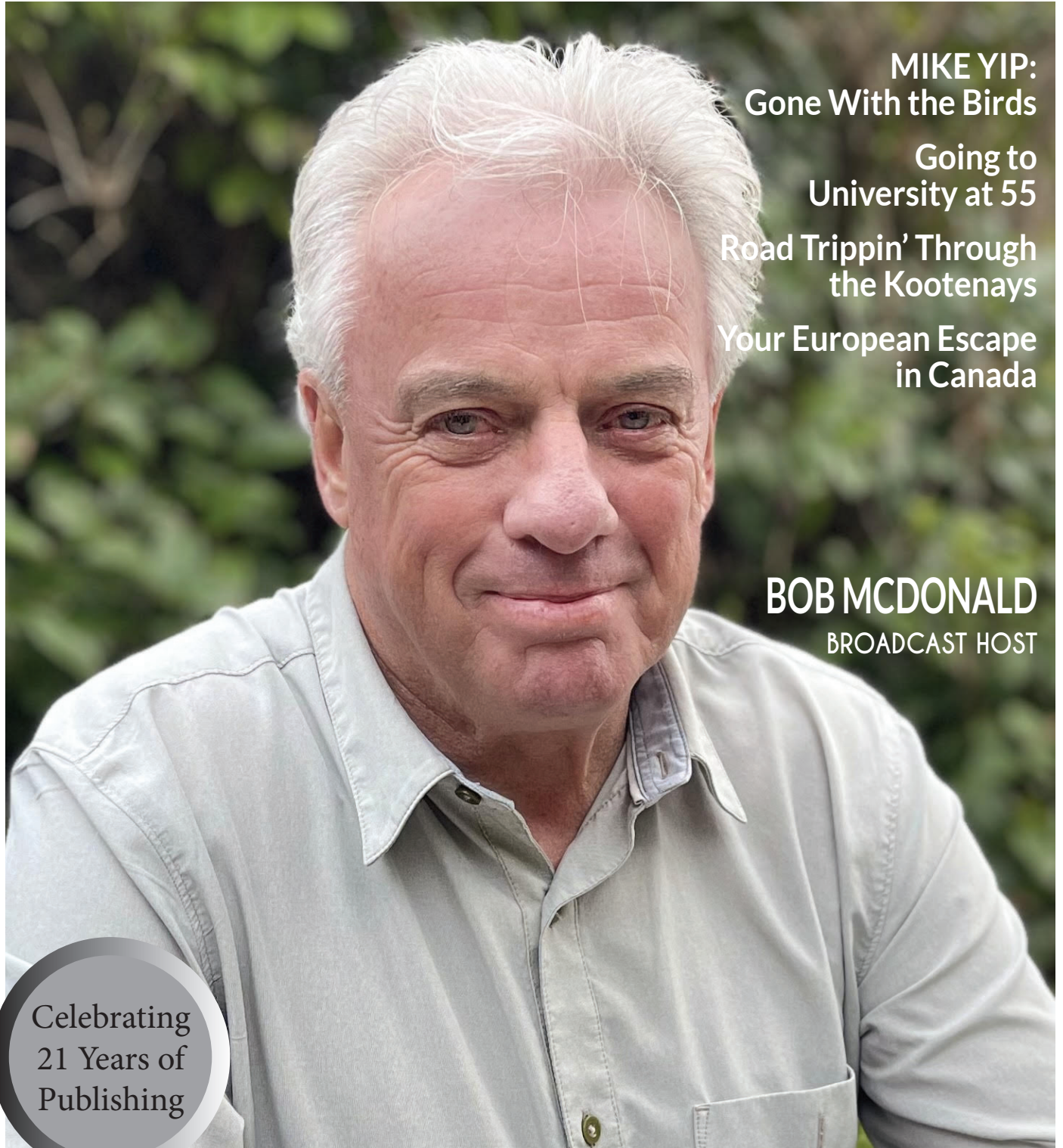


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55+ lifestyle magazine

MAR / APR 2025



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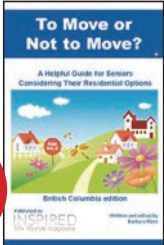
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Cover | Bob McDonald

Bob's new memoir *Just Say Yes* chronicles how his love of science and performing came together when he was chosen to host CBC Radio's *Quirks & Quarks* show, 32 years ago.

Photo: Jennifer Hartley

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True North, Strong and Free

THRIVE BEYOND 55

Finding Your New Passion

by BARBARA RISTO



Like David Axon says about starting his new hobby of photography, it just clicked.

That's the sensation you feel when something you're doing starts to feel pleasurable. Comfortable. Like you own it, and it owns you. It's a match.

How many times have you tried something new, unsure of yourself or how you'll react to it?

It's often a process of trial and error. Sometimes it fits; sometimes it doesn't. But oh, when it does, it can feel blissful.

Over the past few years, I've had to step into a number of new situations, explore options, and try new ways of doing things.

I've sometimes had to search deep to find who the real me is, to uncover what makes me happy, to determine what is a fit for me and what isn't.

Life can lull us into paths that, over time, become stagnant and boring, even though they were once fresh and exciting. Stepping into something new can feel scary. I've held my breath and taken the first step many times. Then the next, and the next.

I'm here to say that some of these adventures have led me into situations I'd never, in my wildest dreams, envisioned. But once I became accustomed to the changes, I started to like them—even to revel in them. I was reinventing my life, reinventing who I was, discovering things that had been unknown to me before.

Like Laurie Mueller points out in her column, a dream takes effort and sometimes even compromise. But to experience even a piece of it is better than letting it slip away untried.

There's usually an exit ramp if what you've chosen turns out to be something you absolutely abhor. Often, though, we pass up opportunities simply because we're uncomfortable taking that first step.

I still struggle to initiate some things. But experience has proven to me, time and again, that "different" is not always

bad. Sometimes, it's the best thing that could ever happen to you.

So, I'm going to heed some of the advice given by several of our writers in this issue and open myself even more to possibility.

Invention thrives on creativity and on people who are willing to try something new.

Verena Foxx mentions in her column across the page that age often allows us the space to try new things. When we aren't weighed down by starting or caring for a young family or trying to climb the ladder to success, we're more inclined to pursue some of the dreams and passions we passed up along the way.

There's no better time than right now to explore what makes you happy.

I love Bob McDonald's title for his latest memoir, *Just Say Yes!*

Saying "yes" opened some wonderful doors for him, and his message is that it can happen for anyone. Be willing to take a chance and see how it turns out. You might surprise yourself.

Mike Yip was comfortably enjoying his retirement when he decided to take up bird photography. Now, his hobby has turned into beautiful coffee-table books that are absolutely stunning. He tromps through miles of woodland and sea-shore to find subjects to photograph. His knowledge of birds and their habits has opened another door—as a speaker.

Who says you can't have it all? Who says you can't make a change in your 50s, 60s, 70s, or beyond? Who says you have to sit back and let everyone else have the fun?

I recently received a letter from a reader who is 88. She'd just read a couple of *INSPIRED* issues and was now sitting down to make her plans for 2025. Yay! I love to hear that the stories of people in this magazine inspire others to try new things. For me, that's really what it's all about.

This is the time to flourish—to take every opportunity and run with it. Learn a new language. Travel. Take up body-

building. Start a neighbourhood book club or walking group. Become an extra on a movie set. Learn to tango. Fall in love with someone, something—maybe even yourself!

