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November | December 2015

2ND YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Bear the Tinker

Loss of a Timeless Treasure

A Time to Remember

David Harvey

Answering The Call Daily

Old Tyme Christmas Memories & New Traditions in Athens

The Gift of Being Part of a Community

Cultural Christmas Traditions

Rooted in Church, Family and Food



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What's Inside

People | Places | Lifestyles | Arts | Entertainment | History & **More!**

November / December 2015



features

- 6** Bear the Tinker
Loss of a Timeless Treasure
- 8** A Time To Remember
- 10** David Harvey
Answering The Call Daily
- 18** Old Tyme Christmas Memories
& New Traditions in Athens
- 20** The Gift of Being Part of a Community
- 22** Cultural Christmas Traditions
Rooted in Church, Family and Food

FOR YOUR INTEREST:

- 3** Recipes by Karen Davis
- 5** Legions Keep Remembrance Alive
Through Art and Literacy in the Schools
- 13** The Year that Christmas Came to Stay
- 17** AJ Benoit Has Passion
for his Musical Craft
- 24** Buying that Special Christmas Tree
- 26** Melchers Travels
- 27** Speaking of Wine
- 28** Final Thoughts





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TUXEDO PASTA

Yield 6 servings

You'll need...

A perfect way to use leftover turkey or chicken

- 2 cups uncooked bow tie pasta
- 2 cups cubed cooked turkey
- 1 medium zucchini sliced
- 1 ½ cups fresh mushrooms
- ½ cup sweet red pepper
- 3 tbsp. butter, divided
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. white wine or chicken broth
- ¾ cup shredded parmesan cheese
- 3 tbsp. minced fresh basil or 1 tbsp. dried basil

To create...

- Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Meanwhile in a large skillet, saute the turkey, zucchini, mushrooms, and red pepper in 2 tbsp. butter for 4-5 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Add the lemon juice and white wine, Bring to a boil, reduce the heat; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until heated through.
- Drain the pasta, add to the skillet. Stir in the parmesan cheese, basil and remaining butter.

SPICED CRANBERRY SAUCE

Yield 2 cups

You'll need...

- 12 ounces fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1 ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground allspice
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp ground ginger
- 1/8 tsp ground cloves

To create...

- In a large saucepan, combine all ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer uncovered until the cranberries pop and the mixture is thickened, about 30 minutes. Cool. Transfer into serving bowl; cover and refrigerate until chilled.



HOLIDAY TOSSED SALAD

6-8 servings

You'll need...

- 8 cups mixed greens
- 2 medium apples diced
- ½ cup crumbled blue cheese
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1/3 cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted
- ¼ cup sliced green onions
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. thawed frozen cranberry juice
- 1 tbsp. white wine vinegar
- Dash of salt and pepper to taste.

To create...

- In a large salad bowl, combine the salad greens, blue cheddar, dried cranberries, walnuts and green onions. In a small bowl whisk together the remaining ingredients. Pour over salad; toss gently to coat. Serve immediately.

Recipes provided
by
Karen Davis



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LEGIONS KEEP REMEMBRANCE ALIVE

Through Art and Literacy in the Schools

By Lorraine Payette

“Lest we forget” – important words. How can we honour all those who served? How can we guarantee our future generations will never forget?

The “Remembrance Contests” of the Royal Canadian Legion keep these memories alive. It combines art, literacy, public speaking and history into one cohesive unit for students from grades 1-12. They involve young people across Canada, whether traditionally or home schooled, in a competition culminating in national recognition and awards.

They advance through branch, zone, district, provincial and federal levels. They learn the history of Canada and the wars while doing drawing, paintings, writing, public speaking or videos. Prizes are awarded at every level as they move up. National senior first prize winners see their works on display at the Canadian War Museum during the annual Remembrance Day period, with second place winners and honourable mentions shown in the foyer of the House of Commons.

Tom Eagles, Dominion President of The Royal Canadian Legion, is quoted at <http://www.legion.ca/article/legion-selects-winners-of-poster-and-literary-contests-2/> as saying, “Since 1960, the Legion has been sponsoring Poster and Literary contests in its efforts to perpetuate Remembrance among all Canadians. I am pleased to report that this past

year approximately 100,000 primary, junior, intermediate and senior students participated in these national contests... Participants represent youth from all areas of the country, in both official languages, and span the various cultural mixes that make up the family mosaic of Canada... ”

Students are encouraged to write poems about remembrance, to make posters, present speeches and create videos as part of the program. This is still school work, and they are expected to produce high quality pieces.

“Regarding the Literary Contest, participants are asked to submit an essay/composition or a poem with a Remembrance theme,” states the official website. “Submissions are accepted in either French or English and are marked on the basis of originality of thought, expression, presentation, grammar and spelling.

“The Poster Contest participants are asked to submit their work in either black and white or colour format with the theme of Remembrance and what it represents to them. Similar to the Literary Contest, submissions are marked based on originality, expression and presentation.”

“We encourage them to get to know their local veterans,” said Janet Gaylord Youth Ed Chairperson of Branch 92 Gananoque, On. “It is a time for Remembrance, to reflect and honour all who served. What did they do? What were their sacrifices? What did they give us? Students

learn about their past and how that reflects on the future. The veterans feel pride when the students honour them for what they did. It gives meaning to the sacrifices they made when they are remembered and respected. Students can join the Poppy Campaign as volunteers, visit the vets in the local seniors’ residences, and bring them in as special speakers at their schools. The program encourages them to do research, to really learn about these people and everything they did for all Canadians.”

In 2014, seven-year-old Thomas Elkins of Gananoque drew a black and white poster for the competition. His art and message were so well done that he took awards at local, district, zone and provincial levels for 2015. While not all students will do that well, all will collect knowledge and memories that are theirs to keep forever.

For them, “Lest we forget” is a phrase that means something, something they will pass on to their children and grandchildren. They will proudly remember the vets talking to them about what it was really like. For this group one thing can be assured. They will never forget. LH

To learn more about the program, please go to <http://www.legion.ca/honour-remember/contests/>



BEAR THE TINKER

Loss of a Timeless Treasure

By Lorraine Payette

First the sound of a horse's hooves clopping rhythmically on the road, the creak of caravan wheels, and a lusty voice singing:

"I wish I lived in a caravan,

With a horse to drive, like the pedlar man!..."

