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Resolutions Reprogrammed

■ Were you honest with yourself when you made your New Year's resolution this year? If you resolved to lose weight, quit smoking, save some cash or any other promise, did you really believe in your ability to carry it out?

It is somewhat depressing to note that various studies show that only 12 out of 100 of us succeed at our New Year's resolutions; other studies show an even more dismal success ratio of less than four per cent. This would seem to suggest that the easiest person to fool at any given time or place is yourself.

There is no shortage of illogical and irrational decision making in the world today, just read a newspaper. World leaders attach meaning to things where there is no logical evidence to substantiate it. Michael Shermer coined the word "patternicity" to underscore humanity's tendency to find meaningful patterns in all we see and do. Unfortunately, sometimes those patterns are there and sometimes they are not. Believing a pattern is real when it is not is a false positive error and probably the most common. Not believing a pattern is real when it is is a false negative error.

Shermer points out that the brain doesn't have a "no baloney detection module" that says, "That's a true pattern and that's a false pattern." We lack the consistent algorithm that helps us discriminate. Humans



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are hard-wired to assume all patterns are real and that they're infused with intentional agency. In short, we trust our own brain too much. We also trusted the brains of Bernie Madoff, James Earl Jones and millions of other swindlers. Do you see the pattern?

The simple thought of stepping on a crack, breaking a mirror or spilling salt should illustrate how the brain is hard-wired for patterns. Conflict increases if we acknowledge the lifetime of beliefs we have adopted from influencers like parents, friends or gurus, that, based on the aforementioned New Year's statistics, also tasted "unsucces" in resolutions past. We falter in the unknown, but when we can connect the dots, we feel good about ourselves; so right or wrong—we connect them to feel good again.

On one hand is the skeptic, who doesn't trust anyone and on the other extreme is the paranoid, seeing patterns everywhere. If all of this seems disconcerting, you may take solace by choosing to challenge dogma and position yourself somewhere in the middle. It is here you can find your creativity, pulling ideas together in interesting and fascinating ways. In between not believing everything and everybody, and believing everything and everybody—there is a lot of real estate.

So while I wish you luck in reprogramming your brain to adopt healthy new habits, I also challenge you to turn off your autopilot pattern maker. Be a bit more skeptical, challenge a few more concepts that our left brain dominating world prescribes. If your New Year's resolution is to get better at finding true patterns, your life will be filled with success.



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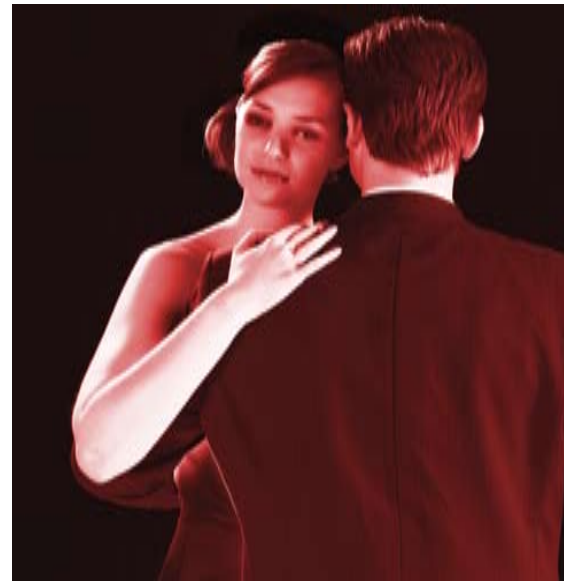
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Penticton: Feb. 11–13, 2011

It's the biggest show in the Okanagan with over 150 displays featuring homebuilding and renovating products. Restore, refresh and renew your home. Get help from the experts at seminars. Shop under one roof and find the latest in new products. Enter your name in the raffle to win a gas barbecue. Free eco friendly bags. Free parking. Concession. Open Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Penticton Trade and Convention Centre.



SWEET CHARITY

Kelowna: Mar. 24–Apr. 17, 2011

Meet Charity Hope Valentine, a girl who looks for love in all the wrong places. She works at a dance club where she has seen only the dark side of life through bad relationships. One day she meets Oscar and believes her luck has changed. This classic musical takes you on a whirlwind journey as Charity sings, dances and laughs her way through romances with hits like *Big Spender* and *If My Friends Could See Me Now*. For more info and tickets (dinner and/or dessert) phone 250.862.2867 or visit www.kelownaactorsstudio.com.

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Kelowna: Feb. 8, 2011

This all-Canadian quartet offers performances of startling intensity with a keen-edged collective sound. Afiara balances a lively interest in new works with deep insight into core classical repertoire. Performance at the Mary Irwin Theatre, in Kelowna. For tickets visit www.ticketmaster.ca or phone 250.860.1470. For more info visit www.chambermusickelowna.ca.

LEND ME A TENOR

Vernon: Feb. 16–26, 2011

Madcap screwball comedy, Saunders, the general manager of the Cleveland Grand Opera Company, is primed to welcome the greatest tenor of his generation. But the star arrives late and, through a series of mishaps, is tranquilized. In an attempt to salvage the evening, Saunders persuades his assistant Max to get into costume and fool the audience into thinking he is the famous tenor, which he does admirably well until the star revives and turns up. For tickets visit www.ticketcellar.ca or phone 250.549.7469. For more info visit www.powerhousetheatre.net.

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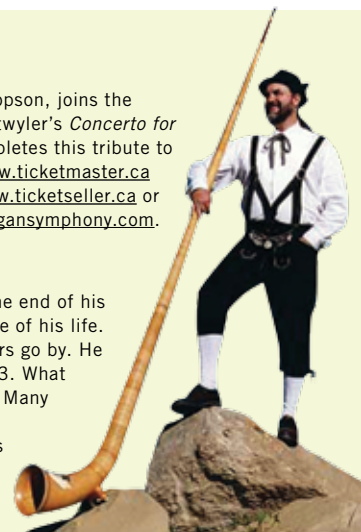
Okanagan Symphony: Mar. 5–6, 2011

Internationally acclaimed alphornist, William Hopson, joins the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra performing Daetwyler's *Concerto for Alphorn*. Brahms' towering *First Symphony* completes this tribute to the Alps. Performance in Kelowna March 5 (www.ticketmaster.ca or 250.860.1470); and in Vernon March 6 (www.ticketcellar.ca or 250.549.7469). For more info visit www.okanagan-symphony.com.

ROPE'S END

Penticton: Mar. 31–Apr. 23, 2011

Bittersweet comedy, Toby Boone has reached the end of his rope when he happens across a photo of the love of his life. There's only one small problem. He's let 31 years go by. He last saw her at summer camp when they were 13. What if she doesn't remember him? Presented by the Many Hats Theatre Company on the Cannery Stage. Show runs Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. with Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Tickets available at the Wine Country Visitor's Centre, in Penticton, phone 250.493.4055.



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FUN AND GAMES FOR YOUTH

Kelowna hosts International Children's Winter Games

■ The games are coming to town. About 500 athletes aged 12 to 15 (plus their coaches), representing 37 cities from 13 countries, will be descending on Kelowna from Jan. 26 to 31, 2011, to compete in the International Children's Winter Games.

Veronika Dimova, originally from Bulgaria, won't have far to travel for the games. Last year her family moved to Canada. You wouldn't know it when talking with her that she only learned to speak English a year ago. An avid skier, she has been cross-country skiing since she was in Grade 2. She was surprised to learn the International Children's Winter Games were coming to Canada.

A seasoned competitor at age 12, this will be her second international competition. She has 29 medals to her credit.

"Want to try my best, giving it my all for me," says Veronika.

To get ready for these games she is practicing three days a week up at Telemark, in West Kelowna. This might sound like a lot for this Rutland Elementary School student, but it's nothing compared with when she lived in Bulgaria near the trails and skied every day.

It was her mom, a cross-country skier herself, who prompted her to give it a try. "I

really liked it," say Veronika.

Although recognized and sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee, these games are not about breaking records and winning medals, these games are about fair play and fostering a better understanding among youth of different cultural backgrounds.

