



Festival Notes

December 2008
Volume 2 Issue 1

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"I look forward to many more new adventures!"



"Winter Fairy"
Cobourg Santa Claus Parade

Seasons Greetings

Our Second Year...

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

We are now entering our second year of writing and publishing the Ontario Festivals Visited newsletter, "*Festival Notes*". I have enjoyed the monthly opportunity to write about the festivals and events Judi and I have visited and the people we have met. The thing I like most about Ontario's festivals is that most are conceived, planned and managed by dedicated volunteers! These are the people who make our communities so special. For me, it doesn't matter if a festival is a multi-million dollar extravaganza or a low budget local celebration! It's the thought and pride that is important. Going into the new year Judi and I look forward to many more new adventures! Ontario has so many wonderful festivals and events to experience. I know our visits will give us a lot to write about in 2009! In the meantime, I hope everyone has a joyous and adventurous holiday season! See you in the New Year!

A Month of Catch Up!

2008 has been a very hectic year! Especially this past summer! Our plans seemed to keep being "rained" on! I don't know how many times we planned on visiting an event and then canceling due to poor weather! It made scheduling difficult. Fortunately many of the visits we had to abort were to events that ran all summer. This made re-scheduling possible. It also backed up my article writing schedule! As a result, I am far behind. I don't like it, but it is a fact. So, the months of November and Decembers are my "catch up" months! I want 2009 to have a fresh start! Judi and I hope to visit another 40 - 50 festivals and events next year. These visits, along with major plans to update and expand the Ontario Festivals Visited website (more on this later), will keep us both very busy!

In November we managed to visit only one event, the Cobourg Santa Claus Parade. It was an excellent parade with lots of bands and floats. December will be equally slow, with only two events planned so far: December 6th - Capitol Christmas at the Capitol Theatre in Port Hope
December 26th - Annual Christmas Treats Walk at the Toronto Zoo



"Aaron Bell – Ojibway Storyteller"
At the
Mississauga Waterfront Festival

*"... then began to tell us
many Ojibway stories and
legends!"*



"White Pine Dancer"
At the
Mississauga Waterfront Festival

Aaron Bell Ojibway Storyteller

We discovered Aaron Bell at the 2007 Mississauga Waterfront Festival. Judi and I had been exploring the festival's grounds when we came across Aaron and the White Pines Dancers. Aaron was on stage, in full regalia, preparing for his upcoming performance. The White Pines Dancers were also on stage talking amongst themselves. The beautiful costumes that they were all wearing fascinated me. I walked up to the stage and asked Aaron when they were going to perform. I thought he was one of the Dancers, so I was surprised when he told me that he was an Ojibway Storyteller and that he would be performing after the Dancers. We talked for a while about the Ojibway and their stories. I had a little knowledge about them because of my friendship with Ojibway artist David Johnson from Curve Lake. Aaron suggested that we come back in about ½ hour for the start of the dance. We did come back and set up our folding chairs near the front of the stage. First came the White Pines Dancers who were introduced by Aaron. Their wonderful costumes certainly added to the drama of the dance! Then it was Aaron's turn. There were a number of children in the audience and Aaron invited them to come closer to the stage. He then began to tell us many Ojibway stories and legends! The audience, especially the children, were mesmerized! The whole ensemble, Aaron and the White Pines Dancers, was very entertaining and I congratulate the Mississauga Waterfront Festival for bringing them to the festival! Aaron and his friends perform all over Canada and especially enjoy performing for and teaching with children. To find out more about Aaron Bell - Ojibway Storyteller and the White Pines Dancers, go to their website at <http://www.ojibwaystoryteller.com/>.

Festival Ideas...

Each month this section features ideas gained from attending so many festivals. For the December issue we want to talk about the "Little Things" we see and do at festivals! In July, I wrote an article on "The Adventures of a Festival Nomad" blog about this subject. We are republishing it for your enjoyment/information?

It's The Little Things...

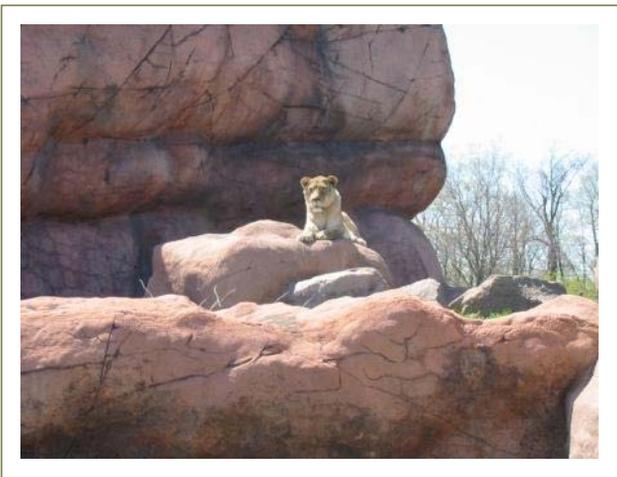
As I think back on all the festivals (70 plus) we have visited so far, it's the little things, unexpected things I remember the most!

