



# Festival Notes

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Ontario Communities...
- 1 A Month of Surprises!
- 2 Friendly Places...
- 4 Festival Ideas – *Why Not Share?*
- 4 Festival Tips – *Should I Tell You?*

## Ontario Communities...

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

Over the years I have been able to travel throughout North America. During these travels I have visited many fascinating places! I believe that very few of the places I have visited rival Ontario's great communities! During the past few years Judi and I have visited almost 150 Ontario community festivals and events. Most of these festivals and events have been planned and managed by dedicated community volunteers. As a salute to these wonderful communities and their hard working residents, I will be writing a series of "*The Adventures of the Festival Nomad*" blogs. These blogs will describe the communities we have visited and will tell you about some of the interesting things we have experienced and the people we have met. The first article, published on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, will be about Bobcaygeon, the picturesque town located in the heart of the Kawartha Lakes.

### "A Month of Surprises!"

Life is funny that way! Sometimes when you think an event is going to be really interesting, it turns out to be a "*dud*". The opposite can also be true! October was one of those months that was full of surprises!

The first happened when my son, Travis, and his wife, Ina, invited Judi and I to a Toronto Argonaut football game. As you may know, the Argos haven't been doing too well lately! No, don't get too excited, they didn't do well at this game either! The surprise came from the extra activities! First, let me explain that the last Argo game I attended was a number of years ago at Exhibition Stadium. This game was being held at the Rogers Centre, so I didn't know what to expect! I was thinking that it would be typical of the games that I had attended before. Boy was I wrong! From the time we walked to the entrance of the Rogers Centre to the time the game was over and we were leaving the building, there was excitement everywhere! The atmosphere was electric! I will tell you much more about what we experienced when I complete my Ontario Festivals Visited article about our visit to the "*Big*" game!

Our next "*surprise*" came when we visited the Norwood Fall Fair! Norwood is a small community located north of Cobourg. The township it is located in has a population of a little over 4,000.



"Learning about wine"  
Bobcaygeon Wine & Food Festival



"The Band played on!"  
Toronto Argonaut Football Game  
at the Rogers Centre

Please see *A Month of Surprises!...* on page 2

*A Month of Surprises!* ... from page 1

When Judi and I decided to visit the Fall Fair in Norwood, we anticipated a typical small town event! Let me tell you, we were really off the mark! The Norwood Fall Fair is very slick and very well run! We visited the Fair on a Saturday and the grounds were packed. The events were well timed and perfectly located and organized!

The final "surprise" came at the end of the month in the form of a "Frightening" experience! Each year Fort Henry in Kingston turns their old fort into "Fort Fright", a tribute to the Fort's resident ghosts and to the spirit of Halloween! The "girls" (Judi and my daughter, Ainsley) were too "frightened" to go with me, so I invited my "ghoulish" son-in-law, Eddy, to accompany me. We had a great time! The Fort had never looked so "ghostly"! It was an experience to "die" for!

All of these visits we be featured shortly on the Ontario Festivals Visited website.

So far November is shaping up to be a quiet month. We have a few events currently scheduled and more may happen as the month progresses. Here is what we have scheduled so far:

November 14<sup>th</sup> - Bobcaygeon Festival of Trees

November 28<sup>th</sup> - Port Hope Olde Tyme Christmas

## Friendly Places...

Over the past 2 ½ years Judi and I have visited over 75 different communities. Each one has its own unique charm, but only a few really stand out! In this article I would like to acknowledge my four top "friendly places".

**Buckhorn** - We have been traveling to the Village of Buckhorn for over 25 years. We even had a boat moored for a couple of years at the Buckhorn Yacht Harbour. Our first experience with the Village was at their annual Fine Art Festival. Since our first visit, we have been back to Buckhorn hundreds of times. However, it's only been over the past few years that we have discovered the true spirit of the community! To date we have visited four of their events, the Buckhorn Fine Art Festival, Colours 'N' Crows, Fiesta Buckhorn and the Buckhorn Maple Syrup Festival held at the McLean Berry Farm. At each one we were always greeted with friendly enthusiasm! Even outside the events, when we needed information or help, we could always count on the wonderful Buckhorn residents. The community spirit is always there!

