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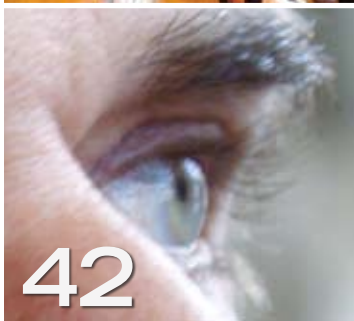


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JAMMIN'

Emotion over reason

■ Jam is cool. But did you know that jam might help you win an argument? Or, to lose one for that matter. Or jam might help you realize, I'll explain.

When *Consumer Reports* magazine conducted a taste test of 45 jams, they never imagined that it might aid mankind with knowledge of how our brains work. In 1991, psychologists Timothy Wilson and Jonathon Schooler replicated the magazine "jam taste test" to see if the preferences of college students would mirror those of the experts. They did.

But this story would be as bland as...well, toast without jam if it ended here. The psychologists repeated the experiment again with a separate group of students, but this time the group was asked to explain why they chose each jam and to document their answers. This forced the undergrads to consciously explain their impulsive "best of" lists.

"All this extra analysis seriously warped their first impressions," wrote Jonah Lehrer, author of *How We Decide* and *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*. Many of the worst tasting jams became the best and the best jams plummeted. Wilson and Schooler argue that "thinking too much" about the subject of jam caused the students to look for and find all sorts of reasons



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that simply do not matter. My research has taught me that many subjects—far more complex than jam—have worried me enough that I either over simplify or over think them. The assumption that more rational analysis leads to better choices is false.

We have been taught from an early age to use reason over emotion. To analyze our way out of any foible—instead of relying on the emotional part of our brain to intuit or, as Olivia Newton John croons in *Grease*, “feel your way.”

The lesson then, is to fight the urge—to understand the urge to over think. Lehrer’s most brilliant point backs up this theory: “The function of reasoning is argumentative. It is to devise and evaluate arguments intended to persuade.” He contends that skilled arguers are not after the truth. They are after arguments supporting their views.

The Texas sharpshooter bias shows us that we all suffer from notorious confirmation bias; after shooting at the broad side of a barn, a marksman approaches the structure and paints a bull’s-eye around the spot where the most holes cluster.

Lehrer sums up this way, “There’s my new metaphor for human reason: our rational faculty isn’t a scientist—it’s a talk radio host. That voice in your head spewing out eloquent reasons to do this or do that doesn’t actually know what’s going on, and it’s not particularly adept at getting you nearer to reality. Instead, it only cares about finding reasons that sound good, even if the reasons are actually irrelevant or false.” Pass the jam.



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events



SENIORS SYMPOSIUM

Penticton: October 20, 2010

The South Okanagan Seniors Wellness Society invites you to check out the 19th annual trade show on the latest products and services for seniors. With over 100 exhibitors there's a lot to discover. Take in the entertainment. Attend a free workshop. Listen to guest speakers. Visit the flu clinic. Enter the raffle. This year's conference theme is "enhancing the quality of life." Penticton Trade & Convention Centre: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more info visit online www.seniorswellnesssociety.com.



MASTERWORKS I BEETHOVEN

Okanagan Symphony: Oct. 15-17, 2010

Be awed by the beauty and power of Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* and *Symphony No. 5* along with guest performer, Jasper Wood, a Canadian-born violinist who has established himself as one of the major talents of his generation. Performance in Kelowna Oct. 15 (www.ticketmaster.ca or 250.860.1470); Penticton Oct. 16 (www.ticketmaster.ca or 250.770.1470); and Vernon Oct. 17 (www.ticketseller.ca or 250.549.7469). For more info visit www.okanagansymphony.com.



HARVEY

Kelowna: October 7-31, 2010

When the eccentric Elwood P. Dowd starts to introduce his imaginary friend, Harvey, a six-and-a-half-foot rabbit, to guests at a society party, his sister has seen as much of his eccentric behaviour as she can tolerate. She reluctantly decides to have him committed to a mental hospital, where a wondrously funny turn of events occurs. Does the world really need another "normal" chap, or more Elwoods? For more info and tickets (dinner and/or dessert) phone 250.862.2867 or visit www.kelownaactorsstudio.com.

MORE CHOICE HAPPENINGS

OKANAGAN FALL WINE FESTIVAL

Valleywide: September 30–October 10, 2010

The 30th Annual Okanagan Fall Wine Festival features over 165 wine and food-related events throughout the Okanagan Valley. Take a vineyard tour, lunch among the vines, attend a seminar, learn food and wine pairings from award-winning Okanagan chefs. If you love wine, you'll love this festival. Book early to avoid disappointment. For more info and tickets visit www.owfs.com or call 250.861.6654.

LEGACY OF QUILTS VII

Vernon: October 1-2, 2010

Bring a friend and enjoy the Vernon Silver Star Quilters' show, which is held once every three years. You'll find quilts of every description: traditional, contemporary and creative art. When you need a break from the stimulation visit the tearoom for a cup of tea or java and a treat. Showcase at the Vernon Recreation Centre on Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

PETER AND THE WOLF

Kelowna: October 14-16, 2010

A musical twist on an old classic, join Peter on an adventure with his friends—bird, duck and cat—as they meet face to face with the wolf. Listen for a tango, a waltz, the Charleston and even cartoon music.

Performance at Glenmore Elementary School.

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Lake Country: October 24, 2010

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JASPER WOOD PHOTO BY STEPHANIE LAKE

WHEELS FOR KIDS

Local bike shop salvages used bikes for needy

There are people who take notice and there are people who take action. Patrick Rosen, owner of Kelowna Cycle, is one of the take action guys.

Every spring his bike shop participates in the annual Bike Rodeos held at local elementary schools to encourage children to cycle to school. The program teaches youngsters, Grade 2 to 6, about road safety skills and the importance of bike helmets. During the bike safety course at one school he noticed more kids were walking than riding and that's when he realized that not every family can afford bikes.

Patrick still remembers the first time he got on two wheels as a kid and the sense of accomplishment he felt mastering something that had seemed hard at the time. "I truly want all kids to feel this," he says. As a bike shop owner he knew there was something he could do.

With the help of local radio stations he put out a call asking citizens for their unwanted youth and adult bikes. Patrick was willing and able to donate the labour and parts to get them road worthy again.

Combined with a sales campaign the bikes started to roll in, almost 50 in total. Some were gently used,

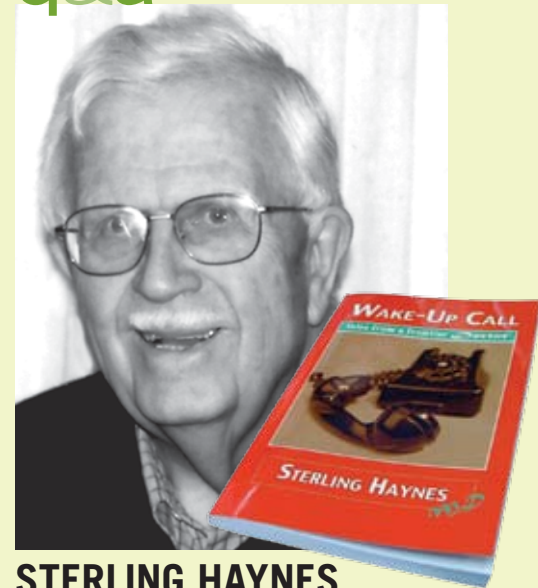
others were clunkers only useful for the parts that could be salvaged from them. It took his crew a week to fix them up.

School staff distributed bikes to kids in need at two Kelowna



elementary schools: Springvalley and Raymer. The rest were donated to clients of NOW Canada's Kelowna women's shelter and the Kelowna Gospel Mission.

Thanks to Patrick Rosen, Kelowna Cycle and community spirit, more junior Okanaganites now enjoy the freedom of owning a bike. —Karen Slivar



STERLING HAYNES Author, *Wake-Up Call*

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

An octogenarian who writes a lot of funny stories with a medical theme. I was a general practitioner for 40 years but now my nom-de-plume is Dr.X. In school I was always considered a humorous guy—cracking jokes, punning and telling stories. I still do but now I write about my life with a freaky twist. I am a people person and have always tried to be a humanitarian doc. Mostly, I liked my patients and did get to know them: I try and understand people and their idiosyncrasies.

WHY DID YOU BEGIN WRITING? When I was 70 I had a stroke and my brain got rearranged. I was aphasic with a paralyzed right foot.

Elizabeth, our daughter and a speech pathologist in Kelowna, taught me how to take detours and find a new route to express myself. Now I have a greater vocabulary than I ever had! My foot is still wonky but my brain is OK—I traded a foot for a brain. Yes, I did get the better of the deal.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH STORIES TO TELL IN *WAKE-UP CALL: TALES FROM A COUNTRY DOCTOR*? Is the story topical and interesting and is it generally funny or amusing.

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE STORY? *Doc, I Gotta Problem (The Peeing Party)* won the 2006 Joyce Dunn prize at the Shuswap International Writing Festival for creative writing. The reason it stands out is that it is topical and addresses the plight of First Nation kids in residential schools.

WHAT'S NEXT? I have a book of zany poetry out to a publisher and a couple of stories that I sent to editors. The first is a funny story about me having my right knee replaced in the KGH called *The Big Ouch*. The second is a story about a great Canadian doctor, Dr. H.H. Boucher, a Vancouver orthopedic surgeon. This story, called *Hammy*, comes out in *The BC Medical Journal* in October. E-books are coming online through Amazon and now through Apple's iPad. We'll have to see how this plays out. —staff

whoknew?

