

Chapter 4

Tempus fugit

Wacky winter weather

The weather was crazy for the time of year. Normally we would be up to our armpits in snow, but merely a skiff of it now, and the temperatures warmed up well above seasonal values. In the Canadian West, it was a balmy 59 deg.F (15 deg.C)—totally unheard of before—and that led to a few uncontrolled wildfires scorching wide areas and torching homes.

Then, in early January, 2012, the freeze/thaw cycle repeated. When we went to bed one Monday night, it was raining, but that changed to snow overnight and it continued to snow most of Tuesday morning. It was also very cold with the temperature stuck at 9 deg.F (-13 deg.C) all day. Once again, though, it turned mild with the temperature reaching 43 deg.F (6 deg.C) and the little bit of snow that was left soon melted.

One positive thing came out of our crazy winter. The tornado recovery effort wasn't brought to a standstill by the weather, and reconstruction work was taking place all over the town. Several big projects in the downtown core were expected to begin in the coming months, and already a large number of new houses were being built. As well, many houses that had become a little rundown were getting some much needed repairs thanks to the tornado. New roofs, siding, doors and windows were a common sight around town. The fundraising committee raised just over four million dollars for the Goderich Tornado Disaster Relief Fund, and the Province of Ontario was expected to match 2-to-1 the amount raised locally.

At about this time, there was a flurry of genealogical activity, as I had access to helpers with different online resources. Information came to light on my maternal grandparents' families; including certificates and census reports. At least I could fill in some of the blanks on the family tree. However, basic information about my paternal grandfather and his father was still elusive, and continued to be way into the future. Also, my memoirs were taking shape, and I had completed Chapter 5, which took readers up to the year 1970.

Monica's 'trigger' thumb improved to such an extent since last November that she considered cancelling her February appointment with the specialist in Stratford. However, she waited to see her chiropractor to get his opinion, and if he thought that she had nothing to gain, she would cancel the appointment. Although he was very pleased with the big improvement in her thumb, he thought that she should still see the specialist. Monica then considered asking her doctor again if he thought she should follow up on her appointment, given that he might see things differently. Even if he agreed with the chiropractor, it still depended on the weather; there being no longer any urgency, as the thumb was almost back to normal. We had planned to go the day before, and even made a reservation to stay overnight in a hotel, as well as arranging a get-together with our friends, Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards, whom we hadn't seen since they had moved to Stratford.

Actually, we had to change the plan. The weekend before we were to go, bad storms with snow squalls kept coming off the lake both days. It was so frustrating that, after weeks of unseasonably mild temperatures and very little snow, we should have a real taste of winter just when we wanted to go away. So, we cancelled the hotel reservation, and Monica was able to change her medical appointment to March without any problem. She also managed to get a later time, which was much better as we could now make it a day journey. Rosemarie and Geoff were free that day as well, which was good news.

In any case, the original appointment coincided with Monica's 73rd birthday, and now we were free to celebrate without the stress of visiting the specialist. We went to Thyme on 21—our local fine dining restaurant—and had a lovely evening. As usual on Valentine's Day, there was a special menu with a choice of three appetizers and three *entrées*. The two desserts—lemon raspberry cheesecake and silk chocolate cake—were served on separate plates. Both of them had lighted candles and were placed in front of Monica. She was kind, though, and shared them with me, and although each of them was yummy, the cheesecake was voted the yummiest by both of us.

Previous to this, we spent a busy time redecorating our living room, kitchen and two hallways. As part of replacing the living room window, the recess was lined with wood, and then framed with a wooden trim. The wood was untreated, and we knew that it had to be painted. So, as I had been hinting for some time that the living room, kitchen and hallways needed redecorating, we decided that rather than painting just the new wooden trim, we would paint the whole area.

Since it was such an enormous task, we decided that the only way of tackling it was to do a section at a time and finish each one before starting another. When we started the first section Wednesday morning, we hoped to finish the complete task in four days, but even though we worked seven or eight hours each day, we ended up needing a fifth day. By then, we were both exhausted, but very pleased with the end result.

On March 4th, Monica and I attended an awards ceremony where I was presented with a certificate of recognition for my work as Chair of Heritage Goderich. The ceremony was small, but meaningful, with a number of recipients also being presented with certificates from the Mayor and current Chair of the Municipal and Marine Heritage Committee.

Mid-March was blessed with some splendid weather, which was a godsend as we travelled to Toronto to visit the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the live theatre. We stayed three nights at the Yorkdale Holiday Inn, located near one of the city's Underground (subway) stations. This meant that we could use public transport to travel to and from the hotel and downtown.

The first whole day was spent at the ROM primarily to explore the special exhibition on the lost civilization of the Maya Indians of Central America. A considerable number of artefacts were on display, and audio/visual presentations gave visitors a clear insight of the civilization and its culture. Much is still unknown, but the Mayan cryptic writing has largely been translated, and folklore is abundant as legends have been orally passed down over many generations. The ruined buildings have given up much evidence, and even tombs similar to the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs exist (often intact). Some of the art forms are remarkable

and their religion was bound up with beliefs of heaven, the underworld, a middleworld and afterlife—akin to other pagan civilizations. We were subjected to information overload by the time we reached the exhibit concerning the Mayan calendar, with its foreboding message that the world was going to come to an end on December 21st, 2012. However, it was so complicated that neither of us could fathom it out; although it would seem that there was no need to worry.

The museum had other expansive collections, including a huge repository of Far East china, statuary, and cultural artefacts involving the mystical Tea Ceremony. There was a gallery dealing with the evolution of suits of armour and weaponry; yet another on Art Deco with beautiful examples of furniture and other interior *décor*, and several dinosaur skeletons that went with the wildlife exhibits.

The next day was the highlight of the visit when we saw the stage show version of *War Horse*. Indeed a tremendous production that lived up to its hype; although we were glad that we had seen the film beforehand, as the full length of the story could be absorbed in the movie, but was handicapped by the limitations of the stage. The lifelike horse puppets stole the show. Each one was manipulated by three puppeteers—one leading and working the head, another inside at the front holding the horse's knees and manipulating the forelegs, and a third in the rear doing the same with the hind legs. The audience simply ignored the puppeteers, as the horse puppets appeared so realistic in their actions. There was a certain amount of emotion towards the end, but not the anticipated 'tearjerker' reaction.

After the show, we gravitated to a nearby restaurant that had been recommended by our local fine dining restaurateur. The establishment was very cozy with tasteful *décor* and quiet background music. We knew the girl who waited on us as she used to live and work in Goderich. The menu contained some exotic dishes and Monica chose grilled caribou with a blueberry and sage sauce. My eye fell on the grilled kangaroo with sweet potato croquettes. The 'roo steak taste was subtle, not at all gamey, and different enough to set it aside from beef or venison—glad I tried it. The wine accompaniment was a full bodied, red *Cabernet-Shiraz* from Chalk Hill Winery in South Australia.

Monica's medical appointment to have her 'trigger' thumb investigated by the specialist in Stratford was on March 27th. Although it was a chilly day—the temperature remained just below freezing all the way there—it was nice and sunny, and the roads were clear and dry. At the specialist's practice, Monica was given a cortisone injection, and all seemed well with no adverse reactions. When she told her chiropractor that she had been given a choice between continuing with the massaging or having an injection, he said that she had done the right thing having the injection. He also said that he thought it unlikely that she would have to have surgery; although she might need to have another injection sometime. After two months, Monica said that the cortisone injection had worked, and her thumb wasn't going stiff overnight anymore.

After the appointment at the specialist, we went to see our friends, Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards. They lived in a condo apartment on the edge of Stratford, and it was our first visit to them there. They have made the condo really nice, and we chatted over coffee until it was lunch time. We then made our way through a park alongside the River Avon to the downtown area. We returned to the apartment after lunch and continued chatting before eventually leaving to drive home. It was lovely seeing both of them again after so long.

We ended the month on a high note by going out for dinner at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant. We hadn't realised until making our reservation that Earth Hour was going to take place that evening, and that the restaurateur was planning to continue the tradition of having dining by candlelight. Having been to previous candlelit dinners there, we would have been disappointed if we had missed this year's one. Even though Earth Hour was from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., we went at our usual time of 6:30 p.m., and needless to say, it wasn't even starting to get dusk then. However, we still had one candle on our table, and the *maitre d'* kept bringing more as the light gradually faded. As usual, the food was delicious, and perhaps because they knew that we weren't in any rush, they let us linger over our meal, and it was almost dark by the time we were ready for dessert. It was a wonderful evening.

The taste of spring that we had while away in Toronto was just that—a taste, as we reverted to more seasonable weather where the days have been fairly mild, but the temperature has dropped below freezing overnight. Also, it snowed quite heavily for a while as March went out like a lion. However, it was wet stuff and had gone by next morning.

Springtime arrives

Organising and writing my memoirs was now getting into high gear, with the narrative having reached the year 1972. There was still a huge amount of information to consolidate, and the mental editing has been ruthless in order not to overwhelm the reader with extraneous 'fluff.' I knew that wading through a host of memories between 1971 and 1973, plus choosing the pictorial content, was going to take time in order to end Chapter 6 at November, 1973. It was a hard grind trying to encapsulate events for 1973, the year of emigration. So much happened and, of course, it was an emotional situation as my leaving affected close kin and my current steady girlfriend.

The day before Easter Sunday was beautiful, so we went for a hike in the morning. We chose a local trail which goes through a wooded area in the hopes of seeing some early wildflowers, and to our surprise we found the trilliums were already starting to bloom. On Easter Sunday it was lunch at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant for their renowned Eggs Benedict.

Our next out-of-town trip was to the annual Belmore Maple Syrup Festival on Thursday, April 12th. This very popular event always attracts a large crowd of people who come from miles around to attend. As mentioned before, the main attraction is the all-you-can-eat pancakes and sausages, but there are also lots of crafts, baked goods and, naturally, maple syrup for sale. We always wander around the craft area, but find it is usually the same old, same old, and never see anything that we like enough to want to buy it. This year, however, a welcome sign ornament with three cute rabbits on it caught our attention. We bought it, and displayed it outside our front door.

The following Wednesday was a brilliant day, and we decided to hike the McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail in Exeter. We always try to hike that particular trail in the spring just to see the trilliums, which grow in abundance throughout the woods, and once again this year they were a marvellous sight. As an added bonus to our hike, we saw four of the renowned white squirrels.

On Thursday, April 19th, a group of members and spouses from the Local Lodge 1863 Retirees Club travelled to London, Ontario, for a tour of the John Labatt Brewery. Labatt is a big name in brewing, being part of the Anheuser-Busch/InBrew corporation that also brews such beers as Budweiser and Stella Artois. The guide at Labatt escorted the group through the building and explained the various processes needed to brew the many varieties of beers produced at the facility. From adding the raw ingredients through the cooking, fermentation and aging stages, the visitors had a close up look at how the basic product made its way through the system before being packaged for consumption. Recycled bottles were inspected, cleaned and added to those going to the filling machine. After undergoing one of the many inspection stages, the filled bottles were capped and labelled prior to packaging and distribution in the familiar cases. This process also applied to cans of beer. At the end of the tour, we sampled several different beers to understand the differences in their recipes, so this made for a good appreciation of the various brews. A small museum containing memorabilia, such as the futuristic looking delivery truck used in parades, rounded out the visit.

We had two out-of-town trips arranged; the first of which was to Sarnia to meet our friends from Windsor for lunch. However, snow was expected for both the night before and the day we were to meet. Thankfully, the forecasters were wrong, and any precipitation that fell was rain. Even that had stopped when we left home, and it was dry for the rest of the day with the sun eventually breaking through the cloud. It had been six months since we last saw Diane and Mike, so we had plenty to talk about over a four hour lunch!

The other trip, on April 28th, was to the Drayton Festival Theatre. However, instead of going to see a stage show, we went to a concert given by the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra played the well known overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* by Rossini, followed by a piece by Mozart with soprano accompaniment, and ended with a Dvorák symphony. Because it was so long ago, we couldn't remember the last time we went to a symphony concert, but we will definitely remember this one, and not just for the good music. Monica bought three tickets to the 50/50 draw, and was lucky enough to have the winning ticket! It was the second time she had won the draw in just under two years, and this time the takings were about £130.00p (\$189.00). We decided to drive straight home and go to Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant. Not surprisingly, we treated ourselves to an extra special meal. It was a wonderful ending to a very enjoyable day.

For four days starting May 14th, we explored the Chatham-Kent area of Southwestern Ontario. This was almost a repeat of a year ago, but concentrated on other museums and hiking trails that we weren't able to visit previously. Last year, our trip to Chatham was primarily to tour RM Auto Restoration, the classic car restoration facility; although we had also planned to visit the Chatham-Kent Museum while we were there. However, after a very wet journey, and then not being able to find the museum, despite asking a postman for directions, we gave up and went to our hotel. So, we thought that we would have another try at visiting the museum, and if the weather allowed, go to Rondeau Provincial Park; a nature spot that's a peninsula jutting out of Lake Erie on the north shore.

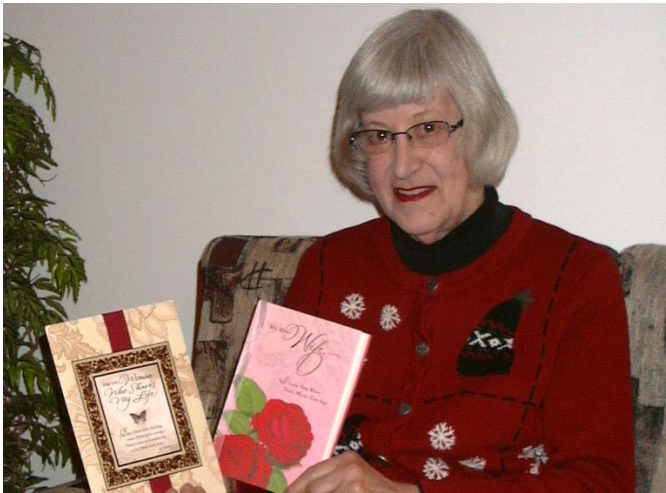
This year's trip got off to a much better start, as we had a beautiful sunny day for driving to Chatham. We arrived there early enough in the afternoon that we had time to explore the downtown area before going to the hotel. We also had a nice walk following the footpath alongside the river.

The following day was another beautiful sunny one with little or no humidity. So, immediately after breakfast we set off for Rondeau Provincial Park, stopping on the way to buy some bread rolls, cheese and apple juice for a picnic lunch. Because the park is on the migratory route of many species of birds, Rondeau is very popular with birders at this time of the year, and there were many avid enthusiasts there that day. The birds were shy and we only saw a few spring warblers, robins, redwing blackbirds, and cormorants (on the lake); although other birders had seen some lesser known species. The hiking trails were well maintained, and we saw a number of blooming flowers such as trilliums, columbines, wild geraniums, phlox, Jack-in-the-pulpit and May apples. The wooded areas in Rondeau were very different, and it was really lovely hiking through them. Another nice trail was the one that took us along the shoreline of Rondeau Bay. Then, as we had the time after leaving the park, and being curious to see what it is like, we drove around Rondeau Bay to Erieau. We expected it to be a typical small lakeside community with lots of summer cottages, but there appeared to be more year-round homes—some quite large—rather than cottages.