A couple of years ago, I decided to build a cottage garden in my front yard. After years of wishing I had one, I wasn't going to wait any longer to enjoy the pleasure of sitting in my very own garden paradise. I've never regretted a moment of the strenuous activity that went into that project. It was a labour of love.

This spring, its third season, I'm going to sit down and watch the flowers grow and feel satisfied with my initiative. It couldn't feel sweeter. But it wouldn't have happened if I hadn't decided to say "yes."

When I launched this magazine back in 2004, I had no idea that 21 years later, I'd still be at it—and enjoying it just as much.

After the magazine, I created an annual lifestyle show. This year, we will be hosting our 19th event. [See back cover for details.]

In 2007, I published a book to help seniors and their families make housing decisions. It became a Canadian best-seller. This spring, it goes into its fourth printing, revised for 2025.

All these endeavours were steps into the unknown—trying something I'd never done before.

Sure, there have been challenges along the way. But the satisfaction that comes from creating something new out of nothing is a feeling like none other. You can almost hear that "click" as it all settles into place and you know you've done the right thing.

Be brave. Be creative. Take a chance and step out of your comfort zone. Discovery awaits you on the other side. |

For the Love of Music & Dance

When ageing is seen as a gift of time to explore new experiences, the freedom to pursue dreams is blown wide open. It is often when people take the time to engage in creativity and connection through music and dance.

Shelagh D., who had been singing for pleasure most of her adult life, decided to study the cello after retiring from her profession as a specialist speech-language pathologist in 2020. “I wanted to play music with others. It’s about careful listening and responding to each other through the music.”

“When you play music, you’re inside it,” she explains.

“The cello is arguably one of the hardest instruments to play,” she adds, five years into learning it. “I never had to read the bass clef,” says the soprano. “With the cello, you feel the vibrations of the music as you play.”

Clara Shandler, an accomplished cellist and president of the non-profit East Vancouver Community Music School (EVCMS), is also Shelagh’s teacher. She explains that EVCMS is for “anybody and everybody who loves music.”

There are no auditions—just interested students who study with teachers of nearly all orchestral instruments, plus the guitar.



Clara Shandler (left) and Shelagh on cello.
 Photo by Colin Davies

“Music brings people from all walks of life together. We make it fun. We are about nurturing that love of music.”

“Making music,” says Shelagh, “takes you right out of your ‘situations.’ It is calming and cathartic and has an intimate language. The experience recharges you.”

Adults new to music, Clara explains, can choose their own adventure and enjoy the journey rather than focus on a destination.

Ongoing scientific interest and peer-reviewed studies continue to explore the many positive effects of making, listening to, and dancing to music on the ageing brain and body.

Dancing is known to reduce stress, increase serotonin levels, and develop neural connections, specifically in areas related to executive functioning, long-term memory, and spatial recognition.

That is all in addition to the immediate benefit of socially connecting with others to have fun, as dancing usually happens in the company of others.

Vivian Lau, a line-dancing teacher in various Vancouver communities since 2009 and now a senior herself, says that while it is a good form of exercise that is not too strenuous, line-dancing is also known to improve balance while engaging the brain to memorise steps. “It can delay memory loss.”

Student Deborah B. says she did not want to continue her family’s tradition of being immobilised by arthritis.

The benefits of line-dancing include proprioception (the body’s ability to sense movement, action, and location), friendship, fitness, and improved memory.

“Fit seniors live longer, hurt less, and smile more,” says Deborah.

When she was looking for a way to keep moving and cope with the sadness she carries because of her husband’s

declining health, Diane K. started line-dancing.

“Now I even welcome the soreness I feel in my feet after practice,” she adds, smiling.

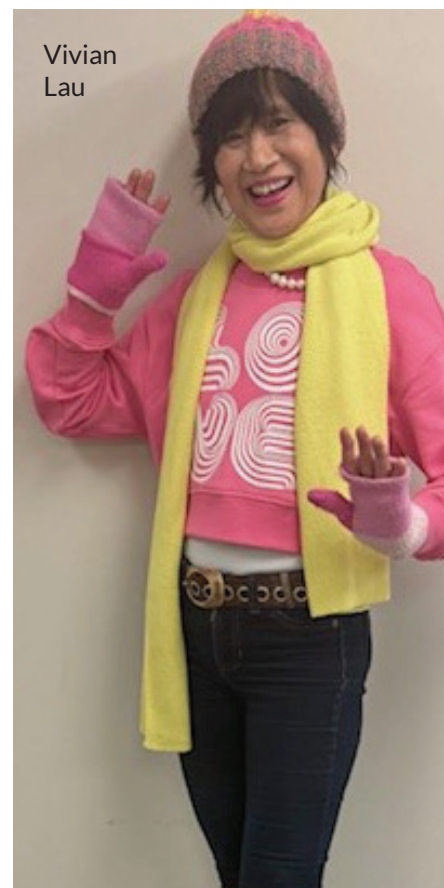
Scientific research has been studying the complex mental coordination that dance requires and its positive effects on memory and brain health.

Cultivating body-mind coordination is beneficial, especially as we age.

Rosemary C. line-dances for mental stimulation and for exercise that is less strenuous and less likely to cause injury than other options.

A July 2008 *Scientific American* article, “So You Think You Can Dance?”, states that “while music stimulates the brain’s reward centres, dance activates its sensory and motor circuits.”

“It’s wonderful to be learning new



Vivian
 Lau

things with other people,” says Paula A. “There is a sense of achievement.”

Social connection is as valuable as the learning.

Both musicians and dancers new to the experience agree that the further they progress, the more satisfying it becomes.

“It keeps you moving forward,” says Shelagh. |

BOB MCDONALD: “Just Say Yes”

by JOHN THOMSON

“I thought I was going to be an actor,” says broadcaster Bob McDonald, long-time host of CBC Radio’s science magazine *Quirks & Quarks*. As a promising college thespian, he could have gone far, but he felt uncomfortable with the auditioning process, so he gave acting a pass. “Now I’m on stages in front of audiences and performing, so it worked out,” he says, referring to his many public appearances. “That acting training helps when I give speeches.”

It’s a cute story, one of many ironies revealed in his latest book, *Just Say Yes*. The book shatters some myths. First, Bob is not a scientist, and he did not just

walk into the job. *Just Say Yes* covers his trajectory from a “half-educated, low-income kid” (his words) to an internationally respected commentator. It’s both a memoir and a call to action.

Bob McDonald was born in Wingham, Ontario, the youngest of three siblings in a working-class family. It was not a happy childhood. His alcoholic father had a Jekyll and Hyde personality—warm one minute, cold and critical the next—leaving Bob in an existential no man’s land. “It’s a fundamental sentiment I have struggled with all my life,” he says, “not feeling good enough to do what other people do.”

He admits he was not a good student. “I barely passed,” he says of his two years at York University. “My marks were always in the 50s. The only thing that kept me in university was acting. They told me I was pretty good at that.”

And even that didn’t last. When he left school in his second year, he worked for a sign company installing billboards, unsure of his calling or his future.

He was a science nut, though, a fan of John Glenn, Alan Shepard, and the moon landings, so when a girlfriend told him there was a vacancy for a presenter at the Ontario Science Centre, he jumped at the chance.

“It was the combination of theatre and science. It was perfect,” he says. “That was the big change for me, and I jumped at that opportunity even though I wasn’t qualified.”

Bob was hired on the spot, not for his scientific knowledge but for his enthusiasm. Hands-on demonstrations were in vogue at the time, and the Science Centre wanted performers.

“They said, ‘Be as crazy as you want,’ and they gave us all kinds of background material to study.”

