Hunter's Supper

November 8 - 6pm - Griffith and Matawatchan Fish & Game Club Fall Festival

November 19 - Township of Greater Madawaska Hard Rock Casino Trip

December 13 - Denbigh Recreation Festival of Lights & Memorial Tree

BOGIE BEAT

Calabogie Folks & What they're Up To By Morgana Dillingham



The first GM55+ luncheon was a heartwarming success held at the DACA Centre in September. There will be more to follow in all areas of the township.



New signs with the township's beautiful new logo are going up across the township. The new branding and first round of signs came as a result of an Ontario grant under the Rural Economic Development program. More will be added later.



King's Off-Road charity ride for CARE Animal Rescue brought more than 70 off road enthusiasts together in September.



The witches were out on the water! Mad River Paddle Co. hosted their 6th Annual Witches Paddle on Friday, October 3rd, and the weather couldn't have been better. Costumes, canoes, and kayaks filled the lake as locals and visitors alike enjoyed a spooky, fun-filled evening on the water. A unique way to celebrate the season, and a reminder that Calabogie knows how to have a good time, especially the witches!



Summer may have packed up its beach towels, but Calabogie is still carrying a little warmth into fall. Between glowing maples, full community calendars, and neighbours who somehow get chattier

the colder it gets, this season feels like one big reunion.

This edition is packed From Taste of the Valley and fundraiser rides to witches on paddleboards and parrots

on the trails. I've also been out exploring local stays like Lanark Landing and trying new events. Whether you love a good charity tournament, a spooky stroll, or just watching the leaves change

with a hot drink in hand, there's something in here for you. Let's dive into everything that made September special, and everything coming up this fall in our little village by the lake.

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Taste of the Valley in Calabogie — On Saturday, September 20, the Calabogie Community Hall came alive with over 70 vendors under the rink roof.



Live Music at Barnet Park — On Sunday, September 21, the Recreation and Culture Committee of Greater Madawaska hosted the final Music in the Park of the season at Barnet Park in Calabogie. From 1 - 4 PM, locals and visitors enjoyed free live music under the early autumn sky, a perfect way to soak in the last of summer vibes before the leaves change.

Pic by Cao Thanh Phong.



OPP Chorus Concert — Thursday, September 26 brought the OPP Chorus to Calabogie United Church, and what a night! Locals turned out to enjoy an evening of beautiful music, and first-time visitors were thoroughly impressed. A big thanks to the chorus for sharing their talent and to everyone who came to support—here's hoping they return to our little village soon!

Pic by Amber Wright



I've started preparing my pumpkins. I love having a mix of carved and painted. My friend group will do some nights where we have fun crafting up our pumpkins. I also got a hand-painted pumpkin from BMJ Design which is the perfect addition to welcoming fall.

Pic by Morgana Dillingham.



A Feathered Tourist in Calabogie — If you thought you'd seen it all on the trails, think again. Local tour guide Tom Irwin had a rather exotic guest join him recently: Murdock, a 25-year-old African Grey parrot (and beloved family member, owned by Tom's wife Lynn's brother). Murdock didn't just sit pretty. He laughed exactly like Lyn, rode along for adventures on the trail, and when someone asked, "Are the police here?" he switched on his best siren impression like a seasoned prankster. Absolute icon.

Pic by Morgana Dillingham

Taste of the Valley in Calabogie

On Saturday, September 20, the Calabogie Community Hall came alive with over 70 vendors under the rink roof. There was such a great variety, showcasing fresh produce, handcrafted goods, baked treats, jams, and more. I purchased so much chocolate, and tried a few of the food vendors, even bringing some delights home for my partner to try. It truly was a feast for the senses and heart of the Valley. Walking through the vendors, I met a lot of Ottawa Valley folks who were all sharing the same excitement. Flavours, textures, and creativity blended as locals shopped, chatted, and filled their baskets with treasures from the Valley. This is the second time that Taste of the Valley has been in Calabogie and it isn't just a market; it's a reminder of why we live here. It highlights the farmers, artists, and makers who bring this region to life, inviting us all to support local while enjoying some delicious discoveries.

King's Off-Road Charity Ride for CARE

September 13 brought more than 70 ATV enthusiasts together for the annual King's Off-Road Charity Ride, supporting CARE animal rescue. Now in its third year, this ride had its highest turnout yet, raising \$2,700 for local animals in need. Riders set out on a scenic three-hour trail from the Highlands,

finishing at Highlands Social House for live music, food, drinks, a 50/50 draw, and prizes generously donated by local businesses. "We are so thankful for the amazing turnout at this year's ride. Animals are very close to our hearts, and it means so much to be able to help the cats get the care they need, while also showcasing such an incredible charity and the dedicated volunteers behind it," said Adam King, organizer and owner of King's Off Road. Sharon Adele White added, "If this year's event is any indication of what's to come, organizers expect even more participation for next year helping even more animals in need." CARE's programs include low-cost spay and neuter clinics, adoptions, foster-to-adopt, and support for feral cat caregivers. If you'd like to volunteer, foster, or donate, contact careanimalrescue2@gmail.com. Photos submitted by Sharon Adele White and Adam King.

First GM55+ Luncheon a Heartwarming Success!

On Monday, September 22nd, the DACA Community Centre was abuzz with warmth and connection. The highlight of the afternoon was an enlightening presentation by special guest speakers, Sherry, and Trisha from the Dementia Society. Their engaging talk and thoughtful Q&A session provided attendees with a wealth of take-home information and sparked

meaningful conversations. A very special thank you to Sherry and Trisha for generously sharing their time, expertise, and compassion with the group. Thank you to Betty Frost, Gail Murphy, and the DACA Association for hosting in their beautiful space. And of course, a big thank you to Charbonneau's for the delicious lunch that brought everyone together around the table. Here's to many more inspiring gatherings ahead!"

The 3rd Annual Stooges Invitational

took over Calabogie Highlands on a Sunday in September. What started three years ago as a small golf day between friends has officially turned into a serious community fundraiser. Eighty golfers hit the course, followed by dinner and a lively auction at Highlands Social House. Last year's goal was \$5,000, this year they more than tripled it, raising over \$17,000, plus a big food donation for the Calabogie Food Bank. All proceeds go to the Greater Madawaska Firefighters Association, making this one of the biggest boosts the department has seen from a single event. Mayor Rob Weir was there to show support, and a special shoutout goes to Powersports Garage, Kev-Tec Electric, Neilcorp Homes, and auctioneers Chris Fleming and Jay Fredericks for keeping the bids climbing. "Being involved in coordinating the fire department, and then getting

to play in the tournament myself, it was amazing to see it all come together. A great day of fun that also raised money for a cause close to our hearts. Everyone in the Greater Madawaska Fire Department truly appreciates the support this community continues to show us."

— Raymond Dillingham, Calabogie Fire Association.

New Greater Madawaska Wayfinding Signs

Driving around Calabogie I noticed someone installing new road signs, later that day it was really cool to see proper signage at a lot of our community spaces from Cherry Point to a "Commercial" sign leading towards where the majority of shops are. The township has shared that this was a big endeavour made possible in part through funding from the Government of Ontario, following the Township's successful grant application under the Rural Economic Development Program, which I know will ease minds of readers curious about the cost. Head to the Township of Greater Madawaska's media platforms if you're interested in learning more. I really like the new signs, and I am curious what everyone else is thinking.

Indian Curry Pot Moves to White Lake

After three amazing years serving from their Container Kitchen in Calabogie, Kay and Nima of Indian Curry Pot have



The 3rd Annual Stooges Invitational was a huge success with 80 golfers who enjoyed the Calabogie Highlands Course followed by a meal at the Highlands Social House and an auction that brought in over \$17,000 for the Greater Madawaska Firefighters Association, plus a big food donation for the Calabogie Food Bank.

officially moved to their new home at The Kitchen at White Lake (618 Bellamy Road). While locals will miss their weekend rituals in Calabogie, there's plenty to look forward to, they are even starting up a new initiative Tableful by Kay & Nima. Catch them Saturdays from Noon to 4 PM for delicious food, warm conversation, and soon, their new "Sampling Saturdays." It's the same great flavors, just a new spot to enjoy them!

Fall Colours have arrived in Calabogie

You don't need to go anywhere fancy or take a big road trip when you live in our beautiful area of the Ottawa Valley. Just heading from one end of Calabogie to the other your eyes are met with such a stunning array of the fall colours throughout the tree's leaves. The maples and birch are stealing the show. We're so lucky that this is the beauty of our backyard. If you are interested in a little bit more of a production, you can take part in the Calabogie tradition of going up the ski lift at Calabogie Peaks. \$1 from each ticket is going to the Calabogie Food Bank. Check out their website for all details.

Wellness Centre in Calabogie?

A post in Calabogie Folks sparked a great conversation about the potential for a wellness centre in our area. The idea includes small rental spaces for health pros, a fitness facility, and even a café with local drinks. Although the post originally was directed towards the Griffith area, many community members chimed in that Calabogie could be the ideal spot—central, already home to a medical centre, and a place where expanding health services makes sense. Definitely an exciting idea to watch!

The Freezer is Stocked Calabogie & Area Home Support has fully restocked their freezer with delicious ready-to-go meals from TimeSaver Foods. There are nearly 30 options to choose from, including soups, stews, pastas — the comfort classics. Perfect for seniors, busy families, or anyone who just wants an easy, affordable dinner without heading to town.

These meals are a lifeline for many in our community, and Calabogie Home Support goes far beyond food, they also offer transportation, telephone assurance services, and more to help residents live independently at home. If you'd like to support their work, watch for their next fundraiser at the Calabogie Winter Market, where they'll be raffling off an outdoor adventure-themed gift basket. You can also donate directly

anytime to help keep the freezer full and services running. It's amazing how much impact one small organization can have when the community rallies behind it.

Calabogie Lions Poker Run The Calabogie Lions hosted their Poker Run this month, drawing a lively mix of locals and visitors for a day of friendly competition on wheels. Riders and drivers followed the route, collecting codes and enjoying the fall scenery along the way. By the time everyone gathered back at the final checkpoint, the Calabogie Highlands Social House, there were plenty of laughs, a few questionable poker faces, and some impressive winning hands. As always, the event wasn't just about the fun experience. This event raised funds for local Lions Club projects right here in Greater Madawaska. A big thanks to everyone who participated and supported another great community tradition! It's always better doing good when you get to have a good time!

What's Happening in October

Yoga in Calabogie There was community yoga at Somewhere Inn this summer and yoga continues to be a hit in Calabogie. The GM55+ October yoga series at the Community Hall filled up in just 36 hours, which is pretty impressive for a Tuesday lunchtime stretch. If you missed out, there are still a few spots left in the Dacre morning classes, Tuesdays, 10–11am on Oct 7, 14, 21, 28. Register at greatermadawaska.com/salc or call 613-752-1129

For something gentler, the **GM55+ Mind & Motion Chair Exercise Series**. This 10-week falls prevention series started on October 2 at the Calabogie Community Hall. It focuses on balance, flexibility, and a bit of social time, all seated or standing, no mats involved. Classes run weekly on Thursdays (No class on November 13) from 2:30–3:30pm \$15 for 10 weeks for GM55+ members, \$75 for non-members. Pre-registration required at greatermadawaska.com/salc/ or call 613-752-1129

Calabogie Mamas Babyccino Buddies Meetup Wednesday, October 29th 10am–12pm | Oh-el-La Café. Monthly meet-up for coffee, conversation, and cuteness — perfect for expanding your village of moms. Last Wednesday of the Month! We are also starting this up in Arnprior at Café Tilda which will be really exciting, I am happy that this is expanding and reaching more moms.

Haunted Halloween Walk Saturday, October 25th from 3–5pm is the Haunted Halloween Walk presented by the Greater Madawaska Fire Department. They have been busy planning this annual event. Ready to get spooked? Head over to the Community Hall and bring a donation for the Calabogie Food Bank.

Classic Trick or Treat in Calabogie Village This year Halloween is on a Friday and that is really exciting because I love a good weekend celebration. I am so excited to take my family out trick or treating. Calabogie Village is such a great place, the tradition lives on. It's so fun seeing all of the kids dressed up, visiting with our neighbors and of course getting a sugar high from all of the treats.

Calabogie Lions BINGO On Wednesday October 29th get ready for a Halloween Edition of our beloved local bingo night with a 7pm start at the Calabogie Community Hall. This event is always so fun, not only for the games but also to see everyone dressed up! There are always cool group costumes, and someone will win the prize for best costume! Get in touch with a Lion if you have any questions and I hope to see you there!

