


From Beyond The Pond



2008 Edition

The Mallinsons, 187 Altamira Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, L4C 4C6

Dear All,

This year seems to have been very mundane compared to last year. There were a few happenings however.

James is presently on a sabbatical from work, up until mid-February. He is spending his time learning more



about architecture as it relates to health care. As part of that, he attended a conference in Washington in November, and managed to visit a number of the Smithsonian museums in that city.

James is still in the Toronto Choral Society, and participated in three concerts this year, of which we attended two. In addition, he has had voice lessons to improve his contributions to the choir.



Earlier in the year, he took on responsibility for a cat named Bandolero who was one of the many cats under the care of Sue's friend Bonnie. Since moving in, Bandolero has become the alpha cat in James's co-operative, and now has ragged ears to show for it.

Of course, we have become caretakers for Bandolero whenever James goes away to places like Washington, or even when James feels the cat needs a break at the cottage!

Just recently, James has been asked to sing in April in an Australian production called "Scotland The Brave" in its performances at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall and New York's Lincoln Center. He is quite excited about this.

Rebecca continues with her studies at York University, and spent the summer taking a condensed organic chemistry course. Unfortunately her studies have been interrupted by a strike of part-time staff at the university since mid-November. It looks as though some kind of resolution is likely within the next two



weeks, so hopefully the Fall term won't be extended too far into the winter. Rebecca is still working part-time at ISIS, an international history of science journal based at the university, and continues to regularly create different soups with her friend Beth. On her

own, she has created "forgotten fridge" soup, which contains anything in the fridge which is on the verge of being thrown out. Consequently, the results are varied. Rebecca also continues to exercise at NIA, maybe to combat the effects of the soup.

Chris finally got rid of his old yellow truck. It was hauled away by a wrecker who gave him \$100, and probably sent it to be shredded. (If you are interested in such things, look up "car shredder" on YouTube). In July, Chris and I took a jet boat trip up the lower Niagara rapids and into the whirlpool. The rest of the family was not interested ("chicken" in other words). It was an exciting ride, and one on which all passengers got thoroughly soaked.



Sue broke her ankle when leaving a friend's cottage in the spring, so was on crutches for several weeks. Fortunately it seems to have healed up, and is not impeding her activities at all now. Sue continues to be involved in the activities of the Canadian Federation of University Women, including hiking, day jaunts to places of interest, and the book club. They have started a couples club, so we have been to several events such as 5-pin bowling, dinner theatres, horse racing and wine and cheese parties. Sue is still tutoring students in math, but it is all a result of word of mouth, as she is not looking for the work.

I, David, supposedly retired at the end of June, but thanks to the economic downturn, am working full time again. However, I enjoyed my four or five months off, and felt refreshed and ready to handle anything again. During the summer, I got involved in helping Sue's cousin Sally and her husband Byron, a cattle-dealer, in getting their business more computerized. As part of that, I developed a facility to capture radio-frequency ID numbers from cattle ear tags as the animal are processed (branded, tagged and, if necessary, castrated) through a cattle chute, and to record them on a cattle export form. It made a change to be dealing with physical entities instead of boring stuff like financial instruments. Presently, I am the project manager and business analyst on a project for the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, developing a system to handle appointments for vendors and carriers to make deliveries to the LCBO's warehouses. One little incident in the spring found me riding a falling ladder as it slipped on the deck when I was descending from the roof. From Rebecca's point of view (she was watching from the dining room), it was "raining Dads" as I crashed onto an outdoor table, sustaining some nasty scrapes (still have the scars) but fortunately nothing more serious.



Happenings

In the spring, Rebecca, Sue and I cycled alongside the Don River, following the people who were paddling the Don (in canoes), an annual event, as it is ordinarily closed to boaters. There are good bike paths all the way, and we thoroughly enjoyed the day which, although chilly and somewhat strenuous, was very sunny.

Soon after Sue broke her ankle, we were driving up to the cottage late at night after our horse racing event, and had an encounter with a raccoon at high speed. It managed to hit the front of the car dead centre, as though it was timing its walk across the road for that

purpose. It's amazing how much damage a large raccoon can do. The final bill exceeded \$3K.

Our major event of the year was yet another trip to England, to check up on Mother and Anne. They are still happy in their respective homes. Recently, Mother had a fall, but fortunately did not break anything. Two days later she was as right as rain, but had no memory of having fallen.

While in England, we took the opportunity to visit relatives and friends again, and managed to see 25 people in all, including cousin Pat, husband Archie, and their daughter Suzanna, aunt Barbara, cousin Ruth, aunt Joyce, cousin Rosemary and husband Barry, their son Dan and his wife Sarah, cousin Rowena and her sons Ben and Jamie, John and Janet Burton, Geoff and Rita Burton, their daughter Katharine and her boyfriend, Tim and Sue Coffey (friends from Toronto long ago), and Peter and Judy Semper (Peter is an old colleague from school who, up until 2004, I had not seen for 40 years. Many thanks to all of you for your hospitality.