Scientists at the Centre also gave the team little tutorials to help them out.

“We were not science specialists, but we were good at presenting. It was really learning on the fly.” Youthful enthusiasm carried the day.

“I thought I was pretty hot stuff because I was wearing a white lab coat and I was up on stage. I had to shake my head about that because I got tripped up a couple of times when I was answering questions afterwards from people who did know the science, and I would give the wrong answer. I’ve learned to say, ‘I don’t know. I’ll look it up.’ That’s why I’ve never called myself a scientist. I say I’ve learned a little bit about this, and I want to tell you what I see as a journalist.”

Besides sailing his boat and riding his motorcycle, playing the guitar is another activity that Bob McDonald enjoys.

Photo: Jennifer Hartley



Bob considers himself a translator of science, a link between science and the public. “I’m not handing out PhDs. I’m just trying to get people interested in science.”

He did well at the Science Centre. Various media were calling him up for his opinion. He accumulated contacts. But after six years as a presenter, he yearned to strike out on his own.

Armed with a contract to produce a radio series on oceans for CBC’s *Ideas*, Bob hopped on his motorcycle for Nova Scotia and the life of a freelancer.

“The whole world was before me. I was free,” he says. “It was just the most wide-open feeling of throwing yourself out there without a net. If it doesn’t work out, you can always find something else to do.”

The *Ideas* series led to other work: guest commentary for TV and radio, writing and presenting documentaries, and hosting the CBC children’s science show *Wonderstruck*. Then *Quirks & Quarks* called up.

“*Quirks* was a real change for me,” he says. “Up to that point, I always did my own stuff. I always did my own research and my own presenting. I was faced with subjects I was not familiar with. For example, I really have trouble with medicine. I would suddenly find myself trying to understand it. What the heck are we talking about here?” So, he developed his trademark delivery—making it simple for people to understand.

“If it got too hard, I would try to visualize it and make an analogy. For instance, we’re talking about how drugs work. You’ve got this protein and a cell that wants to fit in. Like a lock and a key, I’d say? Yeah, yeah, it’s like a lock and a key. I’m struggling to understand the science myself, so I screen it back to [the guests] and say, ‘Let’s see if I’ve got this right?’ It’s genuine. That’s me. On the spot, trying to understand where we are right now so we can move on to the next chapter in the story.”

Four presenters have hosted *Quirks & Quarks* since its inception in the 1970s, and Bob’s been with it the longest—an astonishing 32 years. Despite his success, he admits he’s experienced imposter syndrome from time to time, a carryover from his childhood. “When you have that feeling of not being good enough, you carry that with you,” he says.



Bob celebrates 32 years as host of the popular CBC Radio *Quirks and Quarks* science show. The show celebrates 50 years running in 2025.

Photo: Jennifer Hartley

Which brings us back to his book *Just Say Yes*. “It came about because people are always asking me, ‘What’s your background?’ and when I tell them I’m an uneducated construction worker, they go, ‘How come you sound so smart on the radio? What happened?’”

Bob left Toronto for Victoria in 2011 and has happily embraced the next chapter in his busy life. Contracted to *Quirks & Quarks* three days a week, his schedule leaves him free to pursue other endeavours.

He’s written seven books, two of them

on space, his lifelong obsession. “But I also play hard. I take my playtime very seriously.” That includes sailing his 41-foot ocean-going sloop, *Liberty*, or taking his 125-horsepower motorcycle on an extended road trip.

Now in his seventh decade, Bob shows no signs of slowing down. *Quirks & Quarks* will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025, and Bob intends to be there. “I’ll keep doing it until they tell me not to,” he says, embracing curiosity, learning about the world, and contributing to its understanding. |

INSPIRED PODCAST

Long-time broadcasters Michael Forbes and Lisa Marshall, known as “Forbes and Marshall,” now real estate agents, bring their signature banter to bear in their podcast collaboration with INSPIRED Magazine.

Check out this month’s interview with BOB MCDONALD at www.seniorlivingmag.com/podcast





Gone With the Birds

by MIKE YIP

In 2004 I was comfortably entrenched in my retirement life of golf, gardening, and relaxation when a series of events conspired to change my life forever.

It was a cold, crisp, and sunny February morning, and my golf game was cancelled because the course was frozen.

Normally I would just put on another pot of coffee and catch up on some emails or other computer activities. Instead, I decided to take a drive to enjoy the sparkling winter landscape.

It was a magical wonderland. The trees glistening like millions of diamonds from the morning sun, reflecting off the frost-encrusted branches. I didn't have a destination in mind and drove down a road I seldom used.

As I was passing some wetlands I was suddenly distracted by some movements between the willows and reeds. I stopped and watched. The birds looked a bit like Mallards, but there was something different – they had unusually large bills.

I was mesmerized and perplexed.

After a few minutes I drove home and returned with my Pentax Spotmatic camera and 70-215 mm Vivitar zoom lens. It was difficult to get a clear shot through the tangle of willows and reeds, but I figured I could get enough partials of the ducks for my friend at Ducks Unlimited to identify.

Unfortunately, a quick trip to Walmart's One-Hour photo service was a total disappointment. None of the photos turned out.

There were a few exposure problems, but most of the pictures were out of focus because of the reeds and weeds.

Undeterred, I trotted over to Chapters and bought *Sibley's Bird Guide* and was delighted to find pictures that matched my ducks – they were Northern Shovelers.

When I woke up the next morning, I didn't want breakfast. All I wanted to do was go out and look for birds. Right

in my backyard I discovered a host of new feathered creatures like nuthatches, kinglets and creepers that I had never paid attention to before.

Once again, I tried to photograph the birds but ended up with the same disappointing results. None of the pictures were clear. I was never close enough and knew I had to get closer to the birds or get a bigger lens.

London Drugs was very helpful and lent me a 400 mm lens. After a week of stalking birds and another half dozen rolls of film wasted, I was getting some better results, but most of the images were still unacceptable.

As my frustration increased, I decided to do a deep dive into the internet to see what other photographers were using.

When I emerged, two factors were clarified. First, many were still using film but there was a strong movement to digital that was instantly appealing. It was expensive but a no-brainer. The

emancipation from film would soon offset the cost of a digital camera and the software to process the images.

Second, everyone was using large 500 mm or 600 mm lenses.

The next week I was packing a Nikon D100 DSLR camera and a Sigma 300–800 mm zoom – the largest and newest lens on the market.

The results were instantaneous and amazing. I was soon capturing some of the best bird images on Vancouver Island and decided to use them to help educate the public.

I shared them with newspapers, bird websites, and anyone who was interested. I even started my own website and received compliments and requests for photos from around the world.

The interest in my photos inspired me to expand my range, and I was soon chasing birds south to Victoria, west to Tofino, and north to Campbell River.

By the end of the year I had accumulated a sizeable collection of images and decided that a book would be an excellent tool for bird education.

I actually received an offer from a publisher, but being independent and stubborn I decided to do it myself.

I agonized over the decision for weeks knowing it was an expensive gamble that could easily fail. I had already blown all my disposable savings on the new equipment, but still had a stash set aside for my daughter's university tuition. Should I or shouldn't I?

In a leap of faith I took the plunge, and in April 2005, 3,000 hardcover copies of *Vancouver Island Birds, Volume 1* landed on my doorstep.

