



ONTARIO  
Festivals Visited

# Festival Notes

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Ontario Festivals Visited, P.O. Box 272, Cobourg, ON, K9A 4K8, Canada  
www.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca info@ontariofestivalsvited.ca (888) 818-0255

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*"...we have received many kind e-mails..."*

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*"Horse Drawn Wagon Ride"*  
**Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival**  
(Photo taken at the first festival we visited)



## Our Third Year – Looking Back...

By Gary McWilliams, *the Festival Nomad*

Although Judi and I started visiting festivals and events in April 2007, we didn't start publishing *Festival Notes* until December of that year. Since then we have published the newsletter monthly. Our reason for producing a newsletter was very simple, we wanted to keep in touch with our festival friends (new and old) and let them know where we have been, where we are going and who/what we have seen. We also wanted to give our readers ideas and tips about visiting festivals. We started with only a handful of readers, mainly family and close friends, and now have about 300 subscribers. I have been told by a number of people that they pass the newsletter on to others, so I believe about 500 people are now receiving it. Over the last two years we have received many kind e-mails commenting on our articles and we hope this continues with our future articles.

Please see *Our Third Year...* on page 2

## December – Reflections of the Past...

It's hard to look to the future without reflecting on the past. Our previous, *"Our Third Year - Looking Back"*, reflected on the newsletters past. This article will go back even further and tell the story of how Judi and I started Ontario Festivals Visited.

In March 2007, I attended the annual Festival and Events Ontario (FEO) conference. During the conference I participated in a seminar on *"Blogging"*. I was fascinated by the concept and thought it sounded like a great way to promote my newly formed festival and event consulting business, **StepOne Connections**.

Please see *December – Reflections...* on page 3



*"Festival President Eloise Bucholtz & Peterborough Examiner Staff Writer, Andrea Houston"*

**2007 Peterborough Festival of Trees**

(Photo from our first issue)

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*"I am not only a 'time' coward;  
I am also a 'distance' coward!"*

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*Our Third Year ... from page 1*

As we begin our third year, I thought it would be fun to look back at some of our previous issues. We began the first issue with a "Welcome" and followed it up with an article about the events we had visited the previous month. The third article in the inaugural told our readers about "Being in the Right Place". The "Right Place" was the Peterborough Festivals of Trees where we were interviewed by Andrea Houston of the Peterborough Examiner. This was significant because we had always been the interviewees! A nice article appeared in the Examiner the next day. Our fourth article in the issue was entitled "Festival Ideas". In it we talked about using "Google" to find out about the festivals and events we wanted to visit. The fifth and final first issue article was called "Festival Tips". Our first "tip" was about the weather and "Being Prepared", appropriate given the time of year. Since that first issue, we have tried to stay with the same format. It makes it much easier to write and produce that way. Although we have always included photographs, the photos in the first two issues were quite small. A friend pointed this out to us and suggested that it would be a good idea to make them larger. We did and it was a good idea.

Please see *Our Third Year...* on page 4

## You Want to Drive Where?!

*(This is a reprint from the Festival Nomad's Blog dated December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007)*

This is a question that almost breeds as much terror, when asked, "You Want to Leave When"! I am not only a "time" coward; I am also a "distance" coward! It's not that Judi is a tyrant. It's just that she likes her sleep. If getting up too early cuts into her sleep time, you'd think that a long distance drive would be perfect! No, it's just the opposite. Judi likes to be a co-driver. No, she does not want to drive herself, she just wants to "help". This means being awake all the way! Choosing the right event to visit is important. On any given weekend there are lots of events to choose from. Just log onto any of the following websites, Ontario Travels, Festivals & Events Ontario (FEO) or Ontario Festivals Visited, to see what and how many. It's a daunting task to choose the right one. We want our Nomadic wanderings to take us throughout Ontario. We want to visit different communities (large and small) along the way. And, we want to experience as many different types of festivals and events as possible!

