

Chapter 5

C'est la vie – Life goes on

Prelude to unexpected news

At the beginning of 2014, all highways to and from Goderich were closed due to extreme weather conditions. Since late December last year, we had been affected by a Polar Vortex. A massive amount of Arctic air, rotating at high speed, that migrated from the polar regions to the south; bringing with it the most severe forms of blizzards and absolute wind chill factors. That meant even with a static temperature of 5 deg.F (-15 deg.C), in the open it was actually twice that amount: -22 deg.F (-30 deg.C) or worse. Frostbite could occur in ten minutes and hypothermia was a real danger. To compound matters, because of the extreme deep freeze, everyone was consuming electricity to the maximum. In some places, the power companies had to institute rolling blackouts to try and conserve energy; resulting in a domino effect throughout the transmission system. Fortunately, we hadn't been affected by these controlled outages, but I suspected if the conditions continued for any length of time, there would be problems. However, since the ravages of the tornado of August 21st, 2011, the main power feeder and certain neighbourhood distribution networks in Goderich had been replaced or updated, so we were not faced with an aging infrastructure like other communities.

On January 5th, it snowed steadily all day, and as there wasn't any wind, it just kept accumulating. Then overnight, not only did it continue snowing, but the wind also picked up causing drifting, and by the following morning, our car was practically buried and the driveway completely blocked. Although at the time we weren't planning to use the car, I went out after breakfast to dig it out and, as luck would have it, our snow clearing contractor arrived and ploughed out the driveway. As it had been a week since we last went grocery shopping, we were beginning to get low on staples such as bread, milk, fresh fruit and vegetables. So, with the car and driveway cleared of snow, we did a quick trip to the grocery store while we could. The third straight day affected by the blizzards didn't turn out to be as bad as expected. It was bitterly cold—a high temperature of 5 deg.F (-15 deg.C) with the wind chill making it feel like -22 deg.F (-30 deg.C)—but we didn't have any snow. Anyhow, there was relief in sight. A warming trend was anticipated, and we could be basking in above seasonal temperatures of 36 or 37 deg.F (2 or 3 deg.C), which would be like a heatwave!

Despite shovelling snow, I gained 2 lb. (0.9 kg) in weight. But there again, a hearty supper at the Park House tavern, where a helping of chicken wings (honey garlic sauce), followed by a huge slab of carrot cake plus two pints of Boddingtons ale probably piled the weight on. The anticipated warming trend came with a little sunshine and above freezing temperatures. After enduring the previous week's blizzards and extreme cold, the so called 'January thaw' was helping to reduce the snow accumulation. All the roads were now open, and the arrival of delivery trucks meant supermarkets were able to be restocked.

Since launching the Barnsbury Boys School (BBS) website on Friday, December 13th, 2013, my old schoolchum, James ‘Sandy’ Sanderson, and I were receiving nice comments from the other BBS lads. We complimented each other, and realised that little tweaks would happen from time to time as information filtered through. We also understood that if we accepted every contribution without some judicious editing, the site would start to look shabby. So, we would have to pick and choose in order to maintain the perceived professional look.

Early in the new year, we heard some very exciting news. Our goddaughter, Lindsey, the daughter of our longtime friends from Coventry, Roger and Sue Moore, announced she was expecting her first baby; apparently due in June. It was big surprise to us, as we thought she was intent on pursuing her career. We gathered that it was also a surprise to both Lindsey and her partner, Chris. Although they had known one another for quite some time, they didn’t move in together until last summer when they bought their dream home in Georgetown, a dormitory community about a two and a half hour drive from Goderich. Anyhow, she said that they were very happy at the news, and were looking forward to becoming parents.

We later learned from Lindsey that she was expecting a girl. She even sent us some images from an ultrasonic scan. Although we found them quite remarkable, they weren’t clear enough for us to deduce much from them. Obviously, though, the technician was able to tell from them that the baby was a girl. Lindsey’s obstetrician also noticed a couple of things that she wanted to check further, so she arranged for Lindsey to have another ultrasonic scan done. We hadn’t heard the results of it, but naturally hoped that all was well. Anyhow, Lindsey’s parents were thrilled to know that their next grandchild would be a girl.

Right on January 31st, my laser printer died, but trying to get a replacement unit was difficult, as all the stuff on the market was way advanced beyond my Apple PowerMac G4/450 Cube OS. If I upgraded the OS, my software would be incompatible, and that, too, would have to be upgraded—an expensive undertaking. Even if I ate the cost of new OS and software upgrades, incompatibility with existing files negated this move. This was especially so with my Memoirs, as they were being created on the Mac with the oldest OS (version 9.2), and Aldus PageMaker software which was long obsolete. So, it looked like the current eleven year old printer had to be repaired.

Another Polar Vortex descended on us in mid-January, and we hunkered down for a major blizzard on February 1st. There really had been no respite in our wintry weather, with lots more snow and several more really cold spells with frigid wind chill temperatures. Actually, it was the bitterly cold winds that had got to us more than the abundance of snow. They made it feel so cold that they deterred us from going out and enjoying the snow like we had done other winters. We hadn’t once ventured out onto the trails, and only went for the occasional long walk around town.

Grim tidings

At 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 5th, 2014, I received a phone call from Rev. John Hindley in England, who gave me the sad news that my father had died. The church minister was visiting my Aunt Marion in her Norfolk home. Marion was informed by PC Mason of the Bedfordshire Con-

stabulary, but was so much in a state of shock that she had to have the minister take over. Following much enquiring, the minister found my contact telephone number to make the call.

Needless to say, the news came as a big shock, since my father had sounded fine in his last letter. Anyhow, subsequent communications with PC Mason revealed some of the circumstances surrounding Dad's death. Apparently, Dad had been having a few falls, and had even gone to the hospital the previous Monday after having one in which he had hit his head. However, after checking him over and doing a CAT scan, he was sent home. Then, when Kassy Lean, the coordinator of the local Good Neighbour Scheme that Dad had joined after Pat died, didn't get an answer to her phone calls, she and another volunteer, Jan, went to his house. Fortunately, Dad had had the foresight to tell her where he had hidden a key, so they were able to gain access. It appeared that he may of fallen out of bed during the night of Tuesday, February 4th, and was unable to get back up, as the pillows and duvet were on the floor of the bedroom with the bed moved out of position. Then it seemed at some point Dad had made his way into the bathroom. The two women found him on the bathroom floor, and immediately called the ambulance and the police. According to PC Mason, from the position in which Dad was lying, it would seem that he had died of an apparent heart attack.

Because of the distance involved, as well as the five hour time difference, e-mail was a real godsend when relaying information between ourselves and the authorities. Also, we were very grateful to Allan and Jill Brown, friends of my father, who had offered to help, because we were going to have to rely on them to do some of the running around until I could arrive in England. They kindly offered to arrange the funeral, and since they helped Dad arrange Pat's funeral, we felt they knew better than we did what he would want. So, things started moving, albeit slowly.

After I spoke to the Coroner's Officer and clarified a few things, the necessary paperwork to release the body, and the means to issue the death certificate could then be done from that office. In our conversation, it was decided that since Dad died of natural causes (actually a combination of age-related health issues) there would be no need for a *post mortem* examination. Dr. Jackson would issue the Medical Certificate Cause of Death (MCCD). The death would then be registered at the Biggleswade Registry Office, and the registrar would then give me a green form needed by the appointed undertakers.

On February 10th, I visited the travel agents and secured my flights, car rental and first night's accommodation. I also arranged for my overland transportation between Goderich and Toronto's Pearson Airport.

- Monday, February 17th, 2014: Arriving at London Heathrow Airport on Air Canada 848 from Toronto.
- Thursday, February 27th, 2014: Departing London Heathrow Airport on Air Canada 849 to Toronto.
- Car rental from National Car Rentals.
- First night's accommodation at the Holiday Inn Garden Court Hotel, London Road, Sandy, Beds.

Allan and Jill informed me that they had been in touch with the undertaker, and had arranged a provisional booking for the funeral on Friday, February 21st at 1:45 p.m. at the Bedford Crematorium. They also collected the death certificate and booked me an appointment at the Biggleswade Registry Office on Tuesday, February 18th at 1:15 p.m. I then suggested to them and Kassy that we should meet and discuss the whole situation, and a rendezvous was arranged at Dad's house in the evening of the day of my arrival.

One other loose end to tie up before I left was to check on the procedure pertaining to Dad's will, and I was advised to phone the branch of Barclay's Bank in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, where Dad did his banking transactions. I was then referred to Chorus Law, the bank's Wills and Estate company in Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, where an agent coordinated retrieval of the will from the vaults, and arranged for a Barclay's representative to visit Dad's house. This took a little pressure off working with the Biggleswade branch. I also heard from Kassy, who informed me that the house was well secured. She had even performed some housekeeping chores to make my stay comfortable, and contacted friends and healthcare clinics to let them know of Dad's passing.

We anticipated that I wouldn't be travelling until after Monica's 75th birthday. Dad was very much a romantic, and we considered it would be his wish that we should be together on Valentine's Day; the same day as Monica's birthday. In the evening, we had a lovely dinner at the fine dining restaurant, Thyme on 21. With it being Valentine's Day, there was a special menu featuring a choice of three appetizers, four *entrées* and three desserts. We both chose the same *entrée*—a boneless chicken breast stuffed with spinach and goat cheese—but had different appetizers and desserts. Monica's dessert was a white chocolate and raspberry swirl cheesecake, which was decorated with a lighted candle. We also planned to go to the same restaurant for a 'welcome home' and belated birthday celebration.

Visiting England after a long absence

The last time Monica and I visited England was for two weeks in March, 1995—almost nineteen years before. The first five days were spent with Dad and my then stepmother, Kay, in Potton, and at that time we noticed some deterioration in Kay's health. In 1999, Kay had a bad accident at home, which dealt Dad a huge blow. For some unknown reason, Dad requested in a letter that Monica and I should not visit him unless he requested it. We respected his decision, and from that time until Dad's funeral, we did not attempt to travel to England.

On Sunday, February 16th, Bill Stanbury arrived to take me to Toronto's Pearson International Airport. We had a perfect journey, and were right on time for me to check in at the Air Canada desk without delay. A nice ethnic girl checked me in, and I even secured a seat with extra leg room. I went through security without a problem, but it was a good job I had lots of time, as the queue (lineup) at the Tim Hortons snack bar was long and slow. It was an eternity before the flight was called, but I saw the CBC footage of Canada's victory over the Finnish ice hockey team. The aircraft was a widebodied Airbus with fancy TVs and strange business class booths.

The flight took off slightly late, but there were no discomforts until we hit turbulence on the final stretch. My ethnic neighbour reached for the air sickness bag just in time. As you can imagine, I didn't get much slumber, but continued pretty well considering the sleep deprivation. The inflight meal was chicken and couscous with a small veggie salad, chocolate cake, and white wine/coffee/spring water. Breakfast was a cup of tea and a slab of banana bread, which was all that was necessary. The TV had multiple channels, and I chose Turner Classic Movies with the evergreen suspense thriller, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, starring Humphrey Bogart. Soon we were on the approach to London's Heathrow International Airport.