When our third day away started off wet, we didn't mind too much as we planned on visiting the Chatham-Kent Museum. However, both the weather and our plans changed. The rain stopped, and we had a mix of sun and cloud for the rest of the day. As for the museum, we arrived there expecting it to be open at 10:00 a.m., only to find that it didn't open until 1:00 p.m.! Fortunately, we knew that the nearby town of Wallaceburg had its own museum, so we drove there. Actually, we were lucky, as it was a very interesting museum. While many of Wallaceburg's former industries; including processing plants for such well known names as Heinz and Nestlé, were featured in the exhibits, an extensive one telling the history of the glass making industry was excellent and very informative. The museum had a large collection of glass paperweights, and some of them were really lovely. There was also a display of glass walking canes and other 'whimsies.' We returned home the next day—still without visiting the Chatham-Kent Museum!!

The first of our theatre outings in 2012 was to see our local amateur theatre company's latest production—a musical called *Red Sails in the Sunset*. It was written by a local resident, and depicted life in Goderich between 1953 and 1956. The author researched the local newspaper's archives, and also interviewed several elderly residents to get their recollections of events that took place during those years. The events portrayed were real, as were some of the characters, but the rest was fictitious. While most of the musical numbers were original, the show opened with a fantastic medley of songs from the early '50s, and as they were hits on both sides of the Atlantic, you didn't have to be living in Goderich for them to have any meaning. They brought back a lot of memories for us as well. The show had a big cast and everyone played their roles well, especially the leads who had several solo numbers to sing. We really enjoyed the show, and it was well deserving of the standing ovation it received.

Our other theatre outing was to see *The Sound of Music*. Although we have seen the movie many times and know the story by heart, watching the play in a theatre filled with people was altogether different. The atmosphere was amazing, especially when the Mother Superior sang *Climb Every Mountain*. In fact, all the scenes in the abbey were impressive, and even though it was restricted by the size of the stage, the wedding scene was very well done. Of course, the three youngest children stole the show, but the entire cast was excellent. It was another fabulous show and well deserving of the tumultuous applause and a standing ovation.



Monica Celebrating her 73rd Birthday, Goderich, Ontario, February, 2012.



Heritage Award Recipients at Goderich Town Hall Council Chamber, Goderich, Ontario, March, 2012.



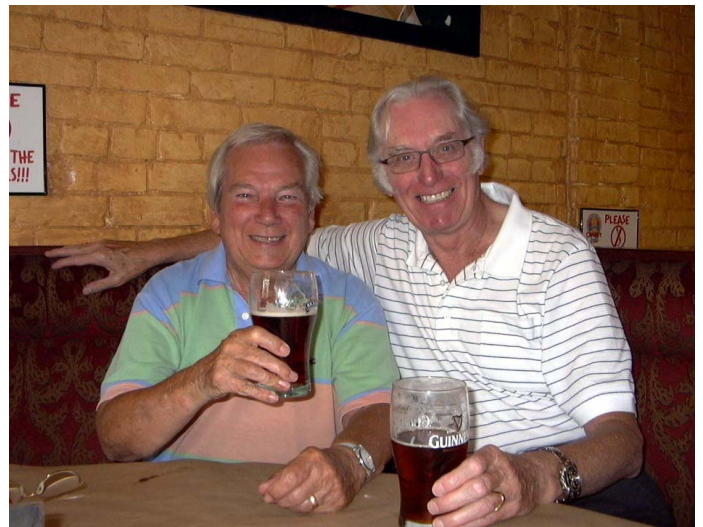
Local 1863 Retirees Club Visit to the John Labatt Brewery, London, Ontario, April, 2012.



Art Deco Architecture of the Capitol Cinema in Downtown Chatham, Ontario, May, 2012.



Baby Raccoon Strays from its Nest, McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail, Exeter, Ontario, May, 2012.



Roger and Barry at Crabby Joe's Restaurant, Woodstock, Ontario, June, 2012.

While our mini trip and theatre outings were all planned ahead of time, later in the month we took advantage of the good weather to go on a spontaneous outing to Exeter. First we had lunch, and part way through our meal we noticed one of Exeter's well known white squirrels. As it turned out, it was the only white squirrel we saw that day, even though following lunch we hiked the McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail where we usually see them. However, our hike wasn't without an unusual sighting. A squeaky noise caught our attention, and after searching the trees around us, we spotted a baby raccoon clinging to the trunk of a tree. It must have felt adventuresome and strayed from the nest, and then got scared. Poor thing, it didn't seem to know whether to go up or down. Hopefully, its mother eventually rescued it. Further along the trail, we saw a great blue heron fly up from the river, and what a majestic sight that was. As for wildflowers, we saw dog roses and a lot of pretty white flowers that we couldn't name. We later found out that they were Canada anemones or, as they are more commonly called, crowfoots.

I heard that my father was doing fine now that both knees had been replaced. With the onset of old age—he celebrated his 89th birthday on April 29th, 2012—his health issues were increasing, as now he had to take additional medication for a thyroid condition; plus regular checkups for his Pacemaker. Nevertheless, both he and my stepmother were taking the days one by one by supporting each other; the driving force that kept them going despite the meagre Social Services help and a chaotic NHS,

We did more gardening this year than usual, because our front garden needed a complete makeover after our landlord cut down the two big fir trees that were there. It ended up being a joint effort, with him buying and planting some burning bushes and ornamental grasses, and us adding a couple of blue junipers. We then decided that it needed some colour, and planted some petunias. We also planted some moonflower seeds in a big pot, as we thought it would be nice to have something growing up the divider between us and next door. The later warmer summer weather encouraged us to sit out on the patio and enjoy our new garden.

June and July events

After starting off cool and wet, June ended with a long spell of hot and sunny weather. We also had a heatwave—three days or more in a row with the temperature reaching 90 deg.F (32 deg.C) or higher excluding the humidex—during the month; apparently very unusual for June. Anyhow, with the humidity, it felt like 104 deg.F (40 deg.C) plus. So, we were very relieved that it lasted only just long enough to qualify as a heatwave. It was brought to an end by a thunderstorm, and while that wasn't anything unusual, it was the day that was significant—the ten month anniversary of the tornado! We had quite a nerve wracking afternoon watching the sky darken, and hearing the thunder get louder and louder, but then when the wind picked up it was really scary. Apart from making a lot of noise and deluging everywhere with torrential rain, the storm didn't develop into anything serious and eventually passed over.

On June 11th, we went to Crabby Joe's family restaurant in Woodstock to meet our friends from Coventry, Roger and Sue Moore, and their daughter, Lindsey, who were visiting Canada for seven weeks this year. Also with them was Sue's sister, Bobbie, who had flown over to join Roger and Sue for the last two weeks of their holiday. Needless to say, it was great seeing them all again, and with so much catching up to do, we had our usual four hour lunch.

We had another out-of-town trip on June 14th, which happened to be the 38th anniversary of Monica's emigration to Canada. We went to the theatre in St. Jacobs to see *Bedtime Stories*. It was described as six comedies in one, and while the first story was quite hilarious, we didn't find the other five all that funny; one in particular which we thought rather sad. However, it was very clever how each story, although complete in itself, had a connection to one of the others. All in all, an enjoyable show, but definitely not outstanding. More often than not when we go to the theatre in St. Jacobs, we have dinner at a restaurant in the village, but as we wanted to celebrate and have a bottle of wine with our meal, we drove straight home after the show, and to the fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21, where, as usual, we had a delicious meal.

Our next theatre outing was to Grand Bend to see *Harvey*. The play has been around for ages, and it was also made into a movie. It was very well acted, and despite its age, still came across as being very funny. We found it a lot more enjoyable than *Bedtime Stories*. Following the show, we went to Hessenland Country Inn for Mongolian Grill night. Diners choose from a wide selection of raw meat, seafood and vegetables, and then take their choices outside to chefs who stir-fry the food for them. Most people go back inside the dining room to eat, but it had been another sunny day so we sat outside on the patio. The gardens at Hessenland are extensive and beautifully maintained, and it was very pleasant having dinner out there.

By way of a change, we went out for breakfast put on by the women's group from one of the local churches to raise funds for their organisation. With bacon, sausages, scrambled eggs, pancakes, toast, juice, coffee and tea to feast on, it was the biggest breakfast that we had eaten probably since the Belmore Maple Syrup Festival in April. So much so, we decided to walk it off by hiking the trail through the woods that are just across the car park from the hall where the breakfast was held. Everywhere was lush and green in the woods, and with the sunlight filtering through the trees, it was really lovely. With so much for us to enjoy during the summer months, either locally or a short drive away, we have no need to go on an extended trip. We are happy being 'staycationers.'

In July, I started to reorganize my computer files and transferred many of them from the aging Mac G4 to the newer OSX laptop. It was a useful exercise, as I found several duplicate documents and images that were lurking around and so purged them from the archives. The biggest chore was renaming hundreds of image descriptions, as OSX didn't recognize some of the characters used by the older operating system. The Mac G4 will be dedicated only for my memoirs composition since the software programme (Adobe PageMaker) isn't compatible on the OSX machine. With judicial editing of facts, the memoirs were progressing well. I also decommissioned the old monochrome HP LaserJet 6MP printer.

July was hot and humid, but still a fairly busy one for us. We went to another fundraising breakfast. It was held at a Masonic Lodge hall situated out in the country, about a ten minute drive from town, and put on entirely by members of the Lodge, who did all the cooking and clearing up. They cooked the food—pancakes, sausages and eggs—on grills set up outside the Lodge hall. Then, after lining up and getting our plates filled, we went inside the hall to eat. Local farmers and other neighbours congregated, so it was also a social occasion. As it was another big breakfast, we decided to walk it off along the hiking trail that is just down the road from the Lodge hall. It was very pleasant when we set off, as there was a nice breeze, but it dropped and we soon felt it getting more humid, so we cut our hike short and returned home.

Our country friends, Tina and Marris Bos, discovered a nice trail and wanted to make a return hike. So, they invited us along together with a picnic lunch. The Lobb Trail (after the name of many Lobb families in the area) is a marked trail maintained by the landowners. The trail led us down a long, steep hill to a clearing just a short distance from the Maitland River. There we found a couple of picnic tables and a few chairs. It was an idyllic setting for a picnic, and we were lucky to see a great blue heron glide by searching for its lunch. Following our picnic, we continued along the trail, which paralleled the river for quite a long way before heading inland and looping back. However, we turned around where the trail went inland and retraced our steps back to the clearing. We intended to revisit; probably in the autumn at a time when the maple leaves were at their best colours.

July 12th, the day of our 38th wedding anniversary, was hot and humid. So, we had a lazy day until early evening when we took a leisurely stroll down the road to have dinner at the fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21. Since it was an important occasion, we decided to have beef tenderloin steaks. They were so tender that we definitely didn't need the steak knives that we were given. Then, as we had begun with appetizers, we shared dessert, which we later discovered was 'on the house', as was my Irish coffee. It was another wonderful evening.

The heat and humidity continued throughout the month, and there were several days when heat alerts were issued. One day the temperature soared to 93 deg.F (34 deg.C), setting a new record. The only relief came with a thunderstorm one night in mid-July. The lightning lit up our bedroom and we had to get up to see how bad the storm was. The sheet lightning was continuous, and although the rain was pretty steady, every so often there was a sudden deluge. Anyhow, satisfied that the storm wasn't as severe as had been predicted in the forecast, we went back to bed.

After a week of excessively high temperatures, it was a welcome change and relief to find a beautiful, clear morning and only 55 deg.F (15 deg.C) when we got up. In fact, it was such a beautiful morning that we just had to get out and enjoy it. So, we decided to go for a walk to the harbour and along the boardwalk. We also decided to go out for breakfast. The restaurant, where we used to have lunch with our friends, Tina and Marris, before the tornado damaged it so badly that it was demolished, hadn't long reopened in different premises, and we wanted to see what it was like. The building was a Woolworth's store when we came to town in 1976, but had been The Bargain Shop for a number of years. However, the store didn't reopen after the tornado, and the building stood empty for several months before eventually being divided into three sections. Anyhow, the old building was given a new lease on life, and the restaurant owners transformed their section into a very nice eating place. The breakfast was still as good as it used to be, and we were glad that we were going for a walk. It was really lovely down by the lake.

On the last Sunday of July, we had another very nice—and very different—evening. When we went to the breakfast put on by the Masons, one of the members told us about another fund raising event—their annual pig roast. However, instead of holding the event at their Lodge, they held it in the grounds of the community hall in the nearby hamlet of Benmiller. We arrived to find a lot of people already there sitting under the trees in a large circle, which kept growing as more people arrived. As we went to join them, we noticed the big rotisserie oven. Apparently, the pig had been roasting in it since 7:00 a.m., and it was nearly

6:00 p.m. when the pig—still on the spit—was removed from the oven. Straightaway, the couple, who were in charge of cooking, quickly processed the pig and piled the meat onto large platters. These were then taken inside the hall where they were placed on the serving table along with bread rolls, pickles and heaping bowls of potato salad and coleslaw. It was self serve, and we helped ourselves to as much food as we liked. Outside, we sat and ate at one of the picnic tables that had been grouped together under the trees. Not only was the pork moist and tender, it was also milder tasting than we expected. In fact, it was so delicious that we couldn't resist going back for seconds. However, we only had a very small second helping because we wanted to save room for a piece of the chocolate cake dessert.

We also had two theatre outings in July. The first was to see *Perfect Wedding*, which was a comedy. It was hilarious and we thoroughly enjoyed it. The other outing was to see *9 to 5: The Musical*, a musical comedy based on the Dolly Parton production that featured the well-known song, *9 to 5*, and other catchy numbers. As well, there were a lot of fast paced, high energy dance routines in the show, which ended with a standing ovation, and the audience clapping in time to the title song which, by then, had become firmly lodged in our heads..

The Goderich tornado remembered

The Civic Holiday weekend (sometimes called Simco Days in Ontario) is a public holiday in August, so Monday is a free day for most people. Sunday is when the traditional Goderich Volunteer Fire Fighters' Breakfast is organised for the community. Always a crowd pleaser, and this year, true to form, hundreds of visitors attended for the feast of eggs, sausages, bacon, pancakes, panfried potatoes, toast, juice and coffee. It's where friends and neighbours congregate and have a good time. All the fire engines and other emergency vehicles were parked around for children to wonder and explore, and the Fire Brigade (Fire Department) took the opportunity to remind folk about correctly working smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms, fire extinguishers and other safety tips.