Looking Ahead to November

November 1st: **The Great Pumpkin Walk** — A cozy fall night is coming to Heritage Point on Saturday, November 1st. Bring your carved or decorated pumpkins at 5pm to show off your creativity and they'll light them all up at 6 PM to make a glowing pumpkin path by the water for all to enjoy, giving our pumpkins one final send off of the season. Kids can wear their Halloween costumes one more time, and there'll be hot chocolate, apple cider, and treat bags for the kids while you wander. For more information on this fun event hosted by the GM Recreation and Culture Committee, check out the township's media platforms.

The Comfort Plate Initiative: Taste & Learn This event had to be rescheduled from the summer into the fall. The date is TBD, we are looking at early November before everyone gets busy for the holidays. This is a collaborative event by the GM 55+ SALC and The Calabogie & Area Home Support to educate residents about healthy meals and the services offered by Calabogie Home Support.

Remembrance Day in Calabogie This event date hasn't been released at time of print, but I wanted to touch on it as I know that there's a lot that goes into this event and it goes on everyone's calendars. Keep in mind, Calabogie rarely has their ceremony on Remembrance Day, this is due to the availability of the gun detachment, cadets, and other presenters. Make sure you check out the community calendar to find out the date if you wish to attend. This is a beautiful event, organized by John Watts where the service takes place at our cenotaph by the water. Afterwards everyone meets for refreshments at the community centre.

5th Annual Calabogie Winter Market

Returning for another year, the market will take place on Saturday, November 15th from 4–8pm. There will be over 60 local makers, bakers, and creators coming together under the rink roof. If you're a vendor who wants to attend reach out directly to Long Lane Farms, and if you're a shopper add it to your cal-

endar, it's not to be missed!

GM55+ SALC Presents Hard Rock Casino Day Trip This one I know will be well attended, I mean who doesn't love a trip to the casino? It's another event organized by the GM55+ SALC and will take place on Wednesday November 19th heading to the Hard Rock Casino. Bus pickup at 8am at the Griffith & Matawatchan Rec Centre, the DACA Centre at 8:30, and Calabogie Community Hall at 9. Bus leaves Ottawa at 3:30pm. Must be over 19. 55+ SALC members only \$7. Non members \$35. Must pre-register. Call Cait Norton at 613-752-1129 or email cnorton@greatermadawaska.com I can't wait to hear about how this event goes as I know it'll be fun! Registration is required, check out the township's website or social media for details.

For weekly happenings around Calabogie check out the community calendar on the Greater Madawaska Township's website, and the posts made in Calabogie Folks FB group.

Feel More Connected in Calabogie

October is for slowing down, soaking in the fall colours, and reconnecting with the people around you. The lake days are winding down, but our trails, parks, and community spaces are buzzing with autumn energy. Here are a few simple ways to build connections this month:

- Check in with neighbors — A quick chat, a wave, or an invite for a coffee can go a long way.
- Join a local event — Attending even one activity helps you meet new faces and feel a part of your community. We have so many events that are fundraisers or just about the recreation.
- Share your favourites — Post your favourite hike, nature spot, or hidden gem in the Calabogie Folks group. Think of it as sending a little digital postcard to your neighbours.
- Offer a helping hand — Whether it's raking leaves, sharing harvest goodies, or lending a tool, small acts of kindness strengthen community ties.

October is all about embracing the season while celebrating the people and places that make Calabogie home. Even the smallest gesture, like stopping to chat in the parking lot of Charbonneaus, can make our village feel even warmer this fall.

Thank you for following along with this edition of The Bogie Beat! I love sharing these snapshots of our community with you. If you have stories, events, or local gems you'd like to see featured next time, reach out anytime at thebogiebeat@gmail.com. Until then, I'll see you around town, probably with a coffee or camera in hand! Stay kind, stay curious, and keep supporting each other; it's what makes Calabogie, Calabogie.



Morgana Dillingham is a media communications marvel and has called Calabogie home for the last decade. With her experience with the Calabogie Folks Facebook group, she stays up to date on local happenings. Based in Calabogie village, Morgana enjoys community involvement, sustainability, arts, motherhood, and time on the water.

NEWS CLIPPINGS WE HAVE GATHERED

Saugeen First Nation looks to the future after Supreme Court denies appeal in dispute over Sauble Beach on Lake Huron, now called Saugeen Beach.

After generations of dispossession, African-Nova Scotian Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust to build 136 co-op housing units with \$61.2M in federal funding

Researchers found that combining nanocellulose with a dye made from red onion skin extract provided a superior, 99% UV protection film to protect solar cells.

Blade Made company upcycles old wind turbine blades into Dutch building code compliant homes in an ambitious demonstration of the possibilities of upcycling.

Denmark's new molten salt battery system can power 100,000 homes for 10 hours, with up to 90% efficiency, potentially revolutionizing industrial scale energy storage

Kia Canada to Offer EV Home Charging System that allows owners to keep their existing electrical panel, adjusting charging draw to accommodate home needs.

The world's first commercial service offering carbon storage off Norway's coast has carried out its inaugural CO2 injection into the North Sea seabed.

Europe's planning innovative renewable hydrogen pipeline network aimed at connecting several countries to stop dependency on Russian fossil fuels.

Aviation industry striving for climate neutrality with sustainable fuels, exploring avenues for market expansion. New study identifies progress, barriers, options.

Scientists breathe new life into climate website. Climate.gov, shut down by the US, set to be revived by volunteers as climate.us with expanded mission.

US Judge Blocks Executive Order Halting Offshore Wind Construction located 15 miles off the coasts of Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Watershed workers in PEI planting trees to shade rivers to prepare for a warming climate, saying they can't prevent drought, but can fight some of its consequences.

Natural Resources Canada has released an update to its plant hardiness zones map with changes due to climate change.

Salmon are making a comeback in a tributary of the Colquitz River that flows through a Royal Oak park in BC after restoration work that began last summer.

The global High Seas Treaty will become international law to create vast maritime conservation areas

Regenerative agriculture successes are spreading from small Saskatchewan farms to thousand acre farms, as farmers see the financial benefits of restoring life to soils.

Prime Minister backs plans to redevelop Manitoba's Port of Churchill. Premier Wab Kinew says Carney's comments represent 'an amazing opportunity' for the province.

Canada has shortlisted two shipbuilders to continue the procurement process for Canada's future patrol submarine project to replace the Victoria-class submarines.

Federal government begins to transfer Coast Guard to National Defence to allow the Coast Guard to conduct security activities, such as patrols and intelligence gathering

25 countries suspend postal services to U.S. over tariff changes: UN

Canadian luxury fashion retailer SSENSE has said it plans to file for bankruptcy protection, partly citing US tariffs including on US-bound low value parcels.

Poll finds that 54 per cent of Canadians who own property in the U.S. are considering selling their homes within the next year.

Canada's food cans come from the US and are heavily tariffed, so a QC company is moving its supply chain here to meet increased demand from our producers.

Canada's largest food can maker re-opening factory in Chatham keeping more processing in Canada, instead of shipping crops to the U.S. and buying them back.

Colorado School of Mines study found that the US could meet much of its demand for critical minerals by recovering materials currently discarded in mining waste.

Australia pioneering light-activated chemistry instead of toxic chemicals for sustainable metal recovery that could reshape the global gold recycling industry.

Japanese rechargeable battery prototype uses depleted uranium capable of powering 3000 homes. If viable, nuclear waste could become a source of energy.

OPG signed agreement to provide a reliable supply of tritium waste from CANDU reactors as a source of Helium-3 to fuel the UK's fusion research and facilities

Canada signed critical minerals partnership with Germany that encourages joint financing of natural resources projects, boosting EU development and exports

Halifax-based Ucore Rare Metals signed a non-binding letter of intent with Critical Metals to develop the Tanbreez rare earth project in Southern Greenland

Winnipeg baffled after someone went through a back lane and ripped out as many downspouts as they could find - worth about \$1 each in scrap aluminum.

U.S. border agents are searching travellers' smartphones and other electronic devices at a record rate, new data suggests amid a broader immigration crackdown.

U.S. Border Patrol arrests 2 firefighters for being in the country illegally as they battled Washington's biggest wildfire, raising concerns for international assistance.

Tourism operators near the P.E.I. end of the Confederation Bridge say they are seeing more customers this summer — lower bridge tolls may be part of the reason.

Ontario supporting workers by breaking down interprovincial barriers for professions such as architects, engineers, geoscientists, surveyors, electricians and more.

FBI warns seniors about AI driven billion-dollar scam draining retirement funds. Three-phase scheme uses tech support, bank and government impostors.

Real Doctors Faked. Scammers are using A.I. tools to make it look as if medical professionals are promoting dubious health care products.

Google says 650-253-0000 is NOT the Global Headquarters of Google. Scammers get you to "protect" your account by changing the password, then lock you out.

Ontario man spends \$40K in unnecessary roofing repairs after free inspection scam

Canadians reported losses of over \$638M to fraud in 2024, with cases nearly doubling over the past decade. 5 to 10% goes unreported. It's embarrassing to report.

Amid Beer Stores closing and grocery stores selling large cases of beer, the LCBO now offers those products in all stores to satisfy consumer demand.

Ontario is investing a record \$30.3 billion in education funding this year as part of its plan to protect Ontario and prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow.

Scientists Made 'Jelly Ice' That Never Melts. It's Edible, Compostable and Reusable. This squishy ice made from gelatin keeps things cold without the mess of melting.

Food safety recalls have increased over the last 5 years because of improved detection methods and regulations at Canada's Food Inspection Agency.

Brain changes driving psychotic symptoms are remarkably similar across mental health conditions. Could change how doctors choose treatments for psychosis

New research suggests that the tendency of older adults to misinterpret neutral or negative emotions as positive may be a warning sign of cognitive decline.

New blood test identifies early-stage Alzheimer's with 90% accuracy.

A new breath-based sensor from researchers at Penn State could soon offer an easy, pain-free, quick way to diagnose diabetes.

Beta-blockers — used as a first-line treatment after a heart attack— may contribute to a higher risk of hospitalization and death in some women but not in men.

New amputation surgical techniques are being developed to preserve nerve signaling and maintain stable connections to the brain so phantom limbs don't hurt.

An increase in cases of Legionnaires' disease, a severe form of pneumonia, around the world can be attributed to warming temperatures from climate change.

Canadians can now submit claims for up to \$100K in tobacco class-action settlement

Research finds individuals with cannabis use disorder tend to have moderate impairments in verbal learning and memory, working memory, and processing speed.

Bespoke brain implant that monitors brain activity and provides personalised stimulation halved the discomfort of people living with chronic pain.

A large-scale study with 600 participants shows that music can genuinely evoke feelings of companionship by sparking social imagination, even without lyrics.

Psilocybin appears to alter brain networks linked to repetitive negative thoughts, which may explain how it helps to treat some mental health conditions with one dose

Chemotherapy and radiation therapies work, but exercise is increasingly being recognized as another first-line treatment in its own right for people with cancer.

Taco Bell rethinks AI drive-through after mistakes shared on social media, like bacon added to ice cream order and, What will you drink with your Mountain Dew?

AI Robot Trained on Human Emotions Suffers PTSD After Test Encounter With Lion in Africa. The Breakdown: "Cat Big. Scared."

Reuters survey: News avoidance at a record high globally 40% in 2025 up from 29% in 2017, the previous high. people said they sometimes or often avoid the news.

YOU BE THE JUDGE! By Lois Thomson

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies . . . The man who never reads lives only one."

- George R.R. Martin

At last! Here are this year's short stories. I'm sure you will read them all and when you do, please tell us which one was your single-most favourite adult fiction or non-fiction.

The judges have a score sheet to go by to make sure all

of the stories are judged by the same criteria, but our readers are tasked with choosing the story they like the best and sending in their vote.

Which one meant the most to you? Which one made you laugh, gave you chills, or made you say, "You've got to read this!" This isn't a popularity contest, so please don't vote for yourself or get others to vote for your story to stack the votes. Send

your vote to the email, phone, or address for The Madawaska Highlander that's on the inside front cover of the paper. Include your name and postal code and a quick line about why you liked it. We'll share that feedback with the writers. If you have positive, encouraging things to say about any of them, please include them along with your number one choice by November 13... and enjoy!



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- Stephen King



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Good Boy

Brett laid the pickerel on the ice outside the fishing hut, searched the pockets of his parka, then took out his phone. He thought about posting a picture on Instagram, which he'd started using since retirement. Before he could open the camera, his Golden Retriever grabbed the fish and dashed across the lake.

"Come back!" Brett shouted. Within a minute, the dog was on the shore of Calabogie Lake, tail waving like a plume on a drum major's busby. Ron stepped out of the fishing hut.

After a moment, he asked, "Where's your fish?"

Scowling, Brett said, "Buddy took it." Ron followed Brett's gaze past the distant sign that read Fishing Derby Today. "I thought he only stole shoes" he said, then added, "But I can't blame him. That fish is a beaut. Must weigh almost 2 kilos."