After a good landing, I had no problems with Customs & Immigration and the baggage reclaim. At the rental car outlet, customers with reservations were required to go by shuttle bus to National's offsite office. I did this and checked into the agency. There was lots of verification, and I chose to have the prepaid tank of petrol (gas) so I didn't have to top up on return. Although a ripoff, and the agency always won out on any unused fuel, it was the best way, as time was of the essence, and seeing the traffic tieup on the A1(M) at the M25 junction, plus others along the way, regardless of the agency's gain, it would save a hassle.

It was time to find the car in the compound and tackle the route to Sandy. There was a choice of cars, and I decided on a Ford product. Finding the exit to the M4-M25 Motorways was a challenge. I got in the wrong lane at the big roundabout and nearly ended up going into Central London, but I broke all kinds of laws by darting across the lanes to find myself on the correct road. Unfamiliar controls didn't help, of course, but driving on the left soon came back. Eventually, I travelled along the M25 to the A1(M) junction and continued to Sandy (approx. 1.25 hours at 60-65 mph [96-105 km/h]). No problem finding the hotel, but the room wasn't available until 2:00 p.m. That meant putting in three hours before I could settle down and shower, etc. So I did a dry run to Pottton and found Dad's house all forelorn, then went back into Pottton to have lunch and put in time. No luck. The pubs weren't open (12:00 noon opening), and no obvious cafe/restaurant. The library didn't open until 2:00 p.m., so I couldn't gain access to a computer that way. I went back to the hotel; then walked into Sandy for lunch and a check of the undertakers. The two pubs I went to didn't serve lunches, and I ended up having cod 'n' chips and a cup of tea at the local chippie run by Orientals. At least it was hot and fresh.

After discovering the Sandy library, I had to join as a member to get a card to use their public computers, and sent an e-mail to Monica bringing her up to date. She was surprised getting a message from me, as she had already logged on before I sent it, and was not expecting me to have access to a computer so soon. In the meantime, I had contacted *The Guardian* newspaper with Dad's obituary, which they edited and subsequently printed.

It was previously arranged that I would meet Allan, Jill, Kassy and her volunteer friend, Jan, at Dad's house on Monday evening. I drove to Pottton, but arrived well before the appointed time just to get a parking space. With the narrow roads and proliferation of cars, trucks and vans, securing a parking space was at a premium. After waiting for some time, I saw a car entering the driveway and assumed it was either Allan/Jill or Kassy/Jan. So I made my way to the house. Allan, who was sitting in his car, saw and hailed me; then we unlocked the front door. He then went back to help Jill, who was terribly afflicted with MS. We entered the house; then Kassy and Jan arrived. The house was cold and I was shivering, but then they adjusted the thermostat to heat the rooms. After the preliminary introductions, we discussed the current situation, and I informed them about the Chorus Law representative visiting the following Monday. We left the house and I returned to the hotel and decided to have supper there. The waiting was abysmal, but I had a reasonable mixed grill with a medium size glass of red wine. Then retired to bed and had a fairly good nights sleep.

Tuesday was a very busy day and, of course, plenty of driving here, there and everywhere. I ate breakfast at the hotel, but it was a fiasco as the waitress didn't realise all I wanted was the Continental buffet, and obviously told the kitchen to cook up a full English breakfast (FEB). After helping myself to coffee and

cereal, a waiter served me with a huge plate of FEB. I protested, and after some discussion, it was decided a genuine mistake had been made, and if I wanted the FEB it was 'on the house.' So I ate most of the FEB, checked out of the hotel and returned to the house in Potton.

After some initial clearing out of drawers, I drove to the Biggleswade Registry Office. I was early, but the Assistant Registrar (a lady, Alyson Sandy) took down all the particulars, and half an hour later, we had completed the documentation. It was very intensive, and I had to buy more than one Death Certificate: mainly because the estate executors would need one, plus the possibility of other government departments, etc., wanting one. Then I went to the funeral home in Sandy. I was pleasantly surprised with the attention and dignity given by Karen at the office. Everything went well as regards the formalities, and I was later contacted by the church official by phone to get details for the Order of Service. Later, I went out for dinner, and after trying one nearby pub—no luck as evening meals weren't served—I continued to the next one, The Royal Oak, and had a great meal—chicken in leek sauce, plus wine. Then went into the bar for a night-cap, and had a delightful chat with *mein host*, whose name was, incidentally, Colin Page!

Wednesday's activities consisted of continuing clearing the house. Fortunately Dad had a paper shredder, and I destroyed much of the garbage paperwork found in the drawers, etc. Kassy and Jan worked like Trojans to help me sort the wheat from the chaff and coordinate the recycling. Clothes, linens and items that could be used by the charity shops were removed. I salvaged Dad's blazer with regimental badge, regimental tie and white shirt, and his coveted red beret for the funeral home to attire him in.

Further clearing out later in the day meant disposing bags of garbage, with the wheelie bin taken to the curb. I also sorted all the estate-related documents in readiness for the interview with the Chorus Law representative the following Monday. I also confirmed that the funeral costs would be administered by Chorus Law.

In the evening, I was welcomed into Kassy's home for dinner. I met her husband, Jonathan, and had an excellent conversation—with a surprising coincidence! At the time, he worked as the International Sales Manager for Crane Industries. When I spoke about my professional life, he was amazed when I mentioned that I worked at Coventry Climax and Rolls-Royce, Ansty. He spent ten years at Jaguar Cars, Browns Lane, Allesley, in their experimental division. I asked him if he knew Dave Cross, but he didn't. Like Dave, he was a graduate apprentice straight out of university. The conversation blossomed, but there were no further coincidences. We had like interests and got on really well. After an excellent single malt Scotch *apéritif*, we went and sat at their huge 18th century dining table for the first course of ham and pea soup. The *entrée* was spaghetti Bolognese with garden salad, followed by fresh fruit dessert and coffee. All in all, a very nice social evening. Nothing was too much of a bother for any of the Good Neighbour Scheme people, and Jonathan volunteered to help me sort out the attic stuff on the coming Saturday.

On Thursday, I continued sorting and disposing, then went to the funeral home to pay my last respects to Dad. In the casket, he looked good and serene dressed in his regimental regalia. As he hadn't opened and read our last letter sent to him, I decided to place it in the casket with him, together with a small photo of Pat. I had also composed my tribute to him, and the funeral plans and Order of Service were now complete.

After a scratch lunch at The Queen's Head pub in Sandy, the rest of the day was spent on a mini tour of the surrounding countryside to find the RAF memorial at the site of Tempsford Airfield. The airfield was an important wartime base for covert SOE and tactical aircraft operations. The memorial proved elusive to find, as the disused airfield had reverted to farmland. I had been in touch with my old schoolchums by e-mail, and it was decided that some of them would drive to Potton to meet me. So, when I ate my dinner—lamb shank—at The Royal Oak, I also reserved a table for the following Tuesday's reunion. The evening was rounded off with phone conversations with Chris and Soulla Zindilis, and Paul Lomas.

Father's funeral

Friday, February 21st, 2014, was the day of my father's funeral. After a casual breakfast, I changed into my suit and awaited the hearse and limousine, which arrived at 1:00 p.m. It was a beautiful, sunny, but windy day and the cortège made its way to Norse Road and the Bedford Crematorium. Guests, including friends, neighbours and my Aunt Marion, were already there.

At the requisite time, 1:45 p.m., the casket was taken into the crematorium chapel, followed by myself and the mourners, to the strains of *Fanfare for the Common Man*, by Aaron Copeland. We met the celebrant, Jacqueline Gommon MICF, who delivered the introduction and opening words, which included Dad's favourite verse, *Horatius at the Bridge*, by Thomas Babington Macaulay. A hymn, *I Vow to Thee my Country*, was sung, followed by my tribute to Dad. The Time for Reflection was signified with a recording of *Jupiter* from the *Planets Suite* by Gustav Holst; one of Dad's favourite pieces of music. The celebrant then addressed us with the Remembrance Words, and as *The Last Post* sounded, a curtain moved to surround Dad's casket, complete with its decorative spray of carnations. After the closing words, the final ritual was receiving the mourners as they exited the chapel to the strains of *Land of Hope and Glory*. Outside in the sunshine, we gathered in small groups before dispersing and returning to Potton for the Celebration of Life refreshments at Kathy's house. The wake went well, and I met some interesting characters; one being Marie Huber, who in her youth lived just streets away from my old Islington home.

After the refreshments, I telephoned Monica, then walked to The Rising Sun pub—after eventually finding it on the other side of town—and had a dinner of fisherman's pie with a small glass of uninspiring New Zealand wine. Afterwards I propped up the bar with a nightcap of Real Ale, and had a long conversation with Barry, a local yokel. The pub was humming—something like the Park House tavern on a Friday evening, but with the typical and unique English pub atmosphere.

Tying up loose ends

With the arrival of the weekend, it was time to unwind and prepare for the Chorus Law representative visiting the following Monday. I checked the attic, but found nothing of any value there as Dad must've thoroughly cleared out all his old belongings. I could find nothing of my previous life, and, of course, none of Kay's possessions. I couldn't find Dad's actual wartime service medals, though, which was strange; just his medal ribbons, which I retained. Of the photographic memorabilia, I could only find two small albums of the wedding with Pat, and some miscellaneous pictures.

The next door neighbour, Ryan Tharby, came with two mates, as one of the large cedar trees at the back had been split in two by the force of recent gales. He asked if it was OK to come onto Dad's property to drag away the fallen limbs. Obviously no problem. Nice people, Ryan and his wife went to the funeral.

I wanted to see if my Coventry friends, Roger and Sue Moore, were are home and possibly even make a visit. After trying to reach them unsuccessfully by phone (I had an obsolete number), I tried a workaround method for Roger to call me, but either the message didn't get through or he was unavailable to answer. So I decided to visit them on-spec anyway. No problem getting to Allesley via Sandy, the Bedford bypass, the M1/M45 Motorways and the Coventry bypass. While negotiating heavy traffic I discovered a function of the rental car that was unfamiliar to me. It had a fuel saving/anti-idling device where the engine stopped when the car came to a prolonged stop. By depressing the clutch pedal, the engine re-started. A bit disconcerting before I realised what was happening.

Anyhow, I arrived at 'Marston House' and Sue answered the door - SURPRISE!! Roger had just come downstairs after ringing the Potton phone number (no reply, of course). After the big greeting, we settled down and had a long chat. Sue asked me if I could stop for lunch and disappeared into the kitchen. We had a nice cooked meal—roasted pork with mashed potatoes and boiled veggies; dessert was sponge pudding with sauce. Another chat, and then over to The Rainbow pub for a few beers. On the pub's flat screen TV, I saw the final minutes of the Olympics ice hockey game, and the big win by Canada. The Swedes really looked dejected with the runaway score, but from what I saw, the Canadians were the superior team with good passing, defence and goaltending.

I said my goodbyes knowing that Roger and Sue could be visiting Canada in the autumn for two weeks. Lindsey called via SKYPE and sent her regards. The journey home was a bit more insane with the M1 Motorway very congested. I stopped at the Blue Boar Services for a quick respite. There was an accident on the Bedford bypass that ground everything to a halt, but after passing the problem it was smooth driving home. In the evening, I was visited by Dad's neighbours, Margaret and Frank, and we had a good chat. Frank was an aircraft buff, so we had a lot in common. I gave him a VCR tape of *The Battle of Britain*, and a paperback copy of *A Bridge Too Far*, which he appreciated.