On August 8th, I attended a high-level meeting with the Huron County Council to help try and sell a proposal put forward by an *ad hoc* committee. This proposal, which had involved several volunteers researching the viability of a county-based central archive repository—instead of records and collections being currently stored in various locations around the county—was in the making for over three years. A professionally produced business plan and information package was delivered to the County Councillors to support the address made by David Armstrong, president of the Huron County Historical Society. In general the response was favourable, but we were not given any commitment until the Councillors had had time to digest the business plan, and the outcome of a study being carried out for the County's Cultural Department.

In the evening, we went to a barbecue to which all the members of the *ad hoc* committee and their spouses had been invited. It was hosted by the couple who had spearheaded the committee, and it was a lovely evening.

It was good weather when we attended a second pancake breakfast organised by the Masons. It was another occasion to meet and greet neighbours and acquaintances, so lots of good conversation. Afterwards,

we went to ‘walk off’ the generous plate of pancakes, sausages and eggs at a nearby hiking trail and managed to complete a self-imposed 3.7 mile (6 km) circuit.

All eyes now looked towards August 21st—the first anniversary of the Goderich tornado disaster—and there were civic events planned to recognise the occasion and to celebrate the rejuvenation/reconstruction that had taken place over the last twelve months. The nearest neighbourhood to us that had been affected by the storm was the scene of *Windstock*—a community gathering of remembrance and celebration. It was a day of music and family-oriented activities. One resident coordinated the event to bring everyone together and count our blessings. There was a moment of silence as a tribute to the one fatality, and then inspirational speeches given by municipal representatives. The entire area was cordoned off to traffic, and residents/visitors roamed freely around to meet and greet. Local bands provided music all day long and refreshment booths were set up. A great deal of effort was directed towards children’s activities. Best of all, the weather was marvellous—sunny and low humidity; just right for an outdoors neighbourhood street party.

On the actual anniversary, there were two major civic celebrations. At the spot where the tornado first made landfall in town—a place called Lions Harbour Park—the event was the dedication and unveiling of the ‘Tree of Remembrance.’ The specially commissioned sculpture of a tree, with all its branches on one side broken off while those on the other side still with all their leaves, not only was a reminder of the tornado but, more importantly, also represented the resiliency of the citizens of Goderich. As well, the ‘tree’ was a memorial to Normand Laberge, who was the only fatality. His widow laid flowers at the foot of the sculpture just prior to the beginning of the ceremony, and there was a wreath from his former workmates at the salt mine. The second event was the dedication and unveiling of the Appreciation/Donor Wall, consisting of three bronze plaques erected in the grounds of the Town Hall. The fundraising committee did an amazing job and raised just over four million dollars for the Goderich Tornado Disaster Relief Fund.

While a tremendous amount of work was still to be done around the town, a great deal had been accomplished in the year since the tornado struck. So much so that people, who came here soon after the storm and returned for the anniversary, were astounded by the progress that had been made. However, work on the one project that most people wanted to see completed—the reconstruction of Courthouse Park in the centre of the downtown core—hadn’t yet started. The park suffered extensive damage and has since been a bare, wide open space after losing nearly all its trees, many over a hundred years old. The actual Huron County Courthouse also suffered extensive damage. However, work on the park was scheduled to start soon with the first phase being the removal of all the topsoil, which still had pieces of glass and metal embedded in it. Then, after installing underground cables for lighting etc. and an irrigation system, the planting of trees would be next; some of these being 30 or 40 feet (9 m to 12 m) tall.

A mix of good and sad news

The weather during August was brutal, with excessive heat and humidity levels, and we went through a drought period that concerned farmers as they saw their crops wither in the fields. The fruit trees were decimated in the spring with late frosts. Now, lack of water was affecting the cereal crops and hay that would be stored for animal feed next winter.

Things became a little unsettled when I received news of the death of my stepmother. Pat passed away on August 28th, 2012, aged 88. The news came as an e-mail message from some acquaintances of my father. They seemed to have helped him with all the funeral arrangements and were continuing to give him support. Otherwise, information was rather scant. My father (89 years old) was holding his own; although it was a tough slog for him with his health issues. Having met Pat only once, we didn't know her very well, but she and my father were very happy together for almost eleven years.

We had two theatre outings in August. The first was to St. Jacobs to see *Big Band Legends*. Despite the title, it was more a tribute to the crooners and songbirds who sang with the big bands and throughout the years since. Anyhow, it was a fantastic show, with nonstop music as one medley of songs was followed by another. The final number was Frank Sinatra's, *My Way*. Almost before the last notes were played, the audience was up on its feet in a standing ovation.

Our other theatre outing was to Grand Bend to see *Johnny and June*, a stage show adaptation of the life and times of Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash. The two impersonators were excellent and the show a smash hit. I only knew a few of his more well known songs, such as *Folsom Prison Blues*, *A Boy Named Sue* and *Ring of Fire*, but their renderings were very authentic. For dinner that evening, we went to Hesseland Country Inn again. It was their last Mongolian Grill for this summer, and as it had been another hot, sunny day, we ate outside on the patio. It was so pleasant sitting there, shaded by the trees and in such beautiful surroundings, that we both agreed it was almost worth suffering the excessive heat and humidity to have gorgeous evenings like that one to enjoy.

After starting very hot and humid, August ended the same way. Thankfully, though, we did get some welcome relief during the middle two weeks with not only much needed rain, but also a short spell of perfect summer weather. However, the heat soon built up again and we sweltered once more in elevated temperatures.

We decided to have a mini trip to Toronto in September, and booked three nights at the same hotel that we stayed at back in March. The plan was to visit a few museums, with the Ontario Science Centre as the main destination. A 'hands on' museum, and not a collection of stuffy static exhibits, we hadn't been to it for many years.

It seemed that things were fine with my father. He wrote a couple of times, and indicated that he was coping well under the circumstances. We also received a copy of the Order of Service that was produced for my stepmother's cremation carried out on September 6th in Bedford. Apparently Dad was accompanied by several other mourners including friends of my stepmother, an old neighbour (who had recently moved back to her native Liverpool), and some caregivers from the hospital auxiliary and a support group.

The town's reconstruction programme was continuing apace, and the next big project was the restoration of the downtown Huron County Courthouse and Courthouse Park; both of which were heavily damaged by the tornado. The contractors already started their work, and, at the end of this phase, a large percentage of the repairs in town would have been completed, and only a few damaged or destroyed properties remained.

On Thursday, September 13th, together with other members of the Local Lodge 1863 Retirees Club, I went for a tour of the St. Marys Cement plant in the town of St. Marys, Ontario. Apprentice millwright, Mark Armstrong, son of one of the members, showed the visitors how raw limestone was quarried and processed through the crushing and milling stages before being mixed with other ingredients to various cement formulas. The powdered end product was either bagged or shipped in bulk directly from St. Marys. Strict quality control was done at the plant's chemical laboratory. Many of the sixty-four workers were long-term employees, and were happy to explain their jobs to the visitors.

Our trip to Toronto wasn't as successful as the March mini vacation, because one day turned out to be somewhat disappointing. Monica had the choice of venue on our first day, and she chose the Bata Shoe Museum. With four floors of exhibits, the museum was much bigger than we had expected. One floor was devoted to the history of shoes, with examples from the very earliest to current styles, as well as from around the world. Another floor had a display of shoes worn by famous people, including Pierre Trudeau and Marilyn Monroe. A third floor showcased North American native footwear, and the embroidery and beadwork on some of them was amazing, especially considering the tools they used and the poor light they worked in. Another fascinating exhibit on the same floor featured the shoe styles of *The Roaring Twenties*. The top floor housed a temporary exhibit that displayed the shoes created by Roger Vivier, who spent part of his career designing footwear for Christian Dior.

With so much to look at, and so many interesting facts to read, it was mid-afternoon when we left the museum. However, it was too early to go for dinner, so I suggested that we go to Ireland Park. Although we visited the park soon after it opened in 2007, at the time it was raining and the light was fading. So, we set off walking—on what turned out to be quite a distance—only to find when we got there that there was major construction in the area, and any access to the park had been closed. We were NOT amused!! Anyhow, we consoled ourselves by going to a well known steakhouse for dinner. The previous evening, we went to a seafood restaurant a short walk from the hotel. Not only did we have the same server as when we went there in March, but amazingly he also recognised us. In fact, he saw us as we were shown to a table, and told the hostess to seat us at one of his tables.

On the second day, we went to the Ontario Science Centre. Unfortunately, the museum had lost some of its appeal, as the displays were well-worn—some didn't even work—and the facility appeared 'tired.' However, one area that we did find interesting was *The Living Earth*. Among the displays were several aquariums containing different corals and beautiful tropical fish, and there was also a separate section depicting a rain forest. Needless to say, it was hot and very humid in there, so we stayed only long enough to have a quick look around. We had dinner that evening in The 3 Brewers, a European-style gastropub with a huge range of onsite brewed beers, after which we headed back to our hotel. By the time we got there, we had had our fill of city life, and were more than ready to return to the slower pace of rural Ontario.

My memoirs were still a work in progress, but writing them gave me the opportunity to reflect on the previous sixty-six years. By and large, not too shoddy a life. The usual 'school of hard knocks' that we all experience, and some major blunders here and there, but otherwise a relatively successful upward climb. My father came to my rescue on several occasions, and my mother offered

logical advice. Emigration was definitely a huge positive step forward. In fact, I'm sure that if I had stayed in England, my future prospects would've been dismal at best. Certainly there was never any intention of looking back and absolutely no regrets. Now that Monica had entered into my life (Chapters 6 and 7 of my main memoirs: <http://barrypagememoirs.weebly.com/>), not only did we share our recollections, but also mutually reviewed the text for accuracy, and a means of not overlooking facts, dates, etc.

Visits and theatre outings

On October 4th, we had another very enjoyable day out in Sarnia with our friends, Diane and Mike Knight from Windsor. We still seem to find enough to chat about that our lunch at Crabby Joe's family restaurant lasts about four hours. While it is always nice seeing Diane and Mike, our outing was made even more enjoyable by the beautiful weather we had that day. Although it was overcast when we left home, the cloud soon gave way to blue skies, and it was sunny from then almost until it got dark. It was also unseasonably warm. Thanks to the sunshine, the countryside also looked its best. Many of the trees had already changed colour, and along the main highway leading to Sarnia they were absolutely spectacular. We hadn't seen such a magnificent display with such a range of colours for a number of years.

We had yet another lovely day out when we went to London, Ontario, for a get-together with my cousin, Don, and his wife, Claire. With them spending three months in Florida during the winter, then being avid golfers during the summer, we hadn't seen them since Don's mother's 100th birthday party last year. As well, Don and Claire had been away most of August and early September on a long trip out West, which included an Alaskan cruise, to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Although in the past we usually met halfway at the fine dining restaurant, Eddington's, in Exeter, we couldn't this time because the restaurant was closed that day. So, we drove to London, and after some light refreshments at their house, we all went to a stately old mansion—the Idlewyld Inn—that had been converted into an inn and upscale restaurant. The interior was grand with high ceilings and beautiful woodwork. We thought that the food was a bit overpriced for what it was, but it was that sort of a place, so we weren't surprised. Anyhow, the food was very good, and so was the service. Following lunch, we went back to their house for a while and did some more catching up until it was time to go home.

We had only one theatre outing in September and that was to St. Jacobs to see *The Love List*. It was a comedy and extremely funny. We thoroughly enjoyed it and ranked it high on our list. Our last but one theatre outing for this year was when we went to St. Jacobs to see the whodunit, *Sleuth*. Although we had seen the play at least twice before, we had to see it again as it held a special significance for us. In February, 1974, when I returned to England for the first time after emigrating in November, 1973, I went on a British Airways Show Tour. As well as the two flights, the price included hotel accommodation in London and tickets to see four shows. Not surprisingly, Monica took time off work to spend the week in London. Then, instead of going to four shows, we managed to get tickets for both of us to see two plays, and one of them was *Sleuth*. It was also during that week that we got engaged. Anyhow, when we saw the play again in St. Jacobs, it was as if we were seeing it for the first time. Both of us thought that we remembered the plot, but it turned out that we actually remembered very little of it, so we were kept guessing right up until the end. It was another excellent show and was definitely a high note for this year's theatre season.

There was an extra show put on as a fundraiser for the theatre company. It was another impersonation type show called *Hank Williams 'Live' 1952*, and performed at the Grand Bend auditorium. Although the actor impersonating Hank Williams was very good, and he had a talented group of musicians backing him, we found the first half of the show rather flat. However, it came alive in the second half with many hit songs featured, and the audience joined in by clapping in time with the music.

A busy autumn

After doing well all summer, our front garden was looking so sad that we pulled up all the petunias the first opportunity we had. Some of them had grown into really big plants. As for the moon-flowers, they were a big disappointment. Despite giving them lots of TLC, we didn't get one flower! We got plenty of buds, but it took ages for them to grow and look as if they might burst open, but later they were a sorry sight and, like the petunias, they got pulled up.

The weather during the last couple of weeks in October was relatively good, and some days were nice enough to make a few journeys to the hiking trails; the autumn leaves being most colourful. One of our local trails—the Maitland Woods—was particularly attractive, as well as the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART)..

We also considered going further afield, and decided to drive to Owen Sound's Harrison Park and hike the Inglis Falls Conservation Area trail. Although we try to make this trip twice a year—every spring to see the wildflowers, and again to see the autumn colours—we hadn't been there at all this year. So, even though we knew that there wouldn't be much colour left that far north, we still went because it made a very nice day out. As well, we knew that we would still enjoy the hike, which we most certainly did. About our only disappointment was that we didn't see any wildlife, but the waterfall was spectacular.

A significant milestone in the recovery from the 2011 Goderich tornado disaster took place on Friday, October 26th. It was the grand opening of the opticians' (optometrists') new premises. Hundreds of buildings had been damaged by the tornado—some more extensively than others—but a lot of them had been repaired, and gradually the shops and businesses housed in them reopened. However, the building housing the opticians was one of the many that were so severely damaged that it had to be demolished. Now, fourteen months later, it was the first of those demolished buildings to be completed and occupied.

I had received a couple of letters from my father. It was still early days following my stepmother's passing, but he seemed to be coping well. Apparently he was receiving support from caregivers, and indicated that my presence wasn't necessary. Actually, I was glad that friends had been rallying around and helping him in many ways. He had companions visiting most days making sure he had enough to eat, and had also joined a 'neighbourhood circle' of local citizens—presumably some kind of social group.