Brett spread his arms, then let them drop with exasperation. "Buddy doesn't even like fish. I gave him a week-old trout last spring, and he slipped it over the fence for his poodle girlfriend, Lulu."

Ron scratched the side of his face with the back of a gloved hand. His beard released a sprinkle of crumbs. "Maybe he's taking her another gift. Wouldn't a pickerel be the dog equivalent of a rose?"

Brett stepped back into the fishing hut to collect his gear. "I'll have to look for Buddy before it gets dark." He brightened momentarily, and added, "Maybe he dropped the fish."

Back outside, he squinted against the remaining sunlight. Along the shore, other anglers were having their fish weighed and measured. People crowded around a bonfire.

Ron joined Brett beside the 2-up ATV. Before his head disappeared under his helmet, Ron said, "That could have been you over there, expecting a trophy. That fish was a beaut. Must weigh 3 kilos."

"And 80 centimeters," said Brett as he climbed behind Ron on the vehicle. "I wouldn't mind losing the pickerel if I thought I'd be doing this next year. But I doubt I'll be ice fishing in Toronto."

A frigid wind, which had pelted across the lake all afternoon, was slowing. The intermittent hiss that accompanied each gust was drowned by the cough and snarl of the ATV's engine. With a jerking start, they crossed the lake and climbed onto shore.

They slowly traversed the streets of Calabogie. A couple of times, Brett made Ron stop so he could examine suspiciously fish-shaped objects. In a front yard, he mistook a grey and yellow slipper for the pickerel, then repeated the error when he spied its mate in the road. It occurred to him that he'd been missing an identical pair for days.

Eventually, Ron pulled up in front of Brett's house and stopped beside the for-sale sign. A photo of the realtor's face grinned over news that an open house would take place the following week.

Pic by Richard Bulrton unsplash.com



Ron pushed up the visor on his helmet to speak and gestured at the sign.

"I dunno what he's so happy about. His brother told me he hasn't sold anything for three months."

"He has us keeping our house tidy as a funeral parlour," said Brett. "I can't even sit on the sofa because we need to keep the pillows fluffy."

Ron smiled wryly. "You find a place in Toronto yet? You said your daughter was helping you look."

Brett shook his head. "Crazy prices there. We'll probably just move in with her until we find something reasonable." He paused for a moment before adding, "But since we're moving to help Heather with the kids, maybe staying with her for a while won't be too bad."

"Did she ever hear where her husband ran off to?" Ron asked.

"India," Brett said. "He started talking about volunteering at an orphanage right after the twins were born. Heather seems to think he's some kind of saint instead of a deadbeat." After a moment, he added, "My guess is he's street busking in Delhi. I have to admit, he's a pretty good juggler."

When Brett finally walked inside the house, Tina was kneeling over a section of the kitchen floor with a scrub brush. "How did Buddy beat you home?" she asked. "He was here when I got back from town."

Brett cast his eyes to Buddy's favourite spot – the sliding glass doors overlooking the neighbour's backyard. As usual, Buddy was waiting for Lulu to be let outside.

Brett told Tina about Buddy's adventure. "He must have squeezed in through the cat door when he got here."

Tina replied, "Oh, that reminds me. The realtor thinks we should close the cat door off. It lets in too much cold air."

Brett sighed as he removed his parka and boots. "Does he recommend a chocolate fountain in the dining room too? Bad enough he has you scrubbing invisible mold from the grout."

Tina stood with difficulty and grunted. The winter static made her hair stick

out like bristles on a chimney brush. Brett patted his own head, momentarily forgetting he was bald. "Hey," he asked, "Did you happen to see a pickerel anywhere in the road?"

Tina arched her back and grimaced. "Not that I noticed. Maybe Buddy dropped it over the fence for Lulu."

Brett slipped his feet back into his boots and went outside to inspect the length of the wire fence. "Don't see it," he said when he was back indoors. "Maybe it wasn't ripe enough. Dogs like fish best when they reek."

He started back toward the living room, caught himself before flopping onto the beige sofa, then went to a hard-backed chair and sat, glowering at the inviting pillows. Tina followed him, pausing to straighten one of the cushions that had gone ajar. Then she glanced around the room suspiciously before resting her gaze on Brett.

"You really smell like fish," she announced.

Brett took the hint and retreated for a shower.

Throughout the week, Tina sniffed around the house like a bloodhound. "That fishing derby smell seems to be getting worse," she claimed. She dumped Brett's boots in the garage to air out. She washed his parka. She laid fabric softener sheets inside all the furnace vents. She bought an air freshener that smelled

maddeningly like apple pie.

Brett washed Buddy twice with a shampoo that made his fur so dry it sparked at night when he rolled over on the carpet. Yet every time Buddy approached the sofa, Brett followed and shooed him away, saying "I know you're clean, but if I have to suffer, so do you."

On the afternoon of the open house, Brett, Tina, and Buddy went to the local dog park to kill time. Lulu was there. When Tina gave Buddy a treat, he immediately cantered over to Lulu and dropped it under her prim snout.

"Buddy's gonna be heartbroken when we move," Tina said.

She was searching for another treat in her fanny pack when her cell phone rang. She answered and said, "Heather! Hi." As she listened, she caught Brett's eyes and shook her head with disbelief. It was a long conversation. "Okay, sweetheart," she said before ending the call. "As long as you're okay with that, we're fine too."

She stood silently for a moment, then said, "The deadbeat's home. She's taking him back. We don't have to move."

They raced to the house and arrived just as the realtor was loading brochures into his car. When Brett told him the sale was off, the big grin softened slightly. With a shrug, he admitted, "It's just as well. I don't think anyone today was interested. They kept saying – I hope you don't mind me passing this along – but there's a weird smell in there. Kind of like gas or old cheese or something. You should get it looked into."

Once inside and in sock feet, Brett walked toward his living room and looked at the sofa fondly. With a grunt of pleasure, he threw himself down – then struggled to stand. "Oh, gah!" he exclaimed. "The smell's worse here."

He pulled back the pillow he'd briefly rested his head upon. Beneath it was a decaying pickerel. Buddy pounced, grabbed it between his teeth, then squeezed out the cat door into the backyard.

Tina rushed to the back window and said, "He dropped it over the fence."

Brett joined her and murmured, "Good boy."



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Joey Fruitcakes

"I need you to collect on a loan for me," Fat Sal pointed a finger at Joey Fruitcake's chest.

"Aw, Sal, it's two days before Christmas. Can't it wait 'til after? Let da guy enjoy da holiday wit his family."

"No. This comes from the Big Guy himself. I don't know what happened but the word on the street is that his son, Raymond Junior, lent this idiot twenty grand, knowing he never could pay it back, so the old man asked me to collect it and now I'm asking you. He poked the finger again, this time into Joey's chest. "Its twenty-five large now and it's due tonight."

"What's in it for me?" asked Joey.

"You get two grand out of the twenty-five." Joey shrugged. Two grand is better than nothing. "So whose da guy?"

Sal reached into his shirt pocket with two fingers and handed a folded index card to Joey.

Joey read it, nodded and crumpled it up, put it into an ashtray and slid off the stool. Twenty minutes later he was rolling down Allen's Avenue in his Cadillac. He turned onto Serenity Place and looked for number 336. The house was a two-story wood frame row house. In the twilight he could see that it could use a coat of paint. The porch sagged a little and a rain gutter hung loosely from its roof. Joey climbed out of his comfortable car and rang the doorbell.

In a minute he heard footsteps then the glass door opened. "I'm looking for Freddy Mancuso, lady. Is dat your husband?"



"No, he's my brother. Who are you?"

Joey considered, "It don't matter who I am. He owes my boss twenty-five grand. I'm here to collect it." Joey looked the woman up and down. Not bad, about his age, dark hair piled on top of her head, just a hint of lipstick.

She snorted, "Good luck. He owes me five. He took off on Tuesday and I ain't seen him since. The rat bastard took my car too." Now she looked him up and down. "Say, don't I know you?" She touched a finger to her cheek and frowned. The porch light was dim and Joey kept his face turned slightly away. "I don't tink so, lady. Any idea where I can find him?"

"No. Maybe Atlantic City, or Vegas. He's a gambler, ya know." She reached out and touched his chin and turned his face. "I know you," she said smiling. "You're Joey Frattentuno! Don't you remember me? Theresa Mancuso. We were in Mrs. Cap's English History class together. Yeah,

you sat in the second row behind that blonde, what was her name?"

Joey brightened, "Wendy, uh, Wendy somethin." He grinned. He used to have a crush on this little cheerleader.

"That's right. Wendy Wilson! We were cheerleaders together!" She touched his arm. "Oh, I remember cheering for you when you played football."

"Yeah, yeah, now I remember!" He was grateful she remembered. He also remembered she was one of the only girls who never called him Joey Fruitcakes. "So, Theresa, you married or what?"

"No, at least not anymore." She touched his arm again. "Oh, where's my manners? Come on in, Joey. I'll get us somethin' to drink." She held the door open and he came. The living room was small and shabby but clean. She'd been watching TV and doing her nails.

Theresa bustled out of the room and returned a few minutes later with two cold beers. She swept the newspapers off

the sofa and said, "Here, sit down, Joey, sit."

They chatted long into the night, remembering old friends, football games and where they'd been. She talked about her failed marriage while they drank beer, ate popcorn and watched TV. Finally he turned to her and admitted that he'd had a crush on her when he was in school.

"No kidding, Joey?" She gently took his hand, "I used to have a crush on you too." He was flattered. "But you know, Theresa, I'm supposed to collect your brother's debt." He scratched his head and said, "I, uh, I'm supposed to collect from his family if I can't collect from him. Have you got anythin' I can give the boss?"

She shook her head and answered, "Joey, if I had anything I would give it to you. I got maybe a hundred bucks in a jar in the kitchen. You can have it, but that's all I've got, honest." A tear slid down her cheek and Joey reached out a thick hand and wiped it away.

He took a deep breath and said, "Theresa, I got some money put away. I can loan it to you, pay off da loan and da vig."

"Oh Joey, you're swell," she started sobbing and pressed her palms to her face. "I'll pay you back, I promise."

Joey reached out an arm and put it around her shoulders. He'd wanted to do this for ten years. She leaned into him.

And that was how Joey Fruitcakes fell in love for the second time with Theresa Mancuso.

There it was – Gone! A short story inspired by a passing comment

The Mont Blanc I inherited from my uncle is missing.

When last I assembled all my implements for a group photograph, there it was – gone! It had always stood out in the staging area. With its thin line and substantial storage, the Mont Blanc has a large capacity for long-range action. The capture mechanism is robust, externally actuated and not requiring access to internal systems. Its pointy end is broad and well-formed, able to tackle almost any medium.

Upon my return from the second-last adventure with the Mont Blanc, my friends at The Club were shocked. "What do you mean you were in Tibet?" they said as one. If they only knew that Tibet was merely a launch point to a far more interesting voyage.

From Shigatse the trusty Mont Blanc took me on an adventure, the details of which must remain rather discreet. I can divulge however, that we came almost unscathed through unlikely spatial geometries. The fluid I washed out after that odyssey was unusually persistent, almost embarrassing. As I recall, it resembled a dark ichor.

Most of our adventures left me arriving home with the reservoir dry, scratching out the last of the escapade. The last time I used the Mont Blanc, it was for very utilitarian purposes. I stayed strictly local. Discharging the dregs was more mundane than usual, with most of the remaining fluid being dumped in the soil of my estate. It left stains, despite persistent cleansing efforts. That area of the meadow has a particularly odd

appearance now.

Over the short few years I've had custody, the Mont Blanc has protected me in some surprisngly aggressive environments. We have come unscathed through bitter cold, nasty storms, and mundane gatherings. Without fail, it has dominated whatever encounter we have faced. Even among its so-called peers, it has held its own. There is no absence of gravitas.

To you, the Mont Blanc may appear to be a classic fountain pen. However, like the Tardis, it is a trans-dimensional vehicle of adventure and exploration. Like many such vessels, it has a mind of its own. Perhaps it has chosen a new custodian, new adventures. One can hope.

I value the brief time we were

together. Perhaps our paths will cross again. We had some fun times, the Mont Blanc and I.





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Dock Girl

I first noticed her when I was cutting the grass, she approached the dock that was across the lake with speed, like she was on some sort of a mission. I looked away for what might have been 10 minutes and she was gone. I never thought of it again until the next day when I was working in my garden and she appeared again, this time at a slower pace, always carrying a bag. Curious, I watched a little closer today because when you live in a small town like Calabogie, you pretty much know everyone unless it's a weekend or the middle of summer because that's when the tourists come out. But this was an ordinary Tuesday. She stayed for maybe 10 minutes again and left. I became curious, two days in a row she showed up, same place, same time, and never staying for long. I decided to check back the next day, this time with a tea and a set of binoculars. I felt a little creepy as I don't consider myself a stalker, I don't even stare at my neighbours like this but my curiosity got the best of me.