On Monday, February 24th, I met with Paul Nicholls, the Chorus Law representative. Everything went OK with all the records put at his disposal. Fortunately, by previously sorting the paperwork, it made the job easy. Paul explained that the executors would coordinate all aspects of disposing the estate. I kept the house keys because the real estate people would need access to the house for appraisal, and Paul (an independent consultant) lived in South London. Therefore, the logistics in them getting the keys was not very convenient. So, we agreed that I should leave all the keys with Kassy.

I had an evening meal at The Coach House posh hotel-fine dining restaurant, and tried the local pheasant with a funny type of scalloped potato and a sort of Caesar salad. It tasted not bad, and I put it in the same category as other game dishes. There was an incident at the next door table, as one of the guests had a medical distress. His companions were very concerned and they called the ambulance. The waitresses and chef attended him, but he recovered sufficient to continue with his meal. Looked like he may have had a

TIA (mini stroke). The ambulance still hadn't arrived by the time I left! When I did leave, though (I had driven into town as it was raining), I was constantly 'flashed' by oncoming motorists. The rental car's headlights had to be manually turned on (no daytime running lights), and only until I arrived back at the house did I realise the reason for the 'flashing'.

The following day's activities consisted mainly of re-checking the house in case I had overlooked any little nook or cranny. This meant another inspection of the attic, garage, garden shed and all the rooms, cupboards, wardrobes, larder and drawers. It was doubtful that I would be seeing Kassy again before I left. She had a critical family health situation. Her baby granddaughter was rushed to hospital in Bristol with suspected spinal meningitis. However, her cohort, Jan, had taken over as coordinator and I should be able to finalise all last-minute stuff, such as handing over the house keys, with her. Jan was a remarkable woman and nothing was too much of a bother; very resourceful and reliable.

With the Potton library closed, I had to use the one in Sandy to send any e-mails. The weather had improved to cloudless skies after some early morning showers, and temperatures were in the double digits. I expected a rude awakening on Thursday when arriving at Toronto's Pearson International Airport.

At the funeral, Marion wanted me to visit her, but I couldn't face a tortuous journey to Norfolk, which would've been a navigational nightmare, for little reward. So I did the next best thing and phoned her in the morning for a lengthy chat, which she appreciated.

I had dinner—liver and onions with veggies: the day's special - £10.00p—at The Royal Oak, and expected my old schoolchums to arrive for the reunion at about 7:00 p.m. Everything went well. There were three car loads at different times. First to arrive were Paul Kenealy with Johnny Pearce and Chris Zindilis. Chris gave me a sympathy card and a paperback book *It's All Greek to Me*. Johnny Pearce was quite the character and a joy to listen to—once you had penetrated his strong Islington accent. George Kent made a sudden appearance and introduced himself, as he was several years ahead of all of us. Time went by and there was no sign of James Sanderson. So Paul called to get James' cell phone number. Then James appeared with Mickey Simmonds, Mike Stewart and Tam Joseph. Finally, Peter Duplock dropped by.

After ordering much beer, we all toasted the old school and good old times. Then the banter began and continued way into the evening. Chris and I were heavily involved in conversation; also with James. Chris took many photos, and later shared them when they were processed. Just as they were leaving, I presented James with a book from Dad's library. It was the history of the Martin-Baker Aircraft Company, and contained reference to Dad's exploits. To Chris, I presented another book from Dad's library—*The Rubbayet of Omar Khayyam*—Arabic philosophy—and for Chris' wife, Soulla, Dad's original manuscript for his booklet about Honey (I had previously given Kassy a copy of the booklet as a gift). Of course, Chris, being of an emotional nature, was completely overwhelmed and was near to tears.

I had included extra days in the trip in case of any unexpected developments, so Wednesday turned out to be superfluous. However, I put the time to good use by checking the attic once again, some superficial housework and verified all security where electrical connections were concerned. Jonathon later

visited to wish me well, and Kassy also phoned from Bristol to say that her granddaughter was now off the critical list, which was very good news.

I completed some loose ends, such as surrendering the Bedfordshire library ticket, final e-mails and saying goodbye to the neighbours. Then it was preliminary packing, and watching TV sipping a cup of tea made with the remaining tea bag. My last dinner—real pub grub of bangers and mash—was again in The Royal Oak where I said goodbye to *mein host*, Colin Page. Then it was home to finish packing, which included extra stuff in the carry-on bag, and early bed.

On the morning of my departure, I secured the house and, as instructed by the Chorus Law representative, left all the keys with Jan to give Kassy. After saying goodbye to Jan, and a last look at the forlorn house, I drove to London's Heathrow International Airport. The A1(M), M25 and M4 Motorways were busy, but no bottlenecks or gridlock to delay my journey. The rental car was returned (with 1/4 tank of petrol – no compensation), and I checked in at the Air Canada desk. By logging on to Toronto Airport's website, Monica was able to track the progress of my flight. It was a smooth one, and even arrived a few minutes ahead of schedule. Bill Stanbury was waiting for me when I exited from immigration and customs.

That day, snow squalls were coming off Lake Huron, and combined with a strong wind were causing whiteout conditions even well inland from the lake. There were road closures, including all three highways in and out of Goderich. Although conditions improved, the wind continued to create both drifting and visibility problems out in the country, so it was still possible that I wouldn't get home. Bill warned that we might have to stay overnight in a hotel. Just outside Stratford we did encounter a highway closure, but by driving on the back roads, we were able continue without hindrance. Monica thought the earliest that I could be home would be around 10:00 p.m. So, she was surprised and overjoyed when I arrived home at 9:15 p.m. I did get a rude awakening though. After leaving a balmy 54 deg.F (12 deg.C) at Heathrow, I was met by a frigid 2 deg.F (-17 deg.C) in Toronto! Not surprisingly, everyone was moaning about this winter.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...

A week or so after I returned from England, we both succumbed to head colds. I was the first to be affected, and Monica followed suit about a week later, although her cold wasn't as severe as mine. However, we were both left with lots of congestion and stubborn coughs which were hard to shake off. On the bright side, just before I went down with the cold, we were lucky enough to celebrate Monica's belated birthday and my welcome home treat at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant.

Sadly, my twelve-year old Panasonic Lumix digital camera finally gave up the ghost. So I started researching for a replacement. There were many models out there, but I began looking more closely at the Nikon Coolpix S6500. I even asked my photographer friend, Chris Zindilis, for his opinion, and he thought it was worth checking into for price and current (but not overloaded) features. I was really reluctant to part with the Panasonic Lumix with its really good quality Leica lens, since the lens specifications of affordable compact digital cameras were not as good. Still, if I had to sacrifice on the optical capabilities, there would be other compensations.

Although I was now somewhat removed from the municipal heritage committee and the Huron County Historical Society, an appeal was put out for me to represent these organizations at a personnel interview. The candidate (a young lady) was applying for a position as assistant archivist to the County of Huron. Three other key county employees (all women) would also be present. I remember being on the other side of the table at my own job interviews, and how several of them were nerve wracking.

At the end of March, we had another get-together with our friends, Robin and Barb Hewitt, their young daughter, Jessica, and mutual friend, Paul Dare. We all met for dinner at the Park House tavern, and as usual had a great evening. Jessica was now ten years old and growing up fast. When we saw Robin and Barb last Christmas, they talked about moving again, but now they weren't sounding so certain.

April began when Monica and I visited my cousin, Don, and his wife, Claire, at their house in London, Ontario. Although just a ninety minute drive away, we see each other only about once or twice a year. They are devoted to their children and grandchildren, as well as being avid golfers, busy volunteers and members of social and professional clubs in the city. When we arranged the get-together, we suggested going out for lunch, but they thought having it at their place would be better since we would be talking about family matters. Although I had spoken at length to Don on the phone after I got back from England, I had things to show him and discuss, as well as a few photos and keepsakes to give him. While I had accepted it as my father's wish, Don didn't think it was right that Dad left all his money to charity and none to me. Actually, we always thought it a possibility, so it didn't come as a big shock to us. We had a nice lunch at their home and spent several hours just conversing in general.

We had several more out-of-town trips and get-togethers planned for April; including the Belmore Maple Syrup Festival, which we missed last year. We were able to get there this time and had a lovely day out, even though the popular event attracted a huge crowd, and there was a long queue (lineup) for the all-you-can-eat pancakes and sausages. They were well worth the wait though.

On April 15th, we were supposed to go to Sarnia and have lunch with our friends, Diane and Mike Knight from Windsor, but the weather forced us to change our plans. We had checked the forecast for that day and it looked good. However, when we checked later, the forecast had changed dramatically and called for ice pellets and freezing rain on April 14th, changing to snow overnight and continuing into the next day. After reading that, we communicated to say that it was unsuitable travel weather for both of us. Naturally, we were disappointed that we had had to postpone the get-together, but soon managed to sort out a new date. When we got up that morning, we already had had about 3 in. (8 cm) of snow, and it was also very windy which blew the snow around, resulting in some ground drifting. It was definitely not a good day for travelling through the wide open countryside, especially on the highway to Sarnia.

As we had nothing planned for the rest of the week, we decided to decorate our den as part of the annual spring cleaning exercise. It seemed a perfect opportunity, and doing it sooner than expected was a bonus; especially as we were very pleased with the end result. By changing the colour of the walls slightly, it made a big difference to the room. All we needed to complete the room were new curtains, and as Monica had made good progress sewing them, she hoped to soon get them finished.

After much deliberation, I decided to visit The Source electronics shop and buy a Nikon Coolpix S6500 digital camera to replace my Panasonic Lumix that had failed. The Nikon had 16.0 megapixels, a Nikkor 12x wide optical zoom lens, and cost \$187.00. I wasn't interested in the more complex characteristics of the camera (for example, Wi-Fi capability), but I needed to know the basics, such as composition and handling a camera of a totally different physical shape, size and weight.

Towards the end of the month, I had to go and see my doctor, as I had a bladder infection. I didn't have an appointment but was very lucky, as when I called the medical centre I was told to go straight away and they would fit me in. The doctor gave me a prescription for an antibiotic which I had to take for five days. However, before I had finished taking them, the doctor called to tell me the lab test revealed that my infection wasn't the usual common one. This meant that the antibiotic I had been prescribed might not be strong enough to completely clear up the infection. So, I had to go and pick up another prescription for a stronger antibiotic in case the infection flared up again. It was very reassuring to know that help was readily available when I needed it—one of the many benefits of living in a small town.

We had another example of getting help quickly when we needed it. We were all set to go grocery shopping, but when I tried starting the car, nothing happened—not even a groan from the starter motor! Because the car had started first time all through the winter, I thought the problem was likely something other than the battery. Anyhow, I called the garage, and two employees came around with a battery booster to see if they could start the car. They were successful, so one of them then drove the car to the garage workshop for a diagnostic check.

When I hadn't received a phone call by the time we had finished lunch, we decided to walk out to the garage—about a 30 minute walk—to find out what was happening. Then, if our car wasn't available, to continue walking to the grocery store—another 10 minute walk—do our shopping, and then get a taxi back home. At the garage, we discovered that the battery was still being charged, and that they couldn't do the diagnostic check until it was fully charged. Anyhow, while talking to the service manager, we happened to mention that we planned on taking a taxi home. Imagine our surprise when he told us not to get a taxi, but to call the garage and their shuttle bus would pick us up and take us and our shopping home!! The driver even helped carry our shopping in for us! Also while talking to the service manager, it was arranged that, if they needed to keep our car overnight, they would loan us a car for going to Elmira (a trip to the podiatrist) the next day. So, I got a ride back to the garage in the shuttle bus to pick up either our car or a loaner. I came back in our car which, according to the mechanic, had just needed the battery charging. He also said that the battery was still good, but being five years old, we thought it needed replacing fairly soon.