GRANT ISLAND (a.k.a. Whiskey Island) near Carr's Landing in Okanagan Lake is named after James Grant (1920-1986), former North Okanagan Naturalist Club member, who helped purchase the important ring-billed gull breeding colony, one of only two found in BC. First Nations who named it Nahun Weenox meaning "child of the mother with a child" believed the island was formed when a rock broke off from the east shore and floated until it grounded itself at its present spot. —staff



LITERACY LEADER

■ Yasmin John-Thorpe has been honoured with the prestigious 2010 BC Community Achievement Award for her outstanding work promoting literacy.

Born and raised in Trinidad, Yasmin inherited a Caribbean talent for folk telling. She credits her parents with instilling in her the importance of a good education and an appreciation of language. She worked as a flight attendant before marrying a Canadian. The couple

later moved to Canada where they raised their two daughters.

Yasmin cofounded Penticton Writers and Publishers (PWAP) in 1994. Recently, PWAP has become a non-profit organization and Yasmin serves as president.

She regularly judges writing contests in which the work of winners is published in the anthologies *Gems of the Okanagan* or *Gems of British Columbia* and she has guided several writers to commercial publication. In

schools, Yasmin speaks to students about the importance of reading and writing. Through the Raise-A-Reader program, she also brings authors into the classroom where they talk about their work, sign and distribute complimentary books. Two years ago she spearheaded the establishment of the BC Youth Write Camp.

Yasmin believes in a love for self, a love for life, and that we're here on earth to learn as much as we can. —Lorraine Pattison

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pulse



Chef Mark Filatow believes kids will eat nutritious versions of menu staples if they're given the chance.

LUNCHTIME LETDOWN?

Not for kids involved in this healthy hot-lunch program

■ Some Okanagan parents, worried about soaring childhood obesity rates and fretting about what their kids may be eating outside the home have found an unlikely ally in Kelowna chef Mark Filatow of Waterfront Restaurant and Wine Bar. In the past year he and colleague Jeff Irwin have been plotting menus, not for the restaurant, but for hot-lunch programs at four Kelowna schools.

Mark first got involved after making pizzas (with whole wheat crusts and locally sourced cheeses) for a school fundraiser. They were such a hit, the school's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) asked if Waterfront would contribute regularly to the hot-lunch program.

"My son was entering kindergarten at Anne McClymont

Elementary and by Grade 1 he'd be able to participate in the hot-lunch program," Mark says. "I know what we feed him at home and wanted to see him, as much as possible, getting that same kind of blend of local and nutritious foods at school."

Mark and Jeff started with macaroni and cheese made from scratch using cheddar from Armstrong's Village Cheese Company and Blackwell Dairy milk from Kamloops.

The team has now branched out to three more schools—Chute Lake, Dorothea Walker Elementary and l'École de l'Anse-au-Sable. They've also added other meals to the menu: a teriyaki chicken bowl, hamburgers made with additive-free, grade-A beef and spaghetti with sauces using local ingredients, including vegetables.

"Most of the hot-lunches before

we got involved included things like chicken strips and fries, pizza, sushi or processed burgers.... The problem is, the hot-lunch program is also a big part of their fundraising, which leads to some conflicts," says Mark.

He just won't make some things — chicken strips among them — as the cost of providing a healthy version is simply prohibitive. He is a firm believer that kids, while fond of certain foods, will happily eat nutritious versions or tasty alternatives. For Mark, that means sourcing food that is local as well as seasonal whenever possible, something he thinks is an important lesson for kids. And while a third-grader may not care what goes into his hot-lunch as long as it's tasty, Mark knows kids can tell that a carrot straight from the ground tastes infinitely better than a pre-packed mini-carrot, just as a strawberry in late September tastes nothing like a strawberry in late June.

Asked about parallels between what he's trying to do in Okanagan schools and the efforts of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver — whose "school food revolution" recently leapt from Britain to the US — Mark will quietly steer the conversation back to something more pedestrian, like macaroni, or his dreams for what he would do in local schools if he weren't so busy feeding grown-ups at one of the region's most popular wine bars.

One idea he's already launched is replacing disposable packaging with reusable containers that are collected after use and sanitized.

Discussing a Toronto-based school program where kids actually grow vegetables in a school garden, then learn to make lunches with the foods they grow, Mark lapses into a near reverie: "That's an ultimate goal of mine — facilitating a school garden and helping the kids learn to cook. I just don't know how I'd do it with the time I have." —*Shelley Wood*

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French flare flavours Valley

The Okanagan French connection
dates to earliest European settlement

by Portia Priegert

■ The French presence dates to early guides and trappers and the first permanent non-native residence in the Valley was established 150 years ago by Father Charles Pandosy, an Oblate missionary from Marseilles.

Pandosy found life here hard. He almost starved the first winter and often struggled with his superiors for more supplies, says Edmond Rivère a French professor at UBC Okanagan. “I got attached to this person because he was a real character,” says Edmond, who wrote a book based on Pandosy’s letters. “He was always against the bureaucracy. His superiors didn’t like him because he was straightforward and did not accept all the rituals of the Catholic Church.” Pandosy, who died in 1891,

planted the Okanagan’s first apple trees. His chapel still stands at the Pandosy Mission on Benvoulin Road.

Early French settlement is also reflected in place names. Local lore suggests the name Kelowna, which means grizzly in the Syilx language, was chosen to honour pioneer Auguste Gillard, who bore the same nickname. Several streets were named for other French-speaking pioneers, including Bernard and Léon Lequime.

Today, francophones, an invisible if sometimes audible minority, live throughout the Valley. An estimated two per cent of residents claim French heritage, although not all speak the language. The majority are Canadian-born but some are from

France or other French-speaking countries. Each summer, the franco-phone presence swells as young people come from Quebec to pick fruit.

The community has its own French-language services that assist with employment and economic development. Many francophones are active in the arts and the community boasts several noteworthy eateries, including Bouchons Bistro and Le Plateau-Bistro in Kelowna. Domaine Combrey in Oliver is known for its award-winning Chardonnays.

meetingplace A former church in downtown Kelowna is a focal point for francophone culture in the Valley. It’s the home of the French Cultural Centre of

“Some of us are doctors and lawyers and have professional jobs and you just don’t see us because we’re no different. You may be able to perceive that we’re different when we speak.”

— NICOLE LEBLANC, coordinator
French Cultural Centre of the Okanagan



1. Pandosy Mission site in Kelowna.
2. Father Pandosy’s final resting place near Casorso Road.
3. Nicole Leblanc at the French Cultural Centre of the Okanagan in Kelowna.

the Okanagan, a non-profit group formed 32 years ago after French-speaking friends began getting together to socialize. The centre now has some 400 members and promotes education, social contact and the preservation of French culture through its lending library and cultural activities such as art shows and musical performances.

The most popular event is Maple Fest, held each March to celebrate a Quebec tradition. That’s when maple sap is tapped and concentrated into maple syrup. While sugar maples don’t grow in the Okanagan, organizers stock up on syrup and cook pancakes and other treats. “We make maple pull taffy on the snow and there’s fiddlers’ music and games for the kids,” says Nicole Leblanc, the centre’s coordinator.

education There are two French schools in the Okanagan, one in Kelowna and one in Penticton. The Kelowna school is called l’Anse-au-Sable, the original name of the first European settlement in the Kelowna area, which means sandy cove in English. Located on Lequime Road, the school opened in 1999 and has more than 200 students from kindergarten to Grade 12. The Penticton school, Entre Lacs or between the lakes, is located on Nelson Avenue and operates in conjunction with francophone programs at Penticton Secondary and Summerland Secondary schools. The schools are part of a province-wide French school district, which offers publicly funded education in French to some 3,800 BC students in “an environment that contributes to the full development and cultural identity of francophone students.”

squeakycheese

Squeaky cheese sounds like something a mouse would love, but it’s actually another name for cheese curds, the solid parts of soured milk. Sold in the Okanagan since 2005 by David Beaudoin, it’s used in poutine, a popular fried-potato dish from Quebec. The curds, which squeak when bitten due to trapped air, are made at Village Cheese, a small plant in Armstrong. “It’s kind of buttery and a little salty,” says the Quebec-born entrepreneur, who prefers his cheese with fresh fruit. “It’s tasty, healthy and addictive.”



CEDRIC SAUCIER

Wine researcher

The French know wine and few in the Okanagan know it better than Cédric Saucier, a chemist who studies wine. Cédric, who earned his doctorate at the University of Bordeaux, teaches oenology—the science of wine making—at UBC Okanagan. He arrived two years ago, lured by the chance to study the wide variety of Okanagan wines. “I like wine, for sure,” says Cédric. “It’s better when you like what you do, right?”

Cédric is part of a new \$2 million federally funded research project that encourages agricultural innovation. He will study tannins, the astringent chemicals responsible for the dry taste in red wine.

“We’re going to develop new tools to measure tannin quality,” says Cédric, explaining one goal is to understand which grape varieties are best for the Okanagan.