At exactly 1:30 she came walking, sat down on the dock and this time took her shoes and socks off. She dipped them in the water. Took a picture with her phone. And then just stared.



Pic by Eugene Melmin unsplash.com

I'm not too sure at what, maybe the lake? It's actually rare to see people sit and take in the lake. They normally just take their selfie and move on, but this girl seemed to appreciate her surroundings. I continued to watch her, since I'm retired I have the time and to be honest, it gave me something to do. I watched her during every season. She even sat on the dock in the winter, when the lake was frozen and it was -30 degrees celsius out. The wind off the lake would make it even colder but still, she came, she sat, she stared, and she left. It wasn't until summer that she disappeared

and I realized I missed the dock girl. It gave me something to do, like I was part of her day. I waited, everyday, but she didn't return. Feeling like she maybe moved or even died, I began to mourn the loss of watching her until one September day she arrived. This time she seemed to walk a little slower and she looked a little sadder. I couldn't take the mystery anymore, I wanted to meet her, speak to her, find out her story. Why did she come to this dock, every day at the same time and only stay for so long? I decided to sit at the dock and wait for her the next day. Like clockwork,

she arrived but she looked confused, almost questioning why someone was sitting on her dock. But it didn't belong to her. I never considered the fact that she might feel like it was hers. She walked past me and the dock and kept going. My heart broke a little because I spent everyday for 2 years creating a story about this mystery girl and hoping today I could unveil it all like a FBI agent finally cracking a case. I decided maybe she didn't want the company, maybe her story was stronger than I imagined. So I left a note asking her to meet me. I knew there was a chance someone else could find the note but I took it anyways. And the next day she sat on the dock, noticed the envelope left stuck underneath a heavy rock that was labelled DOCK GIRL. And that's when I saw something I worried about, fear in her eyes. That someone has been watching her this whole time, invading her privacy. She looked in every direction, staring in every window, looking for answers. I was too far away for her to see me. She took the letter, placed it in her bag, and left. At the same time she always did, but this time, she never came back.

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Persons of Interest

Geoff sent me a card every December. Same message every time: "Happy Christmas and rock on in ..." Every year I'd feel the same pang for not having sent him one. Who even sends Christmas cards anymore? Besides, Persons of Interest hadn't played a gig in decades. I'd left Toronto, got married and settled in the Ottawa Valley. But every Christmas, Geoff came back into my life: "Happy Christmas and rock on in ..."

Guilt got the better of me the year I took the buyout. A Google search of Geoff's return address produced a phone number. He sounded the same: a peppery blend of peace, love, and irony. I had to be back in Toronto for an in-law thing, so we set a date for lunch at the same strip mall diner where, after all-day rehearsals in Geoff's parents' wood-panelled basement, the band drank bad coffee and ate grilled cheese sandwiches. "Excellent," he said. "Like old times."

*

Geoff played pretty good bass. My older brother Stu was a skilled enough drummer to ditch Persons of Interest for a band with an actual record deal but turned them down because it meant touring and he didn't want to leave Fay, to whom he was inextricably attached when not behind his drum kit. Years younger than the others, I wasn't supposed to be a Person of Interest, but Owen, the previous rhythm guitarist, got caught making out with Allen's girlfriend. As Allen was irreplaceable on lead guitar, Owen had to go. They needed someone to bang out chords while Allen soloed. With enough church choir training to also handle harmonies, I was an upgrade. So, I was in. While Allen was the true talent, the real star, the one that girls wanted to meet after the show, was Marshall. Good-looking doesn't capture Marshall: dark hair framed puppy dog eyes and tapered lips that rested in a wicked smile. Charming almost captures it. He had been a junior hockey player on track for the pros before blowing out a knee. So, Marshall dropped his stick and picked up a microphone.

He wasn't a particularly strong singer, but you'd never know it: when he reached for a high note, Allen would lace in some lead work so precisely that you couldn't tell that Marshall was backing off. Most importantly, he looked the part, standing tall in his platform shoes.

And Marshall made us stage-worthy. Allen, left to his own devices, would have gone on in any old sweatshirt, baggy jeans, and bedroom slippers. Marshall took him shopping for a Nehru jacket. He got Stu to ditch his overalls for a black satin jumpsuit and Homberg. Geoff started wear-

Pic by Krišjānis Kazaks unsplash.com



ing ponchos, while I favoured long paisley scarves. Marshall got us a deal on DayGlo business cards that proclaimed:

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We played wherever. Rich girls' birthday parties. High school proms. Frat dos were the worst: they threw beer and their cheques tended to be made by Firestone. But we didn't care. Marshall had us convinced we were one great show away from making it big. He knew people. Marshall had a day job in marketing. Made sense: he could peddle shampoo to a skinhead. Didn't matter if he was pitching a new brand of toothpaste to a focus group or belting out a power ballad to a gymnasium of sweaty teenagers, people bought what Marshall was selling.

I know I did. It was hard not to. The sun seemed to shine brighter with Marshall around. I was still in school and trying on personalities, desperate to be cool. He had an overabundance of the stuff. Always in motion. He'd drop what he was doing to help a buddy move into a new place. He tutored teenage math phobics. Volunteered at a soup kitchen. He tried everything: skydiving; bungee jumping; winter camping. He went Buddhist briefly. He moved from this to that, never settling on one thing. Beyond, maybe, the band.

While the rest of us, except for Stu, who was glued to Fay, chatted up the girls we met at gigs – mostly Clairol blondes redolent of Fabergé Tigress who wore polyester knockoffs – Marshall dated Sydney of the Vidal Sassoon hair and Mary Quant mini

dresses, who did Eaton's Catalogue modelling and television commercials. But she and Marshall were always on-again, off-again.

I don't remember why Persons of Interest broke up. Gigs got harder to book as real life intruded. Fay got pregnant and she and Stu rented a farmhouse. Geoff started getting weekend jobs wiring houses that paid loads more than his twenty percent share of grad dance money. I was mired in university courses and trying to land a co-op spot. Gradually, we started skipping the weekly all-day rehearsals. Allen started working with another group, a showband with a girl singer that did cabaret-style stuff and played pop tunes. Eventually, it had been months since Persons of Interest had played a gig. Gradually, it was over.

*

I got to the diner early. Except for the cigarette machine being gone, it was unchanged. I recognized Geoff when he came through the door: same vehicle, way more miles. He sat down and, over cups of bad coffee and grilled cheese sandwiches, brought me up to date. He still had his Fender Precision and he got together with friends occasionally. "But we only jam; we don't play dates," he sighed.

Geoff had brought along an old photo album. Tucked inside was Persons of Interest set lists and a curling club poster for a dance we played. Faded Polaroids of us packing speakers into vans. An eight-by-ten of the five of us on stage looking very young, very thin, and very serious. By the end of lunch Geoff had me convinced a reunion was possible. "We could dust

off a few tunes," he said, "rent a hall and play for friends."

When I got home the next day, I hauled my Telecaster and Traynor down from the attic. The guitar needed restringing, but the amp hummed right back to life. A few weeks' practice and I could be back in semi-pro rock and roll form.

It was easy enough to convince my brother. Stu was still working, managing a company that installed discount granite countertops. "He'd be up for it if the other guys are," I told Geoff.

Finding Allen took some time. The address Geoff had was out of date, but the people there had a phone number. It belonged to an ex-wife who told me to try Most Excellent Axes, where Allen sold boomers the kind of high-end Gibsons and Fenders they couldn't afford when they were young. He occasionally gigged in a Led Zeppelin tribute band called Das Dirigible but was intrigued by the idea of a Persons of Interest reunion. "I still have the Nehru jacket somewhere."

That just left Marshall. Allen had told me he'd last seen him at a classic rock station where he was selling ad time but that was a dead end. Marshall had zero social media presence, odd for a guy in marketing, so I tried a long shot. Watching one of those all-day TV news shows where political panelists debate who's to blame today, I saw Sydney, older but still stunning, in an ad for bladder leakage pads. I called the company, got through to marketing, and asked who did their commercials. The ad firm put me on to Sydney's agent. He said he'd check to see if she'd care to follow up.

Sydney called the next day. "Were you the one in the ponchos?" She told me Marshall was in and out of her life, but she hadn't seen him in well over a decade.

Then I had a flash. Marshall's first name wasn't Marshall; it was Gordon. Gordon Marshall Black. I did another Google search and up popped a funeral home notice: *Gordon Marshall Black passed away on September 1, 2014.*

Eleven years ago. No cause of death given. No obituary. No photo. Just a couple of memories from former beer league hockey pals and a woman who went to a karaoke bar where Marshall apparently liked to sing. Tears in my eyes, I carried my guitar and amp back to the attic.

Then I called Geoff to tell him the news: the band was never getting back together.

My First Shot



As September rolled into October, my Dad and Grandfather started spending more time in the garage on weekends.

Monthly trips to the local sporting goods stores turned into weekly events.

I knew what they were doing and frankly, it worried me a bit. Deer season was coming up fast and they wanted to make sure their guns were clean, the gear was fresh, and they had plenty of ammo.

"You must be excited about your first Hunt Camp," my mother remarked one day.

Many of my friends had been talking about this day for the past several months. They couldn't wait to get going. They had been out to Al's Shooting Range and spent hours practising for that special day.

Truth be told, I wasn't excited for my first camp. Oh sure, I was looking forward to going out into the bush with my older brother Mike, our father and our grandfather, Pops. And I was pretty

sure a weekend with Uncle Scott would be full of stories I wouldn't forget – or be able to tell!!

But I didn't know how I was going to live up to my brother's legacy – a six-point buck his first year and a good-sized doe the following Fall.

Pops and Dad were legends around our county. And Uncle Scott, well, he was Uncle Scott -- a former pro hockey player who got two cups of coffee in the NHL and still had his Corvette to show for it.

But that wasn't all. I just couldn't think of a single good reason why we had to kill a beautiful living animal that had done nothing to deserve such a fate.

Not that I could say any of that out loud.

On a gorgeous Saturday morning two weeks into October, the three of us hopped in the truck and headed out to Joe's Hunt, Bait and Tackle to get my first camo jacket and bright orange hat, suitable for the mission ahead. Pops, Dad and Joe had a great time arguing over the relative merits of .243 versus .270 versus .30-06 cartridges.

I just about got run out of the store when I asked my Dad, quite seriously, "Why do we buy camo gear to blend into the forest and then put on a bright orange hat and vest?"

Well, ... most of the conversation in the store ground to a halt and I was sure I would be sent to wait in the truck while the "real" hunters discussed the relative merits of Winchester versus Springfield guns.

Some three hours later, (time I'll never get back), we headed home with enough lead to sink a battleship, a new camo jacket and hat for me, and, of course, a

new Thermos for, "the hot coffee every hunter needs to get through those cold mornings in the bush."

When we returned home, Mom said all the expected things about her, "favourite men heading off on manly pursuits" etc. etc. I'd already tuned her out.

Later that day she sent me out to the garage on some pretext -- followed me out and exclaimed, "O.K., What gives? I've never seen a young man less excited about his new gear and first Hunt Camp?"

I'd been stewing about it all day and finally blurted out, "I can't see any reason to shoot Bambi's Mom or Dad."

"There, I've said it – a little over the top – but I've said it."

She paused for a moment and then patiently explained that it wasn't just a fun trip to the bush. There was generational bonding; there was the age-old practice of fathers handing down skills to their sons and, she added, we need the meat the deer provided. Winter can be a little long, and provisions are tight when your father is a flat rate mechanic and the shop isn't busy in January and February. "Every little bit extra counts," she said.

"So, here's what you're going to do: Grab all that gear you've been spending your hard-earned money on; pack it in your rucksack and take it to the camp with you."

"When the time comes – and it will – you'll know exactly what to do. And I promise you it will turn out alright."

A couple of weeks went by and the colours on the trees were exploding all around us. I knew the time was coming.

Real early one Friday morning, while it was still dark, we loaded the gear into Grandpa's truck and headed two hours

north, arriving at our Hunt Camp in time to unload our stuff and head out on a scouting mission. It was quickly determined that for the first morning my job was to stick close to the cabin making sure the dishes were washed and the place was clean.

When the hunters got back after noon; they were tired and discouraged. Not only did they not have a deer to show for their efforts, but apparently, they hadn't even spotted one lurking in the distance. However, their spirits were buoyed a little when they spotted some tracks on their way back to the camp.

That afternoon I was promoted to chief lookout. I was posted about 250 yards from the cabin crouched on platform about eight feet in the air. My job was to wait for a deer to come by, and then press my walkie talkie call button several times when I spotted one.

The others would come when called and take their shots.

