



Spring 2012

Newsletter

Of the
Retirees
Association
Of Mohawk College



The **Retirees Hiking Group** will meet again on June 2nd in the Stoney Creek Battlefield area. After lunch at a local restaurant, the group will take in a reenactment of the War of 1812.

Annual General Meeting: June 5th, 2012 at Michelangelo's. The guest speaker will be Sharron Orovan-Johnston speaking about "Humor in Life". The cost for members and

partners: \$20 per person.

Christmas at St. Jacobs: Wednesday, December 12th. The day includes shopping, lunch at the Stone Crock restaurant and a performance of Norm Foster's comedy, "Love Lies Bleeding". Cost is \$90.00 for members and one guest, \$95.00 for others.

Shaw Festival: Scheduled for the fall. See enclosed flyer for more details.

Other events being considered include a cooking class at the Ancaster Old Mill, a visit to a donkey farm near Puslinch, the raptor centre at Mountsberg and a Social Media workshop.

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GYPSIES 2012

We have been reading the articles from the hiking group with interest. Great advice and it sounds like very enjoyable hikes. We follow the same general principles when we head out. The most important consideration is that when you reach your destination or "turn around point", you are only one half done. Another consideration is that if the hike there is down hill, coming back it will be uphill. That doesn't mean that a downhill hike is easier, it is just that you use very different muscles. Climbing a rough trail you can see your next step easily and use the balls of your feet to propel yourself upward. On the other hand coming down the same rough terrain, you are looking at the next foot placement from a higher point and use your heels more. After a while your knees and calves start to register their "displeasure".

Out here in Arizona,

except for a few desert trails (that are kind of uninteresting to us) most of the trails are up and down and generally over very rough terrain. The most important consideration for us is the character of the destination (what there is to see, do or photograph) and then distance, elevation gain or loss (to the destination) and carrying enough water. In the past three weeks



WUPATKI: A three storey complex, home to about 180 people. There were 5 similar settlements on the surrounding plateau in the shadow of Sunrise Volcano

LIFESCAPES

I thought I might send you some information on a programme that I've been involved with. I am currently participating in a programme called "Lifescapes" at our local public library. The program has been offered at the Brantford Library for some time. This is actually its fifth year. As I understand it, the Lifescapes program is all over North America having been first offered in Las Vegas. It is a program designed for seniors to learn how to write their memoirs. As explained, at our first session, a memoir is just one story involving something about your life, rather than a biography which goes from birth to death. I suppose if you write all your memoirs, then it will take you through all your years.

I enrolled in the 4th year of the program here in Brantford. The objective of the program is that participants will write one story and at the conclusion of the programme, those stories are published in a booklet that is both copyrighted and available for anyone to borrow should they wish to read them. When I saw the notice in the local paper last year, I thought, that's something I've been meaning to do for my kids for a very long time and I signed up. I wondered if enough people would sign up so that the program would go. Not to worry. When I arrived on the prescribed day, the room was absolutely full. We did a quick turn around the group to introduce ourselves. It was so interesting to meet all those seniors and hear tidbits of their lives.

Our greatest problem within the group was deciding what 'memoir' we should write about. The leader of the programme gave us lots of help. She had a series of overhead slides to help us on our way. Still, it wasn't an easy task. We talked about things that might jog our memories. We shared some of our thoughts. Not easy for some people. At any rate, we soldiered on. For me, I feel as if I've lived three completely different lives of which Mohawk was only one small part. Since I really wanted to write for my kids, I wondered what I could write that would be of interest to

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we have been hiking around Sedona, Arizona. Most of the trails have elevation gains or losses of 50 to 150 metres per mile. Some have gains of 300 metres and they are tough to negotiate. As a result we usually avoid them except if there is a spectacular photo opportunity or if it is a pride thing. On one trail, after a 2km hike (up about 75 metres), a final climb up another 75 metres (almost straight up) led us to the top of Devils Arch (a sandstone arch that rises over the trail below). At the top, a group of young people (20's) were surprised to see us and wanted

to know how old we were. When we told them 74 and 73 respectively, they just started to clap and wanted to know where we were from and if we were enjoying our visit to the area.

Sedona Arizona is appropriately referred to as "red rock" country. Imagine driving down a long valley road (through desert hills intermittently covered with cactus, sage and mesquite) and rounding a corner to be presented with huge rock formations of red sandstone. Bell Rock, The Courthouse, Cathedral Rock, The Coffee Pot and even Snoopy Rock all get their names because that is what they look like. Now understand that these are huge. A two hour hike will get you 1/2 way around Cathedral Rock and from every direction the Rock presents a different view. Different spires, different cracks, different backgrounds all contribute to the enjoyment of every curve of the trail. Another important consideration is the the position of the sun and the kinds of shadows that "happen".