Cédric lives in Kelowna with his wife, Véronique and their two sons who attend French language school. A former member of the National Bordeaux Orchestra, Véronique is now principal viola with the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra and recently opened Musical Senses, a home studio where she offers viola and violin lessons. Cédric is also musical. A classically trained singer, he and Véronique have joined cellist Olivia Walsh to form the trio Toulouse-Lautrec. They perform popular French songs at venues like the Minstrel Café in Kelowna.



peak exper

by Dona Sturmanis

David Graham took the last steps to the 6,738-metre peak of Pethangtse in the Nepalese Himalayas on Oct. 30, 2009. With him, taking in a view that included Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, were his 22-year-old son, Stephen, his son's friend, Colin McLean, and two Nepalese guides, Dawa Geljen Sherpa and Pema Chiri Sherpa.

"It was a joyous celebration but muted because I knew we had to get back down safely," recalls the trim, youthful, 60-year-old from behind the desk of his tidy corner office in Kelowna City Hall where he is director of strategic initiatives for the City.

A month-and-a-half later, 56-year-old Finbar O'Sullivan displayed a Rotary Club Peaks for Polio banner

Experiences

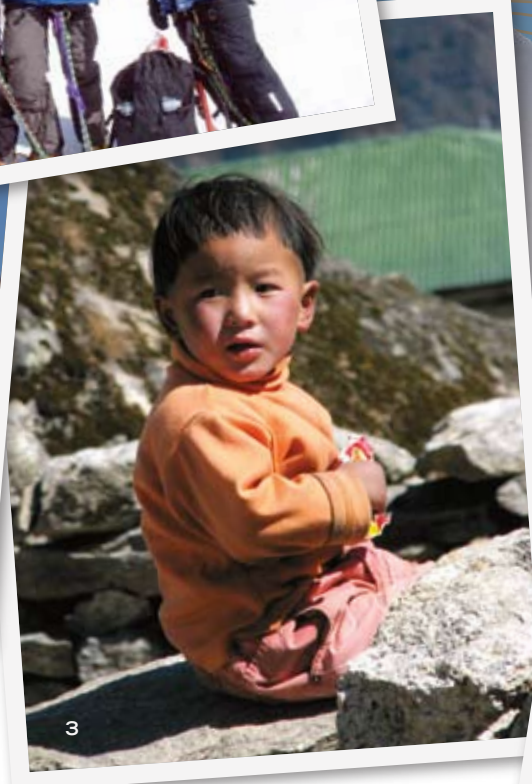


from the 6,961-metre summit of Argentina's Mount Aconcagua, the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere. Sharing this memorable December 15 moment were fellow Rotarian Dan Fogden and guide Laurie Skreslet.

"I felt pretty ecstatic when I got to the top — and relieved. It's hard to describe," says Finbar, sitting in a restaurant near the Kelowna

office of TRADE, an employment assistance service for the trades sector where he is a consultant and manager.

It was coincidence that two local climbing parties should have such closely-timed major peak experiences in exotic parts of the world. David's Pethangtse summit began as a personal adventure and turned into an awareness-raiser for the Kelowna-based non-profit organization Hope for the Nations. Finbar's climb started as a fundraiser for Polio Plus, a Rotary International project, and became a profound personal achievement. Not bad for two middle-aged managers from the Okanagan Valley. ►



Lofty decisions

Previous spread: Sunset and moonrise over Makalu, Nepal.

- 1. Mt. Aconcagua, located in the Andes Mountains in Argentina, is the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere.
- 2. Steven Graham, Colin McLean and David Graham celebrate on the summit of Mt. Pethangtse.
- 3. A Sherpa boy in the village of Kumpulung, Nepal

David and Finbar are far more than a couple of desk sitters dreaming of higher places. They both have extensive mountaineering backgrounds.

“I’ve been stomping around in mountains my whole adult life,” says David. This has included the Columbia Ice Fields (“a real good winter mountaineering experience”), Mount Columbia, the second highest peak in the Canadian Rockies, (“I almost got to the top, but there was this avalanche 200 feet from the summit”), Mount Rainier, Mount Baker and Mount Brazeau in the Rockies, as well as “all kinds of minor summits.”

Finbar says he’s spent most of his adult life climbing the mountains of North America, especially in the Rockies and the Selkirks. The last mountain he “almost summited” was Mount Logan in the Yukon—Canada’s highest peak at 5,959 metres—but bad weather got in the way.

In 2001, David trekked to Nepal and Tibet for two months with his wife Sheila and his teenage children Amy and Stephen. “It stayed with me,” he recalls. “I loved the people, the culture and the mountains.”

While on a ski tour of the Columbia Ice Fields with climber Mark Taylor in 2006, David and his friend talked about tackling something on the Tibetan-Nepalese border, where four of the six world’s highest and most difficult to climb mountains are found.

David opted out. “I didn’t think I was qualified. I wanted to see my family again. There are lots of books written about inexperienced people who get themselves into trouble. I wanted a peak that got me to a high altitude but was not beyond our qualifications, around 7,000 metres.”

They selected a more suitable mountain Lakhpa Ri, beside Everest but in China and made plans for 2009. But when

David ran into trouble obtaining permits from China, the men decided on a peak in Nepal because the government there is “much more welcoming and hospitable.” Their final choice was the rarely climbed Pethangtse, which means goddess of the wind in Tibetan.

Inspiration for Finbar’s Aconcagua climb was sparked in 2007 at a Kelowna Rotary downtown chapter lunch where he heard a presentation by a member who had been in India about the Rotary International project Polio Plus.

“Rotary was instrumental in eradicating polio from the world in the last 20 years,” says Finbar. “A lot of people don’t know this. When I was a kid, several students in my school had it.”

Finbar joined Rotary because of Polio Plus and began thinking about how to contribute. “Having a mountaineering background, I decided I could organize a climb to raise money for the polio project. No one in Rotary had ever done this before.

“I wanted a real mountain,” he says. “A mountain that looked like ➤

1. PHOTO BY BILL MARLER; 2. PHOTO BY PEMA SHERPA; 3. PHOTO BY DAVID GRAHAM

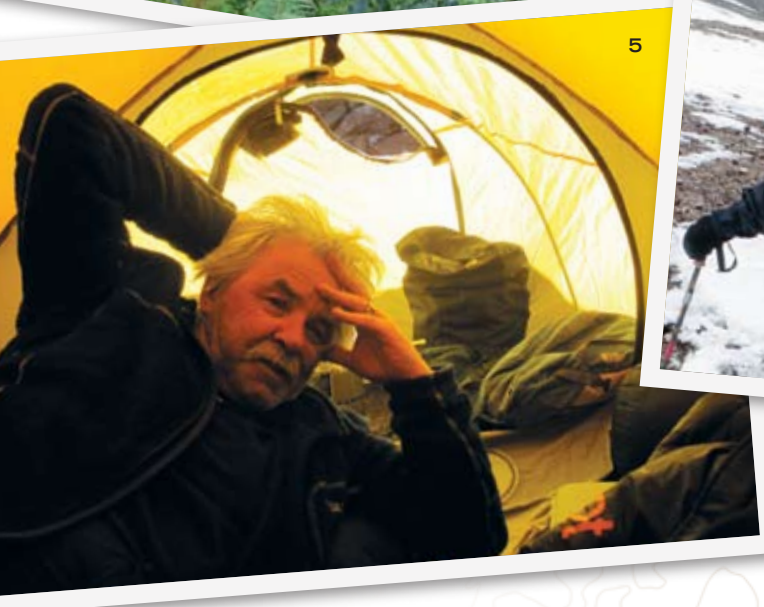
“I wanted a *real* mountain. A mountain that looked like a mountain with a real point on it. I wanted a real challenge.”



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4. Hiking through rice paddies to the Arun River on an early leg of the expedition to summit Mt. Pethangtse in Nepal.

5. Finbar O'Sullivan suffers an altitude headache after arriving at high camp on his ascent to the peak of Argentina's Mt. Aconcagua.

6. Dropping into the Barun River Canyon and the cloud forest on the Mt. Pethangtse climb.

7. Finbar at 5,791 metres on a rest day before the final assault on the summit.

Background image: Mt. Pethangtse in Nepal.



8. Snow spires on the Barun Glacier, Mt. Pethangtse.
9. Buddhist prayer ceremony seeks blessing on the Mt. Pethangtse expedition.



Peaking Pethangtse

“But then I realized we had to go back down, and the chances of falling are much greater...”

David, Stephen and Colin left Kelowna on October 6 and arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal, two days later, where they met up with expedition manager Pema Chiri Sherpa. From there, they flew by bush plane to the trailhead for the route to Pethangtse, the tiny village of Tumlingtar.

“There were only a few houses and fewer than a hundred people,” says David. “The population of rural Nepal is quite fascinating. Multiple ethnic groups, different languages, architecture, religions, different in different areas because Nepal’s never been overcome by outsiders.”

In Tumlingtar, they joined up with the other members of the expedition — Dawa Geljen Sherpa, the cook and second guide, his four kitchen helpers and half a dozen or more porters. There was a lot to carry.

It was going to be an interesting journey. “Pethangtse hadn’t been climbed in a really long time and the guides and the others had never been there,” says David.

The first major objective was Makalu, the 4,800-metre base camp at the foot of a glacier. “It took 10 days of hiking every day to get there. A varied trip... some days easier and some tougher,” recalls David, “through agricultural terraces and jungle in the lower levels, and then in the higher altitudes rhododendrons

before passing the tree line.”

After two days they carried on with a difficult day of clambering over loose rocks to get to the bleak, barren site of Pethangtse base camp at 5,300 metres. While they were there resting and preparing, two of the kitchen crew, who were Buddhist lamas, performed a prayer ceremony, complete with colourful flags. “They blessed the equipment, food and prayed that we seek safe passage on the mountain,” says David, who was very moved by the experience. “And because we respected the traditions, we would have a lot of luck.”