About an hour in I spotted him: a full eight points, head held high, ears cocked, nose flared, smelling the air. I knew I had a split second.

I was so excited, I hammered the switch on that radio about fifty times in ten seconds.

Then, I sighted in that buck and took the only shot I was going to get.

The gang arrived quickly, but it was too late. One whiff of my excitement and he was long gone.

As they crowded around, I told them how it rounded the corner, and I spotted the big eight-pointer 30 yards up on my right leaning into a grove of cedars.

Saturday morning, I was again posted to my usual spot on the platform, but my luck was not good. Two chipmunks and

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a small red fox but no deer or any other sort of wildlife.

Our crew, however, was luckier – two good sized does, one shot by my brother and the other was credited to Uncle Scott although there seemed to be a little bit of confusion as to who actually fired the kill shot as Pops felt he had a legitimate claim too.

That evening, as we sat around the campfire, Uncle Scott regaled us with stories about how his one and only NHL point occurred. He was credited with an

assist on a goal by Wayne Gretzky which he described as a perfect set up for an easy tap in by The Great One.

Truth be told, (and I've seen the video), a slapshot from the point hit his butt, dropped to the ice and Gretz banged it home!

Pops and Dad stayed at the camp for a few days to let the deer hang while my brother and I headed home with Uncle Scott to be back for school Monday morning.

I enjoyed telling my friends stories

about my first camp and I puffed up my tale of spotting the buck. Soon, it got colder and after Christmas we settled into the long, snowy, winter routine – my brother and I dropped off at school each morning by my Dad, who went to the shop hoping to get more than an oil change and a tire repair during his shift.

And then one Thursday afternoon when I got home from school my Mother announced that I had received a letter in the mail.

I eagerly grabbed it, opened it up, read

it quickly and handed it to Mom.

She read aloud: "Dear Robert: Thank you for your recent submission. We have decided to feature your photo of a beautiful white-tailed buck on the front cover of the February issue of Hunter's Monthly. Enclosed please find a cheque in the amount of \$2,500 for the rights to publish this image."

I handed Mom the cheque and declared, "You were right. Everything did work out and I guess every little bit extra does count."

don't

"hey, dad, is it ok to go to grandpa's house."

biily's dad lay prone on the white sand beach. his toes pointed towards the sky, his eyes closed. the sound of the waves bathing his ears. his mom was off to the right rifling through a cooler looking for lunch. billy's younger siblings played down at the waters edge with pails and sand in an endless pursuit for the perfect sand castle. billy, was transfixed on grandfathers house and his wild imagination took hold as he stared at the weather beaten monolith. a breeze blew blonde hair across two pale blue eyes as billy blinked against the shine off the white sand beach.

they had come to the childhood home of his father. they sat on the beach in the "old village" of Poland. the house stood directly across the road, all three stories looming. billy stood up in the blazing sun and said to no one in particular, "i'm going across to explore grandpa's

house. " one of his parents perked up and said it was "ok". billy put on his beach shoes and headed out. the house stood across the road. looming.

everntually billy found himself in the back of said property. a gapping coal shute in the foundation greeted billy. he approached the gapping hole with tremulous trepidation. a cold dank draft similar to hell waft out against's the warm sun shining off billy's blonde haired skull. as his imagination kicked in his eyes further adjusted as he approached the gapping maw anew.

from the back the building loomed over billy. it was in the basement that billy saw the massive firebox and the nuts. in the back billy could make out the stairs leading up into the house. other than that it was quiet.

a noise behind billy...a squirrel. the squrel, he / she ,drops a nut and walks away...stunned by billy...a biped.

billy went over the wall

into the basement. the squirrel looked back. billy stood in the dank basement as his eyes adjusted further from the sky.

it was when billy was in the basement that shit happened. it was an odd knocking from above. still. waiting.

"Clunk"

"Clunk" from above

billy mounts the stairs into the summer kitchen. this house was old, another noise from above. firm, the looming grace of its apparent age, was the building. it held billies imagination. still...the bones held onto the earth. looming. the whole thing felt as if it would collapse. billy stood still.

"Clunk" from on high.

billy then explores the house to the attic. it was on the 2nd floor that billy saw the door to the attic. it was massive and the house loomed. it was in the attic where billy lost his mind. the sky was exposed through the collapsed roof and the "Clunk". it sounded closer than when billy was

in the basement. again, it was from above.

"Clunk"

"Clunk"

"Clunk"

it followed billy to the old front door open, where he pushed open the screen door and ran into the tall grass as his blonde hair blended in and he was gone.

behind him the screen door slams shut, it's springs still somehow working, and simultaneously a red maple leaf falls off a sign that says: "don't feed the squirrels"



Pic by Clovis Wood
unsplash.com

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The Little Dark-haired Boy

In a dimly lit room, the March winds blew relentlessly against the thin windowpane, a tired mother had just delivered a little dark-haired boy. Wrapping him in a well-worn blanket guarding him from the winters chill. The year was 1947 in the small town of Renfrew, times were difficult for most of the families, and she wondered what waited for this tiny new life.

The little boy grew healthy and was helpful to his parents and neighbours, sadly his father died when he was just six, leaving his mother alone with five children to care for on her own. It would be only a few short years later that the little dark-haired boy became very industrious in finding ways to earn some money.

The sun shone brightly through the tiny window as he dressed for the day, settling for puffed wheat and powdered milk he headed out the door. Summer holidays were in full swing, and he knew other kids were out looking for extra jobs too. The early morning was the best time for gardening, and he knew his client would be expecting him. His little legs carried him down to the end of his street to the little garden, he stared at the display of green foliage before him, dropping to his knees he diligently pulled the weeds careful to leave the vegetables undisturbed. The hot sun targeted the back of his neck, and his clothes were soaked with sweat and earth, streaking his face with dirt as he wiped his brow. He felt proud of the work he had completed as he trudged to the old



screen door. Stepping outside she headed to her garden, her smile and approving nod told him she was pleased with his work. He could hear the coins jingling in the pocket of her flowered apron, from its depth she drew two shiny coins and gave them to him, thanking him for a job well done. Looking down into his sweaty, dirty hands she had placed fifty cents. He felt a sense of pride as he hurried home, listening to the jingle of coins in his pocket now.

Under the dim glow of the streetlamp, he and his older sister could be found counting worms they had picked together. Pulling the wiggle, slimy, brown night crawlers from the depths of the damp earth and depositing them in the old rusty pail, topping them with

a handful of damp grass. Together they would bring their bounty to a local vendor who paid one cent for every two worms, smiling they knew they had picked enough worms to make a good profit, for two little kids.

Orange, yellow and red leaves of fall blanketed the streets making a canvas of brilliant colors and bringing a chill to the air. A steaming bowl of oatmeal and brown sugar filled his belly as he planned his Saturday. Donning his fall outerwear, he headed up the street, kicking the crispy ground cover delighting in how they flew around him. His neighbour had hired him to pile wood, and to fill her empty wood box beside the old Finley woodstove. He was daunted at the pile of wood facing him, so with a rhythmic cadence he focused on the task at hand. He was small for his nine years, but he was strong, and he made a sturdy pile of wood out of the tangled pieces, equal to any man. Making his way to the old familiar screen door and knocking he was welcomed inside, she pointed to the wood box, and he heavily dropped the load of wood into it. She was smiling at him as she reached for the familiar tin can with the red rose on it. Tipping it into one had he heard the coins tumble out, she selected two coins and handed them to him. The palm of his small hand felt cold as she pressed the warm coins within, his smile warmed her heart as he thanked her and went on his way. As he put his damp mittens back on, he could hear them jingle as he let them fall to the bottom of his mittens. He reveled in the noise they made as he waved his arms while marching down the street.

The lonesome whistle in the distance meant one thing, a money-making morning for him and his sister. Living near the tracks provided a lucrative investment. Dressed warmly for the blistery day, they gathered two burlap potato bags from the musty shed and slipped down the snow-covered embankment to the tracks. They safely waited on the bank as the steamer slowed down, mesmerized they watched as black chunks of coal fell to the ground in the attempts to shovel big loads into the furnace. They patiently waited for the last rail car to pass they threw open their sacks and began collecting the discarded fuel source. Satisfied with their haul, they slipped and slid trying to get back up the bank and knew just who would buy their wares. After offloading the coal, they walked home with coins

jingling in each of their coal covered mittens.

Families used food rationing coupons, and his family were not strangers to the program. The food coupons restricted the amount of certain goods available to the public, but with larger families there never seemed to be enough coupons for the staples of a pantry. He understood the importance to his mother, and he had a plan. Knocking on the first door he stood tall and waited for the neighbour to answer, mulling over what he would say. As usual she ushered him inside, and with a smile inquired to what pleasure she owed his visit. Wringing his small hands he shyly asked if she had any coupons she was not going to use. Looking down at the little dark-haired boy who wed her garden, piled her wood and ran errands for her warmly smiled and turned away. She went to the sideboard, opened the top drawer and withdrew a tattered yellow envelope, slowly her crippling fingers chose a few basic ration coupons form a meager stack. Turning to him she gently placed them in his hand, smiling he thanked her and found his way to the door, waving goodbye he let the old screen door slam behind him. He continued walking down the familiar street until he had accumulated his own meager stack of coupons from his kind neighbours. Finding his mother in the kitchen he pulled the crumpled pile of food coupons from his pocket and offered them to her; she gathered him into her arms and held her little dark-haired boy close to her heart.

He always felt proud of what he earned or gathered on the small block where he was born, he was well known and well liked by his neighbours. If there were small chores to be done, you often heard them recommend the "little dark-haired boy" down the street. He was praised for his diligence in doing a good job, no matter the task. He was honest and hard working for his age, and not afraid to try most anything. A neighbour they could count on, and as he grew up, he remained kind and helpful, especially to his senior neighbours.

You might wonder why this young boy worked so hard, taking time away from a game of tag, or baseball, what did he do with all his hard-earned coins. What did he hope to purchase from weeding gardens, piling wood, picking coal and worms, doing errands and collecting ration coupons from his neighbours.

The little dark-haired boy ushered in on the Ides of March would hurry home and in anticipation of her smile, handed his shiny, jingly coins to his mother. The purchase he worked for was simply the pride and appreciation he felt when his mother smiled and gathered him in close to her heart. She never demeaned his handful of shiny coins, or when his small hand reached into his pocket for a crumpled stack of coupons to help his family. She no longer wondered what awaited her son, she knew with his childhood empathy for others he would grow up to be a good man. If you ask his neighbours in that small town of Renfrew, you will find she was right.



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The Silence of the Forgotten Town

The autumn moon was full, casting an amber glow over the small abandoned Eastern Ontario town of Balaclava. The streets were empty, except for the occasional rustling of crisp fallen leaves and the creaking of abandoned buildings and weather-beaten wooden signs blowing in the autumn breeze. The October air was thick with the decaying scent of neglect. Wet leaves in shades of burnt red, orange, and brown covered the ground.

Drawn to this old town since stumbling upon it on a road trip a few years back, something was fascinating about the crumbling buildings and the feeling of being alone in the middle of nowhere—a place where one could scream at the top of their lungs, and absolutely no one would hear their calls.

Walking down the desolate dirt road, my eyes landed on an old run-down church. The wooden sign out front was weathered, but it still read First Baptist Church in faded letters. I wondered what kind of secrets this spooky old place held.

Edging closer, there was something sinister about the worn and outdated church that made me feel uneasy. My eyes quickly scanned the horizon in all directions. Approaching the church with caution, my heart thumped in my chest. As I neared, the creaky front door swung open, and a faint glimmer of light caught my attention. A half-burned black candle sat on the altar in the darkness of the empty church. A shiver ran down my spine as I edged my way closer to the light.

Suddenly, a faint rustling sound came from the corner of the room, soft and deliberate, like someone was trying not to be heard. The thought of being watched in this abandoned town left me frozen in my tracks. Who could be in here with me? There were no other cars or traces of civilization around. Assuming I was all alone on my adventure was not the case.

Quickly turning to leave the old church, something else caught my eye. An old shovel with a broken handle lay on the floor, next to a small pile of black dirt. It looked like someone had been digging a hole through the broken floorboards. But why? And what were they digging for?

Taking a deep breath, I tried to calm my racing heart pumping so loud, that I could hardly hear myself think. A small part of me thought I was just being paranoid. But as I turned back toward the altar, I saw something that made my blood curdle. On the wall above the burning candle, a message was scrawled in red letters: "Get out of here while you still can," it read.

Goosebumps covered my body as I realized that this place wasn't abandoned after all. Someone—or something—was watching me at that very moment...

Trying to make a run for it, my feet felt heavy and cemented to the floor. It was as if I was rooted to the spot. No matter how desperately I tried to run, I remained frozen in terror on the church floor. And then, I heard the disturbing sound of a faint humming noise, like the distant engine of a motorbike getting closer every second. I stood there petrified, literally shaking in my cut-off jean



shorts and rubber boots.