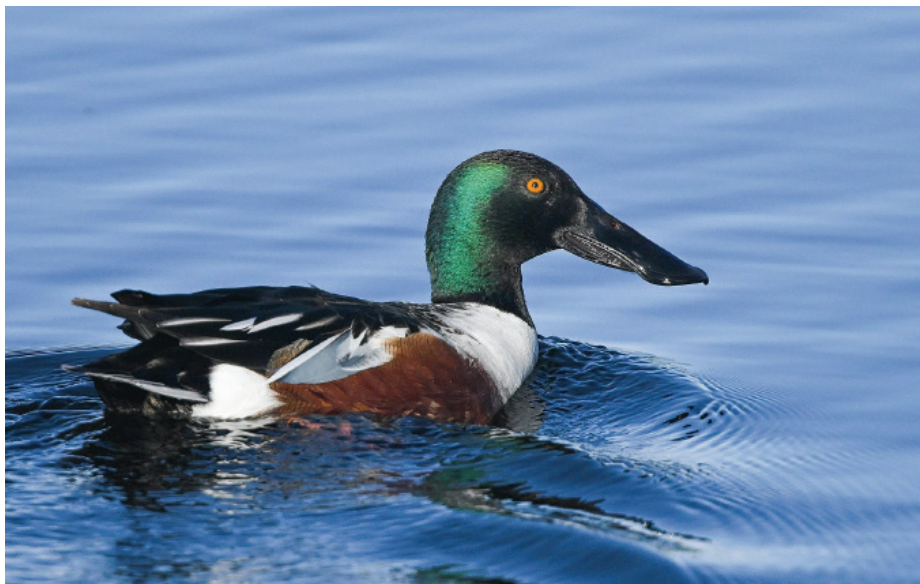
Fortunately, all the apprehension of failure was for naught. The book was an instant success. Local direct sales took off like wildfire, and the book was soon in demand at most Vancouver Island bookstores.

PG 6 | Mike Yip's most recent book *A Year of Eagles* offers stunning images and profiles the habitat and habits of this majestic bird

TOP RIGHT | Mike Yip ready for action

CENTRE RIGHT | Hummingbird babies cozy up just days before leaving the nest

BOTTOM RIGHT | Northern Shoveler, the bird that launched Mike Yip into his new hobby and passion





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Within a few months my daughter's tuition was restored.

But, success comes with a price, and I was soon in demand as a speaker. I was anxious and reluctant at first but realized that if I were serious about educating the public I would have to speak for the birds. Before long I was delivering PowerPoint presentations to clubs and organizations from Victoria to Cortes Island.

The next 20 years flew by like birds in migration, and I was literally "gone with the birds."

I was totally absorbed by the birds and constantly photographing, working on books, marketing, writing articles, and doing presentations.

In 2007 I was inspired by my photos of pelagic birds to produce *Vancouver Island Birds, Volume 2* and in 2010 the white ravens inspired *Vancouver Island Birds, Volume 3*.

I deviated slightly in 2011 to publish *Denman & Hornby NATURE* and in 2014 for *Vancouver Island Butterflies*.

Unfortunately, from 2015 on I was relegated to roadside and parking lot birding because of arthritic knees but still managed to continue presentations and publish *Beginner's Guide to Common Vancouver Island Birds* in 2020, and I just completed *A YEAR OF EAGLES* which I believe is my best work.

Looking back to my chance encounter with the Northern Shoveler ducks in 2004, I have no explanation for why they inspired the sudden change in my life. Previous to that, I had no interest in birds and didn't know anyone who was.

Perhaps we all have an innate connection with nature just waiting to be ignited by the right situation, or perhaps there is no explanation and it was just destiny.

Regardless of the cause, I am grateful for the Shovelers and wouldn't change a thing.

My interest in birds has given me direction and a real purpose in life. It has also provided substance for life-long enjoyment and learning and improved my skills as a photographer, presenter and publisher.

As I enter my 80th decade my interest and passion for birds continues to motivate me every day, and I look forward to the next birding adventure and possibly the next book to publish. |

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Learning Photography in your 60s

by DAVID AXON

It clicked!

One morning, at the age of 61, I woke up and decided to take up photography. It was as simple as that. I never had a hobby in my life, and being totally nontechnical I had a fear of all those switches and dials.

I did not regard myself as creative at all, and knew if I didn't start now I likely never would. Luckily, my wife had a digital camera that had sat in a cupboard for years, rarely used, with lenses and a tripod—all I needed to get going.

I plunged into my newfound craft with a passion—not knowing what the heck I was doing!

I immediately turned to that great online resource known as YouTube. I was amazed at how many channels there were, with advice on every conceivable aspect of photography.

This was both a blessing and a curse. Some said I should just practice on automatic mode (letting the camera make all the decisions) while others said the sooner I learned manual mode (me taking control of the settings) the better. What to do?

I bought an excellent beginners photography book which guided me in a logical manner, and whilst some of it was a challenge, by attempting the exercises I began to at least know what I didn't know! Plus, there were videos embedded that, by using my cell phone QR scanner, helped me learn in a manner that suited me best.

I knew I had a tendency to give up very quickly, or not start at all—this time would be different I told myself.

I allowed myself to take my time, to learn at the only pace I could (slowly!) and not stress too much over poor images. I knew I could be my own worst enemy and was determined not to give up.

Like any skill, the more you practice, the better you get. I went out as much as possible. Many, many photographs were out of focus or were over or under exposed. Gradually, my photographs began to actually resemble the scene I had in front of me. I tried my hand at every genre I could—street photography, landscape, nature.

I discovered an in-person beginners photography class and signed up. Here I met a great photography teacher, Ron Pogue, who was incredibly helpful, explained things in simple detail, for whom no question was stupid and, above all, was patient.

For someone lacking confidence this was ideal. I began to understand why my images were too dark or light, and why I was missing focus. This gave me a burst of confidence as I could then see progress.

I realised I had an unmet need to be creative and I had finally found a means of expression.

I literally saw the world through new eyes—the changing sky, the colours of nature, people walking by on the street. I noticed how watching movies and looking at art changed—I could see what the artist was attempting, looking at their compositions. The camera angles and colour schemes in movies fascinated me. It is no exaggeration to say I “woke up to life”.

I had always enjoyed walking. Now, my walks with a camera



ABOVE | David Axon checking his progress
Photo by Ron Pogue <https://ronpoguephotography.com>

PG 10 | Berries and Waves, two photos taken by David as he attempted to master the art of photography.

took on a whole new dimension. I get up before dawn to capture the sunrise. I go out in rain because I know there will be a different kind of image to be had, particularly in the city.

The camera I learned on was very old in photographic terms, but the Canon 350 D will always have a special place in my photographic life.

I quickly learnt that mirrorless cameras were now the norm—lighter, (which is a huge bonus) with better specifications.

After much research I bought a good beginner's camera, the Sony a6000. Photography can be expensive. However, there are scores of used lenses available online at much less cost than new ones, and older vintage lenses, too, which are even more affordable.

I have met some lovely people through this new hobby, from other newbies in the beginners' classes, to lovely chance encounters with the public, and other photographers. I have not only faced my fear of the technical aspects, but have been able to approach total strangers and ask if I can take a portrait pho-



tograph of them. One hairdresser came out of his barber's shop when he saw me taking photos outside and invited me into his totally unique barber shop!

A few months into my hobby I took another leap and decided to create a beginner's website. My intention was for other beginners to learn along with me. I used a web hosting company that made setting up a web site simple. Looking back, I wonder what on earth I was doing, but it is now a permanent record of my creative journey. I am glad I did it. It is www.battleswithbokeh.com

So where to from here? Well, as I age, I know I need to make the most of my time. I try to practice mindfulness in my life and will continue to explore how this inspires my photography.