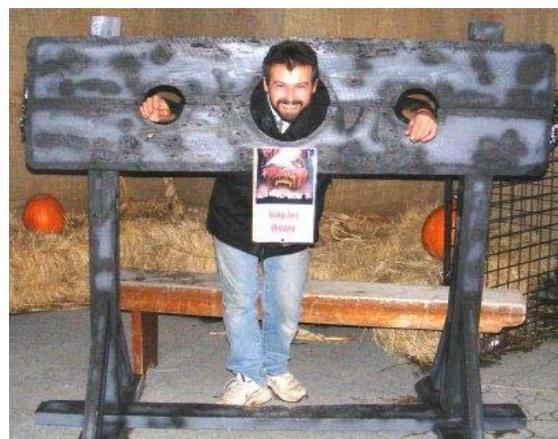
**Prescott** - This town completely caught us off guard! We had been to Prescott a few times before, but only to drive through. On a sunny July afternoon we had driven to Prescott to visit their St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival.

Please see *Friendly Places...* on page 3



"Wagon competition"  
Norwood Fall Fair

"...It was an experience to  
**die** for!"



"The stockade for Eddy"  
Fort Fright  
at Fort Henry, Kingston



"Fall colours"  
Buckhorn



*"Canoeing on the Rideau Canal!"*  
Smiths Falls

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*"The Mayor took her seat behind us. I felt that..."*

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### *Friendly Places ... from page 2*

This was opening night, so no-one knew what to expect. Eventually we were led to the front of the church to an open seat. The lady who led us gave us some insight as to what was going to happen once the play started. She also told us that Prescott's Mayor, **Suzanne Dodge**, would be sitting behind us! As we waited for the play to start, people started to fill the seats in the church. All around us people said hello and asked about us. They knew we weren't from the area. Eventually the Mayor took her seat behind us and I turned around to say hello and introduce ourselves. There was an immediate connection between us. I felt that I had met a long lost friend. Suzanne told us all about her town and its attractions. You could see the pride in her eyes when she talked about Prescott and its people. She told us that next year, 2010, was their bi-centennial and that they had a lot of events planned throughout the year. She invited us come to Prescott to help them celebrate. As this was the Festival's opening night, the town was hosting a Gala after the play. Not only did Mayor Suzanne invite us to the Gala, but several people around us also insisted that we come. We had a wonderful time and certainly appreciated how we were treated. Prescott is definitely one of the top friendly places we have visited!

**Lang Pioneer Village (Keene)** - A few years ago I met a fellow "*Cobourgian*" at the annual Festivals and Events Ontario (FEO) conference. She recognized me and introduced herself to me. She told me that she was the Special Event Co-coordinator for Lang Pioneer Village in Keene. I had heard of the Village, but had never visited it. My new friend, **Laurie Siblock**, suggested that Judi and I should come and tour the Village sometime. After our chance meeting at the FEO conference, Judi and I, plus my family, have visited Lang Pioneer Village on a number of occasions! Along the way Laurie has introduced us to a number of the Village's volunteers and staff, including **Joe Corrigan**, the Village's General Manager. Now when we visit the Lang Pioneer Village, Judi and I feel like family. This past summer we participated in their **Festival of Textiles' Fashion Show** as "*period models*" and more recently Judi volunteered as a raffle ticket seller at their **Applefest**. Lang Pioneer Village is just one of those places we can go at any time and always be welcomed!