Then from the mist, a sight so welcome yet unexpected – a gypsy caravan pulled by a docile and compliant beast. Seated at the reins, a giant of a man who has stepped straight out of the mid-eighteenth century, a full blown tinker of dreams and crafter of words who will stop to sing and play, joke and share a tale with all wherever he might be found.

Maurice Joseph Leger was born in Scoudouk, NB, on December 20, 1954. A

child of the solstice, there was something mystical about him from the very beginning. A soul displaced in time, he spent much of his childhood alone in the woods. When he did associate with people, someone would always say, "The bear has come out of the woods." The name stuck, and he became known to all as Bear.

"Bear knew as a child that he was set apart from others," said his wife, Annie Haggerty of Lansdowne.

Bear lived a quiet life as a member of modern society, fitting in as best he could, until he came across an article in National Geographic from 1972 about gypsies and Appleby Fair. He knew he had found his niche, and started building his first gypsy caravan.

It wasn't long before he became a fixture on the roads in New Brunswick. Casting off the twentieth century, he immersed himself in the time and life for which he had truly been born. He was now in every sense a 1740s travelling tinker, merrily wending his way from town to town plying his trade and singing happy songs to Callum, his horse and favourite traveling companion. People would stop him along the road, sitting with him or inviting him into their homes to play one of his many musical instruments, sing a song or tell a tale.

One fine day, a fair damsel came into Bear's life. Enchanted by her grace, beauty and intelligence, he asked her to join him on his life's journey and she accepted.

"Bear and I met by chance in St. Andrews,"



Left pg: Playing the uilleann pipes in Delta. Unlike traditional bagpipes, a bellows pumped by the elbow fills the bag with air and allows the pipes to be played.
Clockwise: Bear enjoying the music of a young violinist at the Thousand Islands National Park; A trip by buck carriage along the open road; Playing the bodhran at a gathering at Dreams In Motion in Gananoque

said Haggerty. "I was driving to the east coast with my parents on vacation. Mother spied a caravan down a driveway just ahead of the oceanside campground. Bear was spied along the shore grazing Callum, a lad on his back, clearly the gentleman of the caravan. So the adventure began.

"I did travel with him for a week, to be sure a treasured time. He came to stay nine years ago..."

A single horsepower caravan travels at 5-mph, fast enough to get the tinker and his lady where they need to go, but so slow as to suspend time. Wherever they went, enchantment went with them, and people kept coming to touch and to taste that time gone by.

What had worked so very well in New Brunswick didn't seem to have the same appeal in Ontario however. People were more self-centered, closed away from that which is not part of their everyday lives. Bear struggled and, when he had to enter the hospital for open heart surgery, he had to give up Callum and the open road.

"It must have been excruciating selling

Callum, who was very much a part of his life and had been for ten long years," said Haggerty. "He had trained him from an 18-month-old colt. Callum was very much a companion animal – they had been through so much together living that lifestyle."

Although Bear tried other things after giving up Callum, nothing truly worked for him. He had lost his heart, and succumbed to cancer in St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital in Kingston on September 1, 2013 at the age of 59.

"Bear was the epitome of a Renaissance Man who, by choice, traveled from fair to fair with his horse and caravan," said master storyteller, Deborah Dunleavy of Brockville. "A few years back he delighted the members of the 1000 Islands Yarnspinnners one evening with some of his tall tales and delightful music. He will be missed."

Traces of Bear can still be found. If you check the internet, you will see a video here, a quote there, some pictures. A self-taught musician, he played a multitude of instruments – flute, bodhran, guitar, bagpipes, violin and accordion – and sang beautifully. He produced a CD of songs

which he sold from the caravan.

"As 'the bard' his storytelling was a natural gift and his knowledge of early histories and folklore extensive," said Haggerty. "His voice was rich, powerful, and beautiful. He held a small library of early Celtic songs and music in his personal repertoire. When he performed, he interspersed stories with song, engaging listeners, young and old, with his amazing presence."

His mission in life was to live a simple and upright life, then sit by the fire at day's end and spin the tales that keep the magic alive.

"Bear was a philosopher of sorts, who was deeply curious on many things. He quietly conveyed a message, stood to his beliefs and convictions and was 'not pleased' at the price of progress," said Haggerty.

So as the day closes, stand for a moment in the stillness, watch and listen. When the sun drops below the horizon and the moon begins her rise, see if you can still hear a horse drawing an eighteenth-century caravan and the tinker singing his merry song. **LH**



*Bob Nutall today at his home in Kingston, On;
Inset: Bob Nutall serving in WW2*

A TIME TO REMEMBER

By Joan-Rupert Barkley

To a passerby, the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #97 on Henry Street in Prescott, may seem like a place with lots of fun activities. The big sign, located at the front of the building, announces Thursday meals, Karaoke Fridays, Dart Leagues and upcoming events. However, once you enter the doors and look around the hall you are suddenly filled with emotion. Pictures of men and women who fought in WW1, WW2 and also in Korea, as well, certificates and medals cover the walls. Some of the pictures are of Prescott resident Robert Nuttall who served in both WW2 and the Korean War.

Bob was born in Lancashire, England and grew up in a military family. His father was a regiment Sergeant Major in the Lancashire Fusiliers Regiment in WW1. The family moved to Canada and in the late 1920's settled in Kingston, Ontario. Nuttall's father always instilled in his sons their obligations to Canada.

When Nuttall was only 14 he enlisted in the Non-Permanent Active Militia. When he was 18 he was activated for overseas service and sent to the Officers' Training Centre, then commissioned in the rank of Lieutenant. After a short term in England, he was posted as a platoon commander to the 48th Highlanders in Italy. There were about 35 men in his platoon and Nuttall grew very close with them.

Nuttall describes the weather in Italy as being extremely hot in the summer with lots of mud during the rainy season. His platoon was always on call during this wet weather and he remembers wearing wet boots for 29 days in a row. Common sights along the countryside were bloated dead horses and cows. The next year, the soldiers left Italy and traveled to Holland where the weather was much colder.