The first ever games were held in 1968 in Slovenia, with the participation of teams from nine European cities. The games were the inspiration of sports instructor, Metod Klemenc, who had a vision to promote peace and friendship to the world's youth through sports. In the history of the games there have been 44 summer and four winter events. This marks the first time the Winter Games have been held outside Europe.

The International Children's Winter Games will see youth compete in alpine and Nordic skiing, snowboarding, figure and speed skating, curling and hockey. Over 600 volunteers will be on hand to help with a variety of functions including competitions, transportation, food services, ceremonies and operations.

Be sure to check out the games and cheer on the youth. Visit www.internationalchildrensgames-kelowna2011.com for more details and event schedules. —Karen Slivar

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VEIN MYTHS DEBUNKED

Local doctor sets the record straight

■ Varicose veins are a common problem for men and women of all ages. A lot of causes are bandied around, but most of these are false and lay blame on simple things we do every day that in reality have no impact on the whole disease process.

Myth #1: More women than men suffer from varicose veins.

Truth: This common and pervasive belief persists partly because most doctors will tell you it is so. Also, women more frequently seek medical advice for varicose veins and thus higher numbers are reported than for men who largely ignore the problem. But detailed research into the epidemiology has revealed that the percentage of men and women who actually develop the disease is very similar. Times are changing and men are becoming less complacent about their veins and are seeking help more often now that there are new treatment options.

Myth #2: Varicose veins are caused by crossing your legs.

Truth: Varicose veins have nothing to do with crossing your legs. They are in fact caused by leaky valves inside the veins, which is mostly the result of your family history rather than something you've done to yourself.

Myth #3: Being overweight causes varicose veins.

Truth: Obesity or increased body fat does not in itself cause varicose veins but with excess weight people usually do much less physical activity and this certainly plays a role in worsening varicose vein symptoms. It is important to note that the root cause of varicose veins is genetic

and a result of individual family history. Certain activities like standing for long periods of time can make veins worse, but for the most part people are genetically programmed to have "good" or "bad" veins.

Myth #4: Pregnancy causes varicose veins.

Truth: See Myth #1. If this were true we would see much higher numbers of varicose veins in women. While it is true that pregnancy can accelerate the development of varicose veins, it will not cause them. The baby inside the uterus causes increased pressure on the veins leaving the legs and this in turn causes increased pressure inside the veins further down the legs. As a result, the numerous valves inside these veins fail prematurely and allow blood to accumulate in the lower leg causing troublesome varicose vein symptoms. These symptoms may include aching, heaviness, fatigue, swelling, night cramps and itching as well as visible veins on the surface of the skin.

There are numerous ways to treat varicose veins and advanced equipment now makes it easier than ever to diagnose the condition. — *Dr. Craig Crippen, medical director, Kelowna Vein Clinic @ Aesthetic Solutions*



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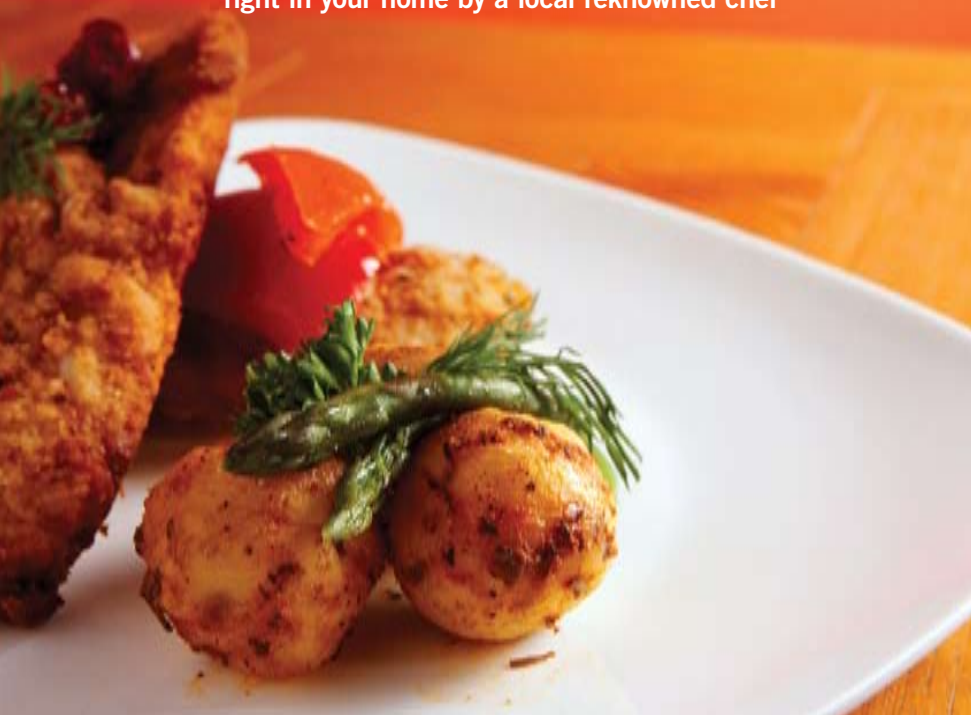
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Entry deadline March 14, 2011

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2. **ONLY ONE ENTRY PER PERSON**—must include name, phone number and address in order for the ballot to be counted.
3. Entries must be postmarked by March 14, 2011, or delivered by 5 p.m.
4. Faxes and reproductions of this ballot will not be accepted.
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PLACE FOR A DINNER DATE CITY

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CHEF RESTAURANT

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FAMILY RESTAURANT CITY

(MORE ON REVERSE)

BREAKFAST	CITY
SUNDAY BRUNCH	CITY
BUFFET	CITY
LUNCH SPOT	CITY

COFFEE HOUSE	CITY
PLACE FOR A CUP OF TEA	CITY
CASUAL RESTAURANT/ BISTRO	CITY
SERVICE	CITY

TAKEOUT	CITY
PUB	CITY
SPORTS BAR	CITY
LATE NIGHT BITE AFTER 10PM	CITY

JAPANESE	CITY
ASIAN FUSION (CHINESE, VIETNAMESE, THAI ETC.)	CITY
INDIAN	CITY

ITALIAN	CITY
GREEK	CITY
EUROPEAN (FRENCH, GERMAN ETC.)	CITY

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TAPAS/ APPIES	CITY
SOUP	CITY
SALAD	CITY
VEGETARIAN	CITY
PLACE TO BUY FRUITS & VEGGIES	CITY
NATURAL/ HEALTH FOOD STORE	CITY

SPECIALTY MEAT SHOP	CITY
STEAK	CITY
SEAFOOD	CITY
BURGER	CITY
VEGGIE BURGER	CITY
SANDWICH/ WRAP/ PANINI	CITY

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BAKERY	CITY
DESSERT	CITY
ICE CREAM/ GELATO/ FROZEN YOGURT	CITY

WINERY RESTAURANT	CITY/ WINERY
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WINE LIST	CITY
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COCKTAILS	CITY
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LOCAL WHITE	CITY/ WINERY
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LOCAL RED	CITY/ WINERY
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(ENTRY DEADLINE MARCH 14, 2011)

SLAM



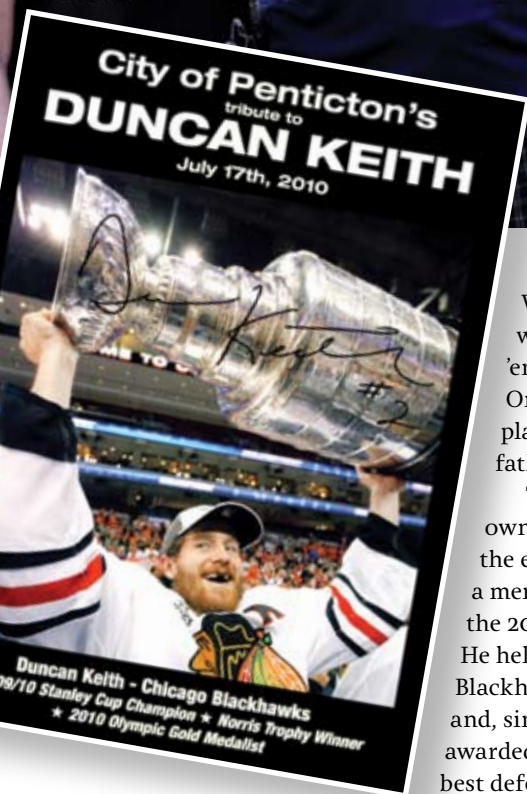
Okanagan's Duncan Keith nets a hat trick of hockey's top prizes

DUNC!