Three more days and two more camps brought them to the 5,880-metre high camp. On the way they walked among 15- to 20-metre tall ice towers caused by glacial erosion. Called seracs, they are known by some in South America as penitentes and are thought to look like nuns in white habits. David says he didn’t see the similarity.

Just after midnight on October 30, they set out on the final climb to the summit. “It would be dark when we started and dark when we finished, too,” says David. The face was steep, with a 35- to 55-degree slope, and very strenuous. “We were using fixed ropes once we got on it to get up to

the summit ridge,” says David.

“At the steepest part of the face, I was taking four breaths for every step.” Only their guide Pema Chiri Sherpa was free-climbing.

The summit ridge wasn’t as steep, but the wind was blowing 80 kilometres an hour or more. “It would come in a gust and blow us over. We’d just get up and keep going,” says David, who experienced considerable emotion just before reaching the summit of Pethangtse because he knew they were going to make it.

Once on top, each of the climbers had their own peak experience. “I just kind of kept it to myself,” recalls David. “There was a sense of achievement, taking in the sight of all those surrounding mountains and realizing what we had done to get here. There was also that father-son experience for me, that Stephen and I had done this together. I think it changed Colin’s life in that he would become a very positive person, and possessing quiet confidence.

“But then I realized we had to go back down and the chances of falling are much greater...”



a mountain with a real point on it. I wanted a real challenge.” Finbar decided to climb Aconcagua long before he got other people involved. “It was not a technical or difficult climb, so it was open to all Rotarians. That said, it has its challenges, which include altitude sickness.”

He proposed the expedition to Rotary in 2008. “The original idea was to go with 20 climbers, all Rotarians. Each one would raise \$50,000. A lot of people were skeptical of the idea.”

To show it could be done, Finbar scheduled a preliminary climb for December 2009. His next step was to find fellow Rotarians who were up to the challenge, both physically and mentally.

Expediting the expeditions

When David Graham’s climbing partner withdrew from the Pethangtse expedition he had to find new climbing partners and his son Stephen and Colin McLean signed on.

David hadn’t started out planning to raise funds for a cause, but because he’d already had a wonderful experience in Nepal, he wanted to do something to help the people. He asked fellow city hall employee Louise Roberts-Taylor for suggestions on a worthwhile organization and she connected him with Nick Arkle, a senior manager at Gorman Brothers and chairman of the Himalayan section of Hope for the Nations. This Okanagan-based society, co-founded by Nick over 20 years ago, partners with local communities and organizations in over 20 countries to help orphans and vulnerable children.

“I was really pleased one of the outcomes of this climb would be to raise awareness for Hope for the Nations and possibly to raise some funds afterwards,” says David.

Meanwhile, Finbar had invited interested Rotarians throughout the area to join the December expedition to Aconcagua. “They had to have the physical and mental fitness, the ability to hang in for 20 days in lousy ▶



10



10. Grandma and children of Rai people in hillside village below Sedua, Nepal.



11

11. Gord Savage putting on his mountaineering boots at 5,791 metres elevation on Mt. Aconcagua.



12

12. Climbers ascend on fixed ropes on the Amphu Labsta Glacier, Nepal.



13

13. Linda Friesen returning to 5,180-metre camp after carrying a load to high camp on Mt. Aconcagua.

“...this is about having a dream and committing to the dream.”

Ascending Aconcagua

“It was amazing to sit there, knowing I was at the highest part of the western world.”

Finbar arrived in Mendoza, Argentina, at the end of November, a week before the other party members. “Everyone dribbed and drabbed their way there. We all had different time restrictions and wanted to spend time to ourselves.” The expedition included guide Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to summit Everest (1982), who had climbed Aconcagua 17 times.

Four hours drive from Mendoza, the trailhead to Aconcagua, Punta de Vacas, is located at about 2,439 metres in arid, rocky Aconcagua Provincial Park in the Andes. Seven Rotarians and their guides set out with “a whole pile of mules carrying our stuff... This (the mules) was a good thing because with all of the food, tents, stoves, fuel and clothing, we each had probably 80 pounds of equipment,” wrote Gord Savage in his account of the expedition.

Four long days later they arrived at the 4,268-metre base camp known as Plaza Argentina. “There were many other climbing parties there,” says Finbar. “Aconcagua, as one of the Seven Summits (mountains highest on their continents) is very popular.”

Members of the party were already feeling some effects of the high altitude including headaches, fatigue and breathing difficulties. However, the summit of Aconcagua—“the real mountain with the pointy top” as Finbar likes to put it, towered above and beckoned them to continue.

The second phase of the trek involved five-hour back-and-forth trips carrying equipment and provisions to the second base camp at about 4,878 metres. The



route was steep, but the snow was firm and better for walking than the loose shale behind them.

After a rest day they prepared for the final load carry. “I was jogging at 16,000 feet with a full pack,” says Finbar. “There is no rhyme or reason... why some people adapt to altitude and others don’t.”

By December 11 all the gear was moved to the second base camp. Again the site had to be prepared and the tents set up. Gord wrote that at this point he was starting to feel some nausea after eating.

For the next three days they carried loads to the high camp at 6,006 metres, located behind the protection of a rock at the base of Polish Glacier. At this altitude, team member Linda Frandsen was struggling with altitude sickness and retreated back to the second camp.

Weather conditions improved and on December 16, the group, without Gord’s wife Maureen (who decided to remain at high camp), began the final ascent. At 4:30 a.m. it was -20 C, windy and dark. At 6,250 metres, Dean McLay, sick and having difficulty breathing, decided he couldn’t go any further. His wife Wanda made it another 152 metres, but then she and assistant guide Bill Marler returned



14. Group returning to base camp after Finbar O’Sullivan, Dan Fogden and their guide Laurie Skreslet successfully summit Mt. Aconcagua, the tallest peak in the Western Hemisphere.

15. Maureen Savage walking through snow sculptures caused by the high winds known locally as the penitentes.

and took Dean back to Plaza Argentina.

The remaining climbers, Finbar, Dan Fogden, Gord Savage and Laurie Skreslet, began the thousand-foot climb up the side of a very steep rock gully called the Canaletta, which required the use of crampons.

About two-thirds of the way up, Gord was again suffering from altitude sickness—light-headed, dizzy, arms numb. “So here I was at 22,580 feet (6,882 metres) waiting and watching and fighting the desire to close my eyes and have a sleep.”

Finbar, Dan and Laurie reached the summit.

Finbar reflects on his feelings: “After two years of planning and weeks at the mountain, getting to the top was like a climax, maybe an anti-climax. It was amazing to sit there, knowing I was at the highest part of the western world.”

weather on a mountain,” he says.

Gord Savage and his wife Maureen, Dean and Wanda McLay, Dan Fogden and Linda Frandsen took up the challenge. They would raise \$50,000 for Polio Plus, which would be matched by the Bill Gates Foundation.

It is a vast understatement to say that David and Finbar and their respective expedition parties had to work hard to get ready for their climbs. Despite their mountaineering backgrounds, both Finbar and David trained hours a day for months before the ascents.

And making detailed plans and preparations for travel arrangements, appropriate personal papers, required guides and expedition members (or mules) for carrying gear, acquiring clothing, camping and climbing equipment, medical supplies and food — was a whole expedition in itself.

Cause for celebration

David Graham presented a slideshow and spoke about the Pethangtse climb to a sold-out audience on Feb. 27, 2010, at Kelowna’s Mary Irwin Theatre. The event raised \$2,000 for Hope for the Nations, enough to operate a home for children in Nepal for almost two months.

He continues to speak and raise funds. His next engagement is October 16, at the Kelowna Community Theatre as part of the Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival.

“The message for me from all this is about having a dream and committing to the dream,” says David. “It’s amazing where you can go if you put one foot in front of the other and just keep going.”

Finbar O’Sullivan still can’t get over his peak experience.

“It’s the realization that we raised enough money — \$50,000, plus another \$50,000 that Bill Gates matched dollar for dollar — to inoculate 200,000 children against polio. That to me was the greatest sense of accomplishment. In Britain we would call that a gob-stopper!” **OL**

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Books and magazines
are a pleasure many
take for granted.

What if you just can't read?

A stack of books with colorful covers (black, red, white, green, black) and a piece of white chalk are positioned in the upper left corner of the page.

ready to read

by Dawn Renaud





■ Shirley Fehr's life changed while she was on a camping trip. The men had gone fishing and her friend pulled out a bag of romance novels. What her friend called easy reading. "Maybe for her, but not for me." Shirley spent a couple of hours every day reading that novel until, two weeks later, she was done. That was the first time she had ever read an entire book.

While Shirley's story is unique, her struggle with literacy is surprisingly common. Around 40 per cent of adults in BC have literacy skills below the minimum required for coping with the normal demands of everyday life.

Nancy Noble-Hearle, adult literacy coordinator for Okanagan College in Penticton, has worked with low-literacy adults for over 20 years. "I have a range of people who come to see me," she says. Some read a little, some struggle with all printed material. For some, English is a second language; others were born in Canada but didn't learn to read and write.

Vareia Green was born in Sudbury, Ontario. Her family never lived in one place for long and she says she only recently figured out what was behind those frequent moves. "My father was fooling around with us," she says. "That's why I never had school." After a life of violence and substance abuse, Vareia arrived in Penticton where a worker suggested she meet with Nancy. She tried school but wasn't ready. "I was still drinking," she says. About a year later she had man-

Previous page: Sarah Grant struggled with reading all her life until she got up the courage to seek help. 1. Shirley Fehr had trouble reading until she took a class that helped her look at words in a different way.

aged to turn her life around. She has been going to school ever since.