In an exchange of gunfire near the towns of Wilp and Twello, Nuttall was injured in the right hand and sent to England to recover. While he was in the hospital, Nuttall discovered that his two brothers were also recovering in the hospital. He was thankful to learn that both of his brothers were safe because they had wives and families back home.

The war ended two months after Nuttall was hospitalized. He heard the news over the radio and he was alone at the time.

"Although there was no cheering, there was a quiet display of happiness.

I felt happy of course at the news and glad my brothers and I were safe. I also had an overwhelming and profound disappointment that I would very likely not be able to rejoin my regimental comrades in Holland," expressed Nuttall.

Deaths and wounding of comrades, agony of women, children and refugee terror were things Nuttall dreaded in the war and when he returned home he found it very hard to adjust and maintain proper sleep and rest. However, during the summer of 1952, Nuttall volunteered for the Royal Canadian Regiment Special Force destined for Korea. He served in Korea for 3 years.

Today, Nuttall, now lives at Chartwell Conservatory Pond Residence in Kingston,



Candy Alexander at the Royal Canadian Legion in Prescott underneath the sign.

where he enjoys reminiscing about his experiences with the Regiment in World War II and with the RCR in the Korean War. Over the past 70 years, he has played a large part at Legions in various branches.

Another Prescott resident, Ralph Alkerton, joined the 1st Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Airborne Regiment in Calgary, Alberta, he then served in Korea in 1951 to 1952. Today Alkerton, along with other veterans who were in the Navy, as well as Korea, meet at The Prescott Legion once a month to enjoy some Japanese beer and talk about war stories of a different kind. At The Legion, these men are referred to as "The Jug Club."

After the war, The Legion was considered to be home away from home for Veterans. Membership was limited to people who served in the war and their family members. It was a place where The Vets could share stories with people who understood. Today membership is open to anyone in the public. The membership fee is \$50.00

Candy Alexander has been a member of the Legion in Prescott for 17 years. She got her membership through her uncle who was in WW2. She also indicated that her grandmother's brother was killed in WW1.

Alexander explained the legion is a social venue for her. She enjoys the people and the activities. It is a nice, clean and friendly atmosphere. The Legion is also wheelchair accessible.

"I like to hear about their experiences and what their lives were like in the war. It is more interesting than just reading about it in a book. The Vets enjoy sharing their stories

and experiences and it is amazing how they can express both sorrow and pride in the same story. They bring the experiences of war to life," said Alexander.

However, Alexander stressed that some Vets never want to talk about the war or share their war experiences with others.

The Poppy Campaign will start at the end of October. At this time, Legion members, Air Cadets and volunteers will be accepting donations for the Poppy Fund of which 100 % goes to assist Veterans, Veteran's widows and or dependents.

On November 11, the Prescott Color Party of approximately 10 Legion members, along with representatives from the Fire Department, will be escorted by the police from The Legion to The Cenotaph, which is located on the grounds of Fort Wellington. Rev. Tracey Smith is the Legion Padre and will assist President Frank Murphy in conducting the ceremony.

Everyone is welcome to attend on Remembrance Day. **LH**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Please check in your community with your local legion where Remembrance Day Services will be held and please honour our vets by attending the service. Also, ask your legion about joining as an associate/affiliate or non-voting member and help financially to keep your local legion in your community.)



DAVID HARVEY

Answering The Call Daily

By Lorraine Payette

Some wander through life never knowing where we belong, always hoping that the next day or job or town will plant us on the path to destiny. David Harvey, Executive Director of The Salvation Army (SA) Gananoque Care and Share is not one of them.

“I have been involved with The SA all of my life,” he says. “My parents were members of The SA church. I became involved through the ministry of the church and have remained involved in the church all my adult life.”

Harvey is the face and voice of the SA for Gananoque and area. In their employ for the past ten years, he couldn't see himself doing anything else. His religion is his lifestyle.

“The SA has slogans that are used nation wide,” he says. “Giving Hope Today; ‘Heart to God, Hand to Man’; or ‘Saving Souls, Growing Saints and Serving Suffering Humanity’.”

Harvey embodies these slogans. He doesn't sit in his office waiting for a call. He's out every day, everywhere, answering the Call, doing all that he can.

Whether working in the Manna Café, at the Care and Share, or raising awareness in the community, he is always making two hands do the work of ten. You might find him addressing a service club, then thirty minutes later painting walls and ceilings where needed.

“We have made a number of upgrades to our facility, especially in our kitchen and Manna Café,” he says. “Due to the generosity of the Town of Gananoque through a Community Grant we were able to upgrade all of our kitchen appliances and freezers, replace counter tops and flooring. These upgrades bring an atmosphere of comfort and peace to those who use our services. All who drop in for a cup of coffee or tea, or to have a meal, feel that they are treated with respect and dignity from the individual doing the serving right through to the place where they sit to eat. The future is as wide and varied as is our ability to meet the needs of the people who come to us.”

With challenges to meet year round – people to feed, clothe and house – Harvey and his volunteers work tirelessly to give a hand up to those who need it most.

“Twelve months of the year we try and meet the needs of those who need us, but Christmas time is much more demanding, with families trying to prepare for the Christmas season, and finding that their money doesn't seem to go quite as far as normal,” says Harvey. “We run a ‘Coats for Kids Program’ where families can apply for a snow suit or winter coat for their child. They will receive a new snow suit or coat, along with mittens and caps. We



SA Toy and Food Drive – 2011

also have our 'Adopt a Family Program' where families, businesses or individuals within the community can adopt a family and provide for them a complete turkey Christmas dinner as well as Christmas toys and, of course, we run our annual Christmas Kettle Campaign. This is the only fundraiser that we do all year, and the money received helps us run our food bank, our Manna Café, and to provide help with utility payments during the year as well as helping meet all the other needs that individuals face year round."

The public is the lifeblood of these programs. Generous donations to the Kettle Campaign are not the only way to support the SA. Extra support comes in many ways, from the donation of new winter clothing – including snow suits, winter coats, gloves/ mittens, or boots – or by adopting a family through their Adopt a Family Campaign.