Please see *You Want to Drive Where...* on page 4



*"Kingsville Welcome Sign"*  
**Migration Festival**

(Photo taken the farthest event – 5 ½ hours drive)



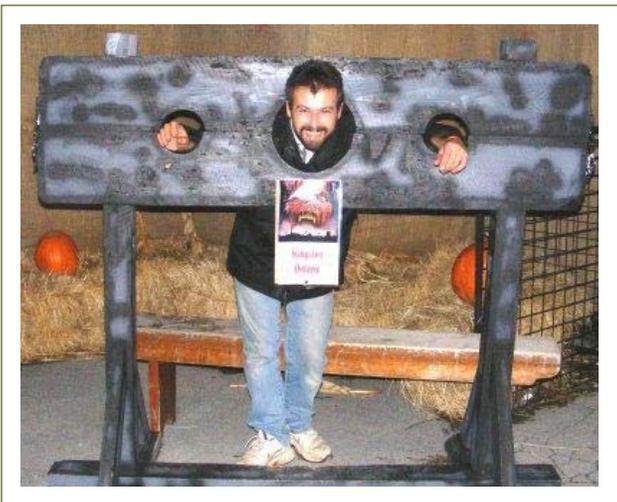
*"Judi and our Springer Spaniel - Dusty"*

**Festival Nomads - Ready for their Next Adventure**

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*"...comes to over ¼ million words. Who would have thought..."*

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*"My son-in-law Eddy in the stocks"*  
**Fort Fright – Fort Henry, Kingston**  
 (Photo taken at last event visited to date)

### *December – Reflections ... from page 2*

My initial idea was to visit a few festivals, take some photos and then come home and write about what I saw and heard. Once the article was completed I would publish it, with photos, on a daily Blog, "*Gary's Blog*". In April 2007 we visited our first event, the Elmvale Maple Syrup Festival. From there Judi and I visited several other festivals and events. After each visit we returned home I faithfully wrote and published "*Gary's Blog*". People seemed to like the articles, because they wrote and told me as much. I was encouraged, to say the least. Somewhere along the line a friend suggested that I make the Blog into a website. I hadn't thought about it until then, but it seemed like a great idea. That's when I registered the domain name, **Ontario Festivals Visited** and asked a web designer friend, Jill Conley, to help. Jill had designed a couple of other websites for me, so I knew she would do a great job. Jill created the new website and I transferred all of my "*Gary's Blog*" articles and photographs to the new site. Jill suggested that it would be a good idea if we attached a "*Blog*" to the website. She told me that it would help draw visitors and help with search engine optimization (SEO). This was a good move for the website, because it now consistently ranks in the top three searches for "**Ontario festivals**" on Google, Yahoo and Bing (MNS). Rather than move "*Gary's Blog*" to the new website, I created a new one called "*The Adventures of the Festival Nomad*". I used the name **The Festival Nomad**, because that's how I saw Judi and me, traveling week to week to different locations and different events. I now publish the "*Nomad Blog*" on a weekly basis and talk about the places we have visited and the people we have met. This Blog is aimed at people who like us, visit festivals and events for pleasure. So far I have written some 118 "*Nomad Blogs*" that contain almost 45,000 words! As for "*Gary's Blog*", I still maintain the Blog on my **StepOne Connections** website and write and publish articles on a weekly basis. "*Gary's Blog*" is aimed at organizers and tries to give them new festival and event ideas. I have now published 106 article and about 42,000 words! If you add the word count of my two Blogs to the word count of all the **Ontario Festivals Visited** articles I have written, that comes to over ¼ million words! Who would have thought that I had so much "hot air"! And, to add to all the words, Judi and I have taken over 15,000 digital photos and about 300 videos!

Now almost 3 years later, Judi and I have visited and written about 130 Ontario festivals and events and our website has grown steadily. From just a few web visitors in the beginning, we now average 7,500 visitors per month. In October alone we had over 10,000 visitors to our website! Both Judi and I have loved the "*adventures*" of the past and look forward to future visits. See you next year!