Beth and I and the dogs hiking to Chicken Rock overlook above Sedona, Arizona 3 km one way. We are: still on the road

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anyone else. With some coaching, I decided on a couple of experiences that I had had long before I ever joined the College. I wrote them up and presented them to our leader for some feedback.

One of my stories was about having been interviewed by Barbara Walters on national TV. I had mentioned that I still had an audio tape that had been made off air and she suggested that perhaps I should include in my story some of the dialogue that took place. It took me a little while to find the tape, and when I did, I wondered how I would listen to it again, cassette tape players no longer part of our everyday stuff. Then, I remembered that my old van had a tape deck. I bundled up (it was winter time) and went out to my van to listen to a very old audio tape that a friend in Omaha had taped off air. I sounded about 15 yrs. old, although I was a very young 27. Having listened to it, I decided that if I had been asked those very same questions today, I would have answered them quite differently and so I decided that I would leave my story exactly as I had written it, without the dialogue. That same day, Pierre Salinger, the other guest on Barbara's show, took me for a

coffee. Later, one of my sons, having read the piece suggested that when I do my book for the family that I include my thoughts about not including the dialogue. Good idea. When my dear daughter read my two stories, she was crying and she said "Mom, I didn't know that."

Since I had written two short story memoirs, somewhat related, they were published in our Lifescapes booklet, "Roads We've Travelled"

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Most of these formations have trails that are accessed from parking areas along main highways. Easy access (parking) means that these trails are well used. Other trailheads are in more remote areas (more difficult to access) accessible by gravel roads or trails for "high clearance" vehicles. We like these best and our Suzuki has been able to handle the roughest of the roads leading to the trail heads.

The area in and around Sedona was home to a number of different native civilizations beginning in 1000 AD and then abruptly ending around 1400 AD. The reason for their "disappearance" from this area is a regular topic of discussion among historians. Some support the "climate change" theory based on recordable tree measurements. Others argue assimilation and even others argue disease. No one knows for sure, however, their settlement here is evidenced by their buildings (most in rock alcoves where they have been protected from the ravages of nature) and pictographs and petroglyphs. The Sedona area is also home to at least 4 vortexes. These vortexes are purported to provide healing and rejuvenation results for thousands of people who visit them every year. Sadly we were not privileged to feel their effect even though we visited at least three. To the First Nation people in the area they are very holy places.

Our next stop was the Grand Canyon and the surrounding area. Two days of walking the south rim trail (we did not venture down into the canyon) allowed us to photograph this 1.5 km deep canyon from many angles. The first day, was very clear so the pictures are crisp and detailed. The second day was hazy so

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as two stories together. We had a book launch at the final gathering, and it was quite wonderful. I bought five booklets, one for each of my children, and one to keep. A wonderful experience indeed and one that I was looking forward to repeating the following year. Unfortunately, the leader of the local program took a job with another library and we learned that the program would not be continued. Recently, I received an e-mail from two of the previous participants telling me that the program was on again. I was quick to call the library and sign up.

We've had two sessions; however, inasmuch as I'm going to be away on a very long winter vacation sailing along the coast of South America, I knew that I would miss several sessions. What to do. I wanted to write about another life experience I'd had many years ago, but to do so, I had to do my research to make sure that I had my dates correct and I needed to find a box of material that I had saved over the years. I searched all one day and couldn't find the box. The next day, I was determined and I searched every possible nook and cranny where I might have squirreled away that box. Well, I finally found it and I spent a whole day going through pictures, newspaper clippings, and all manner of stuff I had kept over the years. What an experience that was. It seems my entire life was in that box. I laughed and I cried. I found bits and pieces that I'd completely forgotten about. I found letters; I found newspaper clippings; I found pictures; I found old yellow notes. I found some wonderful people that had slipped from my thoughts. I drank about three glasses of wine through it all. Mostly, I laughed. I truly can't believe that I did some of the things that I did. I actually found a copy of the application form that I'd completed for my initial appointment at Mohawk College and I can't believe what I did. I had stapled a photograph and an article from an Australian magazine taken as I was addressing a huge group of people at a National Conference in Melbourne. I'm shown winking my eye and making a thumbs up sign! My gawd, did I really do that? Yes, I did.

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the pictures were less distinct but the haze contributed to a kind of mystical look. Day two was not a complete loss because we were able to tour the Sunrise Volcano area's lava and ash covered valleys and hillsides (last erupted around 1250 AD) and an existing pueblo that was built around 1000 AD. At one time this desert area hosted thousands of people in a series of neighbouring pueblos. When the volcano first erupted the light ash layer provided soil nutrients and additional rainfall resulted in a thriving agricultural community. The volcano continued sporadic eruptions and by the time it had quieted, the ash layer was so deep that farming was no longer possible and by 1250, the pueblos stood empty. However, their buildings still stand after more than 750 years. One of the legacies of the volcano's eruption is underground caverns (currently unexplored) filled with nothing but air. There is no access to these caverns except for a crack in the rock known as a "blow hole". This provides a kind of natural ventilation system. On a warm day (with a high barometric pressure) the "blow hole" exhausts cool air. When it is colder, the air is sucked in to the hole. This was a most fascinating place.