"Adopt a Family' is a completely anonymous program," says Harvey. "This protects everyone involved. It protects the dignity of the recipient, who may feel uncomfortable at being in need, and it protects the donor who may wish to remain anonymous."

The program makes it possible for the struggling to get along a bit better with support throughout the year. Even with food banks, Care and Share, and community kitchens, there is still a high level of need.

"We were not created to chase the wind," says Harvey. "We are created to join God on a mission. Some people think of God as hanging around beyond the edges of the universe somewhere, listening to really good worship music. The Bible sees it much differently. It teaches that God is at work 24/7, all over the world, filling his followers with grace, mercy and power to reclaim, redeem and fix this broken planet. It is as if God has work gloves on, and he calls us to roll up our sleeves and join him with our talents, our money, our time and our passion. He wants his mission to become ours. 'If you're into chasing the wind', he tells us, 'you can keep right on doing that. Or you can hook up with me (God), and together we'll transform this hurting planet.' What would it feel like to lay your head on your pillow at night and say, 'You know what I did today? I teamed up with God to change the world!' We accomplish that by becoming engaged,

and involved. We change our community one person at a time.

"On behalf of the volunteers and staff of The Gananoque Care and Share, we want to thank the community and the surrounding area for its ongoing support financially, materially and emotionally. Without it we could not accomplish what we do for people in need and for the kingdom of God.

"Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me (Matthew 25:40 - The Message)." LH

The Thrift Store 120 Garden St. Gananoque- is open Monday - Friday from 10 am to 4 pm, the Food Bank is open Monday - Thursday 11 am to 3 pm and Friday 11 am to 2 pm. and The Manna café is open currently Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. This year's Kettle Kick-off is scheduled for November 14 at 7pm to be held at St Andrews Presbyterian Church Gananoque.

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THE YEAR THAT CHRISTMAS CAME TO STAY

By Lorraine Payette

Christmas is a wonderful time of year, a time where everything is important, especially getting out all those treasured decorations that turn our simple homes into magical fairylands.

Our house was certainly no different. My son and I worked together to make snowflakes and paper chains, popcorn and cranberry strings, personalized cards for all the important relatives, and creative wrapping papers out of newspapers and butchers' wrap. This was not a time to be stingy with glitter and glue, and the tinsel and sparkles flew everywhere, as he happily sang "Jiggle Bells!" for all the world to hear.

We had a wonderful collection of assorted ornaments and garlands from years past, in addition to a well-worn artificial Douglas fir tree and matching wreath. All of these special goodies were carefully pulled out of storage, and then piled high in the living room for sorting and assembly. Mulled cider helped add to the fun, and it was always okay to eat a few of the popcorns that just weren't big enough to string.

He had carefully pulled out and checked the garlands in all three colours, as well as having the lights all untangled and ready to go. They went on the tree first, and he would be the one to test everything. When you're five years old, that's a very important job, and he couldn't wait.

But first the other ornaments had to be checked, and the wreath had to be brought out. The wreath was almost as important as the tree itself – when you put it on the door, it made sure everyone knew that Christmas had come to your house.

He pulled the box with the wreath in it into the middle of the room. It was old and dusty, but all good treasures are hidden in uninspiring places. He carefully lifted off the top, and then stopped. A look of complete awe and joy came over his face.

"Oh, wow, Mum, look!" Curled up comfortably inside the centre of the wreath was a small kitten. It lifted its head and blinked at him. Within seconds, kitten and boy were wrapped in an enormous hug. "We're keeping him," my

son said. "His name is Christmas."

We never did find out where the kitten had come from or how it had got into the box, but it was obvious that Christmas had come to stay. There was just no question after one look into those two sets of big bright eyes.

Time passed, and kitten and boy grew like weeds. It didn't take long for the cat to be known as Mussy, and he and my son were inseparable. Wherever the boy went, so did Mussy. Whatever the boy did, Mussy tried to participate. Anything from homework to treks out in the fields and forest, they were together.

Mussy was part of our family for 18 years. The day he passed on was hard on both of us, but we knew he had had a good life, one filled with joy and comfort in his forever home.

We buried him under a fir tree near where he and my son used to play, and from the tips of those branches, I take cuttings to add to my wreath. You can still feel him there, curled up in the centre, just waiting to find his boy and to make Christmas come to stay. [LH](#)



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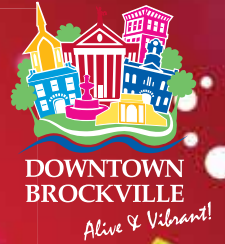


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SANTA AT THE TUNNEL ~ *Dec 5th, 12th & 19th*

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Photo by: Curt Geneau from
Photovisions Brockville

AJ BENOIT

Has Passion for his Musical Craft

By Tanya Shukalova

I taught as an infantry drill instructor. If you can picture the old sergeant out front, hooting and hollering at all of the troops at the top of his lungs, that really developed a lot of strength and power in my voice. It also really lent itself well to my singing voice which gave me a big booming kind of sound."

After retiring from business, AJ Benoit recalls the days when his passion and talents were first being molded. Brockville born, AJ performs around the city with many different groups and shows what he has created. If you ask what his passion in life is, he will sum it up in just one word for you. "Singing."

"I started in music when I was 15. I joined the Brockville Rifles Bugle Band and I joined the Infantry Regiment around the same time. At that time, the military band used to always parade in our military uniform but in front of our band, would march the Brockville Legion Color Party. Most of the members, 40 some years ago, were World War 2 Veterans."

Because of the close relationship formed between the Brockville Rifles Bugle Band and the Royal Canadian Legion Color Party, touring around Canada lead to tour bus sing-a-longs. This is where AJ discovered his love of singing.

"I grew up learning to sing all of the songs from the World War 2 era with the World War 2 Veterans."

His admiration for the theatre world didn't reveal itself until after he had a child. AJ's son grew older and lost interest in theatre performing when he started high school, but by then, a spark was lit for AJ. He auditioned for a local play and got the part. Soon after, he was playing the lead male role of many musical productions such as Petruccio in "Kiss Me Kate", Herbie in "Gypsy", Johnny Casino in "Grease", and Gene Kelly in "Singin' in the Rain" to name a few. Theatre has been an outlet for AJ to do what he loves most; to sing.