**Smiths Falls** - Although we had visited Smiths Falls and their **Canal, Railway and Chocolate Festival** two years ago, it wasn't until this year that we felt the true warmth of this wonderful community and its residents! It all started with a simple e-mail! The new festival chair e-mailed me asking for information about **Ontario Festivals Visited**. From there it escalated into many e-mails and culminated in an invitation to re-visit the new and improved Festival! There was, of course, a bribe involved! **Jim McPherson** told us that if we came on opening day he would arrange a historic Voyageur Canoe trip along the Rideau Canal and onto the Smiths Falls "*Swale*" (click [HERE](#) to read my "*Swale*" article). This offer was "sweetened up" by Jim asking Judi and I to judge the Chocolate Contest! How could we refuse such an offer! On arriving at the Festival grounds, we were met by our now "*fast*" friend, **Chair Jim McPherson**! From that moment on Judi and I were treated very well! The highlight of the day and evening came during the opening ceremonies! Jim invited me up to front and introduced me to the crowd that had gathered.

Please see *Friendly Places...* on page 4

*Friendly Places...* from page 3

He then presented Judi and I with a framed limited print that depicted the Smiths Falls many attractions. Neither Judi nor I had any idea what Jim had planned, but we were certainly honored. In reflection of our Smiths Falls experience, both Judi and I fondly look back at our time there and the terrific people we met!

## Festival Ideas...

### Why Not Share?

Festivals and events are great fun and present a wonderful opportunity to share! It's simple really, make sure when you decide to go to an event that you share your experience with someone else! This includes telling your friends and family about a great festival or events that you have visited or, better still, invite someone to go with you.

Festivals and events can be much more enjoyable when shared with loved ones or friends! Because Judi and I visit so many events through the year, it's impossible to take people with us all the time. However, when we do it always makes the event seem more memorable! Over the years we've gone with a number of different friends and family.

I think the first was to the **Toronto Zoo's Spring Toad Festival**. We went to this one with my daughter and her family. The fun that the grandchildren had was awesome! Since then we have visited the **Bala Cranberry Festival** with our friends Ross and Cathy and their young daughter, the **Polar Bear Festival** in Campbellford with my brother Chuck and his wife, Flo and their friends, Wilf and Win, the **Beaches Jazz Festival** with my son, Travis and his wife Ina and to the **Canadian International Military Tattoo** in Hamilton with my sister Barb. There were more times, but you get the idea. Sharing these events with our family and friends was a wonderful experience! So, if you are going to go to a festival or event I urge you to invite someone else to go with you! If not family or friends, invite a senior in your community. Most seniors love outings like this and make wonderful companions. They will have a great time and you will be rewarded by having a more memorable visit!

## Festival Tips

### Should I Tell You?

Did you ever do one of those "*bone-headed*" things that make you want to "*crawl*" into a deep dark "*cave*" and not come out for a year or so? One of those "*things*" happened to me a few months ago when Judi and I visited Prescott and their **St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival**! If you have read any of my other articles about this Festival, you will know that the play, "*The Taming of the Shrew*" was moved from its normal outdoor venue to an indoor venue. The reason given was that there were thunder storms on the distant horizon! I found this difficult to believe because it was sunny and bright in Prescott! However, in the "*bright*" sun we drove to the Church where the play was now to take place. I parked our car and we walked to the church to join the waiting line. Eventually we were ushered into the church and the play began. We became entrenched in the play! Part way through, however, I looked up at the high windows of the church and saw flashes of lightning! The **STORM** was upon us and I was humbled! By the time the play was over and we were exiting the church, the storm was over and the rain had stopped. Our walk back to the car was dry and uneventful. I remotely unlocked the car door and opened it. The door felt too light! I wondered why until I looked inside and realized that I had left my window **OPEN**! The whole driver's side was drenched! I now had the prospect of a 3 ½ hours drive home on a soaking wet seat! I want to tell you that my "*behind*" and other parts were cold and "*wrinkled*" by the time we reached Cobourg!

P.S. My new address is at the "*Bat Cave*" ... I'll see you in a year or so!!!

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