Looking back on October, I thought that it would be a quieter one than we had had for a while, but we ended up having a busy time, as on November 4th, we recognised my 39th anniversary of emigration to Canada. The fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21, was the celebratory venue. We pushed the boat out and

had a very nice three-course dinner complete with a bottle of chilled *rosé* wine. The dessert was served with a lit candle, and a representation of a red maple leaf in raspberry sauce decorated the slice of cake.

The annual Remembrance Day service was held at our war memorial under beautiful weather conditions. Even though the war memorial was located in the tornado ravaged town centre, it escaped undamaged. The park surrounding the monument was being restored, but an area around the war memorial was cordoned off so that dignitaries, veterans, service personnel and the general public could assemble for the service. With it being a Sunday, there was a bigger crowd than usual, and it was a moving occasion. Several soldiers, who were present and had served in Afghanistan, were recognised and applauded by the crowd. At the end of the service, wreaths were laid at the foot of the war memorial. Then, after everyone in the parade had left the park, the general public was invited to place their poppies on the wreaths.

The weather was fairly typical for this time of the year with the temperature climbing a few degrees above freezing during the day, and dropping below freezing overnight. Also, there was the seemingly never ending cloudy days, broken only by an occasional nice one when a shining sun boosted the temperature slightly. There had been several falls of snow, including one with frequent squalls that left us with an accumulation of 4 in. (10 cm). We walked down to the harbour and along the boardwalk on one of the nice days, and in all the years we have lived here, we have never seen the lake water level so low.

Another significant event in the town's recovery from the tornado took place on the morning of Saturday, November 10th. Because the entire tree canopy was destroyed by the twister, Courthouse Park in the downtown core had been a bare, wide open space. Well, that changed at the beginning of October when reconstruction finally got underway. The first step involved the removal of all the topsoil, which had pieces of glass and metal still embedded in it, and the installation of new water and sewer services. As well, underground cables were laid and new lampposts erected. Once all that work had been completed, the next step—the planting of 150 or so trees—could begin, and the big event was the arrival of the first batch of trees.

They came from various tree nurseries in the Niagara area, and were transported here in a convoy of flatbed trucks, which was escorted by the Provincial Police. Anyhow, when the convoy reached the town limits, one of the town's fire engines and a utility truck—both with lights flashing and sirens blaring—joined the convoy and accompanied it as it made its way to The Square. This was meant to be a grand entry and morale booster for the town's population, since a big deal had been made about the rejuvenation of Courthouse Park. It was greeted by a large crowd, including the Mayor and other town officials, and we watched as the trees from the first truck were unloaded. In anticipation of planting two of the trees as soon as they arrived, the holes had already been dug and the crane needed to lift them into the holes was already in place. A big cheer went up as the first tree was placed in its hole. By then though, we were thoroughly chilled, so we didn't wait to watch the second tree being planted, but it was done that afternoon. The remaining trees, 30 to 40 feet (9 to 12 m) tall, were being planted at a rate of three a day. They hoped to have them all in the ground by Christmas, and they seemed to be well on the way to achieving that goal.

That evening, we went to Hessenland Country Inn for a German-style *Novemberfest* dinner and dance. The owners always used to have an *Oktoberfest* event years ago, but it lost its popularity and they stopped

holding it. Anyhow, this year they decided to have a change and brought it back as *Novemberfest*. It turned out to be a very good decision. There were about 150 guests, and, after the welcoming speech, we indulged in a generous buffet dinner of salad, various meats and veggies, and a delicious dessert of apple strudel and homemade cheesecake. Genuine German *Pauliner* draught pilsner beer from Munich was abundant, and went down well with all the “*Ein Prosit!*” toasts during the evening. Following the dinner, the *Edelweiss Trio* played German music that included polkas and waltzes. Monica and I started the ball rolling on the dance floor, as we kicked up our heels to the beat of the trio’s selection of traditional tunes. Soon, others joined us and the party started in earnest.

We were also pleased to meet Jim and Helga Dunn sharing our table. They were like-minded and engaged in meaningful conversation. It turned out that Jim knew many of my old work colleagues through various professional channels; so it was something of a small world as we discussed a number of mutual acquaintances. Jim and Helga spent many years in Germany, and we compared recollections of places all four of us knew in the country; especially Heidelberg and other towns in the Black Forest area.

The following week, we had lunch at the fine dining restaurant, Eddington’s, in Exeter. As it was nice and sunny when we left the restaurant, we decided to go for a hike on the McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail where we sometimes see white squirrels. Even though we didn’t see any that day, we still enjoyed our hike.

The landlord’s son-in-law—a building contractor with a good reputation—arrived and installed a new bedroom window. The previous installation, which replaced the original window, was a botched job and we had had moisture and mould problems ever since. This contractor installed our lounge window and did a first-rate job. The next and final one for us is the den window—now 26 years old and has lost all its insulation qualities, but that won’t be done until the spring.

The next special event on our calendar was my 67th birthday, and this year we celebrated it twice. The first time was before the actual day when we got together with our friends, Robin and Barb Hewitt, their young daughter, Jessica, and mutual friend, Paul Dare, for dinner at the Park House tavern. Being a Friday evening, the place was packed, but that just added to the friendly atmosphere. We had a great time and lots of laughs. Then, as we were leaving, Robin and Barb invited us to their place for a Christmas get-together on December 23rd.

The other celebration on the actual day was a more intimate affair with just the two of us going to the fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21. Actually, we had the restaurant almost to ourselves, because there was a big sporting event taking place that evening, and people stayed home to watch it on TV. Anyhow, that time we started with different appetizers, but both of us chose the beef tenderloin for our *entrée*. Not surprisingly, we decided to share dessert, which they again divided in the kitchen and then put a candle on my portion. I also received a glass of port compliments of the owner.

I received an upbeat letter from my father which was a very good sign. Of course, he was still going through the grieving process, but his resiliency came through in his letter. At least he hadn’t totally withdrawn into a shell, and was now meeting other locals at social teas every week. He had taxed and insured his



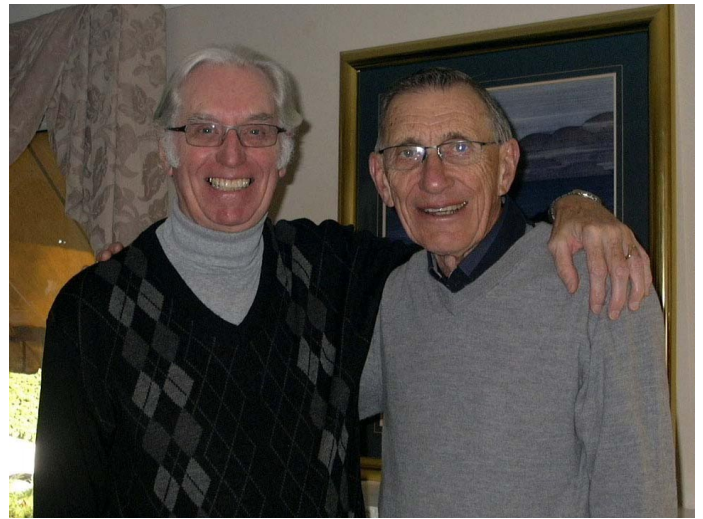
'Tree of Remembrance' Sculpture on the 1st Tornado Anniversary, Goderich, Ontario, August, 2012.



Local 1863 Retirees Club Visit to the St. Marys Cement Co., St. Marys, Ontario, September, 2012.



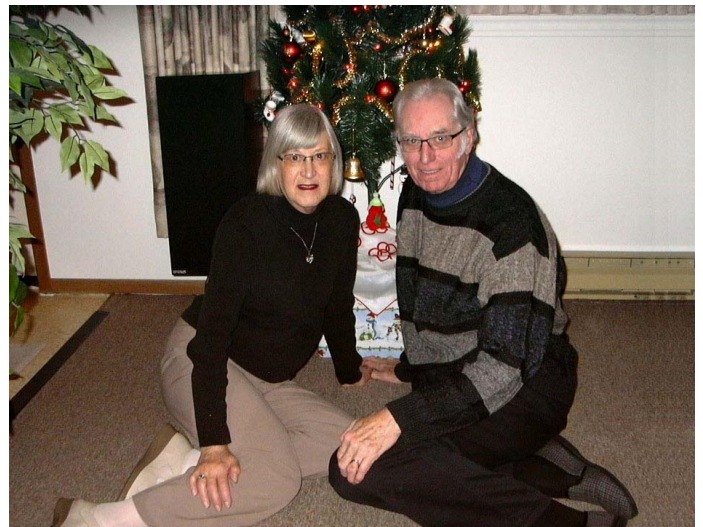
The Simulated Rain Forest, Ontario Science Centre, Toronto, Ontario, September, 2012.



Barry and Cousin Don, at Don and Claire's House in London, Ontario, October, 2012.



The First Batch of New Trees Arrive at Courthouse Park, Goderich, Ontario, November, 2012.



Monica and Barry with their Christmas Tree on Christmas Day, Goderich, Ontario, December, 2012.

car for another year so, despite his age and minor physical handicap, he still managed to drive around town and even went shopping at the supermarket. A great deal of fortitude at age 89!

Near the end of November, the weather changed dramatically. From mild temperatures to winterlike conditions and 4 in. (10 cm) of snow virtually overnight, it was a rude awakening. The onset of winter, however, was good reason for working on my memoirs. So far, I had finished Chapter 7, with Chapter 8 now underway. So far, I had reached August, 1976, but with a great deal of information to digest and distil before reaching the end of that particular year.

A snowy Christmas

We had a great time when we went to Robin and Barb's house for our Christmas get-together with them, Jessica and two other friends. Later, we had a snow shower that brought about a 'white' Christmas. As for Christmas Day, we spent it at home quietly by ourselves. Monica had made our cake several weeks ago, but didn't go to the bother of making a pudding, and bought one that tasted just as good as homemade from our local bakery. For the first time ever, we had a fresh turkey. I always got a frozen one from work every year, even after I had retired. However, when Volvo closed the plant in 2009, that was the end of that tradition. So, we bought frozen ones from our local supermarket. However, we had been getting less and less from there after an independent butcher opened a store on The Square just over two years ago. Unfortunately, it was one of the many stores damaged by the tornado, and was closed for several months while repairs were carried out. It eventually reopened just before last Christmas.

After spending a lovely Christmas Day doing exactly as we pleased, we went to Shirley and Norris' on Boxing Day. There was only nine of us this year as one of their daughters and her friend had already returned to Toronto in readiness for work the next day, and the threat of wintry weather had deterred Shirley's younger brother and his wife from coming. Anyhow, we still had a nice time and enjoyed our once-a-year gathering with the family members who were there.

Our new windows proved to be most efficient. They were a boon to us as we only use electricity for heating, and it could be quite expensive at times, especially with our extreme weather. We weren't experiencing very low temperatures at the end of December, but we knew they weren't far away as winter progressed into 2013.

On New Year's Eve, we went to dinner at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant. With it being a special occasion, it was a four-course meal and a set menu. The *entrée* was something that both of us would have most likely chosen—roasted beef tenderloin with a lobster tail. Before the *entrée*, we had a white asparagus soup, which was followed by a gold beet salad. The dessert was lemon cheesecake with a raspberry sauce, and served with berries and pieces of chocolate almond brittle. We were home soon after 10 o'clock. However, this year, we weren't tempted to go to bed, as we were looking forward to watching the old movie, *Doctor in the House*, and we found it just as hilarious as nearly 60 years ago when we first saw it. Anyhow, when it ended, we got some nibbles and opened a bottle of *Henkel Trocken* sparkling wine to toast in the New Year. Not surprisingly, once we had finished drinking the wine, we soon headed for bed.

Slow start to the year 2013

A part from a couple of days at the beginning of the new year, we weren't very active in January. We had our usual monthly get-together with friends, Tina and Marris Bos, with the four of us going out for lunch. We also went out for lunch the following day, which was a gorgeous one—a rarity this winter. We decided to go for a hike, but being unable to make up our minds whether to go along the boardwalk or over the old railway bridge across the Maitland River and along the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART), we went to the Park House tavern to think about it over lunch. We were still undecided when we left the Park House, but as soon as we saw the frozen snow and ice on the trail leading to the bridge, we knew it had to be the boardwalk. As it turned out, we were really glad that we had chosen the boardwalk because it was really beautiful down by the lake.

Late in January, the temperature plummeted overnight with the arrival of an arctic air mass. After a balmy 37 deg.F (3 deg.C), and with all the accumulated snow having disappeared, the high temperature on one day topped out at a bone chilling 7 deg.F (-14 deg.C)!

General news at the beginning of 2013 was such that Canada had weathered the recession better than all the other G8 countries in the world. However, we weren't immune to rising prices, having to pay more for fresh produce during the winter because it is too cold to grow it here. Greenhouse production usually stops as well during the winter because it is too costly to heat the greenhouses. So, such things as broccoli and cauliflower come from California, while tomatoes and sweet peppers come from Mexico. As for fuel, electricity prices went up at the beginning of November, 2012, but it was a fairly small increase. The cost of a litre of petrol (gas) came down in recent weeks. We were paying between \$1.30 and \$1.40 a litre at the end of last summer, whereas it went as low as \$1.14 just before Christmas.

I had a letter from my father. He appeared to be doing fine, and had a reasonable Christmas in the company of new friends from the neighbourhood social club. I wrote to him again this week to try and maintain morale.

My memoirs had reached halfway through 1978. The photographic record for the years 1977 to 2002 were purely colour slide transparencies, so I had to use a new system to digitally photorecord them. Since I was adding only selected images, it was a case of sorting out all the likely candidates and projecting them onto a screen. I could then use a digital camera set up on a tripod to take a snapshot of each projected slide. It was a bit of trial and error, but I worked out a reasonable setup.

There was a lot of flu around, and it was a particularly virulent strain this year. Fortunately, we seemed to have kept clear of it so far, but it was bad in the cities, with several fatalities, and hospitals isolating wards and restricting visitors, etc. We did have our inoculations early, so hoped to stay protected. In general, we kept well; just a few aches and twinges here and there. I had an eyesight test that resulted in a minor change to my prescription. The optician (optometrist) said that the vision in my left eye was affected by a growing cataract, but apparently it was too early for an operation, and it would be years until the abnormality reached that stage.

Political and monetary changes

O ntario's political scene changed dramatically after the latest provincial elections ushered in a new premier and cabinet. An openly gay woman, Kathleen Wynne, became the replacement premier. Her revised cabinet was larger than the previous one, and this irked the opposition parties. There were many flashpoint issues at that time; e.g., the teachers work to rule, and the latest political scandal dealing with the wholesale squandering of taxpayers' money on dismantling two partially constructed natural gas powered electricity generating stations. We wondered how the new government was going to react.