For as long as Sarah Grant can remember, she wanted to be a nurse. Today she'd like to pursue that goal and she wants to read to her children — no one, she says, had any time for books and ABCs when she was little. Sarah has struggled with reading all her life. When a high school teacher insisted she read aloud, she collected her books and dropped out. Like Vareia, she struggled for years and eventually found the courage to go back.

While Vareia and Sarah didn't get the support they needed in childhood, Shirley was fortunate to grow up in a family of avid readers. Still, it wasn't easy. In Grade 3 she was diagnosed with dyslexia and was put back into Grade 1, starting over with her baby sister and attending remedial classes while other students explored the arts. Summer vacation meant summer school. After more than 13 years of constant bombardment, she'd had enough. Midway through Grade 11, she quit.

The great pretenders

Getting that far took a certain amount of pretence. "Now I say that I adapt," says Shirley, "but back in school I said I was a great cheat." When assigned a novel, she'd read the back cover and try to get through the first part. Then she'd ask "the smartest kid in school" what it was about. As soon as the teacher began to discuss the book in class, Shirley would contribute with so much enthusiasm the teacher would be unlikely to call on her again.

One of Doug Becker's strategies was to avoid school whenever possible. It started innocently. He'd had a restless night and his mother suggested he stay home to catch up on his sleep. After that, if he woke during the night he'd go tell her he was having trouble sleeping and get another day off.

Doug says he enjoyed kindergarten, but his first day in Grade 1 the teacher noticed him gazing out the

What is literacy?

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) defines literacy as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.” Their 2003 survey shows:

About **14 per cent of adults** in BC function at the lowest skill level. They have trouble understanding the instructions on a bottle of pain reliever or for mixing baby formula. They need help with the day-to-day written material that comes through their home and with filling out any kind of form.

Another **21 per cent of adults** function at level two. They read and write at a basic level, but struggle with anything complex.

It’s never too early

Debbie Schiller, executive director of Vernon’s Junction Literacy & Youth Centre, says about 25 per cent of children going into Grade 1 are not ready for school. Being ready doesn’t mean they need to know the alphabet or how to print their name, she explains. “It means they have experience with listening to a story, engaging in conversation, being listened to and being able to ask and answer questions.”

Children need the emotional support of the whole family, beginning from day one. “Singing nursery rhymes and songs, finger play, gazing into the baby’s eyes, creating a bond of love and trust—all of those old-fashioned things need to happen for the child to be ready at five or six years old to start school and be ready to learn,” says Debbie. “Having that experience with language that is rich and regular is almost a guarantee that those children will succeed in school.”

REDUCE SCREEN TIME—television, films, computers and electronic games. Children need interaction with real people who care about them. Even the best children’s programs are no substitute.

READ TO YOUR CHILDREN. It doesn’t matter if you are not a strong reader. Make spending time with books a positive part of your child’s life.

PHOTO BY CAREY TARR

window and smacked his head with a ruler. “That was the end of me wanting to do anything but play sports,” he says. Although Doug went on to enjoy math; for him reading and spelling simply didn’t make sense. That first day couldn’t have helped his situation, but he’s not sure what difference it really made. “At that time they didn’t have any name for it,” he says. “When I hear things about dyslexia...that’s what’s going on with me.” And some of his cousins have similar problems. One kept his inability to read hidden, dropping out of school as soon as he was old enough. He had to take an oral test for his drivers’ license. Doug says, “He had a fantastic memory, which allowed him to fool people for years.”

As Doug finished Grade 9 one of his teachers suggested he quit. She was confident he’d succeed without school. He returned for football season, then found work as a ranch hand and equipment operator. “Put me on any piece of equipment,” he says, “and I’ll figure it out.” Meanwhile his father made substantial money selling a couple of inventions. Family wealth meant Doug didn’t need to work to make ends meet, so he kept busy helping others with ranching and construction projects.

If literacy weren’t an issue, Doug may have become a perpetual student—philosophy is a passion. He tried his hand at college classes but was overwhelmed by the amount of reading required. (He gets through massive tomes like *Shogun* and *Lord of the Rings*, but it takes him a very long time.) And he’d love to be a writer, but spelling is an even bigger challenge. Spelling holds Shirley back, too. She wants to write beautiful sentences but must choose only the simplest of words. Dictionaries help, but it’s hard to find the words she can’t spell.

Can you spell “erroneous assumption”?

There’s a stigma attached to low literacy, especially around spelling. Many of us jump to conclusions about intelligence, capability and even character. Shirley says when her son was also diagnosed with severe dyslexia the doctor told her that he would probably end up becoming a criminal. (She never believed it and her son has proven the doctor wrong.)

Working as a cook, Shirley was often supervised by people with great “paper” credentials ➤





“People can be very judgemental.”

2



3

Here's help

FOR YOU:

Visit your local library. The staff can tell you about services where you live.

Visit your local college. Ask about programs to help improve your skills.

FOR SOMEONE YOU KNOW:

Most people need encouragement to tackle the problem. Nancy Noble-Hearle and Mary Kiviste (of Okanagan College) suggest:

Speak up. Try asking them, “I’ve noticed this is difficult. Is this something you’d like to do something about?”

Suggest resources. The library is a good first choice. Staff members are aware of the many programs available in your community, and they can point

out some of the high interest books available. The Okanagan Regional Library has about 500 items in their adult literacy collection, with new titles added regularly.

Follow up. Try: “How did that work out?” Encourage him to continue—or to try again some day.

FOR EMPLOYERS:

Naomi Ludington, coordinator of Literacy Now South Okanagan–Similkameen, says there are many strategies for employers to keep valued employees with low literacy skills.

Think creatively. Penticton’s Best Western hired a hard-working employee who couldn’t read their housekeeping checklist. They created a pictorial version.

Assess your workplace. The easy-to-use Essential Skills Training Audit

PHOTOS BY CAREY TARR

but less knowledge and experience. She eventually looked into opportunities for retraining and a particularly brutal advisor told her she'd never be able to pass the classes. A woman at her local college had a different opinion, recommending a class that helped Shirley look at words in a new way. She has since earned several post-secondary credits.

Shirley says while her reading is growing stronger, she still dreads forms. A few years ago, filling out an online application for employment insurance coverage was good for several hours of intense frustration. She put that experience to good use while working on a temporary contract with Service Canada, helping countless others complete those same forms. An incredible organizer with extraordinary people skills, she is open about her limitations. She turned down a job at WorkZone because not recognizing grammatical mistakes in a client's resume could cost someone a job.

Doug has only recently decided to open up. "People can be very judgemental," he says, yet there are a great many obviously intelligent and capable people who manage amazingly well despite an inability to

read. Some work their way up in a company, get promoted into a position that requires too much reading and quit to start over somewhere else rather than admit it's a problem.

Catalysts for change

Sometimes, changes at work push people to seek help. Okanagan College's Mary Kiviste pairs students with tutors throughout the South Okanagan. She says some come for help with something specific, like passing a first aid course. They get what they need, go back to their busy lives and reappear years later when they need help with something else.

People also seek help when change occurs in their personal life — perhaps a support person (often a child or a spouse) will no longer be there. Others, particularly women, have fewer family responsibilities and now have time to do something for themselves. Mary and Nancy look for the supports that best fit each student's goals and lifestyle. All of their programs are extremely flexible. "It's really important for me to meet their needs at the time they are ready," says Nancy who routinely adapts

her classes to include new students.

There's no quick fix, but many of these adult students find that the benefits go well beyond literacy skills. Mary relates one student's excitement when she was able to question the price she was charged at the till. "For the first time," she says, "she was able to verbally express 'I think this is wrong. I'd like you to sort it out for me.'" When those seemingly little things become possible, the bigger things seem possible too. Nancy says that's where the real progress happens for her students. "It's about having a voice, about gaining confidence — about being able to move forward in their life, however that looks."

Shirley's progress has been remarkable and 27 years after that camping trip she experienced another first. Before bed she started reading Mariah Stewart's *Until Dark*; the next day she finished it. "It was so good," she says. "I just couldn't put it down." **OL**

2. Doug Becker remembers his father sounding out words as he read. Doug quit school in Grade 9. He'd love to be a writer but he finds spelling difficult.
3. Learning to read and write better helps people become independent and self-reliant.
4. Okanagan College's Mary Kiviste says she's amazed at the strength adults like Sarah Grant show in tackling their literacy challenges.

helps employers identify areas where skills training can improve productivity and employee satisfaction.

