



From Beyond The Pond



2016 Edition

The Mallinsons, Orillia, Ontario, Canada

Dear All,

It's that time of the year again, when I turn my mind to this newsletter, and think about the things we have done in the last year (and maybe about some of the things we should have done but haven't!)

I have been developing a presentation on our China trip for our Probus club, and that, together with a little paid work, has been occupying my time since the beginning of the year. The presentation took place on Monday, February 27th, and was very well received.

2016 in brief:

Winter: Another somewhat snowy winter, which was enlivened by our student from Belgium, Bert Neyrinck. Bert fitted in very well, and stayed with us for three months. We spent most of January preparing for his arrival by painting the bedroom and bathroom that he was to use.

Bert is an adventurous type, and when he heard about the Polar Bear Dip at the Orillia Winter Carnival, he was adamant that he was going to take part. Accordingly, we turned out on a day when the temperature was -14C to watch him plunge through the ice into the lake. Like all the participants, he was out of the water again in no time, with his body steaming in the cold. As he is a keen volleyball player, he arranged to practice with the Georgian College team in Barrie to keep his hand in while away from his regular team back in Belgium.

Other than that, we kept fit by snowshoeing and hiking, but did not get out on cross-country skis at all this year as there were a number of warm spells when the snow melted.

Spring: David participated with the Orillia Vocal Ensemble in



Rickshaw ride in Beijing

singing in concerts in February and May. Also in May, he organized a successful trip to Stratford for our Probus club to see *A Chorus Line*.

In April, with much regret, we decided to cut down the large silver maple in front of our home as it was a fast-growing tree and was already shading our solar panels. Accordingly we got one man in to cut it down, and another to grind out the stump. We replaced the tree with a flowering crab apple which will not grow tall enough to be a problem. The maple was a beautiful feature of our lot, and bringing it down was quite traumatic. Following that, we obtained several loads of free compost from the city, sieved it all,

spread it over the lawn and reseeded it. The lawn is now in the best shape it has ever been.

St. Paul's Church (the one we were married in) decided to make their sanctuary into a multi-purpose meeting hall, and removed all their pews to replace them with comfortable individual chairs. We were able to buy a six-foot pew and now have it in our front hall where it is very useful for storing shoes and sitting on to put on footwear.

Summer: In early June, we were involved in the gala weekend for the Stephen Leacock Award for Humour, attending a "meet the authors" pub night on Friday, ferrying one of the three finalist authors and her boyfriend around town and attending a lunch and the gala dinner itself on Saturday, and taking in a breakfast event on Sunday.

Later in the month we brought our motor boat down from the cottage and I replaced the water pump in the lower unit of the outboard motor. Before taking it back to the cottage, we took it for a spin on Lake Couchiching, ending up taking it all the way to lock 42 on the Trent/Severn canal and back again. It was a beautiful day, though rather



Selfie with Bert Neyrinck

windy, and we covered about fifty miles in total.

In July, at James' suggestion and with his and Elsa's help, we scraped and repainted the bottom of the boathouse, leaving it looking in much better condition. This year we will have to tackle the top and maybe the cottage itself. In August, I had surgery on my little finger to straighten it, as over the last several years it had been gradually bending. Seven months later, it has still not healed properly, and now I can't bend it very much. Not a success.

Also in August, Libby arranged a McKay family picnic at a campground, and it was attended by nearly 90 family members. A lot of fun was had by all on a very hot day. One weekend at the cottage, we welcomed our friends Steve and Marilyn when they flew in for a visit in their aircraft – an exciting event as Steve took us up for flights over the local area.

Autumn/Fall: Our major excitement of the year was at the end of September when we took off for a three-week visit to China. Prior to leaving, we read three books on China to bone up on its history and be more prepared. What we found is that China is a mixture of very sophisticated advanced society and third world country. Our overall impression is that China is definitely a country that is going somewhere and will be a major power - if it is not already. We spent three days in Beijing, where we visited the Temple of Heaven, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the Summer Palace. Then it was on to Xi'an by air to see the terra cotta warriors and a Tang Dynasty Show. Early the following morning, we flew out again to Wuhan where we stayed the night before being transported by coach to Jingzhou where we boarded the ship for a four-day cruise on the Yangtze River. We had a tour of the Three Gorges Dam where the ship passed through the locks overnight, and then through some very large gorges. We passed many sights, including new towns that had been re-located before the gorges were flooded. The cruise ended at Chongqing, the largest city in China, with 32 million people. From there we flew to Shanghai where we visited Suzhou, the Venice of China, a city with many canals, and Shanghai itself. There, we had an embarrassing experience when we accidentally locked ourselves out of our room in our nightclothes when putting out our luggage late at night in preparation for an early departure the next morning. Fortunately a Chinese family rescued us by informing the front desk. Then it was onwards to Guilin by air where we saw the incredible karst limestone mountains the region is known for, and visited a