The trip to Elmira, near Kitchener-Waterloo, was to address another health issue. Monica had been experiencing some discomfort in her right foot, and as it had been four years since she last had new orthotics, she decided to have her feet checked. So, we made an appointment with the podiatrist in Elmira. The practice and shop had changed hands, and the new podiatrist had a different way of doing things. Monica found the new orthotics hard and uncomfortable to start with, but gradually got more used to them. Even so, she still thought they needed some adjustment. That meant another trip to Elmira, but Monica wanted to get her chiropractor's opinion before we went.

We continued to St. Jacobs to have lunch at Benjamin's restaurant, which had been renovated during the winter. Its name had been changed to DH Food and Lodging, which we thought sounded more like a truck stop than an historic inn. Apparently, though, the inn was called the Dominion Hotel back in the late 19th century, and that was shortened by the locals to the 'DH.' Anyhow, we didn't let the new name put us off and still went inside. Everywhere looked much the same as before, and the food was still very good. So, we intended to continue going there after attending shows at both St. Jacobs theatres.

Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards, our friends from Stratford, visited us near the end of April. After chatting for a while, we went to Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant for lunch and had a lovely, leisurely meal. Before any of us realised, it was 3 o'clock! Rosemarie and Geoff then had to return to Stratford for an appointment with their realtor. They had had their apartment on the market since last autumn, and were anxious to sell the condo after having already bought a bungalow. So, we understood why they had to leave in a hurry.

The first of five out-of-town trips in May was to have lunch with Diane and Mike Knight at Crabby Joe's family restaurant in Sarnia. We were all so glad that we had postponed our get-together, because instead of the nasty, snowy day that we would have had, we had a beautiful, sunny day. It was lovely seeing them again, but Diane had been diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and, not surprisingly, she was told to stop smoking. After first reducing the number of cigarettes, she did manage to stop all together. However, we were dismayed to discover that she had resumed smoking.

Our first spring hike for this year was about the time the trilliums usually bloomed. We went to the Sifto Loop, a local trail where we knew there was a large patch of them, and we were lucky enough to see them at their best. They were a beautiful sight again this year. We did that hike on May 11th, and there were very few leaves on the trees. Of course, that changed, and only those types of trees that always produce their leaves late were still leafless.

We knew Monica's new orthotics needed some adjustment. However, rather than make a special trip to Elmira just for that, we decided that there were a few things we wanted to buy in Stratford. It worked out very well—except for the weather! We arranged an appointment with the shop in Elmira on a day which, according to the forecast, was going to be cloudy with a chance of showers. Having done that, the forecast then changed to periods of rain, and sure enough we drove through some really heavy downpours. Fortunately, though, every time we had to get out of the car the rain eased, and we had to use our umbrellas only once when in downtown Stratford after making our purchases. So, all in all, a good day out despite the rain.

The first of our theatre outings for this year was at Drayton to see *South Pacific*. We knew the story by heart having seen the film several times, and the stage version once or twice, but it was one of those musicals you could see time and again. It was an absolutely fantastic show! The atmosphere in the theatre was full of expectation, and it kept building throughout the show. The costumes, sets and lighting were excellent, and all the actors played their parts extremely well. Not surprisingly, as the cast took their bows at the end of the show, they were greeted with thunderous applause and cheering, and then as they did a reprise of the song, *101 Pounds of Fun*, nearly everyone in the audience rose to their feet and clapped in time to the music. We ended the enjoyable day at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant.

Our annual spring cleaning chores, which included the usual apartment overhaul and redecorating the den, were completed. On the Victoria Day long weekend, we concentrated on a gardening blitz. The front lawn and small flower garden had only just survived the rigours of winter. A couple of the burning bushes had minor damage. Even after the blue juniper bushes had got their new growth, they still looked ugly, so we decided to replace them and bought the same again. We also bought a few annuals for a bit of colour, and this year decided to change from petunias to French marigolds. We then dug up the old blue juniper bushes and planted the new ones, as well as the French marigolds. The ornamental grasses came through without any problems; so they were cut back to promote new growth.

After a very long winter, our spring finally warmed up to seasonable temperatures. Everybody had been moaning about the cold, but during the long weekend, golf courses were open and people were walking around wearing T-shirts and shorts. We went to the lakeshore boardwalk for the first time this year, and there were sunbathers on the beach and recreation boaters out on the lake. Walking through the town on our way to the harbour, the flowering cherry trees were in full bloom and were a magnificent sight. Then, as they faded, other flowering trees came into bloom, including the ones across the road from us.

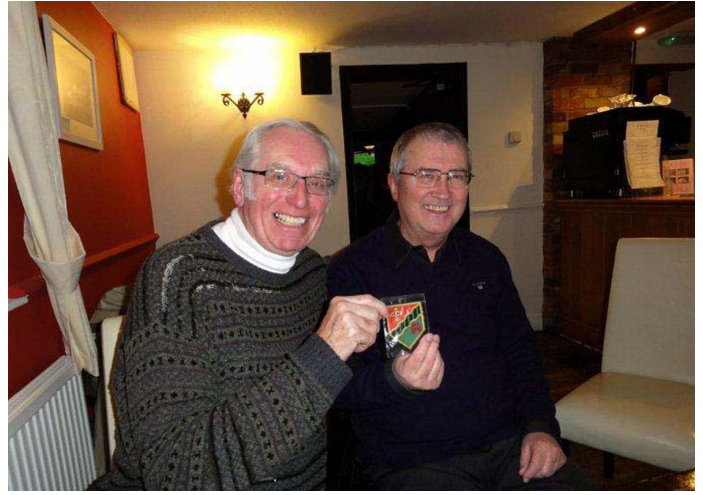
The following week, we had to go to the nearby town of Clinton, as Monica had an appointment at the hospital there for a bone density test. Knowing that the test wouldn't take long, and since Clinton is over a third of the way to Exeter, we decided to continue and have lunch at Eddington's fine dining restaurant. When we made that decision, we expected to eat inside the restaurant, but with it being such a glorious day, we chose to eat out on the patio. It was the first time this year that we had even sat outside. The nice day as such meant we hadn't planned on hiking after lunch. However, we soon changed our plans and drove to the McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail—one of our favourites—and certainly enjoyed our hike that afternoon. We saw four white squirrels, a blue heron, and several pairs of Canada geese with their fluffy goslings. We also saw lots of wild flowers, including wild geraniums, May apples and Jack-in-the-pulpits. It was another great day out, made all the more enjoyable by the beautiful weather.

June 1st was an interesting day, as we met our goddaughter, Lindsey, and, for the first time, her partner, Chris Morton. Lindsey's baby—a girl, and her first child—was due on June 19th. She had kept us up to date with the progress of her pregnancy, and for her age (36), she had fared remarkably well with little or no problems. We met at Crabby Joe's family restaurant in Kitchener for lunch. Needless to say, not only was it great seeing Lindsey again, we were also delighted to finally meet Chris; a very likeable person, who certainly fitted right in. The four of us sat and chatted well after we had finished eating. As for Lindsey, she looked a picture of health, and hoped to keep working until almost the last minute.

We went to St. Jacobs to see our second theatre show for this year: a comedy called *The Affections of May*. It certainly was a true comedy, and hilarious at times. The play had only four characters, and each one was portrayed by a very talented actor. Adding to our enjoyment of the play was the beautiful weather we had for our day out—sunshine and a nice, comfortable temperature. As usual, we took the rural backroads to St. Jacobs, and encountered very little traffic. It was lovely cruising through the countryside, which was still fresh and green; including the drive home in the evening after having an excellent meal at DH Food and Lodging historic inn.



Monica Celebrating her 75th Birthday, Goderich, Ontario, February, 2014.



Barry and James Sanderson at the Old Boys Reunion, Royal Oak Pub, Potton, England, February, 2014.



Monica Watering the Newy Planted Flower Garden, Cambria Road, Goderich, Ontario, May, 2014.



Blossom Trees Outside our Apartment Building on Cambria Road, Goderich, Ontario, May, 2014.



Barry, Monica, Chris and Lindsey at Crabby Joe's Restaurant, Kitchener, Ontario, June, 2014.



Legion Colour Party and Pipe Band Parade at the 70th D Day Anniversary, Goderich, ON, June, 2014.

The 70th Anniversary of D Day was commemorated in Goderich on June 7th, 2014. It was organised by Branch 109 of the Royal Canadian Legion and the local Dutch community. Many Dutch immigrants made this area their home, and like the people in Holland, they still remember with gratitude that it was Canadian troops who liberated them. The event started with a parade led by the town's pipe band, followed by the Legion Colour Party and members of the Legion, including WWII veterans who were still able to march. They marched to the war memorial in Courthouse Park where a large crowd had already gathered. There was a short service of remembrance, during which several wreaths were laid at the foot of the war memorial. Following that, the parade reformed and marched the short distance from the park to the Dutch Liberation Memorial Garden. During the ceremony that followed, various dignitaries made speeches acknowledging the contributions made by the Dutch community, who, in turn, spoke about their gratitude for the liberation of Holland. A lovely gesture by several young Dutch girls dressed in traditional costume, was the handing out of small bouquets of flowers to all the veterans and Legion members. Then, towards the end of the ceremony, an elderly Dutch lady, accompanied by her son and grandson, laid a wreath at the foot of the plaque dedicating the park. After watching the parade leave to return to the Legion, we walked home very glad that we had gone to what was a simple, but very meaningful, event.

Late in the spring, a new neighbour moved in next door. He was single and seemed OK—early sixties and working—and we exchanged pleasantries whenever meeting. He started to move his belongings, and there was also some 'girlfriend' situation, as she visited him from time to time. He also kept a young dog which, when left alone, howled all day in the apartment. Anyhow, the neighbour started to act in a strange manner. During the days when he wasn't at working at his shift, he would sit at a table outside on the patio and drink beer; then he would place a small charcoal barbecue unit just off the patio and start a camp fire. No cooking, just burning small logs that emitted clouds of smoke. This contravened the local fire bylaws, and we were of a mind to alert the landlord and authorities.

Later, he took and left the dog with his girlfriend; then continued to sit outside with his camp fire—which by now had increased in size, as he built it directly on the lawn. We were now becoming really concerned and about to tell the landlord of this bizarre predicament. As it turned out, the situation resolved itself in an unpredictable way.

On June 11th, I spoke to him in the afternoon, and in the late evening, we heard him conversing with another neighbour. The next morning, I noticed a pickup truck in the road opposite and the two occupants were obviously agitated and speaking on a mobile phone. The next thing was an ambulance arriving with all emergency lights flashing. It stopped directly outside, and the paramedics got the gurney from the back and hurried next door. They weren't there long before they took the gurney back to the ambulance and fetched a sheet. Soon afterwards two police cars arrived, and a constable came over to the next door patio to assess the situation. By now I had to know what was happening. Sprawled out on the patio was the lifeless body of my neighbour. The constable took one look under the sheet and started to write a report. His sergeant partner then arrived and they took complete control. Later, the local undertaker took the body away.