Being well acquainted with Brockville, coupled with a sales and marketing background, AJ saw an opportunity to do something a little different in the music community.

"I had a lot of different interests in the kinds of music that I liked. I was introduced to so many different kinds of music over the years, whether it was Celtic or country music, bluegrass or sacred music, calypso, and of course the World War 2 songs, as well as the crooner's songs. I loved all of it. So I started to create my own music groups which catered to each specific genre."

He has a number of music groups such as "The Mixed Nuts", "The Memory Makers", "The Blarney Show Band", "The Crooners" and his latest addition, "AJ and the Buttercups." Each group has a flavor to match the appetite of the event that AJ performs.

One person that has always been consistent for AJ is his musical director and pianist, Mary Ross-Comstock. AJ wrote and produced a musical called "Bless Em All" about World War 2 in which Mary was the musical director.

"She's one of my closest and dearest friends and she's an exceptional pianist. If it wasn't for Mary, I wouldn't have accomplished half of the things that I've done."

He humbly credits a lot of his success to the people he has worked with, saying, "I'm just the guy that's here introducing things, these are the talented people that are with me here. Without them, especially people like Mary, I'd have nothing."

With a new production in the works – coming out sometime next year – and local requests every week, AJ lives his passion every day of his life.

If you'd like to see AJ and his many talented musical partners, they will be at the Brockville Arts Centre for a Special Holiday Event, December 12th. [LH](#)



OLD TYME CHRISTMAS MEMORIES & New Traditions in Athens

By Sally Smid

Perhaps the earliest local Christmas memories would be the annual events at the local one room schools that were often the hubs for rural communities. Students participated in programs that included the Nativity story, which was often re-enacted and it was a time of socializing with rural neighbours. Then there was the memorable ride home in a horse drawn sleigh, snuggled under a bear skin blanket.

One special memory at the old Athens Public School happened in Mrs. Katherine McLean's class when Santa stopped in for a visit. Students were taken aback when St. Nic kissed the teacher before departing. As it turned out "Santa" (a stand in for the real Santa) was actually her husband, Police Chief, Scotty McLean.

Seniors also recall how Christmas gifts were simple and often home made. Children in those days were thrilled with an orange and perhaps some pieces of candy in their stocking.

The Athens Lions Club and Fire Dept. have been long time hosts of Christmas parties. Santa arrives on the fire truck and kids, that are brave enough, climb onto his lap and relate their Christmas wishes, then receive a treat bag. There are still memories of how the orange caused the candy to stick together.

There are the stories of families going to area Christmas tree farms to find just the right tree to cut down and bring home. The smell of the pine and the snapping of cones on

the tree added magic to the holidays. Of course those trees are included in another tradition in Athens after Christmas, when the community enjoys a giant bonfire celebration near the rink.

Many local memories also relate to cultural traditions, which include the annual baking of fruit cakes at Maple View Lodge, Scottish shortbread, mincemeat tarts, or speculaas. Some Dutch immigrants have observed St. Nicolas Day on Dec. 5th when they would put out their wooden shoes or Klompen, hoping that Sinterklaas would fill them with pepernoten or droppies. Of course there was always the fear that if they weren't good Black Peter would put coal in their shoe or even carry them away in a sack! Christmas dinner

for many is not always on the 25th but most do get together for a traditional family meal and celebration. Old timers remember that family times did not include TV or computer games, but it was a chance to skate on a local pond or go sledding or tobogganing. Many local residents recall traveling through the area by horse drawn wagon or in cars to provide carols and cheer especially to any housebound neighbours.

Today there are many newer traditions that include lighted night time Christmas parades. Athens is proud to have hosted the first "Parade of Lights" in the area which is still sponsored by Howards Buslines. Lighted floats, walkers, and carriages parade down the main street to the hum of generators and festive music. Free hot chocolate is provided along with a party following at Howards' garage.

There are many other various Christmas lighting traditions in the area. Perhaps the largest is in Delta Park where area residents are invited to take a wagon ride or walk through the park and experience a massive display that includes 80,000 lights. The event is in its eleventh year and takes place on Saturdays starting at the end of November and includes meals at the local United Church. A breath taking sight each year would also be the Delta Mill that has lit candles in each window during the Christmas season. Then there is the now traditional star on top of the 90 ft. tall Smid silo near Athens which can be seen for miles. Twins Ken and Chris Smid first designed and installed it 20 years ago. It is now timed to convert into a cross as well, proclaiming as the family describes, "the entire meaning of the holiday". In that regard, Christmas Eve mass is also an important part of the holiday for many and there are a variety of candle light services and choirs in churches as well.

It is also the season for the Christmas Hamper program, organized by the local Food Bank, which helps the less fortunate in the area to have Christmas. A Community Christmas Day Dinner has been organized by a local committee. It is intended for anyone who might be alone or would like to be part of a community celebration. The holidays can be especially difficult for those who can't be with family, suffer from depression, or have low incomes.

With all of the busyness and commercialism that goes on at Christmas, it is heart warming to find that there are still ways in which the true meaning of the holiday is evident. After all, what better way to honour the Christ Child on his Birthday than by giving to others. **LH**



Left Page: Local Christmas Dinner in 1924; Top: Santa Spreads Cheer at Athens Community Dinner, Middle: Christmas Star on Smid Silo, Bottom: Sinterklass (Saint Nicolas) arrives on a horse alongside Black Peter in Parade of Lights



Left: Linda Powell serving food at Loaves & Fishes in Brockville; Top: Entrance to Loaves & Fishes Brockville on Perth St, Bottom: Entrance to The Pier Community Outreach (under Royal Brock Hotel in Brockville)

THE GIFT OF BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY

By Tanya Shukalova

Christmas is known for being everybody's favorite holiday. It is a time to take a break from work and enjoy the season. Sometimes we get so excited about the holidays that we forget how fortunate we are, that not everyone has a family to come home to or gifts to open on Christmas morning.