Starting February 4th, 2013, the Canadian one cent (1¢) coin was gradually phased out of circulation. They were still legal tender, though, and while people and businesses still had some in their change, they would continue to be used. Banks would also continue to accept them. However, as they weren't being minted and distributed any longer, they would eventually disappear. Once all the coins had gone, the total cost of any purchases would be rounded up or down. For example, \$1.01 and \$1.02 would go down while \$1.03 and \$1.04 would go up. Only cash transactions would be affected and it wouldn't apply to anything done electronically.

We expected our first blast of real wintry weather to hit us, and hit us it did! Not only did we have blizzard-like conditions, but it was also extremely cold. The high temperature for February 8th was a bone chilling 9 deg.F (-13 deg.C), or -11 deg.F (-24 deg.C) with the wind chill! Although the temperature moderated slightly over the following days, the snow kept coming, and by the weekend, we had quite an accumulation. That then turned into a horrible, slushy mess before disappearing completely during a brief mild spell near the end of the month.

We were hoping that the weather would quieten down, as we were looking forward to meeting our friends, Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards. They used to live in Goderich, but moved to Stratford about 18 months ago. The arrangement was for them to visit here first, and then the four of us have lunch at the fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21. Rosemarie and Geoff had clear roads for their drive here, and it was great seeing them again after so long. Monica's 74th birthday was recognised at the same restaurant on Valentine's Day. The place was packed all evening, and people were still arriving as we were leaving at 8:30 p.m. Anyhow, we had an excellent meal as usual, and this time with plenty of choices, which was different to New Year's when it was a set meal.

Even though it wasn't sunny when we got up on the last day of February, we were still greeted by a most beautiful sight. Wet snow overnight had transformed everywhere into a winter wonderland. We just had to go out for a hike, so knowing that it wouldn't be very long before the snow started falling off the trees and bushes, we grabbed a quick breakfast and left the apartment. The beauty around us as we walked up our road was breathtaking. By the time we had reached the old railway bridge across the Maitland River, the temperature had risen just enough that the snow was starting to melt, and the winter wonderland was disappearing. Even so, it was very pleasant, so we decided to continue with our hike along the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART). Although most of the snow had gone off the trees, it was still deep on the ground, but quite hard packed, so it was fairly easy going and we had a lovely hike.

I received another letter from my father, and he seemed to be well. He had taxed and insured his car for another year, plus renewed his 'Blue Card', so he could park in the disabled drivers' spots. He was still emotional about the loss of my stepmother, but enjoyed a modicum of companionship from various friends and neighbours. He will be 90 years old at the end of April.

March came in like a lamb, but still with snow flurries and a brisk wind from the north. However, above zero temperatures were being forecasted, which meant the maple tree sap would start to run for the maple syrup industry. Already the Belmore Maple Syrup Festival, the rural event that we usually go to, was advertised. Fortunately, with all the wintry weather that we have had so far this year, we haven't needed to go on any out-of-town trips. In fact, it had been over three months since we last put any petrol (gas) in our car!

We recognised the beginning of March by enjoying a nice evening with our friends, Robin and Barb Hewitt and their young daughter, Jessica. They met up with us at the Park House tavern for dinner, a few jars and lots of chatter. It was just as well we had a reservation as the pub was full. I had one of my favourite meals there—liver and onions.

At this time, the Canadian political front was experiencing all kinds of upheavals. The newly elected Ontario provincial government premier was not very popular with the opposition parties, and the call for a general election in the province wouldn't be a surprise. The same situation existed in British Columbia, which also had a female premier. Defections from one party to another was rife in Québec, and all the Senate members were being questioned about irregularities in their claims for certain allowances.

We had an e-mail from our goddaughter, Lindsey. She and her boyfriend had bought a house and hoped to move in July. Her current townhouse was now being rented out, and her boyfriend's condominium was sold at a modest profit. They had known one another for quite some time, but only decided to move in together within the last few months. For some unknown reason, they decided not to live in either of their own properties. So, they looked around, and after a couple of disappointments, found their dream home in Georgetown, a dormitory community about a two and a half hour drive from Goderich. They were lucky, as current real estate transactions have become stagnant due to new mortgage restrictions, so certainly not a sellers' market.

During a brief mild spell, we lost practically all the accumulated snow, and our front lawn was visible for the first time in weeks. We were hoping that we had seen the last of the snow for this winter, but that wasn't going to happen. We had a lot more, and on the first official day of spring, it wasn't very long before the clouds gathered and it started snowing again. It snowed almost nonstop all the next day as well, and by that evening the snow was considerably deep. After a few days of just above freezing temperatures, however, nearly all the snow thawed, and any residue was washed away by rain.

While watching our snow gradually disappear, we started to think that we might soon go on our first out-of-town trip of this year. We found out about two museums in the Kitchener-Waterloo area that sounded interesting and worth visiting. Occasionally we made a day trip to Kitchener for shopping. However, be-

cause there were two museums to visit—as well as a bit of shopping that we wanted to do—we decided to make a mini trip of it and stay two nights in a hotel. We thought about going either the last week of March or the first week of April, but when heavy snow was predicted for the March week, we deferred going then.

After a particularly stormy day, the weather changed dramatically overnight, and late in the week it was absolutely gorgeous. So, as we hadn't gone away, we decided to at least go out for the day. We went to Stratford, stopping on the way in the village of Blyth to have lunch. We had heard favourable reports about a new restaurant there, so decided to try it. The reports were accurate, and the food was very good. Following lunch, we continued to Stratford to do some shopping, and came back home very pleased with our first out-of-town trip of the year.

The snow didn't last long, and it was nice with a lot of sunshine, but still cool—only 39 deg.F (4 deg.C). Despite it being cool, we just had to go out for a hike, and chose the trail over the old railway bridge across the Maitland River and along the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART) rather than the boardwalk, as we thought it would be too cold by the lake. It was a lovely hike, and we had the trail almost to ourselves.

At the beginning of April, I received a letter from my father, who seemed to be relatively content in his own world. Unfortunately, his principal visitors had health issues of their own, and did not see him as often as they could. The neighbourhood social club ensured he had companions every Wednesday, plus the tea and cakes served at their sessions. Social Services and other support workers helped with the chores, and he watched a lot of TV, plus what was available on his VCR and DVD equipment.

We had made plans for our second out-of-town trip—this time to the 46th Belmore Maple Syrup Festival. However, bad weather put an end to those plans. We were warned to prepare for a late winter storm with strong winds, ice pellets and freezing rain, which could result in widespread power interruptions. When we got up, ice pellets were already falling, and they continued to come down until about mid-morning. After that, it remained overcast and chilly, except that the wind gradually grew stronger throughout the afternoon and evening. We had some freezing rain during the following night that may have caused two power cuts. Combined, they lasted a little over two hours, but we were very fortunate. Some places not far away had power outages lasting as long as four days, because several hours of freezing rain had caused extensive damage to trees and brought down power lines.

During one of our power cuts, we heard a loud thud. It was no good looking out the window, as with no street lights it was pitch black outside. Anyhow, in the morning we saw what had caused the noise. One of the two main branches of a huge, hundred year old maple tree directly across the road from us had come crashing down. It also did some minor damage to our neighbour's house, but if it had fallen in our direction, it would have brought down the power lines serving this road. We would then have been without electricity for a considerable length of time; so again we were very fortunate.

The last two weeks of the month were very busy ones. We eventually went on our mini trip to the Kitchener-Waterloo area, and although we enjoyed ourselves, we came home thoroughly exhausted. We

stayed over two nights at the Holiday Inn, and as planned we spent one whole day at the Waterloo Region Museum, which was one of the two museums that we discovered over the winter. It was practically brand new—having been built in 2010—and was an outstanding museum that gave visitors a very good insight into the history of Waterloo Region, from the time when First Nations people inhabited the area, to European settlement and industrialization, to the vibrant hi-tech community of today. The museum also had two small galleries for displaying temporary exhibitions, the current ones being *Teens through the Ages* and *Come to the Circus*. It took us virtually the whole day to absorb the exhibits—and that was without exploring the pioneer village (which we had seen on a previous trip).

We weren't as lucky with the weather on the third day of our trip, as it was already raining when we left the hotel to go to the other museum—the City of Waterloo Museum—which, strangely enough, was located in a shopping mall in Waterloo. Even though we knew that it was a fairly small museum, we were still expecting something bigger than it was. We thought it very disappointing, as it contained artifacts that weren't totally related to the city's history, so we left and drove home. At Stratford, the temperature dropped and we had wet snow for the rest of our journey. By the weekend the weather had turned warm again. We had our friends, Neil and Rynie Verbruggen, here for dinner, and it was warm enough at 9 o'clock in the evening that we still had all our windows and front door open.

According to a message on the monthly electricity bill, we were going to have a planned power interruption from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on the following day, April 28th. The entire town and some of the surrounding area was being upgraded with an improved electricity supply through a new multi-million dollar substation and transmission infrastructure that, in part, was a result of the tornado damage. Without any heat for eight hours, we were very glad that it was warm. Even though we couldn't have any coffee or toast, we had a reasonable breakfast, after which we went out for a walk. We got back about 12.30 p.m. and settled down to read for an hour and a half until the power was restored. That was supposed to be at 2:00 p.m. However, 2 o'clock came and went, and so did 3 o'clock. By then, we were getting really fed up, so it was a big relief when we heard the fridge start up about ten minutes later. Not surprisingly, the first thing we did was to put the kettle on and make a pot of tea.

As it turned out to be a week of rain at the end of April, we carried out our annual spring cleaning and decorating exercise. Some interior window trim needed another coat of paint, and the bathroom was stripped from top to bottom and repainted; plus new fixtures installed. We chose a slightly different colour paint this time—a bit less creamy. It felt good to have got it all done, and we were pleased with the new paint colour and new accent pieces. The den would be the last room for any maintenance, as the landlord indicated that he might be installing a new window sometime this year. The current one leaked like a sieve because the double-glazing was old and inefficient. The new windows installed last year were excellent and contributed to our low heating bill.

Since the arrival of May, we had a week of almost summer-like weather with lots of sunshine and high temperatures. It was amazing to watch how fast the trees, shrubs and flowers changed in that time. A week ago, hardly any of the trees had leaves on them, and now many were in full leaf. Some of the flowering trees and shrubs, such as magnolias and forsythia, had also come into bloom; also daffodils, tulips

and other spring bulbs. The flowering cherry and crab apple trees were showing signs of colour, so hopefully they won't be spoiled by the possibility of night frosts before the warm trend resumes.

With so many flowers coming into bloom in the gardens, we thought it time to check on the wildflowers, so went for a hike through a nearby wooded area. We discovered that the trout lilies were almost finished, but were delighted to find the trilliums at their best. Then on the following day, we decided to go to the McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail in Exeter and hike there. We were surprised to find big patches of trout lilies still blooming, and not so surprising, masses of trilliums everywhere. We really enjoyed that hike.

Now that the trees were coming into leaf, the newly planted ones in the town centre were helping to relieve the bareness of Courthouse Park, still under restoration with new concrete pavements (sidewalks) and other features. The ravages of the tornado could still be seen in a few places, but rumours had it that the biggest empty property space downtown would soon be redeveloped.

The political situation in Ontario became a total shambles, with a spring general election being a distinct possibility. The minority Liberal provincial government tried to shore up the economy and wriggle out of massive blunders that had cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars due to total ineptitude. The two opposition parties (New Democrats and Conservatives) objected to the recently tabled provincial budget, and if the party that held the balance of power decided to vote against the budget's recommendations, then we would be heading to the polls.

Overseas visitors

The latest installment of my memoirs brought the reader up to the end of 1980. The projected colour slide transparencies, which were captured using the digital camera and then edited, seemed to be working well. However, my venerable Panasonic Lumix digital camera was now eleven years old, and while it still worked fine, probably needed to be pensioned off in favour of current technology. I didn't need all the fancy features, but not bare bones either, so the search was on for a compromise, and I started to make a market survey for a replacement.

Much to our disgust, after getting through the winter without succumbing to either a cold or the flu, both of us had coughs and colds. I was the first with a cold, and after the usual three or four days with constant sneezing and a streaming nose, I developed a hacking cough, which took a lot to shake off. As for Monica, she was just beginning to think that she had managed to avoid getting my cold when, all of a sudden, her nose started to stream. Thankfully, though, her cold was less severe than mine, and didn't last as many days, which was a good thing since we intended to meet up with some out-of-town friends and didn't want to jeopardize the trip because of illness.

We started with our first live theatre outing of the season where we saw a musical revue called *The Songs of Sinatra*. Onstage were seven all-male singers and an accompanying combo. There were no female performers (hence no colourful costumes), and the men wore tuxedos through the entire show. Just some coloured lighting effects, otherwise it was monochrome throughout, which I found uninspiring. The premise

of the show—the life and times of Frank Sinatra—was well documented in song and the occasional dialogue/slapstick. The singers, themselves, ranged from the weak to the outstanding, and, in general, provided good entertainment. Of course, I remembered all the songs, and we have been to various productions (*Guys and Dolls*, *Pal Joey*, etc.) where some of them were showstoppers. Even some of ‘Ol’ Blue Eyes’ maudlin love ballads still had their nostalgic feeling, and well known lighthearted songs, such as *I’ve Got the World on a String*, brought back memories of the late 1950s when they were stock numbers on *The Black and White Minstrel Show*.

Then, as usual when we go to the theatre, we completed our day out by having dinner. We went back to the restaurant, Part II Bistro, in the village of Blyth, as it was on our way home and we were impressed by the food when we had lunch there on our way to Stratford a few weeks before. However, our second time there was somewhat of a disappointment. Needless to say, we won’t be rushing back although we may eventually give the restaurant another try.

Our next three out-of-town trips were all to meet friends for lunch, and, by coincidence, they all had a connection to Coventry. Firstly, we went to Crabby Joe’s family restaurant in Sarnia to meet Diane and Mike Knight from Windsor. Mike hadn’t long returned from a six week trip to New Zealand and Australia. He spent the first two weeks visiting friends in New Zealand before being joined by his brother, who lives in the Falkland Islands. The two of them then toured around both countries, finishing their trip with the train journey from Adelaide to Perth across the southern Australian outback. As for the Coventry connection, Diane is a Coventry girl like Monica, and even lived not far from her.

Not having heard from her former Barr’s Hill school friend since Christmas, you can imagine Monica’s surprise at receiving a message from Fay Wathen to tell us that she and her husband, Brian, were visiting Canada and staying with their son and his girlfriend in Kitchener. Fay wanted to know if we happened to be going to the St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market. Anyhow, she suggested the four of us could meet for lunch at Benjamin’s, which was the restaurant where we often ate after going to the theatre. We wrote back saying that we weren’t going to miss the opportunity of seeing them again, and would be more than happy to make a special trip to St. Jacobs. So, it was arranged that we would all meet for lunch at Benjamin’s. It was lovely seeing them again, and the time went by far too quickly.