The deceased's relatives were informed, as well as the landlord, and they all congregated at the apartment. It was decided to clear out some of the possessions, and they set to work. Unfortunately, a brother and

sister had a disagreement, and the brother left in a huff. I lent a hand with the sister, and between us cleared out lots of small stuff. Among the belongings was a large amount of empty beer bottles. It became clear that, even though he appeared to be normal in the workplace, the deceased had an alcohol addiction. Another sister, her husband, the brother and our neighbour's son came the following day and cleared out everything from the apartment to make it ready for re-letting.

This year, we celebrated Monica's 40th anniversary of her coming to Canada on two occasions. This was partly because the actual day was the Saturday of the Father's Day weekend, and we thought our favourite fine dining restaurant would be extra busy that evening. The main reason, though, was that we had a theatre outing to Drayton the following Thursday, and preferred to have dinner at the restaurant that evening after we returned. So, on the actual anniversary, we had a beef fondue at home. It was accompanied by a garden salad, crusty bread and a bottle of Australian red wine. Afterwards, we watched an old movie starring Bing Crosby and Bob Hope.

The play we saw at Drayton was called *Death Trap*. It was described as a twisted thriller, and the ending was so twisted that it left us completely bewildered. We did not enjoy it. However, we thoroughly enjoyed our dinner at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant, and once again both of us chose the beef tenderloin for our *entrée*. We had different appetizers, though, and shared dessert.

On the morning of Sunday, June 15th, I drew back the curtains and noticed an adult white tail deer walking along the grass verge (boulevard) on the opposite side of the road. It wasn't at all panicky, and made its way slowly down the road, giving me time to get my camera and take a photo. I don't know what happened to it, but hoped it found its way back to the woods behind where we live.

The day after, we had an anxious couple of hours after a tornado warning was issued for this area and much of Southern Ontario. A line of severe thunderstorms headed over Lake Huron, but all we got here were a few claps of thunder and a short downpour. However, some inland areas weren't as fortunate; in particular the small town of Angus near Barrie. The community was struck by a small-force tornado that scythed through and damaged 100 homes—some of which needed to be completely demolished. Lots of tree damage, too, and the chainsaw gangs were out in force clearing the debris. Elsewhere there were lots of downed power lines, leaving thousands of people without electricity.

We had celebrated Monica's belated anniversary of emigration at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant, and although we didn't know it at the time, we could also have celebrated the arrival of Lindsey and Chris' baby. She was a very punctual little girl, arriving on her due date, June 19th, which also happened to be the birthday of Lindsey's late grandmother. So, as a tribute to her, Lindsey and Chris decided to give their daughter the same middle name as her great grandmother—Adelaide—with Ella as her first name.

The penultimate weekend of June was brilliant, with lots of sunshine, low humidity and right for going out on the local hiking trails. We headed over the old railway bridge across the Maitland River and along the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART), an easy walk to the site of the former Meneset Sidings. Then after a rest on the bench overlooking the Maitland River valley, it was back home

and a refreshment before working on the gardening chores. The flower garden was doing great, and thanks to the wonders of *Miracle-Gro* all-purpose plant food, the French marigolds had grown into really nice, bushy plants. Even though there were only twenty of them, they were putting on a lovely show. The new blue junipers were also doing well, and the burning bushes had recovered from the winter beating. As for the ornamental grasses, there was no stopping them growing!

The landlord redecorated next door before re-letting the apartment. A huge task, because the *décor* hadn't been touched for years, and there had been at least six previous tenants. Our den was now complete, as Monica had finished making the new curtains and they only needed to be hung. The material was heavier than the previous curtains, so I added brackets to the curtain rail for extra support.

Memoir writing still occupied my spare time, and now I had reached the end of year 1986. Even though the memoirs were still percolating, there was a holdup at the time as I was waiting for a replacement halogen lamp for the slide projector. I was projecting selected slide transparencies for the years 1977 to 2002 onto a screen, and capturing the images using my digital camera.

Our third theatre outing was at Grand Bend to see *Look, No Hans!* It was supposed to be a hilarious spy comedy that would have the audience howling with laughter from start to finish. While that may have been for some people in the audience, it wasn't true for us; although we did find quite a lot to laugh at in the first act. However, the second act became sillier and sillier, until it reached a point where it ceased being funny. Even the ending was silly. Following the show, we drove to Exeter to have dinner at Eddington's fine dining restaurant, and the evening was the most enjoyable part of our day out. We had been lucky with beautiful sunshine all day, and it was still very warm when we arrived at the restaurant, so we decided to eat *al fresco* on the patio. With it being a Thursday, we knew it was 'pizza night', and having had a delicious brie and apple one last year, Monica was hoping that combination would be among the choices this time, but it wasn't. However, while we were looking at the menu trying to decide what to have, James Eddington, the restaurant owner and chef, came and had a chat. I happened to mention that Monica was hoping to have a brie and apple pizza, and much to our surprise he immediately offered to make her one. I had the Chicken Appleby, which was delicious.

Ruby wedding anniversary

July started with a thunderstorm in the early hours, and although it lowered the temperature, it did little for the humidity. It was one of those overcast, clammy days. Later in the month, it became much cooler, but then sunshine and warmer temperatures returned.

Another theatre outing at Grand Bend was to see the musical comedy, *Damn Yankees*. We had seen it several years ago and remembered really enjoying it, which is why we went to see it again. However, as we sat waiting for the show to start, we realised that we actually remembered very little about the story. So, it was as if we were seeing it for the first time. Anyhow, we thoroughly enjoyed it again and thought it well deserving of the standing ovation it received at the end. Following the show, we went to Hessenland Country Inn, and it was Mongolian Grill night. We ate outside on the patio, and although it was slightly cooler

than normal, it was warm enough for us and, anyhow, it was too nice an evening to sit inside. The theatre outing could almost be called an early start of our 40th wedding anniversary celebrations,

On our anniversary day, we went out for breakfast, which was a fundraising event that we like to attend every year. Members of a Masonic Lodge just outside Goderich cooked pancakes, sausages and eggs on grills that were set up outside the Lodge hall. After filling our plates, we went inside the hall not only to eat, but also to socialise with other visitors. The bigger than usual breakfast justified us hiking on the trail down the road from the Lodge hall. In the evening, we went to Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant for a celebratory meal. The establishment's *mein host*, who knew us well, made sure we were given special treatment, including the requisite dessert topped with lighted candles.

Two days after our anniversary, we would be flying to Québec City and spending three days there with accommodation at the Hilton Hotel. As it was our Ruby anniversary, I had the local goldsmith mount a large gemstone surrounded by small diamonds onto a gold band as a present for Monica.

Québec City anniversary trip

Our anniversary trip was all we hoped it would be, and definitely one that we will remember for a very long time. Everything went smoothly. Even the weather was kind to us, and much better than was forecasted before we left. So, we did lots of walking which was something we wanted to do, because that was the best way of exploring Québec City. Also, we anticipated enjoying Québec City's wonderful food, and that required lots of walking to keep us from putting on too many extra pounds. Even though we ate much bigger breakfasts and lunches than we normally do at home, both of us kept our weight gain to less than two pounds (0.9 kg)!

On Monday July 14th, Bill Stanbury arrived on time to take us to Toronto's Pearson International Airport. We then had a two hour wait before our flight, so after checking in and going through security, we went and had lunch. The short haul flight in a twin-turboprop Bombardier Q400 airliner to Québec City Airport took about 90 minutes, and we landed in lovely weather. The 20 minute taxi ride to the downtown Hilton hotel was an adventure in its own right, as Québec cabbies are notorious speed demons. Our driver's Knowledge was very good, and we took all kinds of back alley routes that even the local yokels wouldn't know. The hotel receptionist seemed to understand my rudimentary French, and we then ascended to the 11th floor, and our room with a prize view of the Québec provincial parliament building, the Château Frontenac, the Québec Citadel, and the fortifications of the old city. We certainly had deluxe accommodation for our stay.

Just looking at the view made us keen to start exploring, so after unpacking and refreshing ourselves from the journey, we found our bearings and made for the Upper Town (*Haute-Ville*) district of Old Québec (*Vieux-Québec*) inside the protective stone walls. Nearby was the ornamental Fontaine de Tourny, a philanthropic gift to the city and a photographer's delight, especially when floodlit. Once through the fortified gate (Porte Saint-Louis), the main street of Rue Saint-Louis, lined with 17th century buildings, led us to the heart of the tourist centre. The hilly nature of the city meant negotiating steep streets or several sets of stairs. One

particular stairway connected the Upper Town to a pedestrian precinct called the *Quartier Petit-Champlain* in the Lower Town (*Basse-Ville*), and there we wanted to eat our evening meal at a favourite restaurant, Le Lapin Sauté (The Hopping Rabbit). Even though it was a Monday, the restaurant was very busy by the time we arrived, but we were lucky enough to get a table, albeit inside rather than outside on the terrace. It was a delightful dinner of various rabbit dishes and a bottle of *vin rouge*. By this time, darkness had fallen and the streets and buildings appeared magical, as the old stone structures became floodlit, and an atmosphere of *joie de vivre* permeated the area. It was also a lovely, warm evening, so we strolled around for a while; eventually making our way back to the hotel.

The following day dawned bright and sunny; although a light rain was forecasted. With the possibility of inclement weather, we included some indoor visiting at the same time as roaming the ancient ramparts. Again, we made for the Porte Saint-Louis then followed the stone wall to the Québec Citadel (*La Citadelle*) or protective fort. Just beyond it were the Plains of Abraham where the famous battle took place in 1759, and the English forces under General James Wolfe were victorious over the French. We expected to see statues and other monuments dotted about, but it was just a vast open grassy space used for special events. So, finding little of interest there, and with the clouds starting to gather after what had been a very hot and sunny morning, we decided to go back to the Upper Town. This time, we went back by way of the Promenade of Governors and Dufferin Terrace—a very long boardwalk that followed the cliff top overlooking the St. Lawrence River. Lunch was eaten outside on the patio of Nouvelle France, a bistro in the old Rue du Trésor. The forecasted light rain started to fall, but we found refuge in a museum that was new to us.

When we last visited Québec City in 2007, excavations were being carried out under Dufferin Terrace. Foundations of a previous fort and Governor General's residence had been discovered, and these foundations were later stabilized to become an Historic Site. Access to the site was down a flight of steps from Dufferin Terrace, and once down there, we actually walked along under the terrace. Instead of guided tours through the site, there were numerous touchscreen terminals for visitors to use and learn about the history of the old buildings. It was an excellent display of artifacts, and we found it very interesting. For our evening's dining pleasure, we found the Restaurant Pub d'Orsay and enjoyed some gourmet food seated by the large, open window, a feature of many French Canadian restaurants. The night was still young, so we continued to explore outside the city walls and walked to a principal road called Grande Allée. One block was lined on both sides with sidewalk cafés, restaurants and boutique hotels; and a typical Continental ambiance prevailed. We decided we had to return there.