The South Okanagan Event Centre is packed, its brand new seats filled with an enthusiastic crowd. But they're not waiting for a big headliner. These fans are here to see hockey's Holy Grail — Lord Stanley's Cup ushered into town by one of our own. It's Duncan Keith Day in Penticton



By John Paul Byrne



Was he dreaming of a day like this when four-year-old Duncan Keith laced 'em up for the first time in Fort Francis, Ontario. Most Canadian kids dream of playing in the NHL but maybe Dunc (as his father David calls him) dreamed bigger.

The magnitude of what the Okanagan's own Duncan Keith accomplished last year is the epic stuff of fairy tales. He struck gold as a member of Team Canada's ice hockey team in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics in February. He helped end a 49-year drought for the Chicago Blackhawks by winning the Stanley Cup in June and, since good things come in threes, he was awarded the James Norris Trophy as the NHL's best defenseman of the 2009/10 season. Here in the Valley, we call that hat trick a "Slam Dunc."

Okanagan Life caught up with Duncan Keith, and parents David and Jean, to learn how a boy's dreams, a family's pride and a hockey community's hopes manifested into one of the best seasons ever.

Lots of Ice Time

Those who know this 27-year-old, point to his single-minded focus and devotion to the game for his success. The work ethic and off-season dedication he displayed throughout his childhood is legendary. Living only two blocks from the outdoor rink in Fort Francis, the Keith kids had practically unlimited ice time. "We had long winters," says David. "Dunc

and his brother Cam and sister Rebecca would skate and play for hours on end."

Hockey dads like David understand that hours of skating and repeating drills is crucial to mastering the skills necessary to make it on the top competitive "rep" teams. He believes that kids that rely on paid ice are at a substantial disadvantage compared with kids that skate on Canada's frozen ponds, lakes and streams. "Southern Ontario's free ice also gave (Olympians) Pronger and Richards their start in the hockey world," says David.

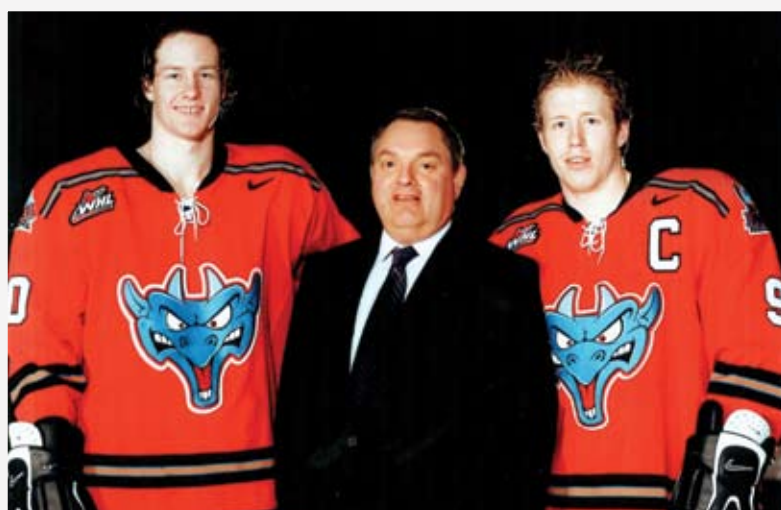
"Duncan always wanted to be the first one on the ice," recalls Jean, who out of necessity taught her son how to start the car for the 5 a.m. practices. "It was -32 degrees, but he would be up and in the driver's seat. He was so keen to get to the rink." David recalls one time when Jean was driving him somewhere and she stopped at Duncan's grandparents' house. When she got out of the car for a moment, Duncan jumped in the driver's seat. Somehow he put the running car in gear and proceeded to drive directly into his grandpa's garage door. "I give him a lot of credit," quips David, "he ▶

Previous spread:
Duncan Keith and the Stanley Cup.

Above clockwise: Handout from Duncan Keith Day. Duncan's parents, Jean and David Keith. Brother Cam, dad David, grandpa Don and Duncan.

Facing page:
Duncan's minor hockey days in Fort Francis, Ont. Duncan wearing a Boston Bruins jersey. The Kelowna Rockets best year ever, 2002/03, with 51 wins.

PHOTOS BY CAMILLIA COURTS



“He was only 135 pounds, five foot nine at 16 when the Kelowna Rockets came calling.”

PHOTOS: KEITH FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM



hit the door dead centre, which lessened the damage" (and probably the odds of him becoming a race car driver).

A Home in the Valley

When Duncan was 14, the Keith's made a life changing decision for their family. Cam had recently left home to play in Kenora and soon after, the Thunder Bay Kings wanted Duncan for tryouts. The goal was to find a community where the kids could live at home and still play rep hockey. David pursued a job in Calgary but when Summerland CIBC needed a bank manager, it caught his attention.

"If Brett Hull and Paul Kariya could play in Penticton, it must be a good hockey town," he reasoned. Discussions ensued and the relocation became reality, much to Duncan's chagrin. "I'm losing my outdoor rink," he complained. "I don't want to go."

But when the Keith's arrived, Duncan was awestruck by his first impression of the Okanagan. "We had flown from Winnipeg to Vancouver and rented a car to drive," says Duncan. "I remember coming off the Coquihalla and seeing the lake and thinking how beautiful it was. I specifically remember blue water—it looked like tropical water, it seemed like paradise to me."

The Okanagan was also becoming a hockey mecca. Retired professionals and current NHL stars were coming here in record numbers. Hockey schools and summer training facilities were plentiful in a region that boasted uncrowded beaches, challenging golf and sunny weather.

"One of the first highlights for me was being able to go to all the Penticton Panthers home games to watch junior hockey with all those great players," says Duncan. "I watched more hockey than ever before."

Duncan would soon have his own Panthers

The Dream

Hoisting the Stanley Cup—now that's what dreams are made of. The national anthem is just about to start and you're skating to the blue line in Boston Gardens. It's game seven of the Stanley Cup Playoffs...

"My Dad gave me the dreams to make it to the NHL," says Duncan Keith. "I remember being six or seven, or even younger, when he would sit on the edge of my bed for hours and tell me stories about me playing in the NHL. Together, we would picture me out on the ice, assisting, scoring and winning the Stanley Cup."

Any sports psychologist knows the power visualization can give an athlete. For Duncan, a passionate father and a supportive family have allowed the young defenceman to live out his dream.

"The biggest influencers in my life were my Mom and Dad," he says. "If it weren't for my Mom driving me to the 5 a.m. practices I wouldn't have had the opportunity to play as much as I did."

Jean worked most weekends so the Keith's had the extra money to keep three kids in hockey. Her hard work did not go unnoticed by her grateful son.

The family was close and hockey crazy. "Cam was my older brother and I looked up to him, in hockey and otherwise," says Duncan. "I tried to act like him, be like him, dress like him (and did, because I got most of his old clothes)." Both Cam and little sister Rebecca (a good hockey player in her own right) made a mark on brother Duncan.

"I spent all my



This page:
Duncan sharing the trophies with his fans in the hospital.

Sidebar:
Duncan was the last to leave the ice at the warm-up for the gold medal game.

Facing page:
Duncan and his sister Rebecca.

DUNCAN KEITH PHOTOS BY CAMILLIA COURTS

spare time at the outdoor rink. Those were some of the most fun days of my life.”

Duncan also delighted in his 2010 summer as he had the chance to show off the Cup in Chicago and at home in the Okanagan.