I intend to get better at editing (a whole new world of technical challenges believe me!), to continue to look for more interesting compositions, and grow my technical skills, such as abstract photography.

I hope to do more classes and meet others in person. I will keep up the web site, but perhaps change the focus (no pun intended!) from being a site for beginners. Most important though, I aim to keep going and enjoy myself!

If you have contemplated taking up photography, I would encourage you to do so—it has the potential to create a whole new world! If you would like advice or support, I am available at battleswithbokeh@gmail.com |



Going to University at 55

by MARION LOUGHEED

August van Stralen never graduated from university. In 2024, at age 55, she decided it was time.

August lives in Princeton, BC, a town of 3000 people. As you might expect, there's no university. August wanted to pursue creative writing, so she had to look online. None of the Canadian schools offered exactly what she wanted — a program focused entirely on creative writing, with none of the mandatory electives of a regular undergraduate degree. At her age, she figured she didn't need to take Introduction to Chemistry.

With her wife's support, she found the perfect program at Falmouth University in Cornwall, England: Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing, fully online. The cost was a little scary, since she wouldn't be eligible for Canadian student loans, but the couple figured out how to swing it. The main problem? The United Kingdom is in a different time zone, eight hours ahead of BC. Since she works full time, the time difference made the summer information sessions hard to join. She did manage to attend a session during a holiday, however.

I spoke to her twice, once just before the program began, and then again after the end of the first semester.

"I've always felt that I wasn't smart enough for things," she tells me in our first conversation. After high school, she took a year at a college for transfer credit to a university program. She planned to become a teacher. "I didn't really fit into the college mentality.

"I had a great creative writing class when I was in college," she recalls, "but that was the only thing that was great. And I think part of what made it great was I became friends with three other women who were like 10, 20, 30 years older than me. And to get their experiences was different."

August has written plenty of stories and poems. She's taken many workshops and courses outside of postsecondary institutions. She's an experienced writer. What does this program give her that she doesn't already have?

"Confidence," she says. "And it's also going to give me discipline because it's going to force me to organize my time.

"One of the things that I am kind of sheepish about at conferences is when people ask me, 'Well, what's your education?' And I say, 'None.' It doesn't feel good. And I know that there are people that have been published without any sort of education. But in general, people kind of look and say, 'Oh, okay.'" Having a university degree may provide a kind of social standing not afforded to everyone.

Another major benefit is exposure to writing and writers that she might not otherwise encounter. She's eager to grow her own writer community.

The other students are much younger than her, which can affect their ability to provide feedback on one another's creative writing. "Most of my classmates are either out of high school or in their early twenties and just, like, baby writers. I'm excited to see if we stick together throughout the three years, how much they change. That'd be interesting."

"I'll change too," she predicts. When I ask her how she



August van Stralen (R) and spouse Finnian Burnett
Photo: Finnian Burnett

expects to change, she says she hopes to become "more proud of who I am."

For many people, university life is more than the classes, even when you're doing it online. "I signed up to be a student rep because I wanted to get the whole university experience."

Initially, August was nervous about going into a new environment as a queer person. At the end of her first semester, I asked her about that experience.

She says she was pleasantly surprised to find many of her fellow students were also queer. "They either have used they/them pronouns or they're poly or ace or bi or whatever. And they're all very open about it. So yeah, definitely not an issue at all."

"We are all diverse," she adds. "There's nothing that's completely rigid about any part of us. This generation is just the first generation to say, 'Hey, be who you are.'"

August encourages anyone else her age to take the leap into a university program "Do it. If it's something that you're interested in, think about doing it part-time like I'm doing."

She believes even someone with a full-time job, like herself, can make it work, as long as it's something they are passionate about. "It shouldn't feel like a chore. It should be something that you look forward to."

As for August, she will stick with creative writing for the long haul, no matter what. This university program is one step along her lifelong journey. She looks forward to the future. "I want to still be writing when I'm 90." |

Let's Talk About Cremation

by THELMA FAYLE

When is a good time to talk about cremation? Before Christmas? No. At the start of the new year? No again. How about during a pandemic? Forget it. And it's hardly an ideal theme at Easter—given the hopeful rising-from-the-dead thread.

It turns out the answer is “never”—unless you're talking to someone with a link to an ancient culture that has an established funeral pyre tradition. You can't have a conversation if people are afraid to own the subject.

When will Canadians be able to open up to discussing the challenging subject of cremation traditions? Maybe even learn to talk about our shivering squeamishness—about what to do with the ashes—other than hide the urn in a closet?

The act of witnessing the burning of the bodies of people we have loved is a tough subject that stirs something deep, shocking, and fragile in many of us. But as with all tough subjects, frank talk helps—especially since there are many lenses through which to view human end-of-life traditions.

“Observing the procedure can be difficult for grieving family members,” the funeral-home receptionist gently offers. “Only 10% of our client families attend, despite data showing that 90% of people who die in British Columbia are cremated.”

Cremation may be more common than burial these days, but Canadians still have few dominant-culture traditions related to cremating the dead.

Not to be deterred, and dressed in the best clothes worn to the last family wedding, my nephew and I headed to the crematorium at the designated time.

Being at my 100-year-old mother's—and his grandmother's—cremation represented an important responsibility to the two of us. It felt like a profound moment of rite and reverence for a Boomer and a Gen Zedder—who happen to be the two curious, and maybe even pig-headed, members of a large family. No sugar-coating for us.

After helping to care for her at home

through the pandemic, we felt the need to accompany her to the very end. I knew it was a bit irrational, but I wanted to make sure this particular waif-like, skinny, and wrinkled body of an old woman did not sit in some cold-storage warehouse with a bunch of other bodies for weeks on end—waiting for a time slot to be disposed of at some unknowable point that suited a busy scheduler. The element of uncertainty didn't feel dignified.

For a variety of understandable and common reasons, most of our family did not want to attend or even talk about the cremation, although they all agreed that it should be done. Facing the logistics of the final step alongside the immense grief of losing a woman who meant the world was just too hard.

One family member, who wore a respectful but discernible sneer, suggested they did not see cremation as a “spectator event.”

I silently wondered what part of end-of-life care is a spectator event. The vomit? The shit? The phlegm? The phlegm was rough. But not as difficult as watching my mother when she was scared from the dementia in that final year. Sometimes, no matter how much we cajoled and tried, we just couldn't take the fearful look from her eyes. None of it was a spectator sport.

Should this final cremation component of dealing with death be hidden from griever's sorrowful sensibilities? I wondered about our societal denial.

•

Since we had been with her the night she died, Keith and I opted not to “view” her body one last time. We knew she was covered with a favourite multicoloured, cozy blanket and accompanied by one of her big, jolly white teddy bears. The young funeral director had checked on her before we arrived and, with a wide smile, noted: “Wow, fantastic fluffy bear!”

He guided us to a sparsely furnished, 20' x 20' room that resembled the little chapel spaces you might find at the end of a quiet hallway in a palliative or hos-

pice ward. There were a few pews, some vases of fresh-cut flowers, and black drapes that we soon learned covered a “viewing window.” When the curtains were drawn back, my nephew and I stood for a moment of silence. We stared at the cremation container—a rectangular, cardboard box with a plywood-reinforced base.

A machine operator standing beside the furnace was patient and at ease, bearing a sentinel-like quality. I wondered at the thousands of bodies he had likely ushered out as part of busy days in an undertaker's establishment and house of the dead. As he was on the other side of the glass, there were no words between us. As instructed, when we were ready, we gave him a nod, and he pushed a large button engaging a belt that reminded me of an airport luggage carousel.