tea plantation. Two highlights of the trip were a raft trip on the River Li, and seeing an open-air performance that took place on the river at Yangshuo that involved 600 performers. The production was based on a well-known 1962 movie called *Liu San Jie* (the Third Sister of the Liu family), which in turn is based on an old folk tale. From Guilin we took a high-speed train to Guangzhou, reaching speeds of 245 km/hr, and were then

transported to Zhuhai, close to Macau, by bus. The following day we visited the sights in Macau, then took a high-speed ferry to Hong Kong, arriving there in the evening. We had a tour of Hong Kong the next morning that ended up at the Stanley Market on the south side of the island, and there we met up with cousin Rowena. Rowena kindly treated us to a meal of hamburgers (a change from the Chinese food we had eaten for three weeks) at her Ladies Recreational Club, and took us to catch a ferry across the harbour back to Kowloon and the hotel, via Hong Kong's splendid subway system.

All in all it was a wonderful trip, and definitely corrected some misconceptions we had of the country. Because we missed Thanksgiving, Rebecca hosted a late Thanksgiving lunch for the whole family the day after we got back, which was very welcome.

Life seemed a little humdrum for the rest of the year after our travels, but we did get back to hiking, socializing and attending concerts.

At Christmas, as Rebecca was flying to New Zealand on Boxing Day, James and Elsa hosted a splendid Christmas dinner at their home this year. This is only the second time we have had Christmas away from our home in all the time we have been married.



James and Elsa:

For Elsa and James, the big news is that they are expecting their first child! The baby is due mid to late August and everyone is excited. Elsa is doing well so far and has a curious penchant for grapefruit.

Elsa and James continue to work in architecture, Elsa at Canadian Architect magazine and James at Perkins+Will, both in Toronto. Ownership at Canadian Architect changed in 2015, which meant Elsa needed to adjust to a smaller organization, a heavier workload and a new publisher, but the magazine now has an associate editor again and the new publisher looks promising, so Elsa is looking forward to the magazine expanding into new territory in the future. James was very busy, working as project architect on a string of post-secondary buildings for Ryerson University, the University of Western Ontario and Trent University. While very demanding at times, the projects are inspired and have substantial sustainability goals that make them worthwhile.

In June, Elsa and James spent two weeks in British Columbia, the highlight of which was a trip up the west coast to the islands of Haida Gwaii. A separate world from the rest of Canada, half of the islands are the home of the Haida first nations people. Although colonization and disease epidemics in the late 19th century nearly wiped out the Haida, the community is still very rooted in Haida culture and James and Elsa were able to visit some of the ancient village sites, taste Haida cuisine between hiking up and down the beautiful mountains and beaches.

Rebecca:

Throughout 2016, Rebecca continued her work at Enbridge Gas Distribution as a Program Design Analyst. This allowed her to take a trip to Phoenix, Arizona in February in order to attend a four-day conference on energy efficiency programs. By extending her stay in Arizona for a few more days, Rebecca was able to add in a visit to the Grand Canyon, which she found to be just as breathtaking as it is touted to be. Outside of work, in addition to her various dance-related activities (yoga, Zumba, aerial silks and contemporary dance), Rebecca re-acquainted herself with archery through three



months of shooting lessons. This was in keeping with her long-standing desire to become an elf – a goal she advanced in 2016 by taking a trip to Middle Earth itself. Leaving on Boxing Day, Rebecca took a three-week-long vacation to New Zealand, where she enjoyed tall-ship sailing, sea kayaking, hiking, and horseback riding, in addition to visiting various Lord of the Rings filming locations. Needless to say, she took far more pictures than was sensible and wishes she were still there.

Chris:

Most of Chris' year has been devoted to the further development and marketing of the Grip video game. The game was released onto Steam (the on-line publisher) last February to good reception.

Chris attended the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco last March, displaying the game in the 2nd biggest booth on the floor, and took the opportunity to explore the San Francisco area.

He also exhibited the game at PAX East in Boston (PAX was originally known as Penny Arcade Expo), was sick as a dog with a cold, but muscled through it with the help of a locally-hired student.



The team had some development struggles in the fall of 2016, but persevered, and is shortly to release a multi-player version of the game that can be played over the internet.

Chris flew to Las Vegas in December, which was cool for a single visit, but he says he probably won't go back. The "valley of fire" about an hour from the city made the trip worthwhile.