“Taking the Cup around to the restaurants and bars in Chicago was pretty surreal,” he says. “Pretty soon the entire establishment was filled with fans that grew to where the entire street was filled so the cops had to block it off. The parade was so amazing, I really wish all fans could experience it.”

Duncan’s grandfather and the rest of the Keith clan from Winnipeg joined local fans in Penticton when Duncan brought the Cup home. When asked which of the three Grandpa was most proud of — Norris, Olympic Gold or Stanley Cup — Grandpa chose the gold, as “not many get the chance to represented their country.” For Duncan, making a choice is tough.

“The Norris is an individual award so it is already special,” says Duncan. “Winning the gold medal was fantastic, but when you come together with a group of guys for eight or nine months, you have one goal — to win the Stanley Cup. I grew up dreaming about winning the Stanley Cup.”



PHOTO BY JOHN PAUL BYRNE AT 2010 WINTER OLYMPICS

“In order to be successful, you need to experience failure.”

number and he excelled under the watchful eye of coach Rob McLaughlin. Rob still tops the list of his favourite coaches along with American League coach Trent Yawney and Chicago’s Joe Quenneville.

His skating abilities always kept the coaches’ attention long enough to downplay his diminutive stature.

“He was only 135 pounds, five foot nine at 16 when the Kelowna Rockets came calling,” says David. Despite being cut from Team Pacific and the chance to compete at a world championship a year earlier, Duncan had caught the eye of scouts and he was asked to attend the Rockets’ rookie camp in Strathmore where he continued to impress.

He stayed with the Panthers for two years and when Michigan State offered a full ride scholarship that eclipsed the Rockets’ offer, he jumped at it. For a year-and-a-half, Duncan played the college league until December 2003 when he donned the WHL jersey.

“It was a very tough decision to leave Michigan State, but it was the right decision,” says Duncan. “The guys (Rockets) were great from day one and some of my best friends come from that team.”

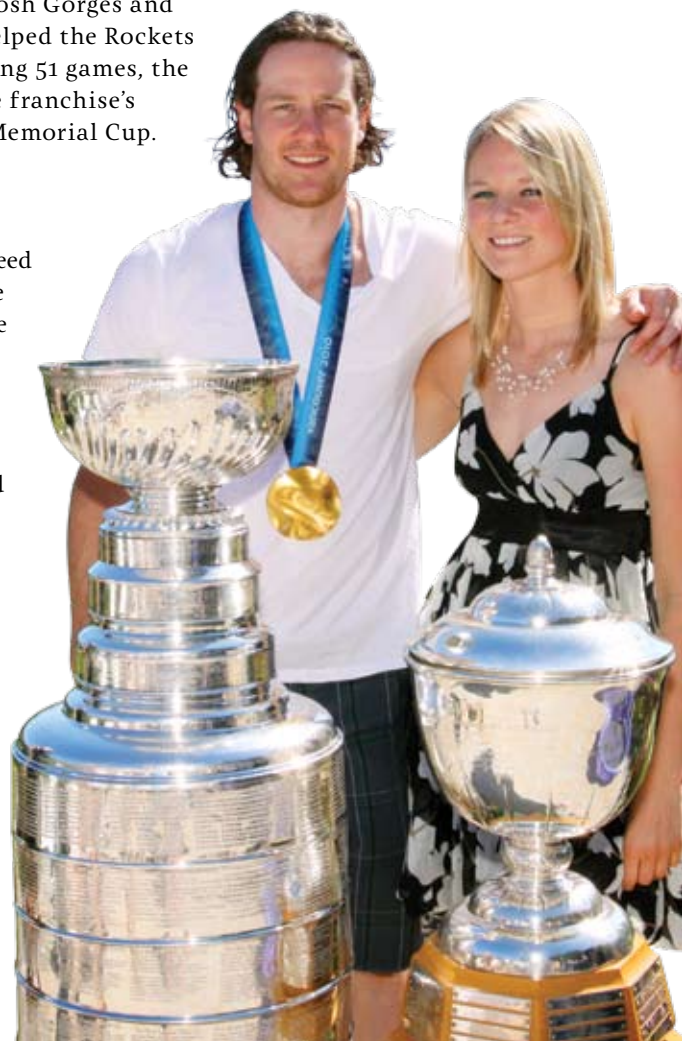
Together with Kelowna’s Josh Gorges and Sicamous’s Shea Weber, he helped the Rockets to their best-ever year, winning 51 games, the league championship and the franchise’s first ever appearance in the Memorial Cup.

Tough Lessons

“In order to be successful, you need to experience failure.” These are the words David used to console his son when Duncan was dropped from rep teams like Team Pacific. The cuts seemed to motivate him even more because the young player would work harder in the off-season, at practice and in games.

Perhaps the hardest to swallow was the cut from the World Juniors roster (arguably, the biggest non-professional tournament on the planet) that baffles most Keith fans.

“I was excited to get picked at 18 to try out for the World Juniors and felt I deserved to make ▶





it," says Duncan. "The next year I didn't get to tryout."

The Team Canada coaching staff are probably still shaking their heads at his delirious successes of today but hockey is a tough game, physically and mentally. Nobody makes all the right moves all the time.

David remembers that his son didn't need a lot of consoling. "Dunc rationalized that he probably wasn't good enough at the time, so instead of fretting over it he just continued to work harder, to get better when the next opportunity came around."

Big Payoff

The cherished red and white jersey came in 2008. At his first World Championship, Canada took a silver medal, losing to Team Russia in the final. Two years later, he'd better his two assists to six and be an instrumental player helping Canada capture gold at the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Duncan continues to be a hard worker. At press time, he is leading the league in total minutes played, averaging 32 minutes a game with the Chicago Blackhawks and trailing only Sydney Crosby in the all-star voting.

And there's off-ice success as well with the endorsements you'd expect. Being an ex-banker, David especially likes the TV ads for Harris Bank where all the tellers start jumping over their counters (boards) only to be replaced by new tellers jumping back in. "Line change," is all they say to a surprised Duncan Keith.

Duncan is also featured in a video game commercial where he interacts with computer-animated teammates that, for some strange reason are not able to get open, so Keith decides to take the end-to-end rush himself—something Penticton and Kelowna fans were privileged to see quite often. It ends with him jumping over a defender, threading the puck between his legs and deking the goalie before sliding a backhand in

for a decidedly Bobby Orr/Larry Robinson/Paul Coffey style goal.

"I grew up dreaming about the NHL and being on hockey cards," says Duncan. "I have to admit it is pretty cool to be on the EA Sports commercial. I get buddies texting me saying they just saw it."

Along with many Okanagan hockey fans, his Dad wonders why the great defensemen of today don't complete the end-to-end rush of yesteryear. "It seems the coaches all want conservative defensemen these days," he says. "The simple answer is to have a forward curl back and cover for the rushing d-man and we would have a more exciting game."

Back in the Okanagan, David and Jean are getting ready to drive to Chicago for a Christmas with the entire family. "We'll see five home games," says David. His son is very busy this year, largely due to the last year's unprecedented success and the demands on his time from eager fans, friends and family.

"I love the game of hockey," says David, "and I always told my children I would give them the opportunity to play as long as they wanted to."

Here in the hockey-crazy Okanagan, we're sure glad he did.

Visit OkanaganLife.com to comment and/or sign a Best Hockey Wishes Card for a true Okanagan hockey hero. **OL**

Above clockwise:

Duncan sharing the joy with his little fans at Duncan Keith Day in Penticton.
Duncan celebrates Canada's overtime victory in the gold medal game at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics.

PHOTOS BY JOHN PAUL BYRNE



Hockey and Health

Mike's Story

by Mike Ertel, MD

Pay attention to the signs

My last memory of “Big Mike” (six foot three, 265 lbs) was of him being wheeled out of the hockey rink in Las Vegas on a gurney flashing the “thumbs up” sign to both teams as the paramedics took him to the local emergency. Mike, age 40, died later that day.

I still get emotional thinking about it and I’m not totally sure why. I’m not a stranger to death—I’ve been an emergency department physician for 18 years so I’ve seen more than my fair share, but this was different. I still think about it constantly.