With the prospect of a completely sunny day, we headed for another cultural experience that was new to us. In Canada, the Crown is represented by an official called the Governor General, who normally resides in Rideau Hall, a stately mansion in the city of Ottawa. We thought that Rideau Hall was the only official residence, but apparently that has been only since Confederation in 1867 when Ottawa became the capital of Canada. Before that, Québec City was the capital. However, in 1872, preferring Québec City to Ottawa, Lord Dufferin, who was Governor General at the time, decided to re-establish a residence inside *La Citadelle*, and it has remained the second official residence ever since. This residence is open to the public as guided tours. After watching the changing of the guard at the citadel's main gate, we waited for the next tour and entered the residence used by dignitaries and other guests. From there, we were ushered up the

impressive staircase and through the various state rooms, many of which had a commanding view of the St. Lawrence River. Although, after a disastrous fire, the exterior of the residence was rebuilt in the same style as the original 19th century building, the interior had two distinct styles of architecture and furnishings—the original 19th century in about one third, and late 20th century in the remaining two thirds. For security reasons, we weren't allowed to take photos inside the residence, just the view from the terrace.

It was then time for lunch, so we backtracked to Grande Allée and found Les Trois Brasseurs (The Three Brewers) sidewalk restaurant for a well deserved cold beer. While we were eating our lunch, the sun broke through the clouds, and it turned out to be a lovely afternoon. Some further exploration of the city walls took us through the formal gardens of the Québec provincial parliament building to the fortified gate (Porte Saint-Jean) and back to the hotel. More gastronomy was devoured in the Restaurant aux Anciens Canadiens (Restaurant of the Pioneering Canadians) set in the oldest surviving house in Québec (1675). Both of us chose regional specialities—me, a typical Québécois meal (*tortière*), and Monica had a huge *vol-au-vent* filled with bison cooked in a blueberry sauce.

The last full day was again spent exploring on foot. The familiar trek down Rue Saint-Louis took us to the steep and winding Côte de la Montagne and the Lower Town beneath the ramparts. Here, the city was less infiltrated by the hordes of foreign tourists, and the Farmers' Market (*Marché du Vieux-Port*) was far removed from the urban setting, as country folk plied a wide selection of fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, fish and cheese. Nearby, a marina was filled with millions of dollars worth of boats: a distinct sign of affluence. A walkway/bike path followed the shoreline of the river back to the cliffs and the pedestrian precinct of Rue du Petit-Champlain. Time for lunch dictated that we revisit Le Lapin Sauté, and a delightful meal on the terrace was accompanied with the strains of music performed by nearby talented buskers. They were very good, and sitting there in the sunshine we could have listened to them longer, but we eventually tore ourselves away as we wanted to walk along more of the old city fortifications. It was then back to the hotel and packing our cases, knowing we were leaving for the airport early the next morning.

For our final evening meal, it was another visit to Grande Allée, and we were attracted to the old stone façade of the boutique hotel and restaurant, Louis Hébert. It had a large outside terrace, but as the temperature was starting to cool off, we decided to eat inside. The restaurant had the featured large, open windows, so we asked for a window table. We had a very friendly and efficient server, who politely corrected my schoolboy French, and she went out of her way to make our evening special; particularly once she knew we were celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary. Both of us started with a salad, after which I had salmon and Monica had duck. By then, both of us were starting to feel a little full and were undecided whether or not to have a dessert, but our server was quite persuasive, and we soon found out why. Written in chocolate across the top of the plates on which our desserts were served, was the message: *Bon 40 Anniversaire de Mariage*. What a thoughtful gesture and such a surprise, and if ever there was an occasion when I needed my camera, that was it. Unfortunately, though, it was the one and only time during our trip that I hadn't taken it with me. Even though we don't have a photographic record, we have some wonderful memories.

Checking out the hotel was followed by a hair-raising taxi ride to the Québec City Airport. After a small snack, we waited for our flight and boarded the Bombardier Q400 airliner bound for Toronto's Pearson

International Airport. We had a smooth flight back, and as we only had carry-on luggage we walked straight through the terminal building to where Bill Stanbury was waiting for us. He was interested in hearing all about the trip, so the journey was far from tedious, and we arrived home soon after 4:00 p.m. However, we were hungry, and walked to the Park House tavern. Since it was a beautiful afternoon, we ate outside on the patio, which made a perfect ending to our anniversary trip.

Events leading up to Labour Day

Not long after our return, we went to a reunion of the retirees and former employees of Champion Road Machinery/Volvo Motor Graders where I used to work. It had been five years since the plant closed down, and it was decided that it would be nice to have a reunion—organised by members of the Local 1863 Retirees Club. The July 20th reunion, held in one of the town's parks, was a huge success. Organisers estimated that about 300 people attended, and were treated to hamburgers, coleslaw, potato salad and beverages. While we were eating, we sat with our friends, Tina and Marris Bos, and afterwards, we wandered around and chatted to people we knew, including Robin and Barb Hewitt, whom we hadn't seen for ages.

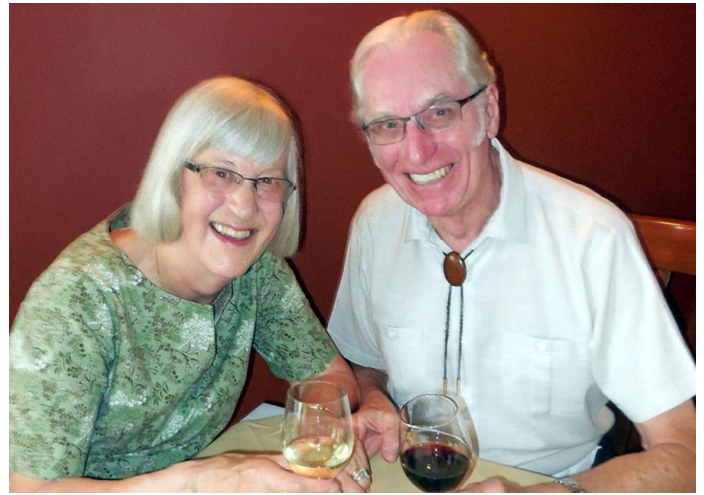
We went to St. Jacobs to see *Wichita Lineman*, which was a musical revue featuring the songs made famous by Glen Campbell, as well as a few other singers. The actor, Aaron Solomon, who played Glen Campbell, was excellent, and he had the backing of four very talented musicians, who added greatly to the show. A female singer, Leisa Way, accompanied Aaron from time to time, to represent the girls; such as Bobbie Gentry, Anne Murray and Tanya Tucker, who were associated with Campbell. It was a dynamic show with several renditions well known to the audience, such as a medley of hits by The Beach Boys, and interpretations of *Rhinestone Cowboy*, *By the Time I Get to Phoenix*, *Wichita Lineman*, etc. It made a very nice change to the comedies and other plays that we usually see. Following the show, we had dinner at D.H. Food and Lodging and, once again, sat outside to eat.

On Sunday evening, July 27th, we had a severe thunderstorm that lasted about three hours. The rain was torrential at times, and the wind really strong. It got a little scary, but there were no reports of any damage here in town. However, Grand Bend, which is only 31 miles (50 km) south of here, wasn't as fortunate. It was hit by an F1 strength tornado, and while only a few houses suffered significant damage, there were lots of downed trees and power lines, leaving thousands of people over a wide area without electricity.

While we were away, a middle-aged couple moved into the next door apartment, which had been empty for about a month. Bob Perry was fulfilling a one year contract working for the construction company that was erecting a large number of wind turbines north of town. Wind turbines, promoted by the Ontario provincial government as part of its 'Green Energy Plan', had become a very contentious issue, pitting neighbours against one another. There were hundreds of them to the east of Lake Huron, and instead of being grouped together, they were dotted all over the countryside. Anyhow, the Perrys seemed a very pleasant couple, and Bob's wife, Rollie, a keen gardener, had made their front area very attractive with a variety of annuals and several solar patio lights. They still had a home in Stoney Creek, near Hamilton, Ontario, and went back there every weekend.



Lindsey, Ella and Chris at Chris' Cousin's Wedding, Loch Lomond, Scotland, July, 2014.



Monica and Barry Celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary, Goderich, Ontario, July, 2014.



Fontaine de Tourny Outside the Old City Walls, Québec City, Québec, July, 2014.



Governor General's Residence Terrace, La Citadelle, Québec City, Québec, July, 2014.



Rue St-Paul, One of the Streets in the Lower Town, Québec City, Québec, July, 2014.



Grande Allée, an Avenue Lined with Restaurants and Boutique Hotels, Québec City, Québec, July, 2014.

With sunshine in the forecast for one day early in August, we decided to tour through the area to the southeast of Goderich, ending up somewhere along the north shore of Lake Erie. We kept to country roads as much as we could, and drove through a mostly agricultural area dotted with the occasional small community. We passed seemingly endless fields of maize (corn) and soybeans until we got nearer to Lake Erie where we started to see tobacco being grown, as well as market garden produce. Although we took the road that follows the Lake Erie shoreline, it was mostly too far away to see anything of the lake. Then, at any place where the road was close to the lake, there were cottages and summer homes blocking our view. We had to go as far as Turkey Point before we found a road that led down to the lake, and then when we got there, it wasn't at all what we expected. There were cars parked all along the road bordering a very long, sandy beach, which was crowded with people making the most of the sunny day. There were also a few fast food outlets and other concessions, but not much else. We had difficulty finding somewhere to park, but persevered until we found a spot, as we wanted to have a break and stretch our legs. However, we didn't walk far before deciding that we had seen enough, and returned to the car. We came back by a slightly different route, and by the time we got home, both of us were feeling very weary. Without realising it, we had travelled 300 miles (483 km)!

In August, the world's only two flying Avro Lancasters performed flypasts at selected airshows in England. The Canadian Warplane Heritage (CWH) "Mynaski" Lancaster (associated with Goderich Sky Harbour Airport) flew from its base at Mount Hope Airport, Hamilton, Ontario, and met up with "Thumper", its English counterpart of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF). I found a photo on the CWH website showing the two aircraft on the runway at RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire. At one point during the tour, the Canadian aircraft developed engine trouble, and was forced to withdraw from several of the planned air shows while repairs were carried out. However, thanks to a loaned Rolls-Royce Merlin engine from the BBMF, the Canadian Lancaster was back in the air again, so onlookers were able to see the two of them flying together at the remaining shows.

We experienced some of the best hiking weather for some time, and it was great to see the trails being used by families and visitors to town. The Celtic Roots Festival was a huge annual musical/cultural event held in Goderich that attracted visitors worldwide. Apart from the stage performances, there was the Celtic College where enthusiasts gathered to learn about the age old culture; including such things as the Gaelic language, ancient handcraft skills, and musical instrument playing (tin whistle, bhodrun, etc.).

Still on the subject of music, the Glen Campbell show was just one of several revues this year. We went to Drayton to see *Hollywood Sings*, which was a revue featuring famous songs from the movies. It was a fast paced show with great singing and choreography. Of the seven singers, four were females, and the dresses they wore were really gorgeous, with a different one being worn by each singer every time she appeared on the stage. The show ended with a long medley of songs from Disney movies, after which the singers and the four musicians were given a well deserved standing ovation. We drove straight home after the show, and then had dinner at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant.

The time came to go to Stratford for a get-together with our friends Rosemarie and Geoff Edwards. We hadn't seen them since they visited us in April, and by now they had moved from their apartment to a small

bungalow. We had already seen it from the outside, and on this visit we also saw the inside. It looked really great. However, we were not impressed with the restaurant where we had lunch—overpriced for what we got, and poor service. Despite that, we had a very enjoyable day out seeing Rosemarie and Geoff again.