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1

2



Curb appeal in spades

by Karen Slivar

French country design combines old world charm with modern conveniences

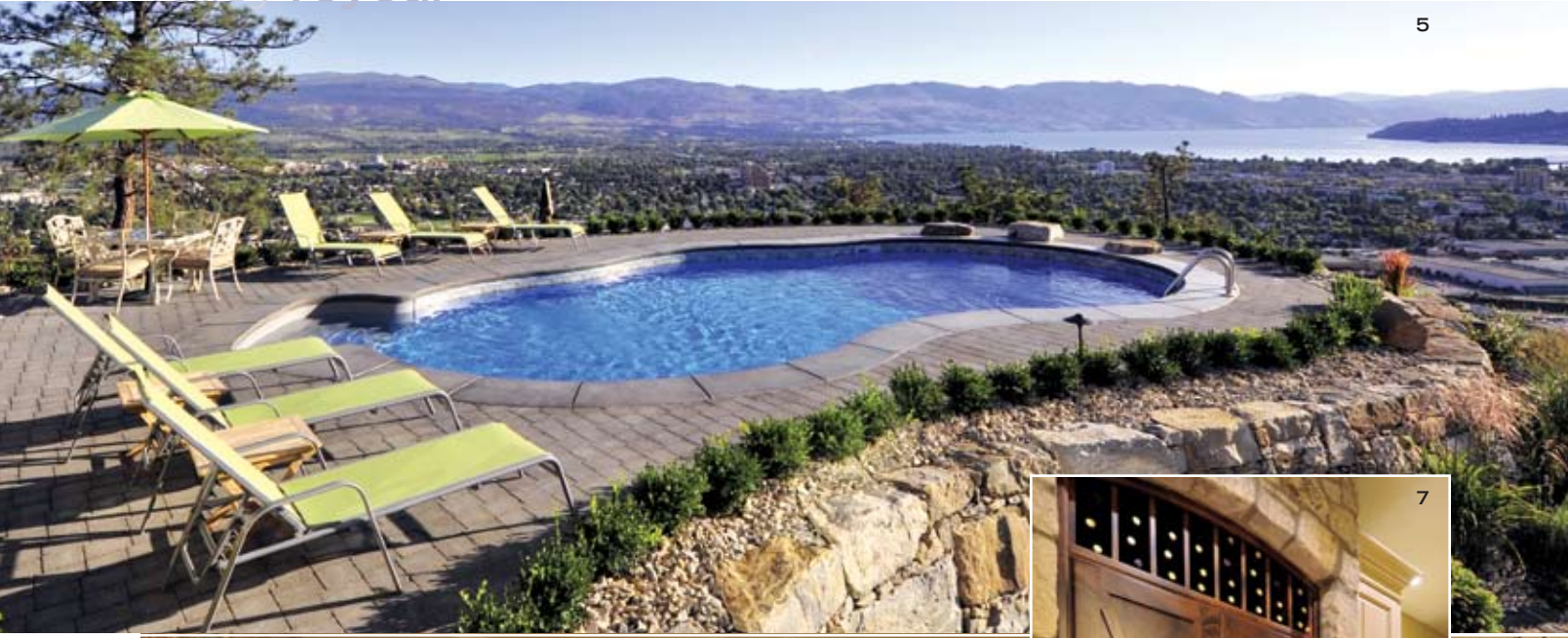
- This hillside home, built by Fawdry Homes and designed by Bill Daniels of W.R. Daniels Design, takes its cues from the classic French country style with its hipped and open gabled roof, arched entranceway, paned windows and French doors.

Inside, this spacious level-entry home with walkout basement offers a combination of formal and informal spaces that connect to each other through double-sided gas fireplaces, archways, hardwood flooring and trim details. Each room has at least one focal point to rivet the eye's attention like the coffered ceiling in the living room. The large expanse of windows capitalize on the views and let in plenty of natural light. The interior design blends wood, stone and tile to create a warm and inviting home. Heating and cooling is provided by a ground-source heat pump for energy efficiency. **OL**



4





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13

1. Painted and stained raised-panel kitchen cabinets along with crown moulding, decorative kitchen exhaust hood vent, tiled backsplash and bowl-style pendant lights continue the classic French country design indoors.
2. Modern amenities in the kitchen include professional gas cooker, exhaust hood vent, dishwasher, built-in fridge and freezer, microwave in the snack prep area, and stone countertops.
3. Designed to complement its surroundings the exterior of this home combines rough slop-dash stucco and natural stone with distinctive wood accents, concrete roof tiles and copper downspouts.
4. Front and back elevations of custom home designed by

- Bill Daniels of W.R. Daniels Design and built by Fawdry Homes. The walkout decks and terraced living spaces in the rear yard expand the home's living areas outdoors and take advantage of the spectacular views.
5. Poolside is a private oasis that overlooks the city of Kelowna and Okanagan Lake. The pool is heated by a ground-source heat pump that is also used to heat and cool the home.
6. Interior design elements like archways, double-sided gas fireplace, hardwood floor and trim connect living room (as seen) to the kitchen and dining areas. French doors expand the space to a covered deck.
7. Additional storage and second fridge near the kitchen.
8. Architectural details like this coffered ceiling

- in the living room act as a focal point.
9. Twin chandeliers in the entrance hall welcome guests.
10. Master bedroom on the main floor has a commanding view of the city. The paned casement windows and French doors throughout the home are energy efficient low-E squared, argon filled, double glazed units.
11. Two archways and a double-sided gas fireplace separate the family and games room, located in the walkout basement. A four-foot wide staircase connects the main living and entertaining areas. The basement features in-slab floor heat for comfort and a wet bar with full fridge for convenience.
12. Walk-in wine cellar is located in the walkout basement.
13. Cozy workstation located next to kitchen on the main floor.

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Vintage name game

by Michael Botner

**Would you drink a wine labelled Cat's Pee?
Savvy marketers are convinced that you will**

■ You can't judge a wine by its outer trappings, but should be able to tell a lot about it from the label—if you know what to look for. At least that is how it should work in a perfect world. Far too often, though, simplicity and clarity about the wine take a backseat to funky, slick or crude identifiers and images designed to titillate or shock. A brief backgrounder....

At one extreme are the French AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) wines. Based on laws established in 1935, the information and size of lettering on labels are precisely prescribed. On a top wine from Bordeaux, the label lists the appellation, Château name, classification (based on a system dating back

to 1855), vintage, winery owner and whether or not the wine is estate bottled. Although grape varieties are not stated, those allowed are rigidly controlled. Imagery on the label follows tradition, tending to be elegant and tasteful (or stuffy and boring). You need to do some research to determine quality or value inside the bottle.

Enter Baron Philippe de Rothschild, owner of Château Mouton Rothschild. He revolutionized the game by adding a work by the famous artist Philippe Jullian to his 1945 vintage label. Now art is a commonplace feature.

In a completely opposite vein, the wine known as Baby Duck sported a label featuring one of the cut-

est and cuddliest critters in all of winedom. Made from Labrusca grapes, Baby Duck became the hottest selling domestic wine in Canada, topping eight million bottles in 1973. Since that milestone, Aussies and others have taken command of the animal focus for such generally good value wines as Yellow Tail and if you find a Burrowing Owl, you're likely to be pleasantly surprised, although a tad poorer. The best labels are both intriguing—and respectful. Fat Bastard and Bitch Grenache cross the line, but Cat's Pee on a Gooseberry Bush and Dirty Laundry are fun, edgy and kinky. The best labels tell a unique story about the wine and the people who made it. **OL**



JUDIE BARTA

Queen bee,
Meadow Vista Honey Wines

From nine-year-old worker bee picking apples in Cobourg, Ontario, to owner of the Okanagan's only meadery, Judie Barta takes on new challenges with gusto. While on a skiing holiday in Banff in 1990, opportunity knocked when the then teenaged dynamo landed a position working in the prestigious wine bar at Banff Springs Hotel. After stints in wine sales in Calgary and Victoria, she moved to the Okanagan in 1993 to join Sumac Ridge Winery. Intrigued by the eco-tourism movement, Judie entered massage therapy school the next year. "It brought me a step closer to realizing my vision of opening a cute little winery with a spa," she says. Proudly entrepreneurial, Judie built her spa. She began making mead with a friend and eventually, rather than adding to the glut of grape wineries, she launched Meadow Vista in 2009. "I was inspired by Dr. Alan Marks, one of the Valley's foremost consulting winemakers," she says. Aiming to create a new eco friendly foodie tradition, Judie produces certified organic, sulphur free honey wine using honeycombs sourced from northern Alberta. Meadow Vista's food friendly honey wine portfolio includes near dry Cloud Horse, spiced Mabron, dessert style Libra made with apricots and honey, and BC's only bottle fermented, honey based bubbly, called Joy. Judie's newsletter, *The Buzz*, features her own recipes using honey wine.

highspirits

Showcasing wines with intriguing labels, the tasting notes list name, price and region or country. The five-star rating system stresses value for price.



THE VIEW WINERY & VINEYARD 2008 RED SHOE PINOTAGE

Okanagan Valley, Kelowna

★★★★ \$19.95

Potent nose previews supple, spicy palate. It delivers richly concentrated dark fruit with notes of black pepper, earth, tomato purée and smoky, toasty oak, backed by firm, ripe tannins. Partners barbecued ribs, roast game or duck and spaghetti with meatballs.



TANTALUS VINEYARDS 2009 RIESLING

Okanagan Valley, Kelowna

★★★★1/2 \$22.90

Purity and elegance characterize intensely rich, concentrated palate. It features pineapple, grapefruit, apple, melon with a note of mineral and a slightly honeyed finish balancing the crunchy acidity. Serve with grilled trout or roasted pork with a fruit sauce.



HERDER WINERY & VINEYARDS 2008 SYRAH

British Columbia, Keremeos

★★★★1/2 \$35

Stylish Syrah boasts seamless palate. Displaying complexity and finesse on the nose, the palate follows with lush blackcurrant with notes of toffee, toasty oak and sweet spice supported by smooth, fine tannins. It partners grilled and roasted red meat dishes.



EX NIHILO VINEYARDS 2007 ROLLING STONES SATISFACTION

Napa Valley, St. Helena, CA

★★★★1/2 \$45

Artfully made meritage features complex, concentrated fragrances of prune juice and tar. Ultra rich, lush, long-lasting palate suggests blueberry/plum jam, sweetly spiced oak, bittersweet chocolate and roasted coffee. Works with rack of lamb or roasted duck.



