



From Beyond The Pond



2020 Edition

The Mallinsons, Orillia, Ontario, Canada

Dear All,

Well! What a year! Let's hope we don't have another one like it. Like everyone else, our lives were turned upside down by the pandemic, but now there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel. The only member of our family known to catch Covid-19 so far (touch wood) has been my sister Anne. Several residents of her retirement home caught the virus, as did some of the staff. Anne spent two weeks in hospital on oxygen and IV drip, but is now back in her home and recovering.

David and Sue:

Sue was lucky enough to have her second hip replaced at the end of February just before the pandemic really got serious, and she is now unstoppable. During her recuperation she managed to make in excess of 130 masks for family, friends and our local hospital. Her sewing machine was installed on our dining room table and has stayed there ever since, as there were no visitors to entertain. Without the incentive to tidy up and clean, the dust gradually builds up, but does get our attention on occasion when we trip over it thus forcing us to vacuum everywhere.

Initially, we were ordering our groceries on-line and having them delivered, but now we also venture out to the supermarket occasionally in masks to replenish supplies. Sue's hair is longer than it has been in many years, and I have trimmed it a couple of times while she has managed to keep what little I have left looking fairly neat and tidy.

Thanks to Zoom, we have had a social life of kinds with CFUW and Probus meetings. My choir has been attempting to hold choir practices on-line, but these have not been very successful, and I am no longer participating in them.



Despite all the restrictions, the year has been a busy one. Sue has been kept busy (for yet another year) completing the constitution and by-laws for CFUW, and she is now their program director, organizing speakers for the monthly Zoom meetings. Elsa was invited to speak on modern Canadian architecture at their October meeting, which was very well received. Sue also plans their walking/hiking/snowshoeing schedule, and leads the hikes with my help. She continues to meet with her two book clubs each month on Zoom. In the spring, following James' example, she experimented with making sourdough bread, with mixed results.

My year has been largely taken up with work for Stephen Leacock Associates, trying to ensure that the Leacock Medal for Humour survives. In the spring, I enhanced their web application to manage the book submission process on-line, and then wrote a user manual for the whole application. Our major concern was that we were running out of funds (not having had a major sponsor for three years) and had hardly enough money for the 2021 awards. Over the summer, I led an on-line crowd-funding campaign to raise money and it turned out to be very successful. Not only did it raise nearly \$18,000, but

it attracted the attention of some charitable foundations, one of which is now generously sponsoring the medal and our student competition for five years (with the possibility of continuing for another five), and another is making very generous contributions to our endowment fund for five years.

After all that work, I needed another project, so turned my attention to our garage, painted the inside of it, built a shallow cupboard around the electrical panel box, and moved a water tap so that it would not interfere with a shelf unit.

Another project we worked on at the cottage was to paint the kitchen windows. This turned out to be much more effort than we expected, having to remove the windows, sand and scrape them, apply putty where needed, and to paint them with undercoat and semi gloss, and finally to screw them back into place. This took place over a couple of weeks, and meant that we had to cover the window frames with plastic sheeting and hope that no-one would find it too easy to get into the cottage while we were away.

As we were unable to travel anywhere this year, our recreational life has centred around visits to the cottage. We were able to expand our "bubble" to include Rebecca, James, Elsa and Aiden, and to spend a week together there in July.

We have decided to sell the sailboat in the spring, as we both find that we are not able to move around it as fast as in the past. Rebecca and I took it for one last outing then hauled it out of the water. We then had to clean it up, removing 40 year's worth of accumulated "rust" stains so that we can advertise it in May or June.

Last winter, some shingles blew off the boathouse, which confirmed that it was time to re-shingle all three buildings; the boathouse, woodshed and cottage itself. This finally happened in November, and has set us up for the foreseeable future.

We had a rather strange Thanksgiving this year. With us all back in our respective bubbles, Sue prepared a turkey buffet and served it on the on top of the freezer in the garage, and we ate at socially-distanced tables in the driveway. Fortunately the weather was reasonably warm and sunny, but we will not be repeating this at Christmas. Instead, we will all be celebrating the day on our own, but meeting on December 27th to exchange gifts, have a picnic, take a distanced hike together, and socialize as much as is wise.

My 75th birthday occurred on December 7th, which we celebrated with coq au vin and a cake prepared by Sue. I certainly don't feel as old as that, and my first reaction on receiving a 75th birthday card was to think "Who's this for?" Seeing it in print really hits home! Sue will also be

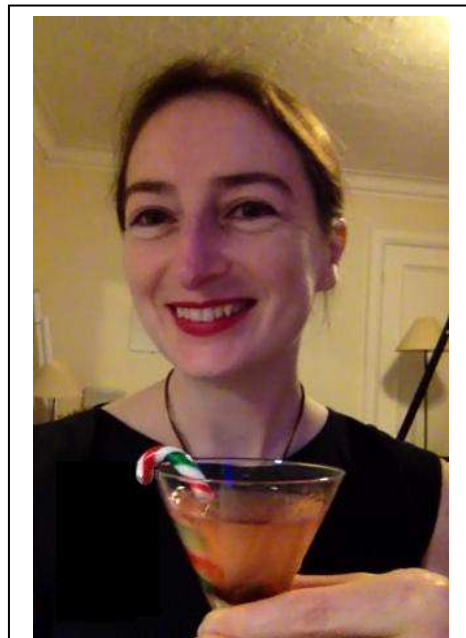
reaching the three-quarter century mark in May. However, our attitude to life can be summed up in Rebecca's text to her brothers from the cottage one day. "Cottage excitement: tree down over road. Septuagenarian Mallinsons LEAP into action with chainsaw and work gloves in pouring rain. Work done before documentary photograph can be taken. The Mallinson Way."