Suddenly, a candy-red ATV burst through the church doors, its headlights blinding me. Shielding my eyes from the glare, I stumbled backward, tripping over the shovel and landing hard on the wooden floor. Glancing up, I saw a dark figure clad in a black leather suit and large silver bike goggles, revving the engine and staring back at me with an unblinking gaze.

For what felt like an eternity, we just stared at each other in silence. Then, without warning, the figure flipped off the engine, coasting into the church toward the altar. As they dismounted, I saw that they were holding a half-full jug of whiskey.

The figure approached me slowly, their eyes never leaving mine. As they got closer, I could see their deathly pale face and skin stretched thinly over their skull. They were gaunt and skeletal, with sunken black eyes that bore directly into my soul. I shuddered at the sight of the bony image in front of me.

Reaching out with one bony hand, I felt dizzy with fear, as a wave of terror washed over me, and I braced myself for impact. But instead of attacking me, they poured some of the whiskey onto the half-burned candle flame and then took a swig of what was left in the bottle and let out a large belch.

The candle flame flickered and died, plunging us into complete darkness. And then, the dark figure turned and disappeared into the Balaclava night skies as suddenly as they had appeared.

I lay there on the wooden church floor for what felt like hours, my heart pounding in my chest and my mind racing with so many unanswered questions. Who was this person? What

were they doing here? And what did they want with me? Were they gone? Was it safe to get up now?

Finally hauling myself to my feet, I stumbled out of the old church feeling like I was still being watched. And looking back toward the church, something affirmed my feelings. The dark figure was standing on the church roof, looking down at me with an unblinking gaze. As they raised their hand in a slow salute and tossed the empty whiskey bottle off the roof, I knew I would never be able to leave this place behind. Balaclava will forever haunt my visions from this day forward.

Stumbling away from the church and into the darkness of the abandoned town, I heard one final whisper echoing through my mind: "You'll never escape."

I didn't know what lay ahead for me in that forsaken town, but one thing was certain: I would never be able to shake off the feeling that I was still be-

ing watched by something malevolent—something that lurked just beyond the edge of perception.

And as the creepy figure disappeared into the night, the only sound left behind was the distant hum of an ATV engine fading into nothingness...

Emerging from the darkness and safely back in my vehicle, my heart was still racing from the terror I had faced, I couldn't help but think of the countless others who had ventured into this forgotten abandoned Eastern Ontario town, seeking thrills and chills. But I knew that I was one of the lucky ones, for I had escaped with my life.

Glancing back at the crumbling buildings, the eerie silence, and the sense of being watched, I knew that I would probably never be brave enough again to venture into such a place alone. The horrors that lurk in this abandoned town are not just fictional tales told around campfires, but real and terrifying threats that can strike at any moment.

To anyone who dares to read this story, I issue a dire warning: do not venture into Balaclava alone, unless you wish to unleash a terror that will consume your very soul. The allure of exploration is a deceitful whisper, promising thrills and adventure, but delivers only madness and despair.

Heed my warning before the darkness that lurks within catches up to you. Do not tempt the malevolent forces that dwell in this abandoned town, for they will not hesitate to claim your very essence. And even if you escape, you will be trapped, forever bound to the desolate streets that play over and over again in your mind, tormented by the horrors that haunt your every waking moment.

And, don't cry out for help when you are consumed by the shadows. Because, trust me, no one will hear your screams. You will be alone. Forever lost in the abyss of terror, with no escape from the black image in the back of your mind that has claimed your thoughts.

Still, considering a joy ride to an abandoned Ontario town? Don't do it! Turn back now, while you still can. Leave the notion behind and do not dare disturb the horrors that lurk within. For those who choose to ignore my warning, I can only whisper this: "Do it, and you will never find peace again."



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A Time Beyond a Time, Beyond a Time Beyond

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I prefer working with quirky people! Dare, and there I said it. It's taken me a long time of working many jobs to come to this realization. My happiness lies in the outliers whose eccentricities allow me to unveil my own, let down my hair, breathe comfortably, and to realize that we're all trying to live our truths. There's no need to hide it behind fancy corporate clothing or professional lingo and I'm not going to get too preachy about it because being unconventional doesn't necessarily mean you will get along with all the other 'quirkees' — there's just too much unexplained chemistry involved in everything and everyone!

For a while, I was working for charities and non-profit organizations which did allow for a good mix of creative work, but over time I could no longer work from home. My own socialization needs began to outweigh the pros of work-from-home tax benefits and wearing sweatpants. I could feel myself turning into a Wall-E blob type person; I wasn't motivated to go outside and my lethargy was at a legendary all time high. Luckily, I saw an advert for a cleaning and cooking position in a group setting and immediately applied. With my educational background in science and many lab experiences having to meticulously follow SOPs and sanitizing protocols, I assumed I would land the job, seamlessly seg-way into the duties, and have some fun burning calories while getting back into social shape.

Before I knew it, I was knee deep in other people's uncleanness: relocating giant house spiders (karma points) wiping up mouse turds galore, taking notes on how dust layers itself in different textures (depending on time and space) opening up moldy jars with mystery compostable contents (and being told to wash and reuse them), finding flotsam and jetsam EVERYWHERE, unkinking the fridge the washing machine the freezers, and sorting through 10+ accumulative feet of freezer burned emergency food funds.

I was happy to be moving and shaking with those that lived and worked on-site. Somehow, I felt my presence was a beacon for hope for others that complained but didn't want to start the cleaning projects themselves, afraid to unveil the many mysteries of neglect lurking behind crevices and cabinetry. The second part of my job was my happy place: cooking and catering on-site events. I was cooking for 4-6 daily regulars and loved creating the meal menus! I felt I was living my dream of becoming a personal chef and getting a taste of my own culinary style with the freedom to experiment and play with ingredients.



I no longer work at said location, so let me say that I admire people who can pretend their job is just a job and carry on with no emotional ties. Sadly, that isn't me. I like to care and need mutual manager-employee expectations and goals. But that wasn't the case and before I knew it, I was downtrodden with a lack of gusto to do more, asking myself, "what's the point if the progress isn't going to be maintained?" The pay was good and the variety of tasks even better, so I stayed put and found a way to diversify my job. One of these tasks ended up being administrative work for their on-site business.

Here's when things got a lot more interesting, but I won't go into too many details about what happened to preserve the anonymity of the place. I will say, some things were done so differently that it rippled through my boundaries and made me question how I perceived the natural order of things. One such instance and the pinnacle of this story was around a woman that came to visit from out west who was dealing with a life threatening diagnosis. Most of us know our society is made-up of the young, fit, dying, elderly, fragile, healthy, and everything in between, but out of sight out of mind is an apt expression for how our culture deals with the sick, elderly, and out-cast situations. You start realizing there's more to society than what's right in front of you when you become ill, go volunteer at a hospital, as a home care worker, have an elderly grandma needing care, try to create inclusive community programming, or the likes of the aforementioned. But illness still has a time and place for sanitization reasons, and we've all grown overly cautious from the pandemic; the sick, wounded, and infectious persons need to be contained in hospital rooms and at home taken

care of by the professionals. Sources of contagion, human suffering, and pain, out in the public, no way!

So, I'm sure you can imagine my horror when going to work and seeing what I imagined to be a 'needing hospitalization situation' happening in a run-of-the mill country home! Why yes, this would be normal back in the day, but I had a hard time accepting, interacting, and coming to terms with the wound care happening on site without necessities such as sterile garbage disposal, formal charting, protocols, etc...

However, this was that person's will, they didn't want to be hospitalized in a cold fluorescent building and they didn't want to be treated like a patient; they wanted to be away from the city and surrounded by nature to try one last hand at relaxing, normalcy, meditation, and coming to a place to find peace with one's life and oneself.

In time, I said to myself, "you know what, this happened all the time in the past and currently happens in hospitals. Patients can be neglected, and they can die of hos-

pital bred pathogens and infections." Imagine the not-so-distant past when homecare was more encompassing of nurse duties. There was a time when the sick would be taken care of at home and those in the near vicinity were responsible for the care. Our knowledge was limited. You were healthy until you were unhealthy. Oozing bodily fluids, smelly odours, infections, blood, and gore, were all normal homebound possibilities and occurrences.

Most of us would put our nurse hat on for our closest friends and family without a second thought, but would we extend that same level of care to someone we don't know? By simply asking or paying us to? It is admirable to extend that same care to someone you barely know. It is admirable to have the 'just do it' attitude, where overthinking isn't an option. I have come to extend this practice into my own working life. In fact, I now know where to go when I get bit by a zombie and need the antidote from someone willing to share and trusting enough to know that I wouldn't bite everyone in the process of being saved.

I was in this situation and would never have been if it weren't for the fact that my boss was older, grew up in a different generation, and with a different perspective on health and the process of dying. Intergenerational wisdom is important. Different generations will do things differently and the way they do something can change our perceptions because that's not what we have known nor have been taught to understand. We are our own realities and when we question this, it becomes ever more apparent that there was and always will be a time beyond a time, beyond a time beyond!

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Bear with Me

There was a time in my life that I dreamed about bears and although I was born and raised on the North Shore of Lake Superior near the birthplace of the world-famous Winnie the Pooh, the bears in my dreams were not soft and cuddly. No, they all seemed to have evil intent.

When I was a kid, and living in my small northern community, one of the entertainment highlights was loading the kids into the family car just before sunset and parking at the town landfill to watch the nightly procession of “dump bears.” Black bears were and still are an integral part of the town’s fabric. Back in those days, American hunters mostly sought the bears and although there were rules against hunting near the dump, an arrow injured dump bear wreaked havoc in the town one year, tearing through screen doors and charging people and dogs.

My own unfounded trepidation of bears was resolved years ago when I was introduced to archery hunting and joined a small community of avid archers and hunters. Although deer was our primary objective, bear hunting was often discussed and an early film of Fred Bear’s extraordinary accomplishment of harvesting a giant Brown Bear in Alaska with a simple recurve bow and wooden arrows was very inspiring. And so, after a few unsuccessful baiting and waiting hunts, I signed up for a hound hunting bear excursion.

On that fine mid-September morning, I jumped into a truck with our guide and five radio collared, crated hounds, and headed for the backroads and cornfields around Almonte and Clayton. It wasn’t long before the CB crackled to life announcing the dogs from another truck had a bear going and they were headed in our direction. I stood nervously on the road, bow in hand in a spot where my guide told me the bear might cross. The baying of the hounds rose and fell through the hills and after a few minutes they started to come from a single location. “Follow me,” my driver said. And away we went, running through the underbrush and trees. We came upon controlled chaos, the bellowing hounds tied up to trees outside a 20-foot perimeter, four men eying the 240-pound boar up in a pine tree taking it all in. I had been practicing this very shot by hauling a bundle of tarps on a rope up into the rafters of an open building and pin cushioning it with arrows and then lowering it back down. I walked around the tree and found an opening through the branches and launched the broadhead tipped arrow. My aim was true, and the bear relinquished its grip and dropped to the ground – stone dead in seconds.

Pic by Eugene Melmin unsplash.com



My bad bear dreams ended that day and so did most of my desire to hunt bears.

That hunt did not end my relationship with bears - anyone who spends a lot of time in the bush is going to encounter them.

I have been followed by curious bears, met bears face to face, and watched them walk under the tree I was sitting in. Several years ago, I had an amazing encounter with an exceptionally large bear.

That crisp, clear dawn during deer season found me sitting on a hardwood hill above a thick cedar swamp. One of my hunting buddies had shot a deer nearby the day before and with a slight thermal breeze from the swamp in my face, I watched and waited. It was not long before I started hearing shuffling and footsteps in the deep crunchy leaves and an enormous black bear appeared. It was rooting in the frosty leaves twenty yards below me in what I later found was the spot where my friend had cleaned up his deer. I had no intention to shoot the bear, but my hands did tighten on my rifle a bit. The huge bear must have sensed danger nearby because after a couple of minutes, it stopped and seemed to look right at me. Slowly it turned, and somehow, without making a sound, walked into the swamp.

When it was gone, I found that the bear had made his silent departure by avoiding the crunchy leaves and stepping only on crisscrossed, moss-covered logs lying on the ground. Totally amazing! I now know why the Indigenous people nicknamed the black bear “smoke” for its stealth.

I had another very personal run in with a particularly clever bear one afternoon.