After a slight mechanical jolt, as the conveyor carrier started, Mom's body slowly moved a last, short journey of six feet towards the entrance of a large, shiny, metal, purpose-built cremation chamber. Placing her boxed body in position for the final, incendiary step was a simple procedure that was over seconds after it started.

Funeral home staff may not have discouraged attendance, but I can understand why they don't encourage it. I suspect part of the issue has to do with the added work a high-functioning industrial facility would have to do in scheduling and accommodating family attendance for a brief and clipped reverential moment. I never doubted that the attentive and respectful staff were doing a good job. Every aspect of their business came across as impeccable.

Keith and I stood straight, tall, and motionless by our seat and held hands. There were no rules about sitting, standing, or kneeling on command—like the ones I remembered from childhood days in the Catholic Church. But it seemed only right to stand as my mother physically left our presence.

Like pioneers in unknown territory, the Boomer woman and the Gen Z man

remained standing as protector-defenders—not knowing what else to do. The coming together of an atheist Boomer and a Christian Gen Zedder can be a subtle business.

We were invited to start the furnace but declined, and the worker pushed another button to activate the 1,800-degree Celsius fire. Carbon would soon be released into the atmosphere. In two or three hours, there would only be ashes and bone fragments remaining in the modern funeral pyre. We trusted the dutiful attendant would carefully bundle them for us.

Body disposal in 21st century cremation practices in North America are a long way from the ancient, communal, open-air alternatives to burial still used in many countries today.

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After my mother's cremation, I felt the need to talk and begin to fathom this new experience.

We ended up chatting for an hour with Mr. Benesch, the knowledgeable and sensitively articulate professional – who went through funeral school five years earlier, when he was 20.

He listened well and stood ready to respond fully to our probing questions. He was prepared and easily able to speak with clients who wanted or needed to talk. With his warm and friendly smile, this man, forty years younger than me, had the comforting presence and bearing of a wise elder.

After we got through the dozen questions I imagine he routinely hears; we seemed to open a door that invited him to be frank with us. We were in listen-mode and our rich chat evolved into a conversation we might have shared with a good friend.

With prompting, he told us about his frustration at trying to raise important climate-impact issues related to his trade. From his professional perspective, the eager, young, subject-matter expert was full of ideas that he felt would benefit the environment.

He said he had tried his best to engage in productive and progressive discussions with government officials about the need for new policies related to cremation. He met with courteous, civil, door slams. The politicians he had contacted were not eager to engage in dialogue about controversies that visibly

rattled constituents with an EWW-ish quality linked to their emotional experiences of loss and mourning. He realized cremation-chat discourse could offer politicians few potential votes.

I kept thinking Canadians might benefit from hearing more from this bright, professional funeral director who is at early days on his career path and has a strong belief that providing education is part of his job. He seemed a natural teacher.

I casually asked him if he planned on being cremated. His immediate, “definitely not” response surprised me and begged more conversation.

He told us about Alkaline Hydrolysis, also referred to as aquamation, water cremation, hydro cremation, or bio cremation – a sustainable, environmentally friendly and less expensive option available to those who want to limit their carbon footprint through death. For his preference, it was the more natural and ethical alternative to flame cremation or burial.

The greener method, not authorized in all parts of Canada yet, uses water to dispose of a body in place of fire – eliminating the use of gas and omissions produced by the traditional cremation process.

The practice can be completely carbon neutral as it uses water, heat and an alkaline solution to return a body to its basic elements – still leaving families with the ritual remains to spread.

His eager and rare candour was striking but I was beginning to appreciate the dread he had encountered with his attempts to educate.

I imagine it will take time for North Americans to warm to a concept that involves dissolving human tissue in water – climate-friendly or not. The process will require a skillful and sensitive advertising campaign.

But then, flame-cremation also faced a slow history of acceptance before being seen as a civilized and hygienic practice.

With the scarcity of available land for cemeteries, the question might become: water or fire? Water seems gentler as well as being easier on the environment.

While my questions to him were about logistics, my nephew had a different inquiry.

“What is the toughest part of your job?” one 20ish Gen Z man asked

another.

“When the caskets are much smaller,” Mr. Benesch replied. Those words silenced my nephew, a new dad.

As we left the building, my always-observant nephew noticed the shimmering heat waves rising from the chimney flue next to a hillside full of rocks and trees.

Just for a fleeting moment, I felt an exhilarating sense of freedom and joy for my mother. That my nephew and I were with her, seemed to make the event a little less lonesome – in our minds.

Cremation had assisted in the magic trick of death. One minute the centenarian who had mentored us both was here – and the next, she was physically gone.

Being next to her as she was cremated, offered a moment filled with the kind of gravitas we rarely get in a social-media-ized world.

As he drove me home, my nephew put on a CD that I had given him when he was a teenager. We quietly listened to the music and then he said he always found Jesse Cook's *Freefall* album to be soothing. I had hoped he would, when I gave it to him long ago. I found it comforting too.

Unlike the prediction offered by the funeral-home receptionist, observing was not difficult for this grieving Boomer and Gen Zedder. We were both happy – yes, happy – that we attended the cremation. The experience helped us accept large loss.

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Postscript:

Comments from Mr. Benesch, owner of Earth's Option Cremation and Burial Services, were based on my recollection from a conversation with him in November 2020.

To ensure accuracy and currency, I checked in with the funeral director and received this comment in 2024: “My work with the BC Aquamation Coalition is still ongoing and we are making great progress in getting letters of approval from 17 local municipalities. We have yet to get a timeframe on the legalization of Alkaline Hydrolysis but we know for sure it's on the government's radar and as the voices get louder, we can expect change to follow.” |

Road Trippin' Through the Kootenays

by KATE ROBERTSON

"Teck Trail is one of the largest fully integrated zinc and lead smelting and refining complexes in the world," says Wally, our 84-year-old guide and ex-employee of the operation.

I am at the Teck Interpretive Centre in downtown Trail, a large room filled with displays, hands-on exhibits, videos and facts.

Founded in 1896, Teck Trail has gone through many changes and been the pioneer of several technologies that changed the face of smelting and mining world-wide. Aside from production of lead, zinc and precious ores, Teck Trail also now produces fertilizers and recycles batteries.

(Fun fact: the walkie-talkie, a precursor to the cell phone, was invented in 1937 for Teck).

This two-hour free guided tour includes a trip up to the electrolytic and melting plant to view the operation.

Teck Trail is appropriately my first stop on a three-day road trip through the West Kootenays, looping from Trail to New Denver and back. After all, it was mining that put the region on the map, including the building of the railway, hydroelectric dams and towns. Teck Trail is still the largest private-sector employer in the city.

We head 10 kilometres up-mountain to Rossland, founded in the 1890s as a gold-mining town, to the Rossland Museum, located on the original Le Roi mine site. This well-put-together museum has artifacts and displays that focus not only on mining history, but also the social/cultural history and nearby Red Mountain's ski history.

The museum houses replicas like a trappers cabin, post office, bar, and general store. QR codes on some exhibits provide access to narrated stories. Allow yourself a couple of hours so you can also wander the extensive outdoor display, exhibiting items like pneumatic compressors, aerial tramways and a 1945 caboose.

Today tourism is the mainstay for Rossland, so it's fun to shop the unique boutiques and sports shops.