What I do know is that Mike looked well when he left the arena—so much so that when the fire department and ambulance arrived, there was absolutely no sense of urgency to get him to the ER, although I told them that I was quite worried. Here’s why.

When our two teams lined up at the beginning of the second period of the tournament finals, one of the opposing players mentioned that they had a guy on their bench who was acting a bit “out of it.” My teammate asked a few more questions and was worried enough to get me involved.

When another teammate, Scott Wood (a nurse), saw Mike we were immediately concerned. He looked pale and sweaty, and his speech was slow and weak. He felt nauseated but didn’t vomit. He’d played a hard first period but denied any chest pain until he sat on the bench between periods, and he said the pain was not severe. Mike had no cardiac history and had never smoked. This was the fourth game in three days for all of us at the tournament, where we play all day and stay up all

night—not exactly heart healthy.

We laid Mike on the ground and gave him a baby aspirin to chew. He improved over the next 10 minutes and by the time the emergency services arrived, Mike looked well. He apologized for “holding the game up,” said goodbye to his teammates and flashed that thumbs up. I shook his hand and wished him good luck—I was very concerned that his pain was cardiac in nature, but I never thought that he would be dead in 12 hours, leaving behind a wife and baby girl.

I’d never been at a hockey tournament in all my years where someone died on the ice, but two days before Big Mike’s death, a 45-year-old man died at centre ice in the same tournament with his wife watching from the stands. It was a very, very quiet plane ride home for our team and a brutal reminder of our mortality.

According to the *Hockey Heart Study* published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (Feb. 2002), more than 500,000 men and over 70,000 women (the latter number growing rapidly) play recreational hockey. I’ve played for many years in a mens’ noon hour league and many of us arrive at 11:50, hurriedly throw on our equipment and bound on to the ice without a warm up. We play hard for an hour, then rush back to work. Also not exactly heart smart.

No wonder stories like Big Mike’s are becoming increasingly common. So for all you hockey players who love the game and don’t have time to take care of yourselves (present company included), here are some warning signs to heed:

1. Pain or pressure in the chest that is worse with exertion. We get especially concerned if there is radiation to either or both arms, and if the pain radiates to the jaw and/or teeth.
2. Upper abdominal pain and nausea and/or vomiting brought on by exertion—surprising as this may seem, this can be cardiac in nature.
3. Decreased energy levels and fatigue out of proportion to what you would expect with activity that you’ve done all your life. Many cases of “sudden unexplained death” have been preceded by the patient simply feeling a bit fatigued a day or two prior.
4. Pay attention to shortness of breath out of proportion to what you would expect. Listen to the “little guy” on your shoulder—he’s usually very wise.
5. And finally, if you smoke—think again about quitting, and don’t stop thinking about it until you’re successful. We as physicians can help, and there are few things in medicine that make me happier than hearing about a patient who has been able to quit smoking!

If you’re a hockey player or any athlete and you experience these symptoms, no matter how subtle, visit your family physician or emergency department. I understand that none of us has the time to sit for hours upon end to get “checked out,” but the alternative is unthinkable.

I’m glad I’ve had this opportunity to tell Big Mike’s story. I’ll never forget him, I wish I could have done more, and I hope this little bit of medical advice will prevent some similar stories. [OL](#)



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Wine country blends *with* *the* times



*Sobering new rules
challenge wine tourism*

by Karin Wilson

On a snowy winter morning, a small stream of luscious deep red wine flows into Jim Perwal's glass as he stands at the bar. Peering out the expansive window overlooking Okanagan Lake, he and his wife Sylvie marvel at how the grey clouds have parted to reveal a shimmering oval sphere of light smack in the middle of the water.

They won't forget this day. It's their 25th wedding anniversary and they're celebrating with a trip through four Okanagan wineries. Quails' Gate is their first stop, and the Old Vines Foch slips down with ease despite the early hour.

The couple travel here regularly from their home in Grand Forks, but this is the first time they've taken in arguably the region's most popular pastime—wine touring. Plans for their silver anniversary

took place after the provincial government instituted its new drinking penalties and it certainly gave them pause.

"I was kind of worried about it, so we picked a wine tour company to take us around," Jim says.


"Normally we would have driven ourselves and I wouldn't have had anything to drink. I can have half a glass of wine and I know I'm done," Sylvie laughs. "So we went with the tour. We both wanted to enjoy this."

It's the kind of situation that means business is ramping up during the usual slow season for Patti Ogden-Grady, president of Okanagan Wine Country Tours. "Every year we're busier in the slow season, but this new law has changed things. People don't want to drive."

Jim, who drives for a living, says he's already seeing improvements on the road.

"The drunk drivers on the road have really declined since this went in. I know people are saying government should take another look at the legislation, but I say don't do that. It's working."

That's especially good news in areas where tastings can be had a hop, skip and jump from each other. In Naramata, West Kelowna and the Golden Mile in Oliver, there are 10-kilometre stretches of road dotted with wineries. A sip ►



“I know people are saying government should take another look at the legislation, but I say don’t do that. It’s working.”



here, a sip there and before you know it even someone with a larger frame could find themselves in trouble.

The laws around tastings limit wineries to serving no more than one ounce, but rumours circulate that some are more, shall we say “generous” with their samples, and that only compounds things. And while there are spittoons on every bar, North Americans are notoriously averse to using them. Leave that to the professionals.

“I was looking at the basin — and I’m not sure I’d even know how to do that,” laughs Sylvie.

The change in the law is doing more than altering who is on the roads. It’s also altering people’s purchasing habits — even in a higher-end restaurant like Hanna’s Lounge and Grill where having an extensive wine cellar makes up part of the cache.

“Over all in the dining room most liquor sales are down 10 per cent, but wine sales are down 40 per cent,” says general manager Andrew Neville, noting even their usually successful two-for-one dining program flopped. “What we’re seeing is people are having a glass instead of a half-litre or a half-litre instead of ordering a bottle. Basically what we’re seeing is the more responsible drinkers cutting back. In the pub (Rose’s) downstairs, wine isn’t down as much.”

The trickledown effect is obvious — when Andrew shows up for work in the morning the wineries that do direct delivery know to leave only half as many crates. The call for orders simply isn’t there.

Whether in the tasting room or the dining room, the challenge now is how to bring those sales up — and restore consumer confidence in a region that has spent more than two decades establishing itself as a focal point for wine tourism.

Some worry that they won’t really know what hit them until May with the arrival of the Spring Wine Festival. There are already ominous signs. At Discover Wines in Kelowna, home to more than 500 VQA wines, owner Tracy Gray says she’s received a few emails from tourists saying they’re making other plans.

“I’ve had a few emails from people from out of province that I’ve passed

Sylvie and Jim Perwal chose to take a tour rather than drive themselves on their 25th wedding anniversary wine tasting trip.

PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS FARROW

on to people in the industry. They say they're not coming here next year and they're going to do their wine touring somewhere else. They say it's too expensive in BC and the rules are making it too difficult so they're going to Washington and Oregon this year. I think this could actually be hard on tourism."

Tracy says it's all a bit difficult in a province that already has a reputation for having the strictest liquor laws in the country. It was only with Expo '86 that pubs and bars opened on Sundays, and even today wine and beer still can't be purchased in grocery stores.

The result is you can almost hear the crystal shatter at the mention of even tougher laws. Many winery business insiders have little appetite for BC following suit with other countries like Germany (.03 if in an accident) or Norway, Poland and Sweden (.02). Wine growing countries like France and Italy already have a .05 limit.

"The more restrictive this province becomes, the more it will impact tourism," she says. "My question is: is this law really targeting the right people?"

And that's a fair question. As it stands, any adult who weighs less than 130-pounds is likely to land in the warning range with only one drink. That means zero tolerance for many women, very few men. And yet ICBC stats show males account for 77 per cent of all impaired drivers. And drivers between the ages of 16 and 25 make up the highest number of impaired drivers, yet the current rules are tied to time-on-the-road, not age.