Along the way, we were treated to a tour of Cambridge by Rosemary and Rowena, views of Ashdown Forest and a visit to Hever Castle with Geoff and Rita, and a tour of Salisbury Cathedral (where we saw a copy of the Magna Carta) with Peter and Judy. We also enjoyed staying in, and seeing the New Forest where Peter and Judy live, and where farm animals and horses roam free. Fortunately, I managed not to hit any of them, as the results would likely have been far more severe than our encounter with the raccoon.

On our own, we also visited Blenheim Palace, which is an incredible place that was given to the first Duke of Marlborough by Queen Anne in gratitude for having thwarted the military ambitions of France's Louis XIV. Clearly, no expense was spared in building and furnishing it, with Capability Brown laying out the grounds. The Marlborough family was not rich and eventually restored their finances when the 9th Duke married Consuelo Vanderbilt, and obtained a dowry of



£2.5 million, an enormous sum at the time. That is quite a story in itself, as the Duke told his bride on the wedding day that he loved another woman. Another thing that amazed us was the number of pheasants running around the grounds. It was like a free range chicken farm.

We stayed one night in Stratford, but having spent so much time at Blenheim, we had time only to visit Anne Hathaway's cottage. It looks primitive now, but in Anne's time it was even more primitive, with earth floors and no glass in the windows.

Cottage Life

Thanks to my "retirement", we spent a lot of time at the cottage in the summer. To finish building the dock deck, I designed special brackets and had them fabricated by a local welding company. The results look pretty good. Because the water in the lake was very high this year, some of the dock supports were too short, and I had to get longer ones made. Even then, there were a couple of supports that had to be clamped to raise the supporting brackets to the right height.



Sue and I trailed the motor boat over to Huntsville one day, and launched it on the Muskoka River. From there, we proceeded through Fairy Lake to the Brunel Locks, and then down to Mary Lake where we spent some time riding down to Port Sydney and back. As an afterthought, we also sped around Fairy Lake on the way back.

Much of our time was spent in clearing up the cottage lot. Over the years, piles of brush had accumulated here and there, so we gathered these together and had several burning sessions. As you can only light fires in the evening and early in the morning, we took advantage of the early morning blazes (which we burn in a large metal barrel) to cook our breakfasts out in the open. The grounds are much tidier now.

After Christmas, on December 28th, the whole family drove up to the cottage to relax for a few days there. It was very windy, and an hour after we arrived a tree fell on the power line and cut the power to all the cottages and homes on our side of the lake. Although the tree was removed the next day, power was not restored for another day.

Fortunately, we had enough candles and lanterns to give us light at night, and the wood stoves kept us warm, but we couldn't watch any movies, and reading in candlelight is hard on the eyes. After New Year, in an activity that seems to have become a tradition, Chris and his two friends from next door built a sled run down the lot, starting on the pile of snow that we had shoveled off the roof. Somehow, they managed to avoid serious injury when they hurtled through the trees at the lower end. Chris has also, as a minor pastime, got into the habit of sliding down and off the roof, and crashing onto the piled-up snow

Normally, we manage to keep the cottage warm, but on our last night I did not get up at 4 a.m. to feed the wood stove, as we wanted it to be cold when we left. When we woke up, the temperature outside was -22°C, and inside it was 1°C. It did not take us long to decide to build the fire, and that the wood stove would be left warm!

The Bowes Family (Sue's sister and family).

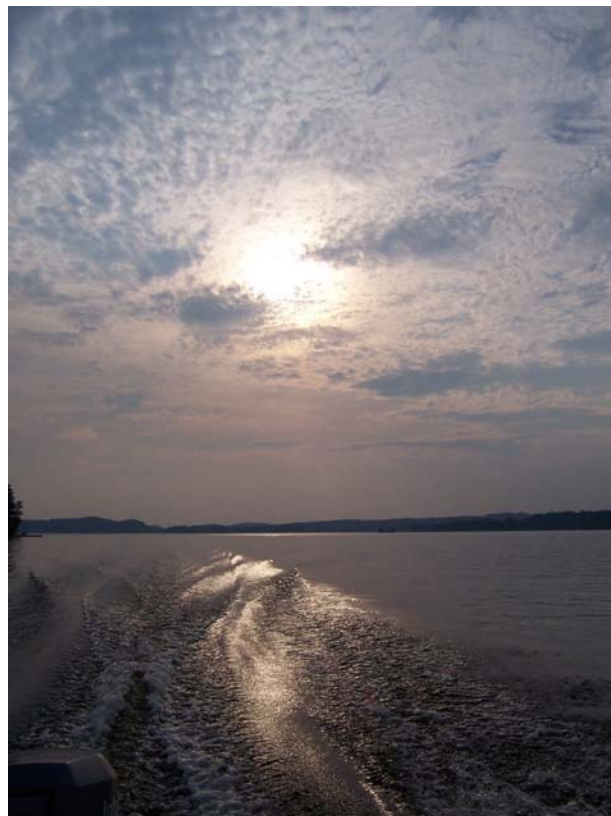
The Bowes grandchildren are all growing like weeds. During the summer, they were all at the cottage for a couple of weeks. After Christmas, we were able to meet up with Dan's family at the cottage, and enjoyed meals and skating with them.



Libby and Bill and all four grand-children

May you all have a successful and happy 2009.

David, Sue, James, Chris and Rebecca



Late in the day on Fairy Lake



Columbine at the cottage



Fall scene in Muskoka