On that pleasant late October afternoon, I was on a platform tree stand fifteen feet up in a clump of giant basswoods, my trusty bow and arrow across my lap. It had been a bountiful wild apple autumn and both deer and bears had left plenty of scat along their trails in the brush around the field I was watching. The occasional snap and rustle in the gulley behind me had heightened my senses and eventually, a pair of fork-horned bucks started meandering out into the grassy field. One of them was slowly grazing its way toward my position and as I watched and waited, I could still hear movement out of sight behind me. I slowly rose and got into shooting position and when the deer dropped his head into the grass, I drew and released a well-placed shot behind the deer’s front shoulder. It jumped and ran in a small circle and fell into the long grass. I sat back and waited in the lengthening shadows to ensure its

demise. After a short time with no movement from my trophy, I climbed down, walked over and began to field dress the deer. By the time I was finished, it had become much darker. I dragged the deer to the base of my treestand and set out down the trail to get my truck and drive it around into the field. Fifteen minutes later, with headlights blazing, I came to the bottom of the tree on the edge of the gully to pick up my deer. And as they say in the Valley, “There it was – gone!”

With only a flashlight in my hand, I approached the spot where I left the deer only to see a patch of blood-stained, flattened grass and more bent grass making a path along the edge of the field. Logic told me a gutted deer does not crawl away and so, with quick glance back at the safety of my truck, I crept along the trail of bloodied grass to the edge of the gully. The beam of my flashlight pierced the blackness of the bush and a mere twenty feet below me; a pair of glowing green eyes reflected back at me. The bear’s head was enormous, and its massive body covered all but a bit of white belly hair of the deer. The bear did not move nor make a sound as I slowly backed up toward the truck. “The deer now belongs to you,” I whispered from the safety of my vehicle.

I sat there in the dark for a long time considering what had happened. I started with the “what ifs?” Unless the bear had been watching me shoot the deer, which was doubtful, it was drawn by the coppery smell of blood. Blood that had been smeared on my arms and pants while field dressing the deer. And I must have walked right past the bear on the dark trail to get to my vehicle. I also thought about what the beast could have done to keep its prize when I appeared above it on the edge of the gully. They have been known to defend their food cache from any intruder. Perhaps the bright light shining in its eyes gave me enough time to get the heck out of there. The encounter could have easily gone really bad.

Black bears are not evil. That is a human trait. Their primary purpose is survival and procreation. They do have a “flight or fight” response, but it’s based on instinct rather than fear. Fear is a human condition. I still think about bears when I am in the bush and when I see one, it is usually going the other way. My former fear of “evil” bears has, through my experiences, been replaced with an understanding and respect for these marvelous creatures.

Dad Days



The first pod whizzed past my head. A close miss. A second one lands short. It's time to run. I turn on my heels, but am not quick enough. It hits me in the shoulder. White milky goo drips down my arm. I don't have time to brush it off. My team needs me. I must make it across the boundaries and into the forest to restock. My legs move as fast as I can. I try not to trip on the branches, and then I slide down the rock. Finally I can reload. I stuff my shirt and scamper back to the top, ready for the next round. I spy my cousin in the left corner of the yard. I make a bee line straight across and empty the ammo within his reach.

Pic by Caroline Hernandez unsplash.com

He begins to pelt them as hard as he can. He is two years older and has a strong arm. His older sister appears from behind the garage with her arms full. Dumping them near the younger kids, she runs in for the attack. No fear. She was always the fearless one.

I stuff my pockets and run off to the side, circling back. I let one fly, hitting my grandpa on his bald head. Peals of laughter fill the air. Two more hit him and then the dads jump up and start running at us. We don't stand a chance. Close range fire breaks out. Screaming fills the air.

Dinner is called. We complain that we aren't hungry, but we are forced to surrender and are led into the house. That is when the poop hits the fan. We were so busy having fun that we hadn't taken a look at ourselves - children, fathers and grandfather. Milkweed juice and fluff stuck everywhere. If you know anything about milkweed, you know that the later in the season it is, the fuller those pods are and the stickier they become, with the milk oozing out if they explode. This was Thanksgiving weekend and those pods were ripe.

Mothers were not happy. Dinner would be delayed while we cleaned up.

Fathers were chastised. Grandpa got a stern tsk, tsk. Oh but it was worth it. It was one of many days when the tired moms decided to leave the dads in charge.

Those were some of the best days ever - dad days. These were the days when rules went out the window. We were all free to be kids, even the dads and my grandpa. Cookies for breakfast? Why not - they have wheat and eggs in them. Ice cream for lunch? Sure - its dairy. Not washing up before we eat - a little dirt never killed anyone. Injured or bleeding? Long way from the heart, so no worries. Most 'dad' days back north or at the cottages in Palmer Rapids involved outdoor adventures. They would take us fishing back of Flinton to Deer Rock Lake. The pike were huge. We would fish off the rocks on some lake back near MacArthur Mills, hoping to hook some rainbow trout. We would walk the hunting camp road, watching for bear, eating berries and racing to see who would get there first. On dad days we learned to appreciate nature. We learned that it was ok to be covered in dirt and that sometimes you needed to just shake things off - injuries, fights with your cousins, a dropped sandwich

floating to the bottom of the lake or the big one getting away. We learned to be free spirits with our dads. Five kids (the two youngest were too young to join in), 4 dads and a grandpa, just enjoying being together. You had to do something really bad to get into trouble and even then, my grandpa would just smile and wink, letting you know that this was one more thing to let go off.

The moms might have needed that break, but they also missed out on something really special. They missed out on just 'being' with their kids. They missed out on the laughter of pine cone fights, milkweed pod fights, bear poop frisbee and yodelling on the lake to hear the echo. They missed out on what a day was like without any rules. No one in charge. Just letting a day unfold. The moms worried too much. As a mom, I guess that is our job. Someone needs to worry about the things that never occur to dads, but in that worry we miss out on being present. Those days were a gift. We knew it then and I still know it now. In a world that often thinks of dads as being disposable, I am so grateful for mine, and for the other men who taught me to just be silly and free. Every kid deserves that.

The Kindness of Strangers

There can't be a better way to enjoy a holiday weekend than a canoe trip into one of our national parks. We loaded up our rental canoes, two people in each vessel, and headed into Algonquin Provincial Park. Canoe routes in the park are legendary.

With all of our provisions aboard, we launched out onto the Barron Canyon River. The weather was perfect, slightly overcast, mild with almost no wind. The water was flowing slowly and showed signs of being lower than normal. After a kilometer of easy upstream paddling, we came to our first portage. This particular portage was about half a kilometer long and wound its way through a forest of rocks and roots. It took a couple of trips to get our gear up to the next launch point but it was all part of the experience.

For the next few hours, we paddled through amazing scenery. Around every corner was a sight that would have inspired our most famous painters. Emulating the early explorers, we paddled our way through a true Canadian wilderness. Bald eagles soared above us harried by ravens anxious to protect their territory. Loons, herons and kingfishers hunted the calmer stretches of the river. The scenery was ever changing as we paddled our way between steep cliffs and flat flooded marshes.

Midway through the morning we stopped at a wilderness campsite where we were greeted by a father and son on a weekend camping trip. They invited us to into their camp and brewed up coffee while we relaxed and discussed the next leg of our journey.

Back on the river we continued paddling until noon. The canoes were pulled ashore and we climbed the trail which led to a waterfall overlook. Alongside the cascading water, and among some enormous tree roots, we had our picnic lunch. We even managed a toast with glasses of river cooled bubbly wine. It was a celebration of the paddling achievements of four friends all in

their seventies.

The return trip was relatively easy. A slowly flowing river helped us all the way. The lead paddler in each canoe was tasked to look out for hidden rocks and semi submerged logs. At one time in the park's history, loggers transported much of their timber via the river. This resulted in many "dead heads" lying hidden just below the surface of the water. Their dark shapes made me think of crocodiles lurking menacingly just below the surface. Although many of these abandoned logs had been cleared, one would periodically surface and pose a hazard to canoeists. Occasionally we felt a dull thump on the canoe's hull, a gentle reminder of their presence. We made great time on the return trip and were able to take lots of photos as we drifted with the current.

As my wife and I approached the last portage we were a few hundred yards ahead of our friends. This section of the river seemed to have more than its fair share of submerged rocks so we paddled cautiously. I heard our friend Sue call out that their canoe had run aground but and that they would catch up with us at the portage. We had just rounded a bend when I heard a scream. Turning the canoe back upstream, we paddled furiously. The sight that greeted us was both comical and serious. Sue and John were both in the river, their canoe was full of water and all of their belongings were drifting down toward us. We paddled over to where they had grounded on a large flat submerged rock. Sue was quite animated but John seemed quiet and subdued. It transpired that when they had run aground John decided the best course of action was to step out of the canoe and onto the rock. As he stepped out, the canoe tipped and Sue and all their belongings spilled into the water. With some difficulty we managed to empty the canoe of water, collect the floating gear and get them back into their seats. We then made a cautious way toward the portage.



When we landed, I carried our gear high up on the shore in preparation for the long portage. While Sue leapt ashore, focussed on getting out of her wet clothes, John remained seated in the canoe. He looked to be in pain. It turned out he had damaged his leg and couldn't put any weight on it. I put my arm around his shoulder and basically carried him onto the shore. It was obvious that he would not be walking anywhere any time soon.

Our plan was that the women would carry as much gear as possible while I would portage the canoes. We would then have to figure out a way of getting John the half kilometer down the rock-strewn trail. What had started off as a relaxing outdoor experience was quickly turning into a nightmare.

When they had changed into dry clothes, and John was made comfortable, I headed off along the portage with the first canoe. As I walked, I studied every dip and turn trying to imagine how I would get my friend through this forested section. John weighed as much as me and with the unpredictable footing, I did not predict a good outcome. As I set down the first canoe and headed back for the second, I was muttering a silent prayer for divine intervention. It overwhelmed me to think of having to carry John along the rock-strewn trail. As I worked my way back up through the portage, I was surprised to hear voices. We hadn't met anyone else on

the river apart from the campers in the morning. Quite suddenly I had to step off the trail as two very fit young men came barrelling along the path carrying John in a handhold sling. Four young trainee firemen on a weekend trip to the park just happened upon us at the critical time. The other two young men had gathered up the second canoe, with most of our equipment, and were making their way down the path followed by the two wives.

These four guys carried all of our gear down to the launch spot and even took care to load John into the canoe. They insisted on meeting up with us back at the cars, wanting to ensure that we got our gear safely loaded for the trip back to town. After heading back up the trail to get their own gear they paddled after us and met up at the car park. I asked why they were there at that particular time and was told that they had cut their trip short as they had run out of supplies.

I had never been so thankful for the kindness of strangers than I was that day. They accepted our thanks but protested that they just did what anyone would have done in the same circumstances. Our trip could have been a catastrophe but was saved by four selfless individuals. It gives me a warm feeling to know that these four guys are representative of the people who, as firefighters, put their lives on the line for the protection of others.

Qimmiq's Adventure



Once upon a time a husky named Qimmiq was hiking up a mountain in British Columbia with her owners. Suddenly a squirrel ran past her. She broke through the leash and leaped through the stream over logs until she got lost. Just then a big grizzly bear yelled "who are you? My name is Teddy". "My name is Qimmiq" said Qimmiq. Teddy asked Qimmiq if she needed any help. Qimmiq told him she was lost and needed help finding her RV. "Where is your RV?" asked Teddy. Qimmiq told Teddy that it was at the

campground near the mountain. Then they set off to find her owners and the RV. On their way there was a big river with lots of rapids. They didn't know how to get across the river. It had too many rapids to swim across. Just then Qimmiq saw a log across the river and said "we can cross the log to get across". So they crossed the log and kept going on their adventure. A few hours later they met a squirrel named Pinecone. Pinecone told them he knew the way to the campground because sometimes the people there

fed him Mac n' Cheese. They followed Pinecone until Pinecone got them all lost. Teddy climbed up a big tree so he could see far away. He saw the campground and it was only a few steps away. They finally reached the campground. Qimmiq said goodbye to Pinecone and Teddy and thanked them for finding a way back to her owners. She ran off wagging her tail and her owners were so happy to see her again and they gave her lots of love and treats.

The Turtle's Moving Day

Once there was a magical pond. A frog was talking with a turtle that was passing by. He said there was a house for sale on the pond but little did he know there was a magical fairy that still lived in it. Then he looked on realtor and the house wasn't for sale but he wanted a garden and the house didn't have a garden. The next day he looked on realtor again and there was a house for sale that had a garden and a pool.

When he went to see the house he learned that the realtor was actually the fairy. The turtle decided to buy the house. When the turtle went to swim in the pool and he got out he turned purple with yellow polka dots because the fairy put a special potion in the pool. The turtle started screaming and jumped in the pond and all of a sudden frogs jumped up and started playing the tuba and trumpet. They all started

to sing "the fairy pranked you". The turtle swam to the bottom of the pond and put mud all over himself, when he came back up the frogs got scared because he looked like a mud monster. The turtle went back home and hosed himself off with the garden hose. The turtle baked the fairy some sugar cookies and they became friends. They had a tea party and lived happily ever after.