The other issue for those in the wine business is countering both the responsibility and anxiety factors. Heading into the recent Christmas season, Tracy says sales were up overall, but she did witness a drop in the number of bottles ordered for business receptions. That sent a signal that few businesses were offering taxi rides home from parties — a legal bell weather if there ever was one. Meanwhile a spike in the handy single-serving breathalyser made it the stocking stuffer of the season. Nancy Holmes, who lost both her aunt and uncle to a drunk driver, picked up a handful for her sons who are all in their 20s.

"I know for me, I'm not drinking when I'm out any more. Every Tuesday night I used to go to the bar for a trivia night and have a beer or two. Now I have club soda and OJ, I just stopped drinking all together. I'm not a very big person and my car is my life." ▶

Restrictions in wine country

If you're planning on touring through any of the major wine regions in North America, you might want to check out the rules and regulations. Here's a glimpse of where things stand.

Drinking Driving Laws	British Columbia		Ontario		Oregon	Washington	California
Legal Limits	Warning .05–.08	Failure Over .08	Warning .05–.08	Failure Over .08	Over .08	Over .08	Over .08
Penalties 1 st infraction	3-day suspension	90-day suspension	3-day suspension	90-day suspension	Fines range from \$1,000–\$2,000 plus possible prison	Suspensions range from 90 days to 4 years	4–6 month license suspension + fines up to \$1,300
2 nd infraction	7-day suspension		7-day suspension				
Young Drivers	Zero tolerance for those holding N & Z licenses		Zero tolerance under age 21; up to 30-day license suspension		Zero tolerance up to age 21; up to 1-year suspension	.02 limit for under age 21	.01 limit for under age 21

Tasters at Discover Wines in Kelowna are typical Okanagan wine tourists who prefer not to spit. Server Renate Lutz is careful with portion control, but tasters have to take responsibility for accumulated blood alcohol levels.

Of course life looks a whole lot different in urban areas where people can walk from bar to restaurant to nightclub and then grab a cab. In Vancouver, 24-hour transportation is virtually instant and hotels like the chic Moda Hotel near the Orpheum fired off a “Take the Elevator Home” promotion acknowledging that some patrons at its Uva Wine Bar may want to simply “tumble or stumble” into a room after drinking a \$108 bottle of Osoyoos Le Grand rather than risking the road.

Fortunately for everyone there are rules on the books that restaurants have seldom used, rules that now seem to have been designed with foresight. No wonder. Renowned BC vintner Harry McWatters was behind the seldom used regulation that allows diners to take home their open bottle of wine, provided the server re-corks it.

“We didn’t really romance that aspect of the law before, probably because it wasn’t an issue, and it’s amazing how many people don’t know about this,” Andrew says. “We took the wording right from the Liquor Control Board handbook and included it in our print advertising. And we’ve put it on our menus too. We’ve even bought wine bags so people have proper bags so they can take their wine home, rather than using a brown paper bag.”

Tourists can expect to hear this conversation more often as restaurateurs grapple with their new world. Up the road at the Sunset Organic Bistro at Summerhill

Pyramid Winery, a light lunch came with an offer to buy a bottle of wine at the same price as in the winery. Simply cork the remainder and stay safe on the road.

So far, the idea hasn’t quite caught on, but Hanna’s owner Rose Sexsmith says the quickly imposed new regulations caught many off guard and it will require change — whether education on the part of consumers or improvements to transportation options in less urban areas.

“What I keep telling myself is ‘crisis or opportunity’ and what I hope to see happen is we are given options on how people are going to go out and then get home safe and sound.”

Back in West Kelowna, Old Vines Restaurant at Quails’ Gate has launched a new shuttle service that picks guests up from their home and drives them back. It all comes neatly packaged with the fee ending up on ▶



PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS FARROW



“Renowned BC vintner Harry McWatters was behind the seldom used regulation that allows diners to take home their open bottle of wine, provided the server re-corks it.”

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“We really want our guests to feel at ease and know they can have a couple of glasses of wine and not worry about it”

your restaurant bill. By working in partnership with an already existing touring company, they were able to avoid the issue of having to obtain a license—a challenging endeavour as the rules stand right now.

“We really want our guests to feel at ease and know they can have a couple of glasses of wine and not worry about it,” says Kristin Peturson-Laprise.

Other wineries are coping with the new rules in a different way. At Little Straw, a small boutique winery a few kilometres away, Tina Slamka says their restaurant always maintains a two-glass limit for all guests. And at the tasting bar, the provincial regulations are now prominently posted.

“We’re always very conscious of drinking and driving,” says Tina, who works the winery and vineyard along with other family members ranging in age from 14 to 21.

“I think we need to set an example with our kids, so we set that bar pretty high.”

At Quails’ Gate, server Peter Stefan is polishing up some glasses



Above left: Carefully measured one-ounce wine taste. **Above:** Wine shop accessories now include mini breathalizers.

for the next group of visitors. He says the youngsters have it right. The responsible ones are taking the new laws in stride — no doubt because they started their driving career with a hefty dose of zero tolerance. And he believes the older crowd is taking this to heart. When he gets together with his eight or so wine club buddies, they used to open up five bottles. Now they're down to four.

"I even picked up some of those self-test breathalysers and we all tried it out. Everyone was fine. We thought we would be, but it was good to know for sure. It's more the uncertainty."

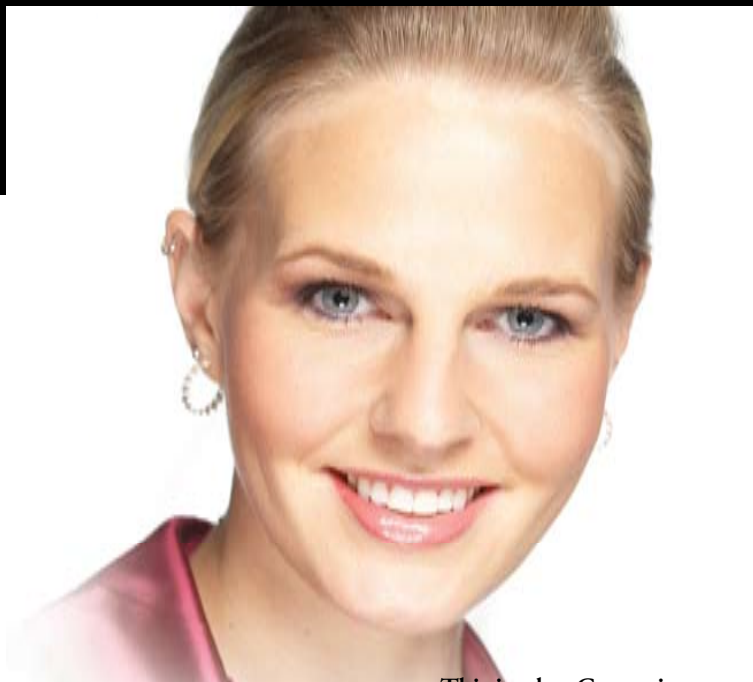
Peter's hope is that this most recent change will serve to bring more wine lovers to the understanding that appreciation is more about taste and experiencing something unique than it is about consuming.