Where do you go if you don't have a family member organizing the Christmas dinner gathering at their house?

Thanks to places like Loaves and Fishes-142 Perth St, Brockville, we have a place for people to enjoy great company and have a dinner if they feel they have no one to turn to. For years, Loaves and Fishes have been providing hundreds of people with a holiday meal in December. This year, their turkey dinner will be held on December 16th (4pm - 6:30pm), as well as a Soup and Sandwich Fundraiser on December 3rd (11:30am - 1:30pm). The restaurant was founded on the belief that in the sharing of bread, a community is built. A community

where barriers between people vanish, where dignity and respect flourish, and where service and acceptance unite. This is a place where warmth and understanding prevail. When people in the community look beyond themselves and beyond their dinner table, they can reach out to someone who is less fortunate.

The Pier Christian Church in Brockville also commits to supporting everyone in the community. They believe that it is critically important that everyone hears, sees, and experiences the love and hope they have in Jesus Christ. Especially at Christmas time, people may have no one close to love or be thankful for, so it is important for places like The Pier to have open arms to anyone who needs a smile or a warm meal when it is cold outside. They will be hosting a breakfast on Christmas day at 10 am, as well as a Supper on the 20th of December (3:30pm - 5:30pm). These meals will be free and anyone that wants to join is welcome. (Visit them @100 Stewart Blvd (under The Royal Brock Hotel).

Different cultures have different beliefs and ways of celebrating the holidays. One common theme is the gift of giving. Giving should not be done only to feel good about ourselves or to think that we are better than someone else. When we show love to people, whether it be through a gift, serving them dinner, or even simply a smile, a connection is formed. Through that connection, the other person is filled with warmth and happiness for even the briefest moment. That moment should be treasured more than anything we could ever receive under a Christmas tree.

Those who may have suffered a loss in their family or relationship during the holidays need our compassion. The entire basis of the holidays is to share gifts and give love. If someone doesn't have the option of either, they would feel left out. In a community we cannot leave people out. A lot of people tend to get caught up with shopping, making sure stockings are filled and the wish list is checked off. But we forget that there is more to Christmas than just our own "holiday routine."

Whether you have a large traditional family or just a beloved pet, everyone deserves a beautiful, festive Christmas time. The holiday is meant to show what we are thankful for. We can do that by being thankful for everything we do have and sharing our hearts with others. Don't be afraid to try something different this year and volunteer at a charity or drop a gift shoebox off at a Church or food bank. A gesture that seems so small to you could make the biggest difference in someone's life. **LH**

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CULTURAL CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Rooted in Church, Family & Food

By Russ Disotell

Tourtiere and Christmas midnight mass. These are two of the cornerstones of French Canadian Christmas traditions and part of my family traditions. Specifically my great aunt Sophia's tourtiere, and my first Christmas midnight mass. I was a nine year old altar boy and this was a huge event. It was quite possibly the first time I had ever stayed up so late and was definitely the first time I drank coffee.

Every culture that celebrates Christmas has its own traditions, usually rooted in religious symbolism. Ewa Bujnicka, of From Here to Infinity Gallery remembers the symbolism in the traditions celebrated in her native Poland. The family supper on Christmas Eve was the focal point of celebrations. The day itself was one of fasting in preparation for Christmas. "You couldn't start the meal until the first star appeared in the sky", she recalls, in remembrance of the star of Bethlehem. "There were 12 dishes to represent the 12 apostles and there was no meat served, just fish and vegetables. One extra place was

set at the table for anyone who might be wandering in need of food and shelter."

Usually there was soup, either borscht or mushroom depending on which region of the country you lived in. All manner of noodle and vegetable dishes were served including perogies and uszka, a dish similar to ravioli. Fish made an appearance in a number of courses, depending again on the specific region. The meal ended with an assortment of pastries and desserts.

After the meal, which could last for hours, presents were opened. Eva remembers the presents appearing, almost magically, when the lights were turned on. Saint Nicholas was the local Santa Claus figure, although Eva remembers that Saint Nicholas or angels were responsible for the gifts. Finally at midnight the entire family headed to church for midnight mass.

Roman Peredun embraced his Ukrainian heritage while in university and found an unexpected bonus pertaining to his

Christmas celebrations, "The traditional date for Ukrainian Christmas, January 7th is still celebrated in many Ukrainian Canadian homes so it allows us to enjoy a longer Christmas season than most." The January 7th date is the Orthodox Church's date for Christmas according to the Julian Calendar, the precursor of our present day Gregorian Calendar.

"In our family we still celebrate December 19th as the feast day of Svyatyi Mykolai, St. Nicholas or the modern day Santa Claus. We have a traditional Ukrainian meal and give each child a gift. It is a quiet day to celebrate our heritage and our religion." One of the tasks set aside for this evening is the setting set up of the Shopka or traditional Nativity Scene, which can be found in many Ukrainian households. The western tradition of Christmas Day as December 25th is celebrated in a traditional Canadian fashion with turkey, cranberry and "the whole nine yards".

The celebration of Ukrainian Christmas begins the evening of January 6th. In memory of the

journey of the Three Wise Men children watch for the first star to appear in the eastern sky, so that the celebration can begin. In many households, like their Polish neighbours, twelve dishes are served to commemorate the twelve apostles. The traditional Ukrainian Christmas meal is known as Svyaty Vechir and often begins with Kutia, a sweet pudding made with grain, which is often only ever served for Christmas dinner.

After the meal the family and guests will gather and sing Christmas carols. One of the most popular is Shchedryk, which is the basis for the well known Carol of the Bells. Dessert is served once the family returns from Midnight mass.

Canadians of Italian descent celebrate Esta Dei Sette Pesci or the Feast of the Seven Fish on Christmas Eve. Much like their European counterparts meat is banned on Christmas Eve and Christmas Eve day should be spent fasting. The seven courses are thought to commemorate the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, or alternately, the seven days it took to create the world.

My wife's family is Italian and a typical Christmas Eve menu can include clams, oysters, scallops, calamari and all manner of seafood, in a variety of dishes and sauces. Pasta dishes, meatless of course, have also made their way onto the menu. If you are really lucky someone's nonna, or grandmother, will bring along a delicious, spicy zuppa di pesci, or fish soup.