One Saturday afternoon at the Goderich Legion, we went to a come-and-go tea put on to celebrate Shirley MacEwen's 90th birthday. Between 30 and 40 of her friends and acquaintances dropped by to wish her well, and, of course, many of her family were there, including husband Norris, who was now a resident in a nursing home. Sadly, he had reached the point where he needed a lot of assistance, and even though caregivers went into the house twice a day, he became too unsteady. He appeared very frail and confined to a wheelchair; and he recognized close family members, but not us.

Towards the end of the month, we went to Grand Bend and saw a spectacular production of the stage show, *Les Misérables*. It was the first time we had seen it, and given the intricacies of the story, we found it fairly compelling. Certainly the calibre of acting, singing, choreography, music accompaniment, set design and lighting effects was top notch. It was a very dark story, so naturally the costumes in most of the scenes were drab and grey. The sets were equally dingy and dark, although a few extravagant touches were added for the wedding scene. Strangely enough, even though it was one of the most celebrated musicals of our time, there were no well known songs from it, so we didn't leave the theatre with the music ringing in our ears. However, we did leave the theatre with the sound of the clapping and cheering ringing in our ears. It was the loudest that we had ever heard in all our years of theatre going. Following the show, we went to Hessenland Country Inn for their final Mongolian grill of the season. Unfortunately, it was too cool for us to eat *al fresco* on the patio, but we reflected on the show and the excellent day out.

It was three years ago that Goderich was devastated by the F3 strength tornado, and the 'Grand Reopening of Courthouse Park' in the town centre was held on the afternoon of August 30th, 2014. Actually, we had been able to walk through the park or sit on one of the many new benches for over a year, but it was only now that the reconstruction of an important feature—the gazebo/bandshell; also called the performance stage—had finally been completed.

The old gazebo/bandshell was a traditional design. However, the pillars and railings partially blocked the view of whatever was taking place on the stage. People wanted the new one to be a more open structure with better visibility. A prerequisite of the new design, though, was that the structure had to be built on the existing concrete base. It was meeting both of those criteria that caused the long delay in completing the project. The new performance stage design was a hot topic among residents. It represented the overturned hull of a boat, and while some people thought it was great and in keeping with Goderich's marine heritage, others hated it. We felt it overpowered the adjacent Huron County courthouse, but as one acquaintance said, we needed to give it a year or two to weather, and for the trees to grow before making a final judgement.

A plaque was unveiled during the official ribbon cutting ceremony, and on it were the names of all the organisations and individuals who had donated to the Tree Replanting Fund. Because Monica's cousin, Trecia, died so soon after the tornado, we made a donation to the fund in her memory, and her name was one of those listed.

An early autumn in the wings

On September 5th, it had been hot and humid all day—88 deg.F (31 deg.C)—but both the heat and humidity were brought to an abrupt end when a line of severe thunderstorms crossed the area in the late afternoon. We had been under a severe thunderstorm warning, so had kept a watchful eye out for signs of threatening weather. Monica was in the kitchen making a salad for our evening meal when the sky went really dark. We could also hear and see the storm approaching—lots of thunder and lightning, but no rain. Then the wind increased and the clouds scurried across the sky. We decided to delay eating until after the storm had passed, as we preferred to stand by the window and watch what was happening outside. By then, the rain was coming down in torrents, but eventually eased. We decided that the worst was over and that we could eat when, all of a sudden, there was a terrific flash of lightning, and our electricity was cut off, plunging us into semidarkness even though it was only 5:50 p.m. I had already got the torch (flashlight) out, so we were alright. We waited a little while before doing anything, but being ready to eat and not knowing how long the power failure would last, I started to put some candles on the table. However, I hadn't got very far when the electricity was restored, so we didn't have to eat our meal by candlelight after all. Apparently, we were lucky, as some places were without power all night. The following day it became cold in comparison, and a northerly wind kept the temperature down to 70 deg.F (21 deg.C).

It was now past Labour Day, and the weather deteriorated into typical early autumn conditions. Getting cool, and I was now breaking out the sweaters and light jackets. The leaves were beginning to turn colour, and the migrating geese were winging south in ever increasing numbers—both sure signs of autumn. However, while the weather was reasonably good, we wanted to make a few more trips out to the hiking trails and watch the gradual transition of the seasons.

Since warmer temperatures were in the forecast, we decided to make the most of it by going out for the day. We drove to the hamlet of Violet Hill and had lunch at Mrs. Mitchell's schoolhouse restaurant. We had been there several times over the years, but always when staying in the area and never before on a day trip. Anyhow, we had a delicious lunch, after which we headed to Mono Cliffs Provincial Park for some hiking. Because of road construction, though, we couldn't get to the official car park, and had to leave the car at another entrance to the park. This meant hiking some trails that we hadn't been on before, and one was particularly steep and rugged. Fortunately, we had taken our hiking poles with us for use in those kind of conditions. The trail took us to the highest point in the park, and we were rewarded with a marvellous view when we reached the top. We had to pass by a lake, which turned out to be bigger than expected. Not surprisingly, we were very weary by the time we got back to the car, but even so, we felt pleased that we were still able to hike on challenging, rugged trails. We decided against stopping somewhere on our way home for a bite to eat; preferring instead to return home before it got dark, and then went to the Park House tavern for a delicious meal.

We had another day out on September 21st when we went to London, Ontario, for a get-together with my cousin, Don, and his wife, Claire. We all went for brunch at a posh restaurant frequented by Claire and the Maycourt Club ladies' group she belongs to. We didn't rate it very high at all. To begin with, there were no appetizers—not even soup or a salad—on the menu. Then, because it was brunch, most of the items were

breakfast type meals, such as steak or ham and eggs, and Eggs Benedict with either ham or smoked salmon. The meal wasn't a patch on the one we had had at Mrs. Mitchell's schoolhouse restaurant, and to make matters worse it was more expensive! We didn't have dessert at the restaurant because Claire had one at home for us to eat while looking at the photos from their trips. They went on a cruise down the River Danube in May, and then in August they visited their son, Brent, in Vancouver, British Columbia. While there, Don, Brent and his partner, Gary, went on a part-flying, part-driving trip to Tuktoyaktuk in the Northwest Territories. We left early to drive home before it got dark, and we were very glad, as it started to rain soon after we left their house.

The last throes of September began with a week of beautiful summerlike weather and lots of sunshine every day. However, having been on two recent out-of-town trips, we decided to enjoy the gorgeous weather locally. So, we went and had lunch at the Park House tavern, and as it was still open, we sat at one of the outside patio tables. We then walked down to the harbour and a lovely stroll along the lakeshore boardwalk.

The Canadian Warplane Heritage (CWH) "Mynaski" Lancaster arrived back home safe and sound on September 28th, and was greeted by a huge crowd, a pipe band and water cannons. One highlight of the tour was when the two Lancasters flew over Derwent Dam in homage to the legendary 'Dam Busters' air raid. We watched a video of it on the CWH museum's website, and it must have been an emotional sight for the people gathered there. Another video that we watched was an interview given by one of the Canadian Lancaster's crew to the local TV station. He said the crew was overwhelmed by the welcome they received everywhere they went in England; especially when they first arrived at RAF Coningsby, and saw all the cars parked along the sides of the roads and the hundreds of people lining the fences.

In October, we went to the village of Lucan, which is on the way to London, to visit the Lucan and Area Heritage and Donnelly Museum. We already knew quite a lot about the infamous Donnelly family, but we were surprised to learn that many of the original settlers in the area were black slaves fleeing from the United States. They named the settlement Wilberforce, in homage to William Wilberforce, the British politician whose efforts resulted in the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire. Having seen the movie *Amazing Grace*, which tells his story, we found that part of the museum very interesting. Then, on our way home, we stopped in Exeter to have dinner at Eddington's fine dining restaurant.

We went to Exeter again, but that time it was to hike on the McNaughton/Morrison Dam Trail, as the autumn colours were about at their best. Then, with it being the Saturday of the Thanksgiving weekend, Monica cooked one of the traditional Thanksgiving dinners that evening—baked ham with a selection of vegetables followed by pumpkin pie. The next day was beautiful and sunny, so we went hiking again, but closer to home, and along the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART). It was much busier than usual, with the nice weather and autumn colours bringing out a lot of people.

We heard about two friends suffering with serious health issues. One was Diane Knight, and we met her and Mike in Sarnia for our periodic get-together. After we had had lunch and heard all about Mike's five week trip across Canada and through several of the U.S. states, Diane suggested that she and Monica move to another table as she had something to tell. That something was that she

had been diagnosed with breast cancer. She had already had a biopsy done, and although she had told Mike the result, she hadn't told their two children. She was going to see the specialist and needed another woman to talk to, so she confided in Monica. Another problem was she suffered from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and wondered whether to have any treatment at all, as the COPD wasn't going to get any better. Anyhow, she was able to have surgery, and a lumpectomy was scheduled. Following that, she would undergo radiation treatment. Surprisingly, despite her bad news, we still enjoyed our day out.

We knew that our Coventry friend, Roger, was suffering from a heart condition, had been seen by several doctors and undergone numerous tests. Since we last saw him and Sue in May, 2013, we didn't know that the doctors had decided on the best way to treat his problem. We received a message that Roger was to have heart bypass surgery. Roger then developed shingles, and it was touch and go whether the surgeon would actually operate on him. The operation was cancelled, and rescheduling would take weeks. Anyhow, Roger's daughter (our goddaughter), Lindsey, had booked flights to go to England, taking Ella with her, and she had to decide whether to still go over or cancel her flights. In the end, Lindsey decided to fly over as planned, so that her parents could enjoy their granddaughter for three weeks.

Although minor compared to those two problems, Monica learnt that she had another medical condition—osteopenia, which is a less severe form of osteoporosis. Her bone loss was still less than the amount where it became osteoporosis, and the osteopenia was only in her right hip. Her doctor suggested that she should start taking medication to prevent further bone loss. We weighed up the pros and cons before eventually deciding that Monica should take the medication, with the dose being only one tablet once a week.

Our third out-of-town trip in October was our last theatre outing for this year. We went to St. Jacobs to see *Footloose*, and what a fantastic show it was. It was a 'modern day' musical with lots of lively singing and dancing, and while it had its humorous moments, it was also thought provoking at times. Apparently, the show was so popular that they had to add performances. It was certainly a full house the afternoon we went, and as the cast took their bows at the end of the show, they were given a well deserved standing ovation by the audience. We drove straight home following the show, and then went and had dinner at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant. The Arctic char was delicious.

We visited another fine dining restaurant. This time in the town of Listowel (a round trip of 98 miles [158 km] from home). The restaurant used to be known as Feige's, and we went there fairly regularly. Then the owners wanted to do something else, and sold the business to a young couple, who rebranded the restaurant and called it Warrington's, as they used to live in Warrington Crescent, Maida Vale, London, England, for a while. Unfortunately, the meal wasn't exactly up to scratch, and they needed to improve on some of the minor touches to the restaurant.

As they were well past their prime, all the annuals in the front garden were pulled up, and deposited in the town's composting site that was scheduled to close on November 1st. I did a lot of leaf raking into the gutter for collection by the town workers using special vacuum machines. October 27th was voting day for Ontario's municipal elections. We had voted at the advanced polls, which was just as well, because the polling stations were very busy with a huge voter turnout.

Instead of handing out sweets to any trick-or-treaters who came knocking on our door on Halloween night, we decided to celebrate my emigration anniversary earlier than on the actual date. We had so few kids come the previous two years that we had already decided to pass on Halloween this year. However, we did buy a couple of bags of candy bars just in case any youngsters came before we went out, but the only people who knocked at the door were our friends, Robin and Barb Hewitt and their young daughter, Jessica.