As British Columbians get used to the new laws, the question remains whether this particular ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. *OL*



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Organic spirit

Natural design fits natural style of Wilden's Clear Pond neighbourhood

■ A pleasing combination of timber, stone and shingle produces marked curb appeal in a dwelling that sits comfortably in a neighbourhood with strong natural values. The show-stopper entrance highlights a wooden door that appears to float in the full window wall. Shaded by heavy timber beams, the outdoor feature wall seamlessly flows into the foyer where the timber theme is echoed in the unique stairway design. The open concept plan of this 3,943 sq. ft. home with full basement by award-winning builder AuthenTech Homes is ideally suited to easy living and entertaining both indoors and out. Nine-foot ceilings, a 12-foot vault, incorporating the soaring geometric roofline over the great room, and an abundance of natural light create a strong impression of space. Hand scraped hardwood flooring unifies the main level living space. The gourmet kitchen, finished with dark stained

by Laurie Carter



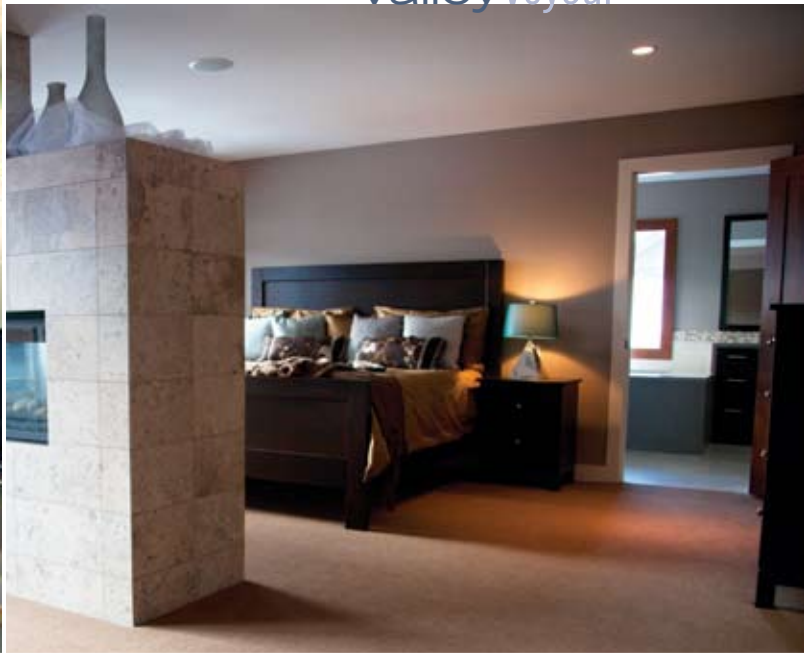
1. Main floor plan 1462 sq. ft.



2. Upper level floor plan 1275 sq. ft.

valleyvoyeur





cabinets, concrete countertops, a six-burner gas range and veggie prep sink in the island appeals to serious cooks and invites casual gathering. A soaring fireplace with lighted art nooks anchors the seating area while skylights and window walls give the dining nook a greenhouse feel and meld indoor and outdoor spaces. The stamped concrete patio features a covered outdoor kitchen and firepit.

Upper and main levels retain a sense of unity through the open stairwell and hallway overlooking the great room. Taking up the entire front of the house, the master suite dominates the three-bedroom layout. A two-sided fireplace block defines a separate sitting room, which opens onto a private deck for casual morning coffee. The spacious ensuite continues the home's modern lines with sleek cabinetry and an enclosed soaker tub cube. The home's partial walk-out basement accommodates two more bedrooms. Climate control includes environmentally responsible geothermal heating and cooling. **OL**



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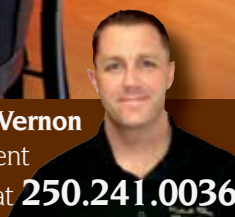
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Naramata Bench

by Michael Botner

Glacial remains and long hours of summer sunshine make this bucolic strip of land on the east side of Okanagan Lake wine heaven

■ The slice of land on the southeastern flank of Okanagan Lake known as the Naramata Bench boasts BC's densest concentration of wineries. Twenty-five lie along what must be the Okanagan's best travelled dead-end.

Naramata Road winds lazily from Penticton to the southern boundary of Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park, a distance of less than 15 kilometres. It affords ever-changing vistas of the undulating landscape along the narrow strip between the Kettle Valley Railway trail on the higher elevations and rugged cliffs along the lake.

But this route offers more than aesthetic appeal. Grape growers especially appreciate the western exposure that allows vines to capture every drop of sunlight from mid-morn-

ing to nightfall. "There is a constant breeze which heats in winter and cools in summer. It means less winter damage, and less bunch rot and mould during the growing season," says Gary Reynolds of Lake Breeze Vineyards, describing the lake effect.

Tim Watts, a geologist who has turned to grape growing with Kettle Valley Winery talks about soil structure. "Bedrock above Naramata Road is the oldest in Western Canada, dating back two billion years," he says.

He goes on to explain that a geological fault runs from Prince George to Washington beneath the Okanagan Valley. This explains volcanic activity in this area 60 million years ago. At the time, the soil above what is now Naramata Road collapsed into

the lake, leaving bedrock exposed. Later, glaciers left well sorted lake and stream bed sediment, including sand, silt, clay and ribbons of gravel, below the road and glacial till above.

Luke Smith of Howling Bluff Estate Wines refers to the silty mixture that prevails on his lower bench vineyard as "rip-rap, or material used to protect shorelines, but without rocks."

Aiming high is the way forward, according to Smith. He stresses the need to focus on varieties that grow well consistently.

"Malbec and Merlot are fantastic," he says, "but nothing can stop Pinot Noir." Not surprisingly, Howling Bluff's Pinot Noir is recognized as one of Canada's best. ►

highspirits

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D'ANGELO 2007 TEMPRANILLO

Penticton, Naramata Bench

★★★★ \$18

Distinguished red grape of Rioja fame, this Tempranillo keeps the faith with developed aromas of tobacco, cocoa and prune, and a smooth, richly-textured palate evoking black fruit, coffee and dark chocolate backed by supple tannins. Partners roast lamb or pork.



KETTLE VALLEY 2007 MALBEC

Naramata, Trovao and King Drive Vineyards

★★★★1/2 \$35

Inky red with bold personality displays pungent aromas of game, damp leaves and spicy black fruit. Rich, fleshy palate features cassis, blackcurrant, coffee and sweet, spicy oak. Refreshing acidity and fine tannins. Prefers red meat and game dishes.



THERAPY 2008 CHARDONNAY

Okanagan Valley, Naramata

★★★★ \$21.99

Classic Burgundy style Chardonnay emphasizes elegance and complexity. It offers melon, hazelnut, toast and vanilla on the nose, and a rich, ripe palate suggesting pineapple, nuts and vanilla with a hint of crisp green apple. Enjoy with grilled salmon.



HILLSIDE ESTATE 2009 VIOGNIER

Penticton, Naramata Bench

★★★★ \$24.99

Cool climate Viognier displays captivating fragrances of orange blossom, peach and mineral, and an intriguing palate featuring juicy peach, anise and creamy oak refreshed by mouth-watering acidity. Delicious with fruits de mer and curried pork or beef.



NICHOL 2008 9 MILE RED

Naramata, Village Grown

★★★★1/2 \$26.90

Producer of top Syrah has introduced a new red, a fun, friendly, tasty blend of St. Laurent and Pinot Noir. It exudes spicy plum and black cherry fruit with notes of earth, tomato puree and sweet oak. Perfect with grilled sausages and beef as well as Indian cuisine.



TOWNSHIP 7 2008 MERLOT CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Okanagan Valley, Penticton

★★★★ \$19.99

Ultra describes the lush, ripe fruit, smooth texture and polished style of this approachable blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. The flavours are reminiscent of holiday fruit and nut cake laced with rum and cinnamon. Partners roast turkey, duck or beef.



LAKE BREEZE 2008 SEVEN POPLARS PINOT NOIR

Okanagan Valley, Naramata

★★★★1/2 \$25

Superbly-crafted Pinot Noir combines intoxicating nose, plush fruit, sweet oak and ripe tannins. It oozes supple black cherry and blackcurrant fruit, nuances of liquorice, earth, tomato puree, toasty oak and vanilla. Serve with roast game or beef with mushrooms.



POPLAR GROVE 2009 PINOT GRIS

Okanagan Valley, Penticton

★★★★ \$20

Stunning Pinot Gris exhibits lovely peach-apricot colour, pungent aromas suggesting ripe peach and tropical fruit with a whiff of smoke, and a rich, juicy, long-lasting palate cleansed by crisp acidity. It partners roast pork and poultry or creamy fish dishes.