PERSEUS WINERY & VINEYARDS 2008 INVICTUS

Okanagan Valley, Penticton

★★★★ \$29.95

Recently bottled Meritage blend impresses with dynamite fruit and nuanced oak. Richly textured palate features black fruits with notes of black pepper, smoky oak and dark chocolate, backed by fine, ripe tannins. Cellar three years or serve now with rare roast beef.



ACES 2007 POCKET ACES SYRAH

Okanagan Valley, Naramata

★★★★1/2 \$95

Made from Osoyoos Lake Bench grapes, powerfully built, hand-crafted Syrah oozes densely packed black fruits, notes of smoky oak, black pepper, licorice and game, supported by ripe, chewy tannins. Cellar five or more years or enjoy now with roast or grilled venison.

TANTALUS PHOTO BY BRUCE KEMP, OTHER PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BOTNER

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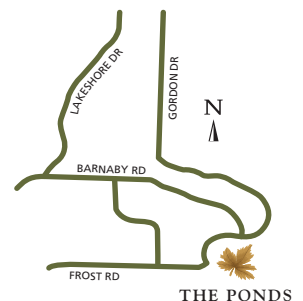
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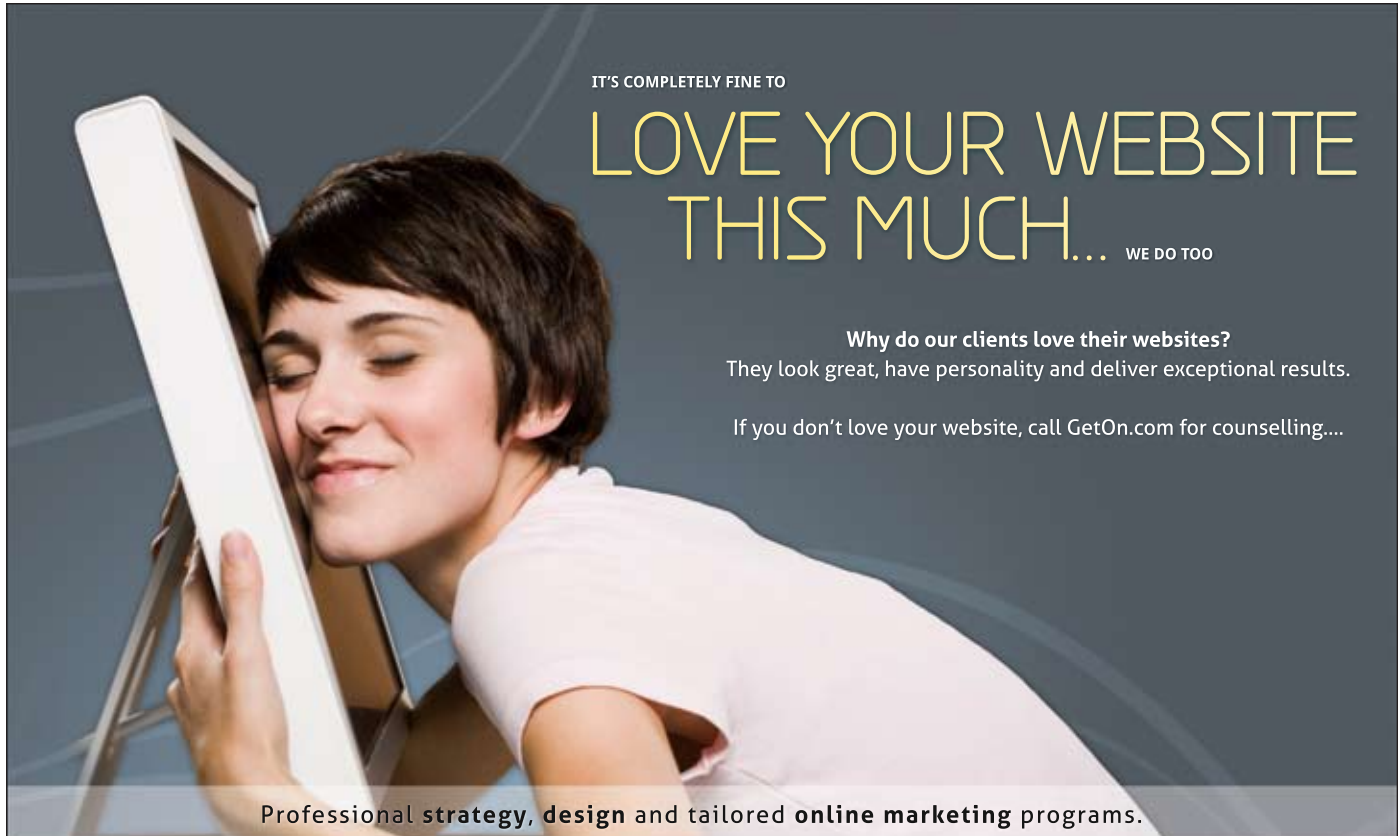
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North Okanagan eco-encounter

by Laurie Carter

Allan Brooks would hate the habitat destruction of his beloved Commonage, but he'd be proud of the nature centre that bears his name

■ “Hey, you want to see something neat?”

I turned from the entrance to the Allan Brooks Nature Centre to where a teenaged girl was beckoning from the shrubbery. She waved for me to join the knot of hunched figures bending low and peering intently at an ordinary looking bush.

“It’s moving,” said one of the others.

I hurried over. The group parted like the Red Sea and I joined a

ragged circle staring into the choke cherry bushes.

Aha! A fat green caterpillar, as long as the first two segments of my index finger, raised its head. The excited observers, who I soon learned were interpreters and volunteers at the centre, told me all about the little critter, which was actually the larva stage in the life cycle of the western tiger swallowtail butterfly.

My introduction to the soon-to-be-butterfly was a highlight of my visit to the centre the summer it opened. A decade later, much has changed—and much hasn’t. The Allan Brooks ▶

2





Nature Centre occupies the old Environment Canada weather station on lonely Mission Hill south of Vernon. It stands as an isolated island in a broad open expanse of grassland that is part of the area known as The Commonage.

Founders of the centre had the vision of increasing public awareness and actually doing something to protect and reclaim the badly endangered grassland ecosystem. It was, and still is, all about spaces and species at risk, or as one insider put it: “Hey guys — wake up — open your eyes. It’s disappearing!”

You get a better idea of just what’s at stake in the Habitat Room where brilliantly coloured murals painted by local artist Andrea Toth, with bird and animal illustrations by Ginny Hall, depict four local ecosystems — the surrounding grasslands, wetlands of the valley floor, the ponderosa pine forests of the lower slopes, and mountain areas, and specifically the flora and fauna of Silver Star.

In the Discovery Room, exhibits change every few years. Currently it’s all about raptors. “Kids love Harry Potter’s owl,” says centre manager Mary Jong, pointing out the snowy bird in a glass case. But I’m more knocked out by the juvenile bald eagle with a wingspan as broad as my arms can reach (and I have very long arms) that seems to be flying in through the corner windows. A peregrine falcon is posed over its fallen prey while a hawk wings overhead.

Discovery is hands-on in this room. “We encourage people to spend as much time as they want to,” says Jane, a volunteer who helps kids spot the queen bee in the glass-walled

hive or get an insect’s-eye view of the world through a multi-faceted viewer. She hands the little gizmo to Kaitlyn, a first-time visitor from Slave Lake, Alberta, who peers through the lens at her brother and grandmother. They’re busy studying the array of bird’s nests in a drawer. “Awesome,” she says. “It’s great to have something interesting to do.”

The centre commands a spectacular view. I stand at the lookout and do a three-sixty — taking in Predator Ridge; the blue finger of Okanagan Lake; the dry flanks of the Bella Vista Range; the entire city of Vernon with Swan Lake in the distance; Silver Star Mountain, Vernon Hill, Middleton Mountain, the Rimrocks, the lush ribbon of the Coldstream Valley stretching toward the white-tipped Monashees; and in the middle distance, Kalamalka Lake, like a chameleon gem — sapphire, jade or emerald — depending on her mood.

Excellent signage interprets the landscape beginning with the fault in the Earth’s crust that led to the formation of the Okanagan Valley about fifty million years ago. I can easily see the legacy of volcanic eruption in features like Bluenose Mountain and the effects of ice age glaciation and melting.

I spot the family from Slave Lake on the Grasslands Trail below and follow. It’s an easy walk, just 400 metres, through habitat that’s only found at low elevations in the hot, dry valleys of the BC Interior. If I’d been strolling this hillside a couple of hundred years ago, I’d have been wading through swaying grasses in a landscape splashed like a painter’s palette with the yellows, blues and reds of wildflowers. This fragile ecosystem is seriously threatened, but efforts are under way to turn back the clock.

Sadly, burrowing owls are gone, but a mom with three baby badgers moved in for a time this summer, no doubt attracted by the residents of Marmot City, a busy metropolis of furry little gopher-like creatures who live near the trail and on the hillside above the

parking lot. Badgers love to dine on the little ones. By the time I visited in August, the badger family had departed, but I did meet a young marmot.

Bluebirds make good use of the houses installed on fence posts around the property. Mary tells me that spadefoot toads have returned to the pond and indigenous gopher snakes, rubber boas and yellow-bellied racers still populate the area although rattlesnakes have been eradicated. Overhead a turkey vulture rides the thermals and a red tailed hawk dives for a mouse in the grasses.