Having been out of town two days in a row, we were glad to have four days at home to catch up on things before our next out-of-town trip, which was to Woodstock to meet our longtime friends from Coventry, Roger and Sue Moore, and their daughter, Lindsey. Sadly, Roger had developed a heart problem since we saw them last year. It was originally diagnosed as *atrial fibrillation*, but now the doctors thought that it could be *angina*. He had what he called ‘episodes’, and they occurred at random times and seemingly for no reason. When we arranged the get-together with Lindsey, she had made us more aware of her father’s problem—Roger hadn’t said too much in his messages—so we were expecting to see quite a change in him. However, if we hadn’t been told, we wouldn’t have thought that there was anything wrong with him, and everything was fine for the first couple of hours or so. We had our lunch and were sitting chatting, when all of a sudden Roger went very quiet. He was having one of his ‘episodes.’ Unfortunately, Sue got very emotionally upset every time he had one which, to us, didn’t help and only made the situation worse. Thankfully,

it was only a mild attack, and he recovered fairly quickly. We then continued chatting for a while longer until it was time to say our good-byes and go our separate ways. It was great seeing them all again, but as we were driving home, we couldn't but help wonder if that was perhaps our last get-together.

I still hadn't done any more about replacing my digital camera, as we lacked a dedicated photographic shop in town, and the nearest of any consequence was in Stratford. I wasn't getting too excited as the Panasonic Lumix continued to work fine, despite being held together by electrician's tape. The quality Leica lens was the camera's saving grace.

I temporarily put aside my memoirs. I had finished 1980, but couldn't get into the groove to continue; largely because not much happened in the beginning of 1981 to create a seamless introduction. Since then, I picked up the threads and added a few facts to overcome the vacuum, and now should be good to continue with the saga. I even borrowed a *Memoir Writing for Dummies* book from the library to see if there were any salient tips to help overcome 'writer's block.'

'Flaming' June?

It did not turn out to be a 'flaming' June. Instead, the weather kept going from one extreme to the other, with the temperature doing the same. We had a few days of lovely sunshine and warm temperatures, and then they were followed by several cooler days with cloudy, and sometimes rainy, skies. It was quite foggy, too, and it persisted most of the day with fog coming in off the lake. It eventually cleared, and we had brief periods of sunshine before the clouds gathered and the heavens opened. The rain was torrential at times, and came down heavy. People had just about had enough of the rain, and the farmers also wanted it to stop and the sun to come out to help the crops grow.

We went on an out-of-town trip to Exeter to have lunch at Eddington's fine dining restaurant. Then, following our lovely lunch, even though it was a cloudy day with showers in the forecast, we decided to risk going for a hike, but not do the entire length of the McNaughton Trail. It turned out to be a good decision, as the first drops of rain fell just as we were nearly back to the car.

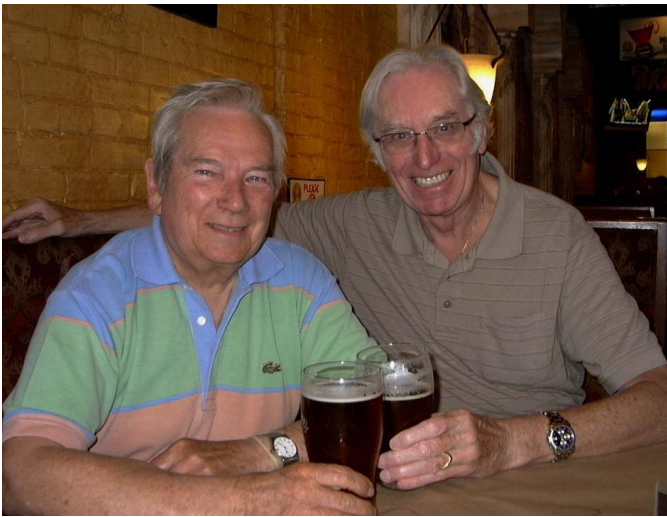
We had a bit of an emergency on the day of Monica's emigration anniversary when we discovered a large pool of water seeping through the wall from the adjacent apartment. The pool size was increasing as the water collected on our kitchen floor covering (a kind of linoleum). I went immediately next door to alert my neighbour (an elderly man with disabilities). Fortunately, his grandson was visiting, and between us we traced the source of the flood. Apparently, the hot water heater tank had ruptured, and water was constantly leaking onto the floor in the utility room. The accumulated water then found its way through the partition wall into our kitchen. We shut off the mains then called the landlord, but had to leave a message. Soon, however, one of the local plumbers arrived and assessed the situation. I left him to replace the hot water heater and returned where Monica and I mopped up the mess in our apartment. Fortunately, the damage was minimal and didn't affect any of our personal possessions. Any accumulated wetness eventually dried up. We were fortunate in discovering the problem early, because if the same thing had happened while we were away, or at night, the mess would've been horrendous.



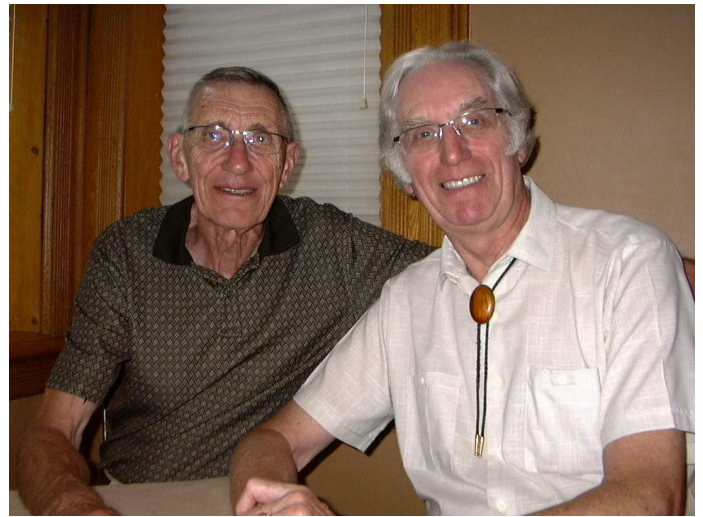
Aftermath of Major Winter Snowstorm, Cambria Rd., Goderich, Ontario, February, 2013.



Barr's Hill School Friends, Fay Wathen and Monica, St. Jacobs, Ontario, May, 2013.



Roger and Barry at Crabby Joe's Restaurant, Woodstock, Ontario, June, 2013.



Cousin Don and Barry at Eddington's Restaurant, Exeter, Ontario, June, 2013.



Preliminary Work Installing Steel Beams to Support the CPR Station, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2013.



Moving of the CPR Station from its Original Foundations, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2013.

On June 14th, Monica's 39th year of arrival in Canada, we both celebrated at our favourite fine dining restaurant. So, at Thyme on 21, we pushed the boat out with steaks and a bottle of Australian *shiraz*. Peter King, the owner and *maitre d'*, was very welcoming, and a good evening was had by all.

As we had such success with petunias in our bit of garden the previous year, we decided to have some again this year. Having had a spell of lovely weather at the beginning of May, we thought that we had seen our last frost, and that by the Victoria Day public holiday long weekend, May 20th, it would be safe to buy some petunias and get them planted. Not so! We had frost two nights running about a week later, but even though all the roofs were white both mornings, somehow our petunias survived without being nipped by the frost, and started to put on a bit of a show. Happily, only a very few of the 150 or so trees, which were planted in Courthouse Park last autumn to replace the ones destroyed by the tornado, didn't survive the winter. It was so nice this spring to go up to The Square and see the park gradually become 'green' once again as all the trees came into leaf for residents and visitors to enjoy once more.

We originally hoped to buy a tree as a living legacy to Monica's first cousin, Trecia, who died on August 30th, 2011, at age 79, but ended up making a donation to the Goderich Tree Fund in her memory. That fund helped offset some of the cost of the replacement trees in Courthouse Park. At the time, our Town Council was adamant at not having trees with individual memorial plaques, and a suggestion to erect a Wall of Memory in the park didn't receive its approval either. So, you can imagine our surprise and delight to receive a letter from the Deputy Mayor informing us that there was, in fact, going to be a plaque recognising the donors, and requested that we advise Town Hall what name we would like on the plaque to acknowledge our donation.

After being on the go so much at the end of May and the beginning of June, we took the remainder of June at a more leisurely pace and went out of town only once. We drove to Exeter to meet my first cousin, Don, and his wife, Claire, for dinner at Eddington's fine dining restaurant. We hadn't seen them since last October, and so had a lot of catching up to do. During the conversation, we happened to mention our get-together with Roger and Sue Moore, and that Roger had *atrial fibrillation*. Claire really surprised us by saying that she has had it for ten years. The topic had never come up before, and as Claire was such an active person and worked hard at keeping fit by going to the gym every day, we never suspected that she had any kind of a heart problem. Anyhow, from what Claire told us, we felt more hopeful for Roger, and that it was just a matter of finding the medication that worked best for him.

Whilst looking for a replacement digital camera, I researched a Nikon product (model Coolpix L350) that was an advertised special. Being a new model, there were no reviews on the Internet, but I inspected one in the store. Although it had many advanced features, I considered it not very robust in construction, and concluded that my current Panasonic Lumix was really all I needed. Despite its age and incidental damage that had been temporarily fixed, it was still serviceable and easy to use.

There were the usual celebrations right across the country on Canada Day—the July 1st national holiday. Here in Goderich, the main attractions were the fireworks display on the previous evening and the parade in the afternoon, but a lot of other events also took place over the long weekend. Unfor-

tunately, the majority of them were just repeats of the previous year. So, having been to them in the past, we decided to give all but one a miss this year. The one we went to was the *Proud to be Canadian Breakfast* put on by the Knights of Columbus, with the help of a women's group from the church, to raise funds for their organisation. Actually, it was more of a brunch than a breakfast, because with sausages, scrambled eggs, home fries, pancakes, toast, juice, coffee and tea to feast on, we definitely didn't need any lunch!

Although the Canada Day celebrations had become very repetitive over the years, we did have another reason for not going to more events. We were too absorbed watching the second season of the popular BBC drama series, *Downton Abbey*, made available on several DVD discs borrowed from the local lending library. As with the first season, we thoroughly enjoyed watching what went on both 'upstairs' and 'downstairs.' This time, though, with WWI and the various romances that took place, we were taken on a roller-coaster of emotions. Once again, the acting was superb, and as we saw on the special features, the attention to detail for both the ladies' fashions and the men's uniforms was painstakingly accurate.

The Canadian Pacific Railway station on the move

Our first out-of-town trip for July was when we went to the theatre in Grand Bend to see *Tuesdays with Morrie*. It was a very poignant story about an elderly professor, who had been diagnosed with ALS. There were only two characters—the professor and one of his former students—in the play, which was a series of vignettes about the student visiting his old professor. These visits took place every Tuesday afternoon over a period of several months until the professor died. While the play had a sad ending, it had its humorous moments, as well as being very thought provoking. Following the show, we went to Hessenland Country Inn for its Mongolian Grill night where diners chose from a wide selection of raw meat, seafood and vegetables, and then took their choices to the chefs who stir-fried the food *in situ* for them. We were once again lucky with the weather—warm and sunny with a few clouds—so were able to eat outside on the patio. As we sat there in those beautiful surroundings, we both agreed how fortunate we were to have so many things that we enjoyed doing 'right in our own backyard.'

On a nice, sunny July day, we first went and had lunch on the patio at the Park House tavern, and then walked down to the harbour. We wanted to check the progress being made on moving the 106 year old Canadian Pacific Railway Station to its new location. Although the building is owned by the town, the owner of the Park House tavern agreed to restore the old station and turn it into a restaurant, but only on condition that he could have it moved nearer the lake. Anyhow, we saw holes had been made in the stone foundation of the station, and steel beams pushed through the holes to stabilise the old building. More work still had to be done before it could be moved, which was expected to happen in about two weeks time.

In contrast to the Park House *al fresco* meal, July 12th was our 39th wedding anniversary, so we indulged in a luscious dinner at our favourite fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21. A bottle of Australian *shiraz* complemented the *filet mignon* beef tenderloin steaks—bacon wrapped for me, plain for Monica—with all the trimmings. After dessert, I finished with an Irish coffee while Monica had her usual peppermint tea. When our bill came, our desserts, tea and coffee were all compliments of the owner. It was another wonderful evening to add to our book of memories.

The second theatre outing was two weeks later when we went to Drayton to see *Too Many Cooks*. It was described as a farce, but we thought a better description would have been a madcap comedy. The first act was a bit silly and slapstick with lots of shouting, but it improved in the second half with several clever one-liners, and, of course, all the mistaken identities were sorted out in the end. Although we didn't rate it very high among the many farces we had seen over the years, we still enjoyed it for what it was.

The Communities in Bloom judges were about to visit Goderich. Having won top honours in various categories over the years, the town was competing in a special winners category this year. Anyhow, as a way of getting residents to spruce up their front gardens, the local committee came up with the idea of handing out awards for 'Great Curb Appeal', and we were pleased to accept such an award for our garden. The ornamental grasses had grown tall this year, and with the other shrubs also getting bigger, we needed only a few annuals for a bit of colour.

Later in the month, we decided to spend the day away from home and visit one of the newest tourist attractions in Southwestern Ontario. For some time now, the town of Port Burwell on the north shore of Lake Erie has wanted to bring more visitors to the area, and inaugurated an ambitious scheme to display a decommissioned Canadian Navy submarine for public viewing. Back in the 1960s, the Canadian Navy bought several 'Oberon' Class submarines and adapted them to counteract any threats to Canada during the Cold War period. They have since been removed from the Navy's inventory and stripped of their sensitive equipment. The Port Burwell authorities organised for one of the submarines, *HMCS Ojibwa*, to be towed from its berth in Halifax, through the St. Lawrence Seaway to Hamilton for refurbishment as a museum piece. Then it was loaded onto a special barge and towed through the Welland Canal and Lake Erie to Port Burwell. The final location was near the waterfront, but the submarine had to be manoeuvred along a ramp and lifted onto custom made cradles. Visitors could take both external and internal tours, and we did both to get a full appreciation of life on board the submarine. The guides were quite good with incidental information, and answered most questions put to them

Even though the submarine seemed huge as we walked around the outside, it was very cramped inside, and it was hard to imagine how a crew of 75 managed to live and work in such a restricted space for weeks, or even months, at a time. The conditions they worked under were often hot and dirty, but because water use was restricted, they weren't allowed to shower, and even having a wash had to be done with a minimum of water. It amazed most of us on the tour that men had actually chosen to be submariners, and we all agreed that they certainly deserved every penny they earned. After finishing both tours, we only had time for a quick look around Port Burwell before starting our journey home, but there didn't appear to be a lot to see anyway. Dining on the patio at Eddington's restaurant in Exeter made a perfect ending to our lovely day out.