Please see *Festival Ideas...* on page 3



"Judi at the first festival visited!"
The Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival

"Judi found a book she had been searching and paid..."



"Overlooking its world!"
At the Toronto Zoo

Where Festival Ideas ... from page 2

We experienced our first "Nomad Festival", at the annual Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival and enjoyed the taste of local real maple syrup! While traveling with my Grandson to the Antique and Classic Boat Show, we had fun stopping along the way at a trading post and being given two free containers of "Nibs" chocolate ice cream pieces. Then there was the very interesting genealogy store located in the picturesque village of Campbellville. We discovered it on our way to the Waterloo County Quilt Festival. In Perth, at the Festival of Maples, there was the wonderful Matheson House Museum located on Perth's main downtown street. Last fall during our Colours 'n Crows tour in Buckhorn, we marveled at the fall colours and the views across Pigeon Lake. Colborne's Apple Blossom Tyme Festival produced a special treasure for Judi at their Library book sale. Judi found a book she had been searching and paid only \$2.00! The jousting contest the Gregor's Crossing Medieval Faire took my breath away when the two Knights faced each other with lowered lances. During our trips we saw amazing farms, beautiful scenes, interesting architecture and quaint rural towns and villages! All wonderful memories! Being a "Festival Nomad" certainly has its advantages!

Christmas Bonus!

For the December issue I thought we would include a Christmas Bonus article! Most people don't think about the Toronto Zoo and its amazing animals in the winter months! This is unfortunate because the Zoo and its staff have some great events planned. A week ago, I wrote an article on "The Adventures of a Festival Nomad" blog about this subject. We are republishing it for your enjoyment/information?

Toronto Zoo

A few articles ago I wrote about the Toronto Zoo's attempt to break the Guinness World Record for "the Most Leap-Froggers"! Unfortunately they didn't quite make it. I understand it was a really fun event, so I hope they try it again next year. While I was writing the article I started thinking about Canadian Zoos and the Toronto Zoo in particular. In 1990 Judi and I had the privilege of traveling across the west to visit a number of Canada's National and Provincial Parks. Although it was a business trip, we had a wonderful time! Along the way we visited several Canadian zoos. At many of these zoos we were given a back scene tour. To say it was fascinating would be an understatement. The tours certainly gave us a wonderful appreciation of the workings of the zoos and how much the staff and volunteer care for the amazing creatures under their charge.

Please see *Christmas Bonus...* on page 4



"The Festival Gift Shoppe"
At the
Peterborough Festival of Lights



"Here comes Santa!"
At the
Toronto Santa Claus Parade



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One of the Zoo's we got to tour was the Toronto Zoo. I don't think anyone, outside of the zoo family realize just how much work there is to provide the type of habitat necessary to maintain all the zoo's living creatures, birds, mammals, reptiles, flora, fauna and insects. It is a testament to the Toronto Zoo's staff, when you see how well the facility runs! Toronto and its surrounding area is very lucky to have such a world class attraction! Most of us tend to think of zoos being open to the public only during the fair weather months. This couldn't be further from the truth. The Toronto Zoo is open all year long and offers programs and events throughout all seasons! In December there are two scheduled events. On Friday, December 26th there is the **33rd Annual Christmas Treats Walk**. While on Wednesday, December 31st, there is the **6th Annual New Years Eve Countdown**. In January there is the permanent **Great Barrier Reef Exhibit** to visit and at the end of the month, the Zoo, combining activities with the City of Toronto, are holding the **City of Toronto's WinterCity - Zoo Animal Fun and Games Skating Party with the Toronto Zoo**. You can find out more about the Toronto Zoo and its fun activities and events at their website (<http://www.torontozoo.com/>). Remember the Zoo's **"Adopt an Animal"** program. It's great way to help the Zoo care for its animals and a wonderful Christmas present. Judi's sister and her daughter adopted one a few years ago for us as a Christmas present. We had a lot of fun that summer visiting the Zoo and our Adopted Animal!

Festival Tips

Batteries...

If there is anything Judi and I have learned over the past two years of visiting festivals is that we should always carry extra batteries for our camera. This was never truer than a few weeks ago. Judi was watching and covering the Cobourg Santa Claus Parade. She was having a great time taking photos of all the bands and floats. Part way through, just as a great float was coming into view the batteries ran out! Fortunately Judi had remember to take those extra batteries and the photo of the float was taken! Another example of planning ahead!