Card games are quite often played after the meal or between courses, especially if there are older generations present. Midnight mass is the centrepiece of the Christmas Eve celebration. After mass the family returns home for dessert. This is traditionally panettone, a fluffy, sweetbread style cake or loaf. It can be plain or contain dry fruit and is served with mascarpone cream or/and amaretto (almond flavoured) liqueur.

Gifts are usually exchanged on Christmas afternoon. As in many other European countries they are brought by Father Christmas. However there is another tradition, now almost forgotten expect by older generations, that the gifts are brought by La Befana, the good witch. The story goes that the Three Wise Men stopped to ask directions of La Befana, and after they left she tried to follow them with sweets and gifts for the baby Jesus, but got lost. She stopped at every house she passed, giving gifts to the children in the hopes that one of them was the Christ Child.

Whatever your Christmas tradition is, it is probably rooted in religion, family and food. Simply have a Merry Christmas. **LH**



Left Page: Tourtiere is the cornerstone of many French-Canadian Christmas meals, including my own.
Middle: Many Christmas traditions are centered around the family's Christmas Eve meal.
Bottom: A 2006 Christmas postage stamp depicting Ukrainian Christmas scene.



BUYING THAT SPECIAL CHRISTMAS TREE

By Jonathan Vickers

Finding that special Christmas tree might seem hard but with some important tips it can make finding that tree to fit into that special room in your house worthwhile. Below is some information to make your tree hunting a little easier and worthwhile for the holiday season.

Measure your room and the height of your ceiling. There is nothing worse than buying a tree that is too wide and too tall for the room you plan to put the tree in.

Depending if you buy your tree from a retail lot or a tree farm, make sure the vehicle you take can handle the tree, either on top of the vehicle or in the back of a truck. Make sure you bring plenty of rope or tie downs and red flags/cloth to let other vehicles know what you are transporting. Make sure the branches do not obstruct your vision of the road if the tree is on your roof rack.

Retail lots such as grocery stores/hardware stores/and department stores offer a simple variety of trees and they are wrapped. The prices are often lower but so is the

quality of the tree and it has probably been cut down 30-60 days prior to reaching the lot. Nurseries in our area carry a better quality tree and offer better selections of species of trees. The prices might be higher and a lot of the time the tree won't be wrapped

If you are buying a Christmas tree from a retail lot, try and find a tree that is not wrapped. The main thing to remember is freshness when selecting a Christmas tree. Take hold of a branch and pull your hand toward you, allowing the needles to slip through your fingers, they should bounce back. Most, if not all, of the needles should stay on the Christmas tree.

Lifting and gently tapping the tree on a hard surface should not result in a shower of green needles. Brown needles that have shed the previous year are fine. The Christmas tree should have a fragrance and rich green color. Branches should be pliable and bend without much resistance.

Now the best thing is to purchase the tree fresh from a local Christmas tree farm. In most cases you can find a Christmas tree farm close enough to allow you and/or your kids to cut the tree or buy one that the farm has just cut. Harvesting a tree from a local farm is becoming more and more a favorite family event. It is a great outing and a day truly to remember and a cherished Christmas tradition to hand down.

Cut one-quarter inch off the base of trunk if the Christmas tree has been harvested over 4 hours. This fresh cut will encourage the free flow of water into the tree to preserve freshness.

- ✓ Water, water, water; and don't let the water ever go below the fresh cut base. This will cause the base to seal. Christmas trees are very thirsty and will use up to a gallon of water each day. Check the stand each day for water. Did I mention water?
- ✓ Display your Christmas tree in a cool place but out of a draft. Fireplaces can dry your tree prematurely. Do not place Candles nearby!!!
- ✓ keep your pets away from the tree. Dogs like to drink from the water base and possibly (well you know... without going outside!!!) Cat's like to climb things and with all sorts of shiny things on the tree and the lights, let's just say the temptation is too much for them.

Lastly, I would recommend, like Clark W. Griswold found out in "Christmas Vacation", check for squirrels on the lot or tree farm before bringing it home!! Enjoy your tree and Merry Christmas! [LH](#)



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*The Stone of Remembrance
at the entrance of Groesbeek
Canadian War Cemetery*

MELCHERS TRAVELS

By Phil Melchers

During the final months of WWII, the Canadian forces had been tasked with the liberation of the Netherlands from Nazi occupation. This dangerous and deadly campaign would begin less than a year after the D-Day landings in Normandy. Canadian forces operating in Belgium were tasked with liberating the Netherlands; a country that had been occupied since the beginning of the war. Thanks to Canadian efforts, the Netherlands would be liberated from a long occupation by May 1945. Now free from starvation and dismay, the elated Dutch referred to the following season as the “Canadian summer.”

Flash forward to 2015 and the bond between Canada and the Netherlands is still strong. In fact, two sites in the Netherlands technically still remain Canadian soil. They are the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery and the Holten Canadian War Cemetery. In the winter of 2015, I had the chance to visit each.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Over the past year Living Here, Phil has written about his travels in Europe and the Netherlands reconnecting with his families roots. Visit our website @ www.livingherebrockville.weebly.com to read his articles this past year.

Since coming to the Netherlands, I had been eager to see these sites. In being half-Dutch it felt like a proper pilgrimage for me, a way to console my own genetic make-up. After all, if it weren't for the sacrifices made by those soldiers, my Opa (Grandpa) and Oma (Grandma) may never have had the freedom to come to Canada, thus my parents would never have met. My entire existence remains dependent on the Canadians buried at those sites.

My first destination was Groesbeek. While exploring the cemetery I noticed how some graves were quite old and faded, while others were white as pearl. After a brief talk with the groundskeeper, I learned that they were currently in the process of renewing some of the older graves. This discussion caused me to notice how immaculately kept the cemetery was. There was barely a blade of grass too tall or any stray littering to be seen. Such pristine condition demonstrated to me the amount of respect the Dutch had for these memorials.