Our third theatre outing of July was to see *Weekend Comedy* at Grand Bend. We had seen it before many years ago, and remembered it as being very funny. The plot involved a middle-aged couple trying to put some romance back into their 23-year old marriage, and a young couple who weren't married, but had lived together for three years. They decided to share a cabin in a remote area of New York State for the weekend, and although they had very different opinions on most things, they ended up learning from each other. Even seeing it for the second time, we still found it extremely funny and thoroughly enjoyed it.



Communities in Bloom Award in our Front Garden, Cambria Road N., Goderich, Ontario, July, 2013.



Decommissioned HMCS Ojibwa Submarine, Port Burwell, Ontario, July, 2013.



Moving of the CPR Station Using Wheeled Bogies, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2013.



Moving of the CPR Station to its New Foundations, Goderich, Ontario, August, 2013.



Moved CPR Station Resting on its New Foundations, Goderich, Ontario, August, 2013.



Local 1863 Retirees Club Visit Don McNeil's Retro Collection, Brussels, Ontario, August, 2013.

The time came to physically move of the 1907 CPR station from its current location to one nearer the lakeshore and main beach. The professional moving company had already jacked up the building from its original foundation, and inserted steel beams underneath to support the structure. Later, rubber tyred bogies used to transport the building were installed, and some heavy duty trucks, equipped with cable winches, were positioned in readiness to tow the structure.

Although we thought that the move would take place on schedule, the preparation work took much longer than expected. We never saw more than three men working on the project all the times we walked down to the harbour to check on the progress, which was about once a week. I went a bit more frequently as the move got nearer, because we didn't want to miss the BIG day. Then, of all days—Wednesday, July 31st, it turned out to be when we had the theatre outing at Grand Bend to see *Weekend Comedy*. However, we had time to walk down to the harbour before we left for the theatre. A big crowd, equipped with lawn chairs, umbrellas and refreshment coolers; plus the TV cameras and other media personnel, had already gathered. Other than that, there wasn't a lot happening. Although it was obvious that the station had been moved a short distance, a problem had arisen bringing the move temporarily to a standstill. We stood and watched for an hour or so, and during that time the station moved twice and only a very short distance each time. We then realised that the moving operation was going to take longer than one day, and that we weren't going to miss a great deal by going to the theatre that afternoon.

On the following day, I went down to the harbour on my own, and then we both went in the afternoon. By then, the station had been moved a considerable distance, and had reached the point where one end had to be brought in line with the new foundation. It was a tricky towing manoeuvre and, once again, a problem arose bringing the move to a halt. I went in the afternoon of the third day, and the moving operation had already been completed that morning. There was still a lot of work to be done over the coming weeks, such as building up the foundation, repairing any cracks that had appeared, and removing all the supporting steel beams, so we continued our frequent walks down to the harbour to check on the progress. Considering its age and the punishment it took during the move, the building showed little distress for its experience.

More theatre and dining

We received an e-mail from our Coventry friend, Roger Moore. He had had another very nasty 'episode', but fortunately he had a friend visiting who called an ambulance, and he was taken to the hospital. That turned out to be a really good thing, because while Roger was in the hospital, he had the good fortune to be seen by the top cardiologist, who went through all Roger's medications and promptly scrapped the lot. He then put him on some different medication, which Roger said so far had been working well controlling his *atrial fibrillation*.

Even though we seemed to be always on the go, August was a quiet month with only two theatre outings and no other day trips. The first theatre outing was to Grand Bend to see *Mary Poppins*, and not having seen it before, we were absolutely amazed by the production. All the actors played their parts extremely well, and the choreography was superb, as were the sets and costumes. Although we knew Mary was supposed to 'fly' during the show, we didn't know whether the theatre was equipped for something like that, but much to

everyone's delight—especially all the children in the audience—she ‘flew’ three times. Then, not only did Bert, the chimney sweep, ‘fly’, he added a few somersaults as he ‘flew’ from one rooftop to another. It was a truly magical show, and more than likely would be the highlight of this season for us. Following the show, we went to Hessenland Country Inn for dinner, and, once again, it was Mongolian Grill night.

As part of its August programme, Local Lodge 1863 Retirees Club members visited Don McNeil’s remarkable storehouse of memorabilia just north of the village of Brussels, Ontario. Don’s collection was featured on a promotional video that showcased the communities of Seaforth and Brussels in a series of documentaries called *Rediscovering Canada*. I went with twenty-six club members and spouses to visit the old workshop building, and Don prefaced the tour with many anecdotes of his early life in Brussels. The visitors then roamed through the building to wonder at this repository of antique items—too many to describe. From the only other surviving Rockne roadster to small items such as Dinky Toys, the building was an Aladdin’s cave of everyday items from bygone times. Don was delighted to open his collection, and the club members were equally appreciative of the opportunity to see it.

The second theatre outing in August was to see the good old chestnut musical, *Oliver!* We had seen it before (and I saw it many years ago in London, England), and had so enjoyed it that we decided to see it again. However, this production wasn’t a patch on the previous one. It lacked the usual polish of Drayton shows, and it also seemed rushed. As well, we felt that some of the actors tended to overact their parts; although the boy playing Oliver did very well, as did all the other children, considering the constraints of a stage that was much smaller than one usually required for such a show. We drove straight home after the show and had dinner at our favourite fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21.

With the arrival of September, our weather turned very autumn-like, and some days were quite chilly with several heavy downpours. When the rain eventually stopped, it turned a little humid. However, the weather was forecasted to go from one extreme to the other. Some days very hot with the temperature reaching 93 deg.F (34 deg.C), but later the high temperature would be only 59 deg.F (15 deg.C), and dropping to 39 deg.F (4 deg.C) overnight!

While gardening, I was bitten on the arm by a virulent mosquito. I left the wound for a while, treating it with various ointments, but soon the area appeared infected. I decided to visit the emergency outlet in the hospital, and was checked by a nurse. The outcome was that the wound wasn’t infected, and I had to take a course of antihistamine tablets. This did the trick as the redness and minor swelling went away.

Numerous events took place throughout this year in communities all around Lake Huron to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great Lakes Storm of 1913. As the deadliest and most destructive natural disaster ever to hit the Great Lakes, the storm destroyed 19 ships, stranded 19 others and did considerable damage along the shoreline. As well, more than 250 people lost their lives.

In Goderich, a group of people launched *A Remembrance: The Great Lakes Storm of 1913*. This multi-faceted event included a series of presentations, ranging from guest speakers, a play, a memorial unveiling and dedication, and an actual scuba dive venture to attach a special copper wreath to one of the storm’s

known shipwrecks on the bottom of Lake Huron. We were invited to a private reception held in a local art gallery where the committee and participants were fêted, and the Great Lakes Storm of 1913 event was officially started. The presentations on related topics were to be held every Thursday evening from the beginning of September to the anniversary in early November. The first one was about the Goderich lighthouse and the role it played during the storm. Apparently, the organising committee had made a request to Heritage Goderich for a speaker, but nothing was done about it. Then, after none of the current members of the committee volunteered to take on the task, it was suggested that I, as Immediate Past Chair, be asked to do it. I reluctantly agreed, mainly because it didn't give me much time to research and write the speech, as well as creating a PowerPoint presentation for the visual component. There was going to be a captured audience of knowledgeable people, so I had to make sure the programme was bulletproof where details and images were concerned. However, I managed it, and my presentation lasted nearly an hour. There were no hitches with the PowerPoint presentation, and the only shortcoming was a rather lame ending on my part. It should've finished on a much stronger note. However, the dialogue was very well received by the full-house audience of about eighty people, and elicited some questions, plus a review on the Great Lakes Storm of 1913 committee's website. During the social time that followed, and at the reception for the opening of an exhibition of maritime art, I heard several people say how much they had enjoyed the presentation. I was even remunerated with a cheque for \$100 (approx. £65).

When we were at Hessenland Country Inn after seeing the show, *Mary Poppins*, we learnt about three forthcoming events there that appealed to us. The first one was a special *Taste of Huron* dinner. These dinners are held at various restaurants throughout Huron County and feature all local meat, fish and produce. In keeping with the German theme at Hessenland Country Inn, the dinner there was called *It's the Schnitz*, and it was served buffet style so that guests could take their time sampling all the things on the menu. As the name suggested, it consisted of five kinds of schnitzels - pork, chicken, turkey, fish, plus the traditional veal. It was a very enjoyable evening but, even so, not something that we would want to do often. Too much food and too much getting up and down! We prefer to be served when we go out for a nice meal. The other two events weren't until November.

On a brilliant day, we went out for a hike along a local trail called The Sifto Loop. We walked to the old railway bridge across the Maitland River, then followed the winding trail through the mixed wood forest to a clearing overlooking the river mouth. It was all very tranquil. Not much wildlife; just a small bird of prey that threw a flock of pigeons into panic, and some migrating waterfowl that had rested in the area before resuming their flight southwards. Later, we had some mild frosts overnight and fog patches in the morning—typical of the time of year.

We went to the theatre to see *Legends of Harmony*. It was a fun-filled musical revue spanning 50 years and featuring classic songs by such groups as The Four Aces, The Beach Boys, The Hollies and many more. We had to smile. The audience was filled with seniors, who remembered all the songs from their younger years. Whereas the performers, who looked as if they were in their late twenties or early thirties, hadn't even been born when many of the songs were popular. We thoroughly enjoyed the show. The day before going to the theatre, we discovered The Queen's Bakery, a new café in the nearby village of Blyth. Gourmet coffees and awesome desserts rounded off a successful shopping expedition in the village.

2013 autumn activities

The weather was gorgeous with endless sunshine and warm temperatures all the first week of October, and the following week also promised to be mild and mainly sunny. So, we took off for three days to the Headwaters Country in the Caledon Hills, which is an area that we really like. We used to go there quite often a number of years ago, and then always stayed at the Millcroft Inn in the hamlet of Alton, a few miles from Orangeville. However, the inn had changed hands the last time we stayed there, and we didn't think it was as good as it had been previously. Since then, a new Best Western Suites had opened in Orangeville itself, so we used it as a base for radiating out to various destinations. Chief among the places of interest were: the Dufferin County Museum and the Mono Cliffs Provincial Park or Limehouse Conservation Area hiking trails. There was fine dining in Orangeville at Greystones restaurant, and at Mrs. Mitchell's in the nearby hamlet of Violet Hill.

Also, we wanted to do some shopping *en route*. Goderich had only one menswear store, and we always went to Stratford whenever I needed something smart. However, I was told about a good menswear store, called Sussman's, in the town of Arthur, and we stopped there on our way to Orangeville. Sussman's was billed as one of the largest independent menswear stores in Canada, and it certainly was a huge establishment—almost a city block long. There was also a women's section; all good quality stuff. I came away with the two items that I needed—a black blazer jacket and a pair of dark brown trousers (pants). Afterwards we went to a fabric store for Monica to choose some material, and that also turned out successful.

There had been a series of broadcasts on the Internet, each one showcasing a different place of heritage significance. Goderich was featured in one, while another was all about some ruins left from the Limehouse area's once thriving lime making industry. Anyhow, the only way to get to these ruins was to hike along the Bruce Trail. We weren't sure that we were up to what could be a strenuous hike, but decided to give it a try anyway. As it turned out, it was perfect weather for the trip to the Limehouse Conservation Area and the rugged Bruce Trail. Not for the faint hearted because of the rocky terrain, we traversed this part of the Niagara Escarpment to a really challenging part—a natural feature called 'The Hole in the Wall', which was a contortion to get at by descending two rickety wooden ladders to a crevice in the rock wall. Not surprisingly, we took our time, but we made it without mishap. From there, it was easy going, and we soon came upon the ruins that were featured in the Internet broadcast. Then, rather than retracing our steps back to the car park, we followed a side trail which, although longer, saved us from having to ascend through 'The Hole in the Wall.' We drove back to Orangeville feeling quite pleased with ourselves for still being able to do a comparatively energetic hike.

Of the restaurants for the two evenings away, Greystones had closed down, but Mrs. Mitchell's maintained its perennial charm, and we had a very nice dinner there. The second meal was at The Globe Hotel in the hamlet of Rosemont. We had been there before and knew of its reputation so, again, we were not disappointed.

We returned home the following day by a different route from the one we had taken two days earlier. Monica needed a new pair of walking shoes, and always got them from the store in Elmira where she went

for her orthotics. It was just as easy to go home that way, and it also saved us having to make another journey. Fortunately, they had her size, so our trip was an all-round success. That evening, we went to another of the presentations to do with the Great Lakes Storm of 1913. The speaker was a meteorologist, who gave an insight into the storm and why it turned into the most destructive natural disaster ever to hit the Great Lakes.

Although we were expecting things to quieten down following our mini trip to Orangeville, it ended up being another very busy time. Knowing that winter wasn't all that far away, we decided that we had to make the most of the beautiful weather that we were having at the time, and decided to drive to Owen Sound's Harrison Park and hike the Inglis Falls Conservation Area trail. We have hiked it many times in the past, but we timed it right to watch the salmon as they struggled up the Sydenham River to spawn. We were so close to them that we could have almost plucked one out of the water.

On the Friday night before the Thanksgiving holiday long weekend, Monica discovered that the bottom element of the oven wasn't working. Help! Cannot cook Friday night dinner or the baked ham for the Thanksgiving holiday. So, on Saturday morning we called the local appliance repair shop to see if a spare part was available (the cooker is 26 years old). Within an hour the repair man visited, fixed the oven and we were off to the races in no time. Amazed that: a part was available and: the repair man fixed the problem on demand on a statutory holiday weekend. The landlord had no qualms paying the bill either.

The Wednesday after Thanksgiving, we joined the members of the Huron County Historical Society on a very special outing. We visited an Amish farm where we first went on a hayride and then had dinner. It was special because our hosts were traditional Amish farmers who, like the Mennonites, shun electricity and do not want to be photographed. Even though it was a chilly evening, visitors clambered onto the hay cart and, with two huge Percheron horses pulling it, we set off. We had expected the ride to be through farm property, but we went out onto the country road that we had just driven along. On our return, we all went into the farmhouse. For us, it was like walking into a pioneer home in one of the many 'living history' museums that we have visited over the years. It was quite austere and very simply furnished with long, plain wooden tables and benches with neither backrests nor cushions. And, of course, it was lit solely by oil lamps, but there were so many of them dotted around the rooms that they gave a very good light.

We entered the farmhouse through the kitchen where we took off our coats before filing into a large room. There, we helped ourselves to the hot food—fried chicken, potatoes, vegetables, etc.—which had been laid out on one of the long tables. We then went and found a seat at one of the other long tables. When everyone had had their fill of hot food, some of the Amish ladies collected the dirty plates while others started handing round the desserts. These were numerous and included trifles, fruit set in jelly, assorted pies, brownies and carrot cake. We could have as many and as much as we wanted. On the whole, the meal was what we expected—plain but plentiful. Following the meal, one of the elder Amish ladies spoke at length about their way of life, and answered many questions. Anyhow, it was a very interesting evening.