After having worked with his partner Rob (who lives in Indonesia) for over two years without meeting him, Chris has just booked a flight to Singapore and Indonesia in April to connect with Rob in person for the first time. No doubt he will be doing some sightseeing while he is there.

Sue:

Every month, Sue usually goes to her Old Bags luncheon and her CFUW Orillia meetings which always have good speakers and refreshments. She attempts to get her books read for her two book clubs and has especially enjoyed *The Prison Book Club* and *Canoe Country* this year.

We usually go to the local theatre plays, TIFF movies held in Orillia and history speakers each month where we discover a little more each time about our adopted city. Our Probus Appy nights are always fun to attend as well. Sue leads a CFUW hike every Tuesday morning. As our husbands come now, we usually have 8 -10 walkers. David and I both turned 70 last year! We still don't consider ourselves seniors – most days that is. Our China trip this fall was our celebration treat. Sadly, three of Sue's cousins passed away this spring and summer – Jim, Ron and Vee. We have been very blessed to have known them and experience the joy that they brought to others. Sue continues to go to physiotherapy for her aching legs, and back. Her new physiotherapist has pinpointed the trouble as originating from her sciatic nerve crossing the piriformis muscle and a hip out of alignment; she has improved Sue's well-being greatly. She now has little pain while walking and hopes this continues.

David:

David is still handling membership for our Probus club, and we continue to participate in dinners, outings and theatre visits. He took a break from the Orillia Vocal Ensemble in the fall, as we were going to China and the fall is always a very busy time of year anyway. He is still on the boards of three volunteer organizations; the Probus club, the choir, and Leacock Associates, and is becoming more involved in these organizations all the time. Recently, he obtained a contract to develop a web site for another Probus club, and has now almost finished it.

We wish you all health, happiness and success in all you do in the coming year.

David and Sue.



Bert about to take the Polar Plunge



Sue feeding trumpeter swans



Lisa at a book-signing session

Pics



Rachel driving boat – David worried!



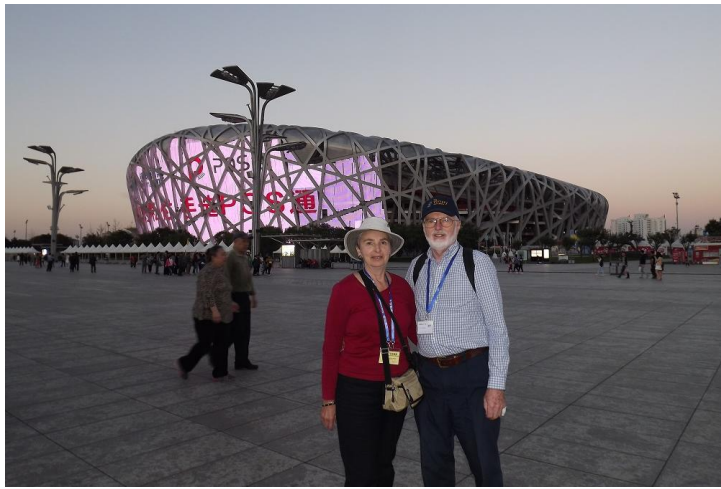
Elsa stripping paint off the boathouse



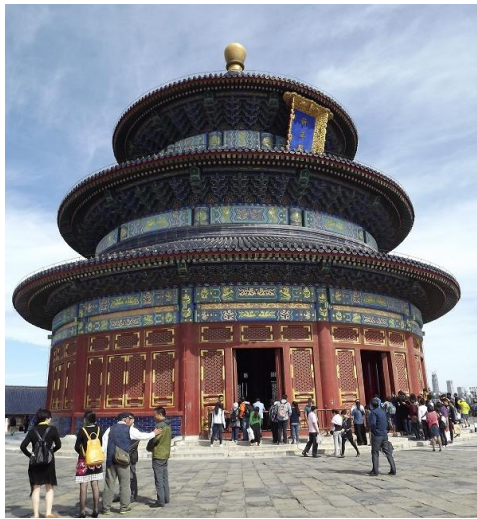
Steve and Marilyn drop in



Mallinson and Bowes families at the picnic



Olympic stadium in Beijing



Temple of Heaven
In Beijing



Modern Shanghai



Terra Cotta Warriors, Xi'an



Rafting on River Li at Yangshuo



Japanese Fishing Cormorant



Sun and Moon Pagodas in Guilin



Qilin sculpture at Summer Palace, Beijing



With Rowena in Hong Kong



Junk in Hong Kong Harbour