"You want to see something," Mary asks, leading me to the now tall choke cherry bushes. She pulls aside a branch and points to a tiny round ball. "That's a swallowtail egg," she says. "And over here, is a larva." Sure enough, there is another of the fat green creatures I saw that first day. We walk on to the Naturescape Garden, also now fully mature, where visitors can learn about draught tolerant native plants like the milkweed beloved of the swallowtails.

I have to believe that Major Allan C. Brooks, the centre's namesake, would be very pleased — not with the damage humans have done since he lived in the Okanagan Landing area in the early 20th century — but with the hard work that so many volunteers are putting into reclamation.

The Commonage was one of his favourite birdwatching venues and forms the background for many of his paintings. His work was featured in publications like *National Geographic Magazine* and Robert Bateman says that Brooks' pictures inspired him during his own formative years as a wildlife artist. A significant collection of Allan Brooks' work is displayed at the Vernon Museum and Archives. But to get a real sense of what he was all about, you need to walk a mile in his shoes — and the nature centre is the place to do it.

Visit www.abnc.ca for hours and details on its two annual garage sale fundraisers. Help the volunteers keep this excellent project alive. **OL**



1. A juvenile bald eagle spreads its massive wings in the Discovery Room, a hands-on learning centre where kids can peer through a spotting scope for an eagle's eye view of a mouse, check out the bird's nest collection, try to identify the queen in the beehive and meet a cousin of Harry Potter's owl.
2. This peregrine falcon is one of the birds featured in the current Discovery Room exhibit, Okanagan Raptors.
3. Western tiger swallowtail butterfly egg laid on the leaf of a choke cherry bush outside the centre.
4. Larva stage of the swallowtail butterfly, munching a leaf on the same choke cherry bush. Centre manager Mary Jong says,

"If you have choke cherries, you will attract swallowtails."

5. Adult swallowtail butterfly.
6. The walls of the Habitat Room are covered in murals depicting four local ecosystems: the dry grasslands such as those surrounding the centre, which are seriously endangered; wetlands like those found around ponds, rivers and lakes; the ponderosa pine forests of the lower hillsides; and the subalpine and alpine ecosystems of the mountain environment, specifically Silver Star Mountain. The murals were painted by local artist Andrea Toth with bird and animal illustrations by Ginny Hall.



by Anne-Rachelle McHugh

You only live once

YouTube phenomenon Joe Vass aims to educate and inspire others to pursue their dreams, at any age

■ Joe Vass sits at his computer talking excitedly about a recent all-expense-paid trip to Jamaica and the hundreds of videos he shot while there. To his right sits Cindy Aspden, answering emails, uploading videos and keeping her verbose boyfriend on track.

As we talk, Joe continues to make money through a partnership that provides revenue every time someone clicks on one of thousands of videos posted on his YouTube site. It's a sweet deal the formerly sluggish Joe worked hard to realize after a lifetime spent living a comfortable yet unadventurous life.

"I always wanted to see pyramids and jungles but it was always someday, after I retire. Then my wife Bernice died from a brain aneurism and I realized this is the only life I have and I want to do more with it," he says. "Up until then I worked five days a week, collected my cheque and went home where I watched TV because there was nothing driving me."

Joe was never much of a traveller until his first trip outside BC in

May 2002 when he visited Mexico with his grown children. He became consumed with the idea of documenting his travels using an antiquated 8 mm camera. "I clearly remember walking through the resort and thinking how beautiful it was and how if more people knew they wouldn't put off living their lives."

Joe sent his videos and stories to newspapers and television stations that were clearly not interested in what a middle-aged widower had to say. Travel agencies also turned him down. "The people at work were saying you're nuts, it ain't going to amount to anything. But I never wavered in my belief that it was going to go someplace. I was learning and I continue to learn to this day — to see what the trends are — and for some reason I figure it was going to happen."

Rejected but not dejected, Joe invested thousands in equipment he bought on credit and paid for by working extra shifts. In his free time, he took courses, studied photography magazines and

fine-tuned his skills filming the erratic movements of ducks.

"When I first started to edit videos the thing that I became most proficient at was resetting the computer because I was screwing everything up. In my younger years when I was more impatient I would have said the heck with it, it's not worth it, but this time I had the attitude that I wasn't going to fail."

Joe was so confident that when his employer went on strike, he and Cindy went on a three-week working vacation to the Caribbean, where he spent his days shooting and his nights editing. When he returned the media was buzzing with talk of what would become the phenomenon of YouTube. Joe, who had hundreds of videos stockpiled, was one of the first to sign up.

"At first nobody seemed to care about what I was doing and that hurt but I didn't let that stop me and I just kept uploading more videos figuring eventually someone would take notice." ▶



Up at dawn to watch the sun crest the Jamaican horizon and capture an "absolutely stunning" shot that will be uploaded later today



Join 11 others on a frightening 45 minute drive from Chukka Cove into the jungle where a series of nine zip lines awaits — the longest of which is 400 feet



Dine on jerk chicken in Chukka Cove before watching the Jamaican dog sled team demonstrate how their team of rescue dogs pull a sled on wheels



Turn the tables on CBC Power and Politics host Evan Solomon with an impromptu interview by the pool focused on his stay at the resort



Ride horseback through the countryside and on the beach before dinner and the evening's entertainment at the resort



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whoamongus

AGE: 55

FORMER PROFESSION: PAINTER
WITH SRI HOMES

FAVOURITE SAYING: YOLO
(YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE)

REGRET: DROPPING OUT OF THE
BCIT BROADCASTING PROGRAM
BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID TO FAIL

**LONGEST HE'S GONE WITHOUT SHOOTING
VIDEO:** JOE PUT DOWN THE CAMERA
FOR TWO MONTHS AFTER FALLING IN
LOVE WITH CINDY IN MARCH OF 2007

LATEST CHALLENGE: MANAGING HIS
NEWLY DIAGNOSED DIABETES

WEBSITE: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/JCVDUDE

By 2007, people were flocking to his site and at least one video—a tarantula walking on Joe's hand—had gone viral with more than 800,000 views. That video has now been viewed more than 18 million times and is one of a library of more than 2,700 videos viewed over 32.6 million times.

“Not bad for a grade 10 educated construction worker who didn't pick up a video camera until 10 years ago,” Joe says. “If I can do it then anyone can.”

Joe's fans appreciate his honesty. “The goal of our videos is to give people the experience of being there and to show real people in real situations. We get comments from people who said they were tired of seeing videos that painted a perfect picture of every travel destination and were relieved to see what places were really like.”

Equally important is Joe's goal to motivate others to adopt a philosophy he likes to call YOLO—you only live once.

“I want to motivate other people to realize that we don't know what's going to happen today or this afternoon. This is the only life you have and it could be gone in an instant so live it, not recklessly, but pursue your dreams and your passions. Live life to the fullest because you only live once.” **OL**



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Child poverty: who cares?

Former educator lays down a challenge

- Aiden feels the pressure of his little sister's small hand on his. He snuggles into his warm sleeping bag on the lumpy couch, trying to ignore her. Impossible. She's up and she's hungry.

"Go wash your face and get dressed," he says. "And be quiet. Don't bother Mom. She worked late last night."

He checks the kitchen cupboards. No luck and no surprise. It's the end of the month. He dresses quickly, helps Sarah find her backpack and jacket and grabs his own. They head out the door of their dingy one bedroom apartment.

Consumed with guilt, their mom hears them leave and tries to get back to sleep. She knows they're OK. It's a school day and Aiden is in Grade 7 this year. He walks Sarah to and from the red brick sanctuary every day.

Thankful for the free breakfast club started by school staff who noticed hungry kids like Aiden and Sarah, she drifts off. Feeding two kids and being left pregnant with a third is exhausting on the meager pay from two minimum wage, part-time jobs.

Think this scenario is overly dramatic or even unusual? Add in the fact that mom is a new immigrant trying desperately to fit in weekly English Second Language classes and her husband, trapped in his own debilitating depression, is long gone.

During 20 years as an elementary principal in inner city Vancouver I met many hard-working, dedicated single moms with similar stories.

That's Vancouver, you say. But poverty isn't restricted to the Lower Mainland. After years of practice I can recognize it at a glance. These moms and kids often display a certain look of despair and hopelessness. Since moving to the Okanagan five years ago I've seen it here, too.

These are children who before they finish elementary school may already be statistically sentenced to a future with less educational success, poor quality food, even poorer accommodation, higher rates of obesity and a

lower level of physical fitness: all resulting in a shorter life span.

Has my experience left me jaded? Statistics say otherwise. BC has the dubious honour of topping the provincial Canadian child poverty rate for the past five years. In 2005, before the recession, the child poverty rate in Vancouver was 28.7 per cent. But the Okanagan wasn't far behind with Vernon at 22.7 per cent, Penticton at 21.2 and Kelowna at 16.4. And, according to First Call, the BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, the risk of poverty is more than three times greater for female lone-parent families.

Seth Klein, BC director for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, says child poverty is primarily a low-wage story. Fifty-six per cent of BC's poor children live in households with at least one parent working year-round, full-time in the paid labour force.

What to do? Embrace hope over despair. Resolve to be non-blaming, then act. Pack an extra sandwich for your child to discreetly share at school. Don't wait for December to donate to the food bank and other involved community organizations. Email your MLA. And privately thank those teachers who always keep an extra box of granola bars in their desk for hungry kids. **OL**



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