The next day was our last live theatre outing for this season, and we went to St. Jacobs to see *Godspell*. It was our first time seeing the show, and we had to admit that the first scene left us somewhat perplexed. However, as the story unfolded, and we realised what it was all about, we became completely absorbed by

it. The boundless energy of the actors was astounding, and the set design and lighting effects, especially for the crucifixion and resurrection scenes, were outstanding. It was a tremendous show, and as the actors sang the last number—a reprise of *Day by Day*—nearly everyone in the audience rose to their feet and clapped in time to the music. It was certainly a great ending to a very enjoyable season.

The following week was another very busy one with three get-togethers with friends—two out of town and one in town. We drove to Sarnia to have lunch with Diane and Mike Knight, who live in Windsor, as it had been a tradition for several years for the four of us to meet at the same Crabby Joe's family restaurant every spring and autumn. Usually we're there four hours or more, but the management doesn't bother us and it's a convenient arrangement.

The next day, we went to Stratford to have lunch with Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards. Before we left that morning, I had to clear wet snow off our car, and we drove through a mix of rain and wet snow for the first part of our journey. There were even patches of snow alongside the road and in the fields but, thankfully, we eventually ran out of the wet weather, and it was nice and sunny by the time we reached Stratford. We went first to Rosemarie and Geoff's condo apartment where we chatted over coffee and goodies until it was time to go for lunch. They took us to a restaurant that we hadn't been to before. This was the Keystone Alley Café, an upscale eating house, and, for once, we had a very good meal. With Stratford being a popular tourist destination, we find most of the restaurants there are poor and the food overpriced for what it is. So lunch that day was a lovely surprise—for example, my quiche and garden salad combination was quite generous, and good microbrew beers there, too. Following lunch, we went back to Rosemarie and Geoff's for a while before leaving to drive home.

Our last get-together that week was with our friends, Robin and Barb Hewitt, their young daughter, Jessica, and mutual friend, Paul Dare, for dinner at the Park House tavern. Because there was quite a crowd the last time we saw them all, which was at the party that Robin and Barb hosted for Paul's birthday, we didn't manage to catch up on all their news. However, with just the six of us sitting around the table, we did much better and, by the end of the evening, we were pretty well caught up.

There was a planned power outage on the night of October 27th, so that damage done by a storm in the Seaforth area a while ago could be repaired. The outage was supposed to be from 3:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., but it was about 9:15 a.m. before the power was fully restored. We had got fed up lying in bed—even though it was the warmest place—and were having our breakfast when the power was restored, which pleased us as we could have hot coffee to drink.

The building contractor came and measured for a new thermopane window in the den. We asked him how soon it might be before he came back to carry out the work, and he thought it could be either the end of October or the beginning of November. When he replaced our other two windows, he was very good and didn't damage the surrounding wall. However, after some beautiful weather, we had lots of rain, and even some wet snow, during the last two weeks of October. November started off very wet as well. So, not surprisingly, we were still waiting to hear when the contractor would be coming. If replacing our other two windows was anything to go by, we expected he would finish the job in a day.

We went to our favourite fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21, for an early celebration of my 40th anniversary of coming to Canada. The actual anniversary was November 4th, but the restaurant was closed on that day and for the whole of the week. Needless to say, we had another excellent meal, and since it was a special occasion, my dessert was suitably decorated, but not with the usual candle. The *maitre d'* went to great lengths and cut the word 'Canada' from a label, which he then stuck onto a cocktail stick, thus making it into a little flag, which, together with a lit sparkler, decorated my dessert.

In early November we went to Hessenland Country Inn for the German-themed dinner and dance called *Novemberfest*—a parody on *Oktoberfest*—now in its second year. It was more or less a repeat of last year's event, except that there was a slight change to the way the dinner was served. Instead of it all being served buffet style, only the main course was a buffet, and it was bigger and better than last year. Another difference was the band that provided the music while we were eating, and afterwards for dancing. We didn't think they were as good as the one last year, and although they started off playing traditional music, including several polkas, they gradually changed over to loud Rock 'n' Roll numbers. This year, the organisers didn't have the Munich draught beer *Pauliner*, but a new Canadian brew called *Steam Whistle*. We stayed until about 11 o'clock, by which time the music was getting to us. As well, many of the guests had already left, so the best of the evening was over anyway.

A week later, also at Hessenland Country Inn, was an amateur stage production called, *White Hurricane – The Great Storm of 1913*. It was one of the numerous events that took place throughout this year in communities all around Lake Huron to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great Lakes Storm of 1913. The show was organized in a unique way. When the guests arrived, they were directed to pick up their 'boarding passes' and meet and mingle with glasses of wine and warm *hors d'œuvres*. Then the plot unfolded.

Actors represented ships' captains, and despite the warnings of a severe storm, they discussed whether or not to set out on one last voyage before the shipping season ended. Following this scene, guests entered a separate banquet hall where the tables had been placed in four rows, each row representing one of the ships. We all knew which ship we were on by our 'boarding passes', and once everyone was seated, dinner was served. It was an excellent meal, and we were even entertained by some of the actors between the courses. The play then continued with some of the action taking place between the rows of tables as the fate of each ship was portrayed. Of the four ships depicted in the play, only one survived the storm, the other three went down into the icy waters of Lake Huron. In the days following the storm, bodies began drifting onto the shore, and they were taken by local residents to various locations for identification and burial. The play ended with the tolling of a bell for each of the lost freighters and their crews. It was a tragic event, and the way in which the story was told was simple, but very effective. Needless to say, it was a great evening of dining and theatre.

Although events commemorating the anniversary had been held throughout the year, the actual anniversary—November 8th, 9th and 10th—was marked with a weekend of special events in Goderich. Among them was the unveiling of a monument. The base was constructed from stone, and it had a significance of its own. The stone pieces came from the ruins of the Victoria Street United Church that was so heavily damaged by the tornado of August 21st, 2011, that it had to be torn down.

One day, we went out of town to have lunch at Eddington's, the fine dining restaurant in Exeter. Very often when we go there we continue with a hike afterwards, but that day we came straight back to Goderich to join the members and spouses of Local Lodge 1863 Retirees Club when they visited Ken McGee's remarkable collection of automotive memorabilia. A party of nineteen went to Ken's enterprise on MacEwan Street, Goderich. Ken introduced his visitors to his business of selling sales and service literature; then he showed us into a room full of quality made scale model vehicles of all kinds. The highlight of the tour was viewing Ken's classic car collection at close quarters. There was a fascinating story behind every model; including a very rare 1941 four-door convertible Cadillac. Ken entertained his guests with the history of his family's automobile dealership business, and welcomed the many questions from the car enthusiasts in the crowd. Ken was delighted to show his collection, and the club members were equally appreciative of the opportunity to see it.

Celebrating my 68th birthday wasn't straight forward. We were forced to postpone it after I had the bad luck of breaking a tooth, and I couldn't get an appointment with the dentist until the day after my birthday. Although the tooth didn't ache all the time, it was very sensitive to anything hot, cold or sweet. Following treatment, we ended up going to our favourite fine dining restaurant, and chose items on the menu that we normally save for special occasions. We shared dessert, and, of course, my portion came decorated with a lighted candle. It was another of those evenings for our book of memories!

The weather was fairly typical for November. We had our first real taste of winter around the middle of the month with frequent snow squalls coming off the lake, making it impossible to see across our road at times. We ended up with about 4 in. (10 cm) of snow from that storm, but it didn't last long, as we then had a few days of above freezing temperatures. However, we had a really big blast of winter at the end of the month with snow every day during the last week. While it drifted gently down some days, other days were really stormy with frequent snow squalls once again. We had a huge amount of snow that time, and we thought that we had seen the last of our grass until the spring. Then, not only did the temperature rise well above freezing, but we also had heavy rain, and those two things combined soon put paid to the snow.

We waited for the contractor to come to replace our den window, but he was held up by the bad weather. Anyhow, he eventually came on a nice, mild day, and definitely the best one for weeks. He arrived about 9:30 a.m., and after first putting down a big dust sheet to catch all the debris, he set to work. By lunchtime, he had removed the old window and got the new one in place, although it still had a gap all around it. When he returned after lunch, he filled in the gap with foam insulation before fitting wood trim on the inside and around the outside of the recess. With the job completed, he gathered up the dust sheet and used his own heavy-duty vacuum cleaner to pick up any bits that had missed the sheet. He left about 2:15 p.m., and although there was hardly any mess, we decided to give the room a good clean.

We both had our flu jabs (shots), and I had a discussion with my GP about my general health situation, and that my knees were showing signs of age. The doctor couldn't find anything amiss with my knees, but gave me the necessary X-ray requisition, as well as one for blood work. So, it was into the local clinic for the blood extraction, and across the road into the hospital's radiology department for the X-rays. Happily, my knees haven't been curtailing our hiking.

At this time, I was still diligently working on my memoirs and was now at 1984, the year when we visited Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Hawaii. There were lots of images to sift through, and, of course, trying to relive the adventure to record the daily events. The pictures helped jog my memory as to where we went, and the Internet helped fill in some of the gaps pertaining to the road journey, and details of some of the communities we visited.

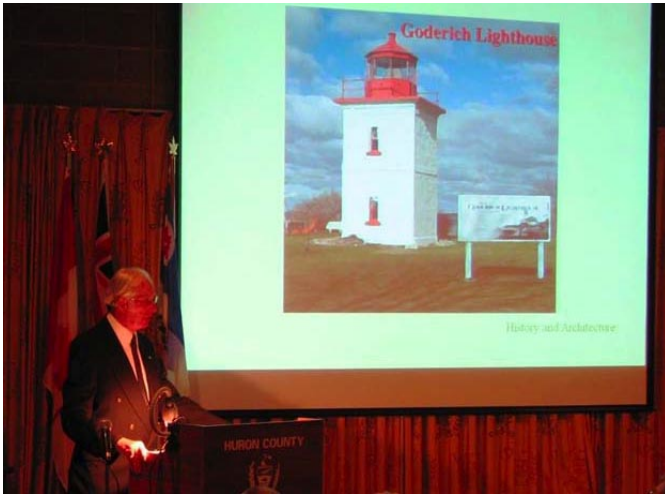
With the Internet in mind, my old schoolchum, James ‘Sandy’ Sanderson, contacted me to ask if I had heard of the Internet website called Weebly. I hadn’t heard about it, but considered it a useful means of promoting the old school, as well as a virtual scrapbook for other schoolchums to see and contribute to. James wanted me to help develop the website, and between us we started constructing an Internet Universal Resource Locator (URL) with the Weebly free online software. I considered that the URL should be used only as an archive; a place to record historic information—both text and images—and a dedicated repository for all things pertaining to the school. In short, not a chat forum, as that was catered for using our regular e-mail exchanges, which was a far more flexible arrangement. James and I evolved the Barnsbury Boys School (BBS) website, and new features were added as we periodically received information from former BBS lads. There was a great deal of this activity at the end of November and the beginning of December, as we learned techniques—often by trial and error—in readiness to launch the website and go public.

James and I mutually decided that the BBS website would go ‘live’ on Friday, December 13th, 2013. So, in a joint effort, I launched the site and James simultaneously sent out e-mails to connect with the BBS lads and other Internet search engines. It was done in a dramatic fashion as I pushed the PUBLISH button at exactly noon hour in Canada, which was 5:00 p.m.—just before supper time—in the UK. Following “Lift-off!!” we were now officially online, and both of us declared that the site really looked good.

Blessed and cursed with a white Christmas

Later in December, we were affected by a Polar Vortex that brought with it extremely cold temperatures and blizzard-like conditions. However, even before this rare weather event, this winter has been the worst for several years. It started early, and except for a brief mild spell at the beginning of December, it hadn’t let up. We even had a big ice storm the weekend before Christmas, and it did considerable damage across parts of Ontario, Québec and New Brunswick. It also resulted in widespread power outages, and some people were without electricity for over a week, including over Christmas. We were very lucky as we were on the fringe of it. We didn’t experience any power outages. However, the shopping plaza on the edge of town where there are three major stores was in the dark for about eight hours. We later heard about other communities not very far away that were without power for several days. Even though we didn’t have a power outage initially, a big concern that we had in the days following the ice storm was all the snow that was accumulating. It fell nonstop for most of Christmas Day, and we were worried that the additional weight on the still ice coated trees and power lines could cause them to break, resulting in even more power outages. Thankfully, it didn’t happen.

We went to Robin and Barb Hewitt’s before Christmas for a get-together with them, Jessica and two mutual friends. I knew the beer would flow and the dining room table groan under the weight of food. This



Barry Speaking about the Lighthouse's Role in the 1913 G.L. Storm, Goderich, ON, September, 2013.



Ruins in the Limehouse Conservation Area near Georgetown, Ontario, October, 2013.



Wild Salmon Making their Way Upstream in the Sydenham River, Owen Sound, ON, October, 2013.



The Great Lakes Storm of 1913 Monument Unveiled, Goderich, Ontario, November, 2013.



Local 1863 Retirees Club Visit Ken McGee's Car Collection, Goderich, Ontario, November, 2013.



Christmas Eve Winter Wonderland Scene, Cambria Road N., Goderich, Ontario, December, 2013.

annual affair is always great fun, and, as usual, we had a good time. We still went out for long walks. However, with the bad weather, we went for only one long walk, and that was Christmas Eve just after the ice storm. We awoke that morning to be greeted by a real Christmas card scene. So, after breakfast, we headed out for a walk around town, and it was like walking in a winter wonderland. We spent Christmas Day on our own and enjoyed doing exactly as we pleased. Then, on Boxing Day, we continued the long-standing tradition of going to Shirley and Norris' for dinner with them and their family. This year, there were eleven of us. Unfortunately, Norris, now ninety years old, was looking quite frail, but Shirley continued to soldier on. Happily for both of them, one of their daughters and her partner bought a house in Goderich a few months previous, and recently moved here from Toronto.

Our New Year's Eve celebrations started with dinner at the fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21. Being a special occasion, they offered a special four-course dinner, and it was a fabulous meal. As we went to the late sitting, it was nearly 10:30 p.m. before we got back home, but even so, we still went ahead with our plans to watch an old movie on the Internet. It was *Carry On Cabby* starring Sid James, Hattie Jacques, Kenneth Connor and Liz Fraser. It was typical of the *Carry On ...* series with the kind of humour that is still as funny now as when the movie was made. Because we didn't have enough time to watch all of it before seeing in the New Year, we took a break about 11:45 p.m., and got a few nibbles ready, together with a bottle of *Henkel Trocken* sparkling wine. Then, once we had toasted in the New Year, we finished watching the movie before heading off to bed.