*Our Third Year ... from page 1*

Since that first issue we have written about a wide range of topics. In our second issue I vented my frustration in my "*When Disaster Strikes*". This was an article about the Roger's Centre and how unprepared they were for seniors and people in wheelchairs. In the next issue I talked about "*Judging Festivals*" for the Festivals and Events Ontario (FEO) achievement awards. In the March 2008 issue I wrote a fun article about a man (and dog) we met at the Prince Edward County Studio and Gallery Tour. The article is entitled "*A Dog Day Afternoon*". In April I thought it would be interesting to hold a "*Nomad Contest*". It turned out to be less than successful! In June I told you about a game my family and I used to play (*Bury All Your Horses*) when I was a kid. I introduced Judi to the game and we still play it today during long trips! My Festival Tip for July was "*What Not to Wear*". It seems that I was always guessing wrong on how much or how little cloths I should wear during a festival visit! August brought out the "*devil*" in me. We had visited a number of re-enactments and it seemed that the "*dead*" were always moving to a shaded spot. My article, "*Dead Men Talking*" described my observations! Our thirteenth issue kicked off a new year and new hopes for the future. Tim Hortons held a story contest called "*Where Every Cup Tells a Story*". I entered the contest with "My Tim Hortons' Story". It wasn't chosen, but I really enjoyed writing it. During the past year I have written about the different people I have known over the years. In March 2009 I wrote about my friend Kevin Stuart, "*The Voice*", who has been my partner in voicing the radio vignettes are attached to the **Ontario Festivals Visited** website. With his professional help, I sound halfway coherent! I have also written a number of articles promoting various Ontario festivals and events. Some of these include the Stratford Festival, IlluminAqua (Welland), the Toronto Harbourfront Centre and the Mississauga Waterfront Festival. Two of my favourite articles were written recently. In August Judi and I visited the Canal, Railway and Chocolate Festival in Smiths Falls. Here we had the privilege to participate in a voyageur canoe trip through the Smiths Falls Swale. My article entitled "*The Swale*" described our adventure. In last months my article, "*Friendly Places*", I acknowledged my top four places to visit, Buckhorn, Prescott, Lang Pioneer Village (Keene) and Smiths Falls. All-in-all it has been a wonderful two years presenting our festival and event adventures and ideas. We sincerely hope that you have enjoyed reading our articles and that you will continue in the future.



*"Dog Day Afternoon"*  
**Prince Edward County Studio & Gallery Tour**  
 (Photo taken at the end of a very long day!)

*You Want to Drive Where?! ... from page 2*

Since I was elected (*Judi had the only vote!*) to choose the events to visit, I have to take all these variables into consideration. That means the visits can't all be local! Once I have made my choice, I have to inform the other half of the team (*Judi*) where we are going. If it is a short distance, it's not a problem. Remember, distance = time (*to leave*). However, when it's a long distance, say 2 - 3 hours, that a much different story. I get the "*stare*". I feel like a 12 year old reporting to the principal's office. She asks me to explain where exactly it is. I try to tell her but my answer is normally trite, like "*Try thinking of this trip as a great adventure!*" or "*Half the fun is getting there!*" She just grits her teeth and says "*When are we going?*" Like a true Nomad, I love to travel (*in a car, not on a Camel*). It relaxes me! I can drive for hours without a break, so it's hard for me to understand. The funny part is that once we arrive Judi has a great time. That's what makes us a great team, I love to get there and she loves to be there! Once we finish the visit everything is back to normal... that is until I tell her that there is a great festival in Timiskaming that I want us to visit! **She is not amused!**



**"1218 Re-enactment Battle"  
Upper Canada Village**

(Photo inspired the Festival Nomad Blog – Dead Men Talking)

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*"We want to change our  
'one-way street' to a 'two-  
way street.'"*