James, Elsa and Aiden:

James and Elsa chose to spend a lot of time at home this year, so it's a good thing that a pandemic came along to assist in that endeavour. With the daycares closed, the first six months of the pandemic were a difficult juggling act between working from home and childcare, but slightly reduced and staggered work hours meant that we spent a lot of time outdoors this summer, exploring Toronto's ravines, parks and some of the more isolated beaches. On the whole, we've felt fortunate compared to the healthcare workers, service industry workers, and small businesses who have had more trying experiences.

Aiden is currently in a small home daycare while Elsa and James continue to work from home. Aiden is loving daycare; enjoys the beach, jet skis and anything involving water; is very into imaginative play, especially involving trips to the cottage; and regularly zooms around on his scooter at the local skate park.



Rebecca and her friends met for a Zoom cocktail party

Elsa's magazine has been a voice for the architectural profession on pandemic-related issues while also keeping climate crisis mitigation front of mind. Elsa's book, Canadian Modern Architecture, launched last year and she wrapped up her book tour early this year, notably with talks in Sudbury and Montreal that James and Aiden tagged along to.

James has bounced around a few projects at work, but is currently ensconced in a large Government of Canada office renovation.

Rebecca:

Rebecca has been working at home since March, thanks to Covid-19, and has thoroughly enjoyed the lack of

commuting and the preparation of three meals each day to eat during the three hours of transit time. She finds she is far more productive without the distractions at the office, and has much more time to do other things such as walking to local parks to sit and read on the grass. Work has also been helped along by the purchase of a stand-up desk. She has also been avoiding public transit and cycling everywhere and finding that it is actually quicker to cycle, which means that she will be cycling more when things return to normal.

Rebecca is still working on new construction energy efficiency programs for residential and low-income customers and is the project manager on three programs. She was promoted from Senior Analyst to Advisor in recognition of her abilities.

As she was not able to pursue aerial silks at the studio, Rebecca has bought her own rig which she has erected in her living room, and which helps to keep her muscles toned.



In the summer, Rebecca spent a week at the cottage with us, as she was in the same bubble, but our bubbles had to be collapsed in the fall, and she is now in the same bubble with James, Elsa and Aiden.

Chris:

Chris has had a tough year. He and Yalda decided to split up, but they remain friends and he still sees the two boys. He has moved into a lovely condominium apartment by the lake in Etobicoke, which is on the west side of Toronto.

The GRIP game is still performing well in its second year after release, and Chris is in the midst of funding another game project, which is a tall order but he and his business partner are confident it can happen.

We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Better New Year, hoping that things will return to normal within the next few months.

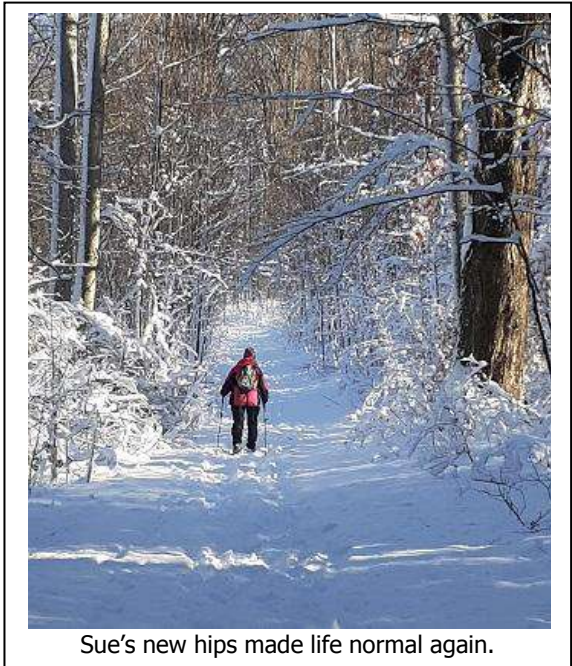
David and Sue and Family .



Sue tried making sourdough bread



Rebecca bought lots of balloons for James' and Chris' birthday. Aiden loved them!



Sue's new hips made life normal again.





Dock scenes at dawn and in the afternoon



Painting windows at the cottage.



Near Chris' apartment



75th Birthday!



Masks galore! A few of the 130+ that Sue made.



Sue meets with the Old Bags (former Park Street Collegiate teachers) for lunch every month (pre-Covid)



Thanksgiving dinner in the driveway



75th Birthday Cake



Beautiful Tudhope Park in the fall



Linden leaves on the back deck in the fall



With Chris on the lakeshore.
Toronto downtown in the background.



Rebecca cartwheeling. James and
Aiden collapsed trying to emulate
her.



Libby and Bill in Gravenhurst



Sue on a hike next to Lake Simcoe



Aiden enjoys the winter solstice



Because of Covid, Rebecca set up her aerial silks equipment in her apartment.