On the evening of November 1st, we attended a Mardi Gras Gala, which was a fundraiser for our local Hospital Foundation. There was both a live and silent auction, but as none of the items appealed to us we didn't bid on anything. As for the meal, it was what one would expect with 300 people in attendance—a bit massed produced! There was musical entertainment, but by the time the live auction ended it was after 10:30 p.m. and people were starting to leave. However, we stayed and danced a few numbers before we left. It wasn't one of our most enjoyable evenings, but it was all for a good cause.

There was more rain than usual this autumn, and the ground was so soggy that the farmers weren't able to get on the fields to harvest their crops. Also, the temperature varied as much as 59 deg.F (15 deg.C) between one day and the next. Later, a string of wet days, but still relatively warm for early November, turned wintry with snow falling more seriously, and we had the potential of an accumulation of 2 - 4 inches (5 - 10 cm). The folks inland from the lake felt the worst of the storm, and there were dozens of road accidents due to driver unpreparedness for the change in conditions.

Remembrance Day was extremely well attended as crowds stood around the war memorial in Courthouse Park. The larger than normal assembly was probably due to the reaction surrounding what happened in Ottawa in late October, when a Canadian soldier on sentry duty at the National War Memorial was murdered by an Islamic radical. The subsequent attack by this person in the Canadian Parliamentary Buildings showed how vulnerable the government was; although fortunately he was taken down before any more collateral damage ensued. Princess Anne was at the Ottawa cenotaph, and rededicated it in the name of recent Canadian casualties in Afghanistan. Our ceremony was simple, yet meaningful, with the laying of many wreaths, as well as all the poppies from the audience.

We received a message from our friend, Diane Knight in Windsor, telling us that her surgery had been brought forward by two weeks. Being anxious to hear how she was, Monica telephoned Diane, and was expecting that after a lumpectomy, Diane would be kept in hospital overnight. However, she was in and out on the same day. Not surprisingly, Diane was very tired, but she chatted for a few minutes over a cup of tea. As far as she knew, the surgery had gone well, but she would find out more the next time she saw the surgeon. However, that wouldn't be for two or three weeks, to allow her incision time to heal. Since then, we kept in touch by e-mail, and in some of her messages she sounded a bit down, but that may be due more to her COPD than to her latest problem.

We were on tenterhooks for about six months after receiving a recall notice from General Motors (GM) advising that our car's ignition could shut itself off without any warning. This would mean a complete loss of power—engine, brakes and steering. A disastrous situation if it happened on a busy multi-lane highway. Thankfully, we didn't experience the problem, and after months of waiting, our car was fitted with a new

ignition switch under warranty. The long delay was because the massive recall affected thousands of vehicles, and GM had to wait for the replacement parts to be manufactured.

We didn't go out of town once in November, which was a very quiet month with little happening apart from my 69th birthday. We didn't even go to the *Novemberfest* dinner and dance at Hessenland Country Inn. I contracted a head cold a few days beforehand, and we cancelled our reservation. Flurries were also in the forecast for that day, and we were concerned that road conditions might not be the best for coming home late. I managed to shake off the cold fairly quickly, and better still, Monica wasn't infected with it.

Monica and I celebrated my birthday at Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant. It was a bit windy walking there, but as soon as we entered, the establishment's *mein host* made us welcome in one of the small dining rooms that had an open fire—very cozy! The specials of the day were explained, and we then ordered an *apéritif* of *Henkel Trocken* sparkling wine. After studying the menu, we both ordered the purée of butternut squash soup, followed by beef tenderloin with a peppercorn cream sauce as the *entrée*. The soup was particularly tasty as it had been infused with apple and maple syrup; the latter gave it a lovely, subtle caramel flavour. The bacon-wrapped steaks were cooked to perfection and accompanied with sautéed mushrooms, vegetable medley and baked potato. Our wine of choice was a bottle of Australian *Shiraz*. We had room for dessert and that consisted of a small slice of lime tart garnished with whipped cream and a fresh raspberry. My piece of cake was also decorated with a lighted candle, and came compliments of the house. The meal was topped off with coffee and a Bailey's Cream Liqueur.

Lots of excitement when there was a major fire in town. We heard on the local radio station that a downtown building had been gutted. Our local volunteer fire department did a fantastic job containing the blaze, which broke out at 2:00 a.m. on a bitterly cold night. The Victorian building contained a double-fronted store and an apartment over it. The outcome could have been a lot worse than it was, but the store had been vacant for a while. Only one person lived in the apartment, and the tenant escaped unharmed, but lost everything. I saw the remnants later (there was only one wall left standing).

The Festive Season had already started with Christmas lights installed in the Courthouse Park trees and elsewhere around town. The switching on ceremony and Santa Claus parade happened on November 22nd, and many festivities between then and New Year's kept people amused.

Another 'green' Christmas

At this time of year, our biggest moan about the weather was the lack of sunshine. We stayed in more than we normally would, because day after day of dreary, grey skies made it uninviting to go out. So, almost in desperation, when the forecast for one early December afternoon called for a mix of sun and cloud, we grabbed the opportunity. Although there was only a slight breeze, it still wasn't the kind of weather for strolling along the lakeshore boardwalk, so we headed over the old railway bridge across the Maitland River and along the Tiger Dunlop section of the Goderich to Auburn Rail Trail (GART), which to our surprise, had a dusting of snow on it. We had had a few flurries that morning, but any snowflakes had melted on impact in the town. Anyhow, the snow gave the trail a bit of a Christmassy look, and adding to



Newly Installed Performance Stage in Courthouse Park, Goderich, Ontario, August, 2014.



Monica at the Outlook, Mono Cliffs Provincial Park, near Orangeville, Ontario, September, 2014.



Barry and Cousin Don, at Don and Claire's House in London, Ontario, September, 2014.



Autumn Colours Reflected in the Morrison Dam Reservoir, Exeter, Ontario, October, 2014.



Early Snow outside our Apartment, Cambria Rd. N., Goderich, Ontario, November, 2014.



Celebrating Barry's 69th Birthday at Thyme on 21 Restaurant, Goderich, Ontario, November, 2014.

that, someone had hung Christmas ornaments on selected trees. We noticed them as we walked to our turnaround point, and then counted them on our way back. We spotted twenty-one in just over a mile. While we really enjoyed our hike and were glad that we had made the effort, we didn't see much of the sun. It made a few brief appearances, and we saw some small patches of blue sky, but it was a mostly cloudy afternoon.

Just before the first weekend, Monica suffered with a dreadful head cold and stubborn cough which didn't go away for weeks. Then I succumbed to it a few days later. Having already had a cold this winter, I hoped that it would have given my immune system a boost, so I was pretty annoyed at getting a second one.

As we felt so rotten, most of the things planned for the weekend didn't get done. One of them was putting up our Christmas tree and other decorations, and the other was going out for lunch. We eventually got the Christmas decorating done, and were planning on wrapping presents, but once again our plans went awry—that time caused by a power failure! We later learnt that it was quite a widespread outage affecting about 23,000 customers in the counties of Huron, Perth and parts of Middlesex.

The weather became most unseasonable, and it was a complete 'green' Christmas this year. We had some snow accumulation, but all that had gone by Christmas Eve; washed away by torrential rain and temperatures as high as 52 deg.F (11 deg.C). Good for those who were travelling, but no atmosphere at all. The ski resort operators were having to rely on man made snow for their slopes.

As it turned out, our Christmas was a repeat of previous years—by ourselves on Christmas Day, and then going to Shirley and Norris' on Boxing Day. We were uncertain with Norris now in the nursing home, but Shirley called to say that we were expected as usual. This year's gathering included two family members whom we hadn't expected to see. Shirley and Norris' granddaughter, Katie, and her husband, Stuart, were visiting from Holland where they have lived for about the last four years. It was nice to see them again.

Another invitation that we received was from our friends Robin, Barb and Jessica Hewitt to join them for a get-together between Christmas and New Year's. They had moved to a house on three acres of land surrounded by open fields not far from Goderich. Jessica had a growing menagerie of animals, so they needed somewhere more suitable than their house in town. Anyhow, we met the new additions to the menagerie. Previously, there were two dogs, several cats and some rabbits. That has now grown to include a miniature pony, a donkey, a goat and some chickens.

Our head colds were minor in comparison with health issues affecting friends and acquaintances all around us. In the message on her Christmas card, Karen Gilroy, our friend in Australia, said that she had had a brush with breast cancer, but after a double mastectomy, she was fine and hadn't needed any follow-up treatment. Unfortunately, after having had a lumpectomy, Diane Knight from Windsor was now having to have radiation treatment. She said that so far the treatments had gone well, but didn't know how many more sessions she required. Leading up to Christmas and over the holiday, our thoughts were very much with our Coventry friend, Roger Moore. His heart bypass surgery was rescheduled and things went well for the first few days, but then a few problems arose and he was kept in hospital over the holiday period. He was eventually allowed home towards the end of December.

By this time, I could see the light at the end of the tunnel where Chapter 10 of my memoirs was concerned. I had a few more months of 1990 and early 1991 to review and record, but they were times of turmoil and I had to scrupulously research my papers to make sure the events were written accurately. I intended to end the chapter dramatically, as, once again, my world was turned upside down.

Since my old employer closed the factory doors in Goderich and moved manufacturing to Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., in 2014 there was another shift with everything now being produced in China. This is part of the announcement:

“ ... Volvo Construction Equipment (Volvo CE) will discontinue development and production of its current product line of Volvo-branded backhoe loaders and motor graders. In the future, these products will instead be manufactured by Volvo CE’s Chinese company SDLG.

“ ... A review of the operation has now been performed, resulting in the decision by Volvo CE to discontinue product development and production of backhoe loaders and motor graders in Europe and Americas and transfer these operations to its Chinese company SDLG. Combined with other efficiency enhancement measures, this will result in a workforce reduction of about 1,000 employees, of whom the majority are in Poland, the US and Brazil.

“ ... SDLG-branded backhoe loaders and motor graders will better serve customer demands in the large and growing value segment of the market.”

Fortunately, I had seen the writing on the wall in good time, and left with a benefits package and reasonable pension.

Winter conditions were predicted to return at the beginning of 2015 with temperatures dipping to 18 deg.F (-8 deg.C). Fortunately, we only had to walk down the road to Thyme on 21 fine dining restaurant for a rewarding New Year’s Eve meal. As usual with it being a special occasion, there was an appropriate four course dinner. The first course was a cream of mushroom soup with sherry and crème fraîche, and that was followed by a roasted beet salad with arugula, goat cheese, sliced almonds and dried cranberries. There was a choice of two *entrées*—roasted beef tenderloin with asiago cream sauce, potato croquettes and vegetables, or pan seared halibut, salmon, scallops and shrimps with risotto and vegetables. Both of us chose the beef. Dessert was a slice of chocolate pecan pie with vanilla ice cream. Needless to say, it was a fabulous meal.

As we went to the late sitting, it was nearly 10:30 p.m. when we got back home, but that still gave us time to watch an old classic film, *The Miracle on 34th Street*, which was one of those nice, heart warming stories. Then, after toasting in the New Year, we headed to bed. However, we were unaware that 2015 was to become an *annus horribilis*, and we were faced with one of the biggest challenges in our lives – a situation with life altering consequences.