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## Festival Tips

### We'd Love to Hear From You!

Over the past few years I have derived a great deal of pleasure writing about Ontario's great festivals and events. However, it's generally been a *"one-way street"*. Judi and I love to hear from other like-minded people, people who love to visit festivals and events and then talk about them. Over the years we have received e-mails and phone calls from readers (especially from newsletter readers), but not enough. In entering this new year, we would like to encourage as many people as possible to contact us and let us know what festivals they are visiting and what they like or dislike about them. If we get enough, we will start sharing them in our various articles. We have tried to make contacting us easy. Of course, e-mailing us is likely the easiest way, but there are other ways. At the bottom of each of my two Blogs (*Gary's Blog* and *The Adventures of the Festival Nomad*) there is a link to post comments. When I have received a comment, I have tried to respond if applicable. At the bottom of each festival article page we have added a *"Comment Button"*. Pushing this button will open a *"Comment Page"*. Underneath the Comment Button is a *"Survey Button"*. This will take you into a Survey questionnaire that asks you about that festival. If you have visited a festival that we have not visited, there is a *"Visitors Forum"* page to let us know what you think. If you send us a comment or ask a question we will respond. We want to change our *"one-way street"* to a *"two-way street"*. Talk to you soon!

## Christmas Bonus

### My Car Knows the Way...

(This article first appeared on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in my *Adventures of the Festival Nomad Blog*)

Desert Nomads ride Camels... right? And, Camels know how to find water... right? I'm a *"Nomad"*, but I don't ride a Camel! Heck, I don't even own one! Besides, if I rode a Camel it would just take too long to get to the festivals we visit and it would be very uncomfortable. We would, I think, cause a lot of excitement, but, frankly, for the most part, I like to go under the radar. Now, back to my ride! So, it stands to reason, if I don't go by Camel, I must go by some other means! Yes, my festival going friends, I go by Car! Like a good Camel, my car knows where all the *"watering holes"* are located along the festival way

Please see *My Car Knows the Way...* on page 6



**"Tim Hortons Booth"  
Burlington Sound of Music Festival**  
(Tim Hortons seems to play a big part in our **Festival Adventures**)

*My Car Knows the Way ...* from page 2

I am, of course, referring to "Tims"! Plus, my car knows who is BOSS, because if it didn't know where the "Tims" were, it would get into trouble with Judi! And Judi, when it comes to passing a "Tims" without stopping, has a "short fuse"! That being said, we make frequent stops during our festivals travels. Let me tell you, I like "Tims" coffee as much as anyone, however, I don't buy "Tims" coffee, I rent it and then, only for a very short time! That means, for you young Camels, that my body rejects the coffee quite quickly. That's where my "smart" car comes in for me. It remembers where all the washrooms are located. The only problem is that they are all located at "Tims" ... and so, my friends, the circle of life goes on!!

## Festival Tips

### Make Sure the Ink Stamp is Dry!

A month or so ago Judi and I visited an event that used an ink stamp as a way of letting them know who has paid their admission fee. This is an inexpensive way of keeping track of who has paid. After receiving our "stamp of approval", we began to wander the event. We were about half way through our explorations when we decided to sit down to rest. I was wearing light coloured pants and I noticed a black mark on them when we sat down. I asked Judi if she knew where it had come from and she said that she didn't know. I took a closer look and saw that it had the inverse impression of the stamp that was on our hands. It was the same! I looked at Judi's hand and the ink was all smeared! Somehow she had managed to put her hand on my pants while the ink was still wet, thus the stain on the pants. Fortunately the mark came out when the pants were washed, but it did produce a great "Festival Tip"! "Let the ink dry before you start putting your hands in places where they shouldn't be!"



*"Entrance to the Toronto Zoo"*  
**35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the Toronto Zoo**  
 (The Ink Stamp used at the Zoo inspired our latest  
**Festival Tip**)



*"Santa comes to Cobourg!"*  
**2008 Cobourg Santa Claus Parade**

***"We wish you all a very Merry  
 Christmas and Happy Holidays!"***

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P.O. Box 272  
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 1-888-818-0255

Fax:  
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E-mail:  
[info@ontariofestivalvisited.ca](mailto:info@ontariofestivalvisited.ca)