Bullhead City's (our next stop) claim to fame is their next door neighbour, just across the Colorado river, Laughlin Nevada. Laughlin was established by Don Laughlin in 1964 with a small casino and an advertised, all you can eat, menu of baked chicken for 98 cents. Today there are 12 major casinos and Laughlin is the third most visited city in Nevada after Las Vegas and Reno. The Colorado river's Mohave Dam, Christmas Pass and Oatman (on old route 66) along with a couple of visits to the Casinos kept us busy.

In the Las Vegas area there are many points of interest in addition to the "Strip". In our first few days there, we concentrated on the geographic attractions. Fire Rock State Park was an all day excursion through some of the most spectacular bright red rock formations we have ever seen. The drive combined with hikes into box canyons and heights overlooking Lake Mead resulted in a very late return to the coach. We spent time at Red Rock Canyon high above Vegas and

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In going through the pile of stuff, I found letters that I had received from students and colleagues and I could hardly believe them myself. I truly didn't realize that my career at Mohawk, and my public service activities had touched so many people. I had almost forgotten who I really am. It felt so good to know that I had actually made a difference.

So, if you belong to a library, speak to the decision makers and ask them to put the Lifescapes program on their list of programs to offer. It's a wonderful program and hopefully, your library will do the necessary research and offer it in your community. I hope they do. If you are interested, you can access the Brantford Lifescapes booklets on the internet and you will be glad that you did. If your local library doesn't offer the program, then I encourage each and everyone of you to begin to write your memoirs. You will be glad that you did.

Cheers, Kay

- Kay Boyd



Mohawk Hikers

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that prompted us to spend a Saturday night on the Strip. It has been a few years since we visited those famous casinos such as Caesar's, Flamingo, Mirage, Treasure Island and Circus Circus and had heard that many more have been added. Now the "strip" extends for miles with names like New York, Bellagio, Paris and Excaliber. There are many more slots and tables willing to take your money. The nice part about the strip though is you do not have to spend any money to be entertained. Every Casino has an outdoor extravaganza show. The Bellagio has an amazing outdoor water show and a conservatory/arboretum. Treasure Island has an outdoor "pirate show". The Mirage has a Volcano and Circus Circus has a free circus. If you want to attend a Celine Dione concert, however, that will cost \$150.00 per ticket. There is lots to do and great meals to be had in Vegas.

Today, (March 19) we have been camped at St George, Utah for a week. From here we have hiked in Zion National park on three different days and spent a day at Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park. By far the most scenic drive in Zion is to enter by the eastern entrance. It is difficult not to stop every 100 metres because of the constantly changing scenery. As well, right across the road from our park there is a Bureau of Land Management preserve which was the site of a 1850 Morman settlement called Harrisburg. We combined a hike through the old town site with a long walk into a narrow red rock canyon to three large spring fed pools. Now after stocking up we will head back into central Utah to tour The Grand Staircase, Bryce Canyon, Capital Reef, Glen Canyon, Natural Bridges and Arches National Parks over the next two weeks. That will be the topic of our next article.

- Vern and Beth Pich...
we are: Still On The Road



Vera Woronchanka, retired from the Computer Science Department, has been kept very busy in retirement:

She is a board member of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario (HAAO) and serves as HAAO Golden Horseshoe Region President, an area that includes hospital auxiliaries in Burlington, Milton, Simcoe, Dunnville, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, St Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby, Hagersville, Port Colborne, and Welland.

Vera is the past president of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH) Auxiliary, the Finance Committee Chair and the co-manager of the Gift Shop.

At her church she is a member of the perogy team and the ladies auxiliary.

In her "spare time", she babysits her granddaughter.

In the past she has served as President of the WLMH auxiliary as well as a board member. She also was an inaugural Board member of the McNally House Hospice.

Vera is an outstanding example of the good things done in our communities by retiree volunteers. Keep up the good work, Vera!

Share with us YOUR volunteer stories.

The Mohawk Retirees "Laid Back" Hiking Group: Confederation Hike

On April 4th, a group met at Hutch's on the Hamilton Beach strip to hike along a portion of the Confederation Trail. The weather was sunny but a stiff easterly breeze greeted us. Bundled up in some winter wear we headed down this concrete trail. Once beside the homes, we were protected from the wind and it became springy "warm". Some were able to hike to the canal while others enjoyed the day and strolled at a leisurely pace. One point of interest was the Dieppe Monument. On return, we lunched at Barangas on the Beach. Future hikes are in the planning stage so stay tuned.

- Barb Hallam



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