Rossland is all about the outdoors: golf courses, skiing at Red Mountain Resort, hiking and mountain biking trails and, of course, amazing restaurants.

After placing our order at Underbelly, a little bistro with a big personality specializing in house-smoked meats, we cross the street for a beer at the Rossland Beer Company. On the sunny patio I enjoy every last bite of my succulent shredded-pork sandwich, slathered with cheese, hot banana peppers and just the right amount of house-made BBQ sauce.

We wear off the calories with the self-guided Rossland Heritage Walking Tour, a collection of 31 heritage buildings and sites ranging from the Miners Union Hall to the Kamloops Mining and Drilling Co. building (tip: plan your route, Rossland has a lot of steep uphill streets).

The next morning is a 40-minute drive north to Castlegar. Along with mining, the region has an important history for the Doukhobors, a pacifist, non-materialistic religious sect who fled from persecution in Russia in 1899.

At the Doukhobor Discovery Centre, several beautiful red-bricked buildings contain displays that celebrate the Doukhobor culture and heritage, including a replicated "dom", a traditional communal residence.

A life-size statue of Leo Tolstoy overlooks the grassy courtyard, an homage to the great Russian novelist who helped fund their journey.

Carrying on the road trip, we take a 30-minute drive to Nelson, established in 1886 when a copper-silver deposit was discovered on Toad Mountain. On the second floor of the Nelson Museum, Archives & Gallery, a collection of over 7,000 artifacts walks you through local history from First Nations Ktunaxa and Sinixt peoples, to the early mining history which put Nelson on the map, to the logging history and the culture of sports and arts that are strong in the city.

The drive up Kootenay Lake from Nelson to Kaslo, alongside the deep

blue lake flanked by snow-capped mountains, is arguably the most stunning drive in all of British Columbia.

Kaslo, the oldest incorporated community in the Kootenays, was established in 1893 to service the silver mining rush in the region.

The *SS Moyie*, a stern wheeler that provided service between Nelson and Kaslo and the last sternwheeler in Canada when it retired in 1957, is our first stop.

We wander the luxurious passenger dining, lounge and staterooms and check out the cargo deck and vintage cars (all carefully restored in 2023).

For a \$5 donation, you can even blow the ship's original steam whistle. Onsite there is also a miner's cabin, CPR caboose and restored Kuskanook Ladies' Salon.

We overnight at the Kaslo Hotel, originally built in 1896, but burned to the ground in 1950. Built again in 1958, it was completely restored/renovated into the current boutique hotel in 2009. From 1942-1945, the hotel was also used for interned Japanese Canadians.

This is a sadder part of the history of some of the small towns of the West Kootenays. They were government-designated as internment camps for Japanese Canadians forcibly relocated during WW2.

On the second floor of the Langham, we learn more at the Japanese Canadian Museum, from a self-guided archival display of artifacts, photographs and story-boards.

Eighty Japanese were interned in this building, and on the third floor there's a replica of the sleeping quarters of one of the families.

Both the Langham and the *SS Moyie* are included on the self-guided Kaslo Heritage Walking Tour, which also includes churches, city hall, the Molly Brown House (you guessed it, a brothel), masonic lodge, a heritage-home street, and several more stops.

Another scenic 40-minute drive brings us to Sandon, a ghost town located in a steep, narrow valley. It's hard to

believe that this was once the centre of the richest silver-lead producing region in Canada. Incorporated in 1898, Sandon at one point had 5,000 residents.

Today there are only a few buildings still standing, including the original 1900 City Hall.

The Sandon Historical Society Museum, housed in the restored Slocan Mercantile Block, has an extensive display of mining artifacts. Sandon was also a Japanese internment camp designated for those who were Buddhist, before they were moved to nearby New Denver, due to the severe winter conditions.

Continuing 14 kilometres down the mountain, we arrive at our final destination, New Denver. Founded in 1892 by silver miners, by 1920 the boom was over and logging became more important.

New Denver was also home to an internment camp, the third largest in the province. The Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, a national historic site, beautifully preserves the life and condition of the “nikkei” (a person of Japanese heritage) living here and in the region between 1942-1957, with original buildings, period artifacts and interpretive displays.

A Zen “dry garden”, made up of carefully placed rocks, plants and foot bridges weaves around the buildings.

On our drive back to Trail, we make one more stop at Camp Cafe in Silverton for a mid-afternoon treat—mouth watering carrot cake and a latte.

Who would have thought there’d be so much to learn about and experience on a 300-kilometre road trip? |

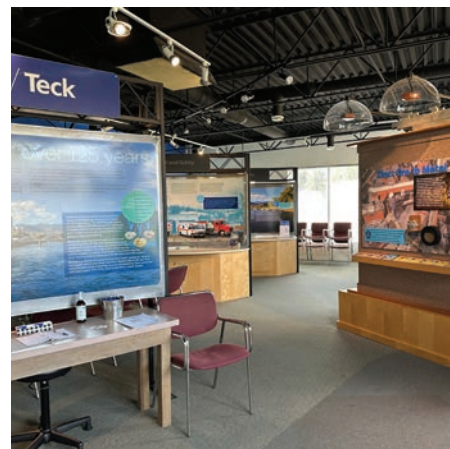


TOP | Exhibits at Sandon Museum

MIDDLE | A replica of the sleeping quarters that interned Japanese were housed in at the Langham in Kaslo.

BOTTOM LEFT | Old church on the Rossland heritage walking tour

BOTTOM RIGHT | Displays at the Teck Interpretive Centre give you an historical glimpse of the mining and smelting process and progress that anchored the Kootenay region for many years





Your European Escape in Canada

by JOAN THOMPSON

“The Barrington Woollen Mill was unusual for its time as its water wheel was laid flat in the water rather than up and down.”

We follow our guide outside, and where the water on the Barrington River is the fastest, and the mills’ trestle over it the most precarious, we lean over the railing to peer at the rapidly spinning wheel half submerged in the churning water beneath us.

“Every machine in this mill – the spinners, twisters, skeiners and looms – were powered by that hard-working wheel right until the millworkers’ last shift in 1962. Mr. Stephens, the owner, would only turn the wheel off on Christmas and New Year’s Day.”

Everything else about this 19th century mill in Barrington, Nova Scotia, was like the woollen mill I had chanced upon in Scotland years ago. An elegant red and white trimmed

wooden building, with gable roof and carriage-friendly entrances, couched between river and gardens. Rambling wall-to-wall raftered rooms featuring rows of that newfangled invention – the spinning jenny.

Victorian to its bones, the floors creaked and the lamplight shimmered as we crept through the washing and carding rooms, imagining the flurried delivery of wool from stage to stage, and the voices calling to each other over the click-clack of the whirring looms upstairs.

Surprisingly, time-travelling experiences like this one, where you feel as if dropped on the set of a period movie, is not uncommon in Canada.

Given that it is home to some of North America’s oldest European settlements, scenes of Normandy France and Georgian England become standard backdrops for many of your travels

here. And for those of us missing those opportunities to leap, guiltless, across ‘the pond’ to wander through medieval market streets and stare gobsmacked up at Gothic spires and gargoyles, knowing these historical ‘highs’ are but a short trip away is welcome news indeed.

While western Canada is steeped in gold rush history, and the pioneers who followed, staging your great European escape gets a lot easier the further east you travel.

I would recommend starting in Ottawa, which owes much of its architecture and ambience to the early 19th century when the city was welcoming refugees – and staunch British loyalists – from the American Revolutionary War.