VAN WESTEN 2007 VOLUPTUOUS

Naramata, Boothe Road Vineyard

★★★★1/2 \$29.90

Unless rare beef, game or strong cheese is on the menu, cellaring is advised for this muscular blend of 2/3 Merlot, 1/3 Cabernet Franc. It delivers a potent nose and brooding palate revealing richly-concentrated plum, black cherry, dark chocolate and orange peel.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BOTNER

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PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD

Where's the fire

Mixing gas, grease, flames and fans inside a public building sounds like a recipe for disaster. Keeping workers and the public safe is Phil Ackland's profession, and his passion

■ Phil Ackland's summer job before his last year of high school paid a whopping \$2 an hour—a small fortune in 1966. There was a reason cleaning exhaust systems in restaurant kitchens paid so well. "It was filthy, disgusting work," he says. "I quite enjoyed it."

A few years later he decided to branch out on his own. Not wanting to compete with his former employer, Phil left Seattle for Vancouver. His business grew quickly, and he began selling franchises. But by the late 1980s what he'd seen along the way had set him on a different path.

Most commercial kitchens produce huge volumes of grease-laden air. The hoods over cooking appliances are designed to collect this hot, greasy air and suck it into the duct work, which may run great distances through the interior of the building. Most of the grease is captured in special filters that fit tightly between the hood and the rest of the exhaust system. The remainder heads for

the outdoors, but some condenses within the ducts along the way.

Controlled fire is a natural presence while cooking, but with gas, hot grease and open flame, there's always the potential for something to go wrong. That's when the kitchen hood's built in safety features activate. Typically, when excess heat releases a fusible link the gas shuts off; the fan stops, preventing flames from being sucked further into the building; dampers close off the duct work, which is airtight so even if flames did get in there's no oxygen supply; and spray nozzles in the hood release chemicals to douse the fire. Although the kitchen is left in a mess, disaster has been averted.

But some kitchens are literally playing with fire. When it comes to contraventions of fire codes and common sense, Phil has seen it all: duct work that's been modified, allowing grease to pool (or escape into building cavities) and oxygen to enter; flammable con-

struction materials a mere hand's breadth from high-heat appliances; grease-choked filters pushed aside to allow air—and flames—better access into the duct work; "just cleaned" exhaust systems with clogged nozzles and grease-blocked safety doors; fusible links disabled through intention or neglect.

Phil figured he could help by giving fire department inspectors a more thorough understanding of how these systems were designed to work, so he started offering short information sessions. Before long he was invited to a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) meeting, then asked to sit on the committee for NFPA 96, the standard for commercial kitchens.

In 1989 he headed to his first session in Washington, DC, with more than 40 proposed changes to the standard. ("I was totally naïve," he recalls; his list made up nearly half the recommendations from all of North America.) Several of his ideas were adopted. After that ►



Head to home office. Check email and Google feed. Tackle revisions to current technical manuals, then call lawyer in eastern Canada to discuss draft of report for upcoming insurance case.



Breakfast with wife Therese. Plan the day over eggs and tea. Discuss revisions still required for manuals; assess timeline and consider delaying republication.



Check email. New information related to insurance case has arrived. Read depositions; study reports and photos of fire. Note inconsistencies: fire suppression system failed to activate and appears to have been bypassed.



Inform lawyer about evidence that now indicates fire suppression system was disabled. Suggest consultation with expert on specific fire suppression system. Note deadline for report.



Lunch with Therese, then nap for about an hour. "I don't have the nervous energy to sustain the workload I used to." Check email; respond to request for training seminar in Fort Worth, Texas.



Contact experts on west coast; share fire scene photos via Internet, confirm fire suppression system was disabled. Add input to report. Walk to town with Therese for tea.

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meeting another member told him, "You've arrived with common sense."

He also tackled cleaning up his own industry. "There are a lot of fly-by-nights, even to this day," he says; anyone can set up a business.

In the early 1990s, Phil and his wife Therese cracked the phone directories at the public library, compiled a list of exhaust cleaning companies, invited them to join an association and developed criteria for certification. "The purpose of certification was to try to provide the restaurant owner, the fire community and the exhaust cleaner with a base level—a standard of care."

Phil sold his business in 1993. "By '96, I was bored," he says. "Then a friend said, 'Why don't you write a book about cleaning?'" Specialized manuals for inspectors, then fire investigators followed.

Phil's two-day inspectors' seminars had him flying all over the continent, which is exhausting, so he prefers his other line of work—investigating kitchen fires. Just before he sold his business, an insurance company

BACKGROUND: DUAL CITIZEN (CANADA/US). GREW UP IN WASHINGTON STATE; HAS CALLED SUMMERLAND HOME FOR 40 YEARS

INVENTOR, WRITER & EXPERT WITNESS: CREATED AND PATENTED SEVERAL PRODUCTS AND CONCEPTS. AUTHOR OF BOOKS ABOUT COMMERCIAL KITCHEN MAINTENANCE, INSPECTION AND POST-FIRE INVESTIGATION

HOBBIES: TRIED HIS HAND AT FICTION. ENJOYS GETTING OUT INTO THE BACKCOUNTRY, AND COOKING WITH WIFE, THERESE

KITCHEN STOVE: NATURAL GAS. OWNS A FIRE EXTINGUISHER; KNOWS HOW TO USE IT

called looking for a consultant.

"I got some education as far as fire investigation principles are concerned," he says. "It is the investigation that is the most fun. Playing Sherlock Holmes, figuring out what happened and why, and who's to blame."

His work with NFPA 96 goes on. Trends and technology in the industry change, but Phil is still making sure those responsible for safety in commercial kitchens don't lose sight of common sense. **OL**



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I quit Facebook! I like

Escape from cyber “friend”-ship

■ Quitting Facebook is probably the hardest thing I’ve done this month. Not that I’m finding life lonely without it, or miss being privy to the daily musings of far flung friends, family and people I ignored in elementary school. The hard part was convincing Facebook itself I wanted to go. I’ve never felt so cherished and popular on Facebook as I did when I quit the party.

First Facebook sulked, refusing to hand me my coat until I explained why I was leaving. Not providing a reason is not an option. When, after a minute of soul-searching, I ticked: “I don’t find Facebook useful” — a tight précis if ever there was one — Facebook pop-ups beseeched me to try other ways of improving my experience. Don’t go! Try this! Or this!

Committed, I press on with deactivation, only to be asked to remember my long forgotten password, then decipher those eerie words, scrawled by cyberghosts, to make sure I was a real live human, trying against all reason to quit the company of unseen online acquaintances.

Facebook, sensing the unbearable lonesomeness that would ensue, sent me emails exhorting me to come back — I could “reactivate” at any time. Curious, I tried logging on again and lo! There I was! All my photos and friends waiting for me, like I’d snuck away to have a good cry in the toilets only to slink back, my seat still warm, and no one aware I’d been gone.

I’m no Luddite. I make a living online; I tweet, I blog, I’m LinkedIn. But Facebook for a long time repelled me — too vacuous, too vain. Ultimately I was spurred to join when I figured out that my friends, my true friends, weren’t calling or emailing any more. No pictures of their kids at Halloween, birthdays slipping past unremarked. But, I realized, they were keeping in touch on Facebook and that prodded me online.

Soon though, I resented how much time I spent prowling around the lives of people I scarcely cared for and wondering if my life was being similarly snooped. If isola-

tion and nostalgia drove me onto Facebook, it also chased me off.

I tried to join in on the idle status updates, post occasional photos, but either I failed to get the gist of it or I friended the wrong people. I balked at posting anything truly banal, and my “friends” seemingly weren’t the kind of rabid responders ha-ha-ing or OMG-ing my every phrase. To post some truly heartfelt announcement — an accomplishment, the death of a family pet — and have no-one like/not like was worse than keeping silent. A distant relative was often the only person who “liked” what I was up to: when I started leading my life in ways that could earn her approval, I knew it was time to go.

These days I’m trying to surprise old friends with calls to their landlines — those few who still have them. I mail letters and postcards from my travels: an upsidedown iPad makes for an excellent lapdesk.

Naturally, I spent far too long agonizing over my final status update — even in my leave-taking, Facebook could sap every spare moment from my busy day.

Shelley Wood...is quitting Facebook in search of more authentic and tangible connections. To friend me in real life, I’m findable.


Or you can follow me on Twitter. **OL**



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