MEMORIES OF VENNACHAR (NOT PART OF THE CONTEST)

Clans Across the Water - A Worldwide Scottish Kinship By Bill McNaught



I went to Fergus Ontario to represent Clan Hay at the Scottish Festival and Highland Games in August where I had the chance to interview some very prominent people from Scotland for the Highlander.



Photos of my great grandparents Nancy Jane Gregg and Philip Fred Ball in 1886. I was very happy to learn that Sir Malcolm MacGregor and Lady Fiona (Armstrong) MacGregor would be travelling from Scotland to Fergus for the games. He is Chief of the Gregg Family, one of the principal pioneer families in the Tri-county area of Renfrew, Lennox & Addington, and Frontenac.



After my interview, I was pleased to present a copy of my Book, *Vimy: Letters from the Front* to Sir Malcolm and Lady Fiona MacGregor.



My second interview was with Lord Lyon King of Arms, Dr. Joseph Morrow, after which I presented him with my *Vimy* book and a framed tribute to the eighty year anniversary of the Scottish Festival and Highland Games in Fergus.

Shakespeare, as far as I know, never visited Canada. Had he done so in 2025, he surely would have had Richard III speak of "our summer of discontent" rather than "our winter of discontent." Recent events have concentrated our minds, made us re-examine the good experiences of Canadian life. We appreciate even more what we have created. One Canadian delight is the Scottish festivals, whether in Antigonish Nova Scotia, celebrating 160 years, in Maxville Ontario celebrating 76 years, or in Fergus Ontario celebrating 80 years.

As we wait for our continuing gentle reminders to sink in that North America works best as a partnership of equals, is there anything more Canadian than slowly wandering through grassy fields, watching young dancers, arms above their heads, with the skirl of bagpipes in the background? This summer, it was as if the weather, sunny and warm, refused to disappoint. There was a whiff of sweet grass in the air. There were plaids and kilts and children running

back and forth, their parents looking for answers to two questions — Where are we from? What does it mean?

To properly celebrate its 80th anniversary, several Clan Chiefs travelled from Scotland to Fergus. Among them was the Chief of Clan Gregor, Sir Malcolm MacGregor of MacGregor and his charming wife Lady Fiona (Armstrong) MacGregor. Sir Malcolm is the Chief of the Gregg Family, one of the principal pioneer families in the Tri-county area of Renfrew, Lennox & Addington, and Frontenac. Arriving in 1830 from Ballymena, Ireland but originally from Aberdeenshire on Scotland's north-east coast, James and Ellen (Weir) Gregg were part of the crews that completed the construction of the Rideau Canal System. Afterwards, the Gregg Family created 7 farms out of the Ontario Wilderness, first at Oxford Mills, then Kincardine on the shores of Lake Huron, later along the Addington Road west of Denbigh and finally 3 farms in Vennachar. Their 12 grandchildren were prominent in that

area. The granddaughters married into other local pioneer families including the Bebees, the Livingstons, the Flakes, and the Grants. In 1886, my great grandmother, Nancy Jane Gregg (1855-1934) married Fred Ball, a grandson of Loyalists Solomon Ball and Esther Walker from Vermont. A Memorial to this family was erected by their descendants in 1991 in Vennachar Cemetery.

Sir Malcolm and Lady Fiona graciously consented to a short interview. Sir Malcom, who is tall and blonde-haired, has a long military background.

Lady Fiona exudes a youthful image with a winning smile behind which lies a sharp perception. Together they make a formidable team. Surrounded by other Clan Gregor members, it proved to be an interesting interview between the Clan Chief and a grandson of Nancy Jane Gregg. It was clear that they took the interview seriously and were prepared to discuss substantively Scottish culture and values in Canada and around the world.

began the interview by describing the Fergus locale when my Gregg



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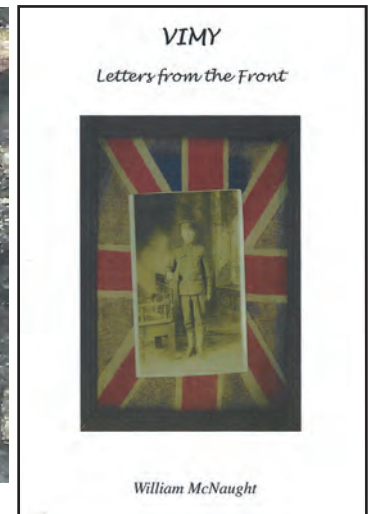
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Great Grandchildren of Nancy Gregg Ball on May 1, 2012.



In 1991, Gregg family descendants erected this plaque in the Vennachar Cemetery. Note the names.



Family arrived in Canada in 1830. Ontario was then an unspoiled Wilderness. Britain considered it to be "wasteland", but the Greggs and other immigrants had the ability to see its value when others did not. Consequently, they created some of the richest farmland in North America. Sir Malcom did not hesitate. "Clan means children. It is a connection from deep in the past. Part of my role as Chief is to support networks in different countries as a result of the Scottish diaspora."

That led to a discussion about the unique Canadian opportunity of land ownership. Rather than the plantation model in America and the Caribbean nations which relied on permanent tenancy and has in the past led to slavery, the model in Canada relied on individuals owning the land they farmed, becoming farmer-entrepreneurs, who determined their own destiny. Immigrants were recruited on the basis that they could pay their own passage and had resources to buy their land rather

than remaining permanent tenants in Scotland. Sir Malcom agreed but added that ownership involved "risk." I pointed out that land ownership resulted in generational wealth that was passed on to future generations.

I followed up by asking Sir Malcom if he had identified any difference between clan members who had emigrated and those who had stayed in Scotland. He replied that both emigrants and those who remained had the same qualities. The difference was access to assets to permit them to change countries. Lady Fiona interjected that many Scottish tenants realized the limits of Scottish feudalism. Their inability to leave created a sense of desperation but many of those remaining in Scotland had no other option.

Time was short so I asked Lady Fiona about her own heritage. As an Armstrong, she is a descendant of the Armstrong Clan, which was a major participant in the border feuds during the 16th century. It was the era of constant

cattle-rustling, sheep-stealing and hostage-taking. One notorious Armstrong outlaw was Kinmont Willie. Foolishly, I asked her what, in her opinion, were the benefits to Scottish history arising from that era. Lady Fiona smiled. It would be impossible to put that era into a few words. "The border clans were running a protection racket" But then she added, "There is so much history written about the Highlands and so very little about the border lands. There should be a more comprehensive study of that era." I agreed. The most recent book on the subject is George MacDonald Fraser's *The Steel Bonnets* ISBN 0 G0 272746 3 1971.

After James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne from Queen Elizabeth, he set about exiling the border clans to plantations in Ireland. The Plantation model was extended to America and the West Indies, but not to Canada. Here it was the model of the farmer-entrepreneur who owned the land, but the best part of the clan system remained.

Across Canada, people came as entire communities, where people helped each other. Individual success was augmented by community success and finally the success of our nation. That was the dominant emotion at Fergus, Maxville and Antigonish. We enjoy what we have created.

I presented them with a copy of my book about my Gregg Family *Vimy: Letters from the Front* detailing the deaths of Private John Ball and Private Charles Gregg at the battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917. Sir Malcom and Lady Fiona graciously accepted it.

I was also able to interview Lord Lyon King of Arms, Dr. Joseph Morrow. Like Sir Malcom and Lady Fiona, Dr. Morrow is a living symbol the Scottish establishment both historical and contemporary. His primary function is to mediate and officially settle disputes regarding clan crests and heraldry which also recognizes insignia for individuals.

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Dr. Morrow has his own Coat of Arms and his own motto "Deo Volente" (With God Willing). That fits well with his mission, which he describes as the practical application of ceremony to state, civil, military, and ecclesiastical areas of Scottish life. As such, he represents accomplishments of the past as it relates to present events. That is a huge undertaking as the representative of historic Scottish ideas and values.

Dr. Morrow presents himself as a welcoming figure with a whimsical smile and a steely glint in his eyes. I began by noting that Morrow was not a recognized Scottish name. He responded that "Morrow is, in fact, Irish." I asked whether being unconnected to a specific clan made it easier to represent all clans. Dr. Morrow nodded in agreement. That led to a discussion of Canadian history when the successful construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad relied on a non-Canadian with no prior Canadian entanglements to distract him, William Cornelius Van Horne. Van Horne proposed that the railroad hug the north shore of Lake Superior thereby ensuring that British financiers would support an all-Canadian trans-continental railroad. Then he accomplished that undertaking. Dr. Morrow reminded me that another driving force was Lord Strathcona (Donald Smith), the inspirational leader of the CPR. He was a Scot from Badenoch and drove the last spike at Craigellachie, British Columbia, named after a mountain in Badenoch. I replied that my mother's ancestors, the Hays had come from Badenoch with the McLeans and McPhersons in 1840.

Canada's second transcontinental railroad, the Grand Trunk Pacific,

through Edmonton to the Pacific coast at Prince Rupert, was constructed in 1912 by Charles Melville Hayes, another American. Ironically, that same year Hayes was in Britain raising funds for its completion. He returned on the Titanic and was lost. But his railroad continued and supplied men and materials from Canada's west to support British and Allied forces during both wars. Today Prince Rupert is an oil and gas hub with several liquified natural gas plants.

We next discussed Scottish values in modern democracies. I asked him his views on the Covenanter Resistance when 18,000 Scots were killed over 50 years (1638-1688) for defending the Church of Scotland from the Church of England. As the Honorary Canon of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Dundee, I wondered what was his view of the Test Act and the leader of the Church? (During the terrorism of the killing times Covenanters were asked who leads the Church. Covenanters could not disown Christ as the leader of the Church and reply that the monarch was the leader as English law states. Many were summarily killed for failing the Test Act including my ancestor, Andrew McRobert, at Kirkconnel Moor in February 1685. That same year, two women were bound to stakes in the harbour of Wigtown and forced to drown when the tide came in, for failing the Test Act).

It was evident that Dr. Morrow had dealt with this thorny era in Scottish history before for he stated that in his opinion Jesus Christ is the leader of the Christian Church although the law in England states differently. He added that as Lord Lyon he had attended the coronation of King Charles III and dur-

ing that ceremony, Charles took an oath as "King of the Scots", all the Scots. I surmised that Dr. Morrow thought that an era when Scots fought Scots should be closed after 337 years. Perhaps Dr. Morrow is right.

But the result of the Covenanter Resistance brought about the recognition of the pillars upon which modern democracies are built. I mentioned that Neil Oliver in his recent book (1988) *A History of Scotland* ISBN 978 0 297 85663 4 wrote at page 217 that the Covenant signed by Scots was "a document of profound importance, symbolizing the moment when Scots were encouraged to regard their homeland not as a kingdom, but as a nation state. Within that state men and women were citizens rather than subjects and they had rights—human rights—to follow their own religious beliefs, regardless of what the king may tell them."

The era of the Covenant Resistance brought about limitations on the monarch/government such as the Habeas Corpus Act, requiring proof of crime rather than mere accusations; the Claim of Right Act codified the right of citizens to petition the King/government without reprisal, freedom of speech and conscience, a prohibition of governmental cruel and unusual punishment, and equality under the law, even the right to bear arms. These are fundamental values of citizens in modern democracies. (Something Author Oliver glides over is that both men and women signed the Covenant, establishing a beginning of equal rights of women.) They were radical ideas in a feudalistic society, but ideas and values that immigrants from Scotland carried with them to the Cana-

dian Wilderness. The first endeavours of the new immigrants whether from Colonial America, Scottish feudalism, or from Ireland like my Gregg Family, was to set up courts dedicated to the provision of justice rather than the corrupted court systems left behind and building schools to educate citizens on their duties to their community and country.

It was clear that Dr. Morrow would not engage in that discussion. Still, it is amazing that from the Scottish stew of Picts, Scots, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Norsemen, Normans and others, the pillars of modern democracies were developed. Instead, Dr. Morrow stressed the importance of "enjoying our Scottish heritage" and living by the "values of the living Scotland". I was curious. I believe that Dr. Morrow was referring to the inscription on the Scottish Mace sitting in the Scottish Parliament that society is "underpinned by the values of wisdom, justice, integrity and compassion". Good values for Scotland. Good values for Canada. As we parted, I presented Dr. Morrow with a copy of my book about my Gregg Family, "Vimy: Letters from the Front" and he graciously accepted it.

Thank you, Sir Malcom MacGregor of MacGregor and Lady Fiona. Thank you, Lord Lyon, Dr. Morrow for coming to Canada and reminding us of the values that got us here. Thank you for reminding us that nationhood is not a sprint or a marathon. Rather it is a relay race where each generation hands off to the next. And the only way we lose is if we give up.

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