As I began to read the head stones, taking time to appreciate each epitaph written by widows, mothers and friends, I also examined the divisions of each soldier. This is what brought the experience home for me. Among these graves were The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, soldiers that perhaps could be from the Brockville area, who would have later found themselves absorbed by that regiment.

After Groesbeek, we moved onto the Holten Canadian War Cemetery which was little more than an hour away. Though the sight was similar, the difference with Holten's cemetery was that it also had an information centre. While visiting the information centre, a group of school children came in behind me. Out of everything I had experienced during my trip, seeing these children felt the most rewarding. Though they conversed in Dutch, it was obvious that they were still at an age where war was simply army men and bad guys. Yet as they examined each model tank or battered regimental flag, they did so with such enthusiasm. Truly, any soldier buried within the cemetery would feel perfectly justified in their actions if they could see those children being so happy and free.

My experience within each cemetery was incredibly positive and certainly worth the trip. All in all, I would encourage any Canadian coming to the Netherlands to make this trip. For one, those cemeteries serve as a reminder that not every soldier had the opportunity to come home, a vicious reality indeed. However, it also serves as a brighter view to war, about how something so terrible could create something as beautiful as two countries forming a friendship unlike most other country alliances. A transatlantic appreciation of thanks and welcome, a loving bond bound in the blood of our nation's vital sacrifice. **LH**



Speaking of wine

By Russ Disotell

Christmas is hectic enough without worrying about what wine to serve. Relax, the Christmas bird is a wine friendly canvas. Just avoid overly dry, tannic reds and you should be fine. As a fail safe fall back position, serve your favourite wine or consider one of the following suggestions.

For our first selection let's stay close to home with Grange of Prince Edward Pinot Noir 2013 (CSPC# 230227, \$16.95). Complex aromas of red berry fruit, vanilla and herbaceous spice are readily apparent upon opening and tantalizingly inviting. This Ontario charmer is medium-bodied, with absolutely superb balance, layers of flavour and a lengthy, complex finish. The palate is dominated by a blend of Bing cherry, cranberry and raspberry fruit, with just a hint of red currant and plum. Add in a dash of the spice exhibited on the nose and a light veneer of oaky toastiness and you have a complex, intriguing palate. The flavours are deep and rich with just the right amount of balancing acidity. A finish that has great

length and flavour tops off an eminently quaffable candidate for your Christmas table.

Masi Masianco is an Italian producer that has made a reputation on their Pinot Grigio offerings. Their Pinot Grigio and Verduzzo 2013 (CSPC# 620773, \$15.00) is a prime example and our next candidate to match with the holiday bird. Medium-bodied, soft and round with a plush texture, it will appeal to all palates, from sophisticated to neophyte. Citrus and tropical fruit aromas dominate the nose. Grapefruit, pineapple, peach and pear fruit mingle on the palate with just a whisper of black pepper. A firm citrus acidity provides a framework for the generous, forward fruit. The finish is bright, clean and refreshing. Everything you would want in a quintessential food wine.

Finally, something a little different. Laroche Viognier De La Chevaliere 2013 (CSPC# 377622, \$12.70) from France. Viognier isn't well known, which is a shame because it brings a lot to the table (pun intended). It has the most enticing nose, a blend of rich floral aromas (think acacia, orange blossom and jasmine) and exotic fruit, such as pineapple, kiwi and melon. But don't let the rich nose fool you; this is a versatile, well balanced, food friendly wine. Laroche matches peach, tangerine, apricot and almond flavours with a crisp, zesty acidity to produce superb balance. The palate is complex and multidimensional. The finish is palate cleansing and lingering. If you need a comparison think of an exotic Chardonnay with just a tad more depth of flavour.

Merry Christmas and enjoy!

Russ Disotell enjoyed a twelve year career with the LCBO. He spent the last four years as Product Advisor in Vintages purchasing where he was a member of the buying panel and endured the arduous task of tasting products every week! Since leaving the Board he has written columns and articles on wine, helped develop wine lists and conducted wine tastings.



FinalTHOUGHTS



By Jon Marshall

Welcome to our Nov/Dec, 2nd Anniversary Edition of "Living Here" magazine. This is the sixth edition of 2015 and our 13th issue. We publish on a bi-monthly basis; our next issue will be out the week of January 11th. This will be our January February 2016 issue.

It is amazing how fast this past year has gone by. We have told lots of different stories about our local communities and reflected on many unique events to our area towns and cities. We've focused on special people, events, arts, history and entertainment that make our region such a great place to live.

This brings us to our current issue, where we have a couple of articles that reflect on our Veterans as we all honour them on November 11th. We have an article on a couple of Veterans from the Prescott Legion that reflect on their personal journeys during the war and after they came home. There is also an article on how Legions are keeping Remembrance alive with art, literacy and

public speaking in our schools. Phil Melchers writes about his visit to two Canadian war cemeteries in The Netherlands while he was in Europe this past year. We have a story about a loveable storyteller "Bear the Tinker" who lived in Lansdowne and who passed away in the fall of 2013. Bear lived the gypsy lifestyle with his caravan and his beloved horse "Callum" and plied his trade of storytelling and musical whimsy. There are stories of Christmas traditions and memories in Athens, and an article about how different ethnic families celebrate Christmas in our area

So please enjoy this special anniversary issue.

You cannot produce this type of publication without help and encouragement, so I would like to thank my wife Catherine for everything she does behind the scenes and for her contributions these past 2 years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our advertisers this past year for their support and business.

On behalf of Catherine and myself, as well as our writers; Lorraine Payette, Sally Smid, Phil Melchers, Russ Disotell, Joan Rupert-Barkley, Tanya Shukalova, Jonathan Vickers, Karen Davis and our good friends at Henderson Printing, we all want to wish everyone a "Merry Christmas" and a "Happy Holiday Season". The holidays are a special time to spend with family and friends, so please enjoy the season. May the Spirit of Christmas bring joy to your heart and happiness to your home.

Lastly, I encourage all readers to "Shop Local", especially now that we are preparing for the holidays and the Christmas season. Help support our local business community. "Living Here" will NOT feature USA ads. We only advertise local businesses and Canadian companies. Until our next issue, THANK YOU for reading. LH

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