Immerse yourself in the regal centre of the city – Parliament Hill and its Gothic-inspired buildings – and the

jumble of red-brick districts, like The Byward Market, that lie alongside it.

Grab your Roquefort cheese and baguette and head down for a picnic and a chance to marvel at a ‘lock flight’ alongside Colonel John By’s other legacy, The Rideau Canal.

Two hundred kilometres east, long before Colonel By was capitalizing on Ottawa’s potential, the French had been busy establishing their presence in Canada on the island of Montreal. Officially christened Ville Marie (City of Mary) in 1642, the ‘city of spires’ and financial hub for the North West Company’s fur trading business was, by mid 19th century, the economic and cultural centre of the country.

The old mills, warehouses and refineries in Vieux Montreal today are a testament to that history, where labyrinths of narrow streets and greystone buildings are home to no less than fifty National Historic Sites.

What were once public market squares are now, like Place Jacques-Cartier, stylish promenades of bistros and classical Parisian-style terraces, or like Place D’Armes, courtyards to magnificent cathedrals like the beloved Notre Dame Basilica (which attracts almost as many admirers a year as the Notre Dame in Paris!).

Continue downstream another 250 kilometres along the St. Lawrence River, through the Eastern Townships and the patchwork of seigneuries along it (the long narrow strips of farmland traditionally operated by subjects loyal to the French king), and you reach Quebec City, a city that was at the heart of New France.

Today it is unmistakably Old France, wearing its storied history with pride. Like how cartographer Samuel Champlain together with his mercantile sponsor, Pierre Dugua de Mons, and a handful of hardy settlers, set up camp here in 1608. And how, by the end of the century, the camp looked like any other medieval town in France; a cluster of stone buildings

OPPOSITE PAGE | Normandy architecture in Quebec City

BELOW | Barrington Woollen Mill, Nova Scotia

TOP RIGHT | Harbourville, Nova Scotia

BOTTOM RIGHT | Oldest restaurant in Quebec City (1676)

PAGE 18 | Church in Eastern Townships, Quebec



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Bay of Fundy, they established Port Royal, which, when commandeered by the British, became Annapolis Royal. And today, the rich heritage of this community, from French trading post to refuge of the Loyalists and New England Planters to capital of Nova Scotia, is proudly on display.

Peak-roofed churches and bijoux galleries vie with Georgian-fashioned inns and theatres on some of the oldest and loveliest streetscapes in Canada.

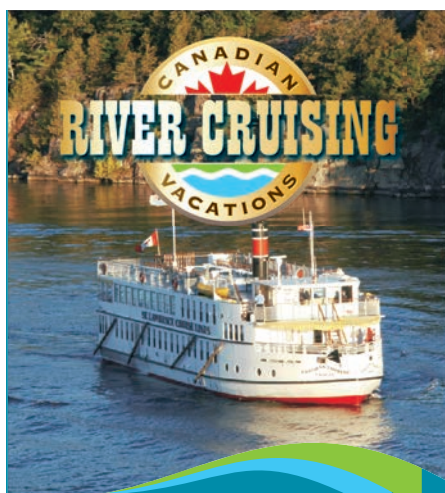
Follow other storybook lanes through farming communities and fishing villages nearby, past 'The Fundy Thread and Thimble Club' and freshly painted churches peering from groves of white oaks and elms.

As travel continues to come with cautionary clauses, it behooves us to consider our options closer to home.

Rather than travelling there, we need to remember that Europe, and successive emigrants' versions of it, was brought here as early as the 17th century.

While I gave you a glimpse into those versions here, the European influence lives on in so many of the beautifully preserved cities and hamlets and homesteads in our country.

Go ahead and be charmed...by just one more perk of staying home! |



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with steeply pitched roofs and chimney stacks and towers huddled within a walled precinct. And how successive eras of development simply built around this central core, leaving today's Unesco-enshrined World Heritage Site a beguiling tapestry of old world charm and character.

Visitors flock to take in the cobble-stoned streets lined with bistros and boutiques and flowers spilling from dormer windows, Ursuline convents hidden down narrow alleyways, and cathedrals presiding over squares buried in chestnut trees.

De rigueur is an evening stroll along the governor's promenade to enjoy the views of the Saint Lawrence River, the legendary Plains of Abraham, and what is allegedly the most photographed hotel in the world - the towering Chateau Frontenac.

East of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence River, European roots run even deeper. Acadie (present day Nova Scotia) was actually the first port-of-call for Champlain and Dugua in their early forays across the Atlantic.

In 1604, at a sheltered point off the



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LIVING ON PURPOSE

by LAURIE MUELLER

A Place in the Sun

I'm sitting at a little wooden table for two. My husband and I are drinking designer coffees listening to soft jazz tones from a YouTube channel over our heads. Palm plants form one wall and snake plants, and philodendron plants form the opposite wall. Behind me is a kitchen and more indoor seating at this little cafe.

We just finished a walk around our little Mexican suburb in Puerto Vallarta where we are living for three months this winter.

At one time, we thought we would live downtown in the tourist area of Puerto Vallarta, but it would have meant a shorter visit on the budget we have, so here we are a 20-minute bus ride from Centro (downtown).

It's my version of adventure. It was my husband's dream since before I met him. There are many compromises to living the dream and yet if we didn't do this

much, we wouldn't even have a glimpse of it.

The boulevard with palm trees down the centre confirms the busyness of city traffic around us. But the fan above my head helps it feel like ocean breezes are cooling me.

This is not a hallmark movie. The buildings are not whitewashed clean; most have bars on the windows. They are in varying states of repair and disrepair. We walk on cobblestones—uneven and wobbly. The sidewalks are narrow and inconsistent.

Yet, the smiles and greetings of total strangers erase the messiness of the area. The sunshine in the blue, blue sky relaxes me and makes me want to shine just as brightly.

When we want to be with other tourists we take the bus downtown. Taking the bus is mostly fun. We join our neighbors jolting and jiggling while the driver makes up time in the straight stretches or races with another bus next to us. When it's busy and standing room only, holding on is a challenge. Helmuth simply holds on to the overhead rail. I must clasp the seats' back bars. I try to smile and laugh and greet others, but inside I'm giving myself a pep talk to stay upright and not lose my balance. After the first month I start feeling a bit more confident.

Once downtown, we walk along the Malecon, the beach sidewalk, with all the little shops, cafes, bars and sidewalk vendors.

Our favorite place besides the beach walk, is a little cafe that sells used books (yes, in English) called A Page in the Sun. We often meet friends there. I've met people for the first time there that have since become friends.

One day we decided to meet two couples for coffee, but while we were there another couple of friends arrived—my old friend telling a new travelling companion, "This is Laurie's favorite hangout...oh look there she is!"

While we were there, friends we had arranged to meet were surprised to see



people they knew, and conversations and talking groups were breaking out all over. You can see why it's my favorite place!

On other days I attend a Writer's Group and Helmuth plays Bridge. There is an organization for international visitors that offers many activities.

Retirement allows us to do things we couldn't do before. I challenge you to do something you have thought of but not done. What kind of arrangements could you make?

Mick Jagger sings, "You can't always get what you want / But if you try sometime, you'll find / You get what you need."

A winter stay, living in the suburbs of Puerto Vallarta fits the bill for me! What fits the bill for you? |



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A Page in the Sun

Laurie Mueller, M.ED is retired and living in Victoria with her husband, Helmuth. Her book *The Ultimate Guide on What to do When Someone You Love Dies* is available on Amazon. More about Laurie can be found at www.lauriemconsulting.com or on Facebook.

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