



# From Beyond The Pond



2021 Edition

The Mallinsons, Orillia, Ontario, Canada

## Dear All,

Yet another strange year! We had hoped that things would have returned to normal by now, but it looks like we're going into another wave of infection. New cases of COVID have multiplied by a factor of 20 in Ontario in the last couple of weeks, and the prognostications are dire. However, it appears that the Omicron variant, although more transmissible, may be less virulent. Let's hope so.

## David and Sue:

This year my major project was to migrate our Probus club from the web application that I had developed over the course of several years to a commercial application called Wild Apricot.

My application did not handle membership subscription payments or event management and registration, which Wild Apricot does. The project fell into my lap because I appear to be the only person in the club with the necessary experience, so my summer and fall was taken up with design work, self-education, investigation and problem-solving. Finally, in October we were able to generate invoices for members and accept payments by credit card. The next stage will be to implement the event management features. Beyond that, I'm hoping that other people will step forward to manage the information on the web site and take that millstone from around my neck!

Also, for Probus, Sue and I contributed a number of articles and photos to the Probus monthly newsletter.

Other than that, the Leacock Medal Gala Weekend had to be cancelled for a second year thanks to COVID, and we are hoping that we won't have to cancel it a third time.



Afternoon tea with scones.  
Note Sue's COVID hair style.

Sue has been kept busy organizing speakers for her CFUW group, and planning their hikes. Elsa, our daughter in law, was invited to speak about her book, Canadian Modern Architecture, which was very well received.

Just before Christmas, Sue was diagnosed with shingles, which has been a very painful experience from which she is gradually recovering with the help of pain-killers. We both intend to get our shingles vaccinations early in the new year to help prevent any recurrence on her part.

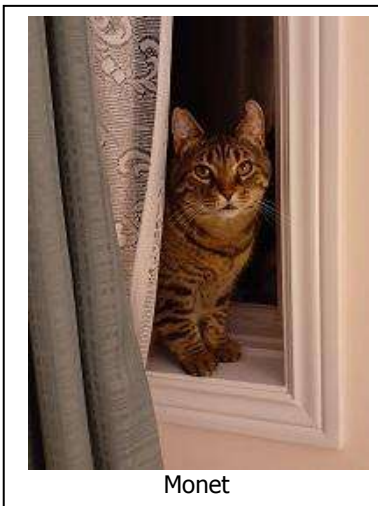
As with last year, our activities have been very much stymied by COVID, but we managed to keep fit by hiking or snowshoeing two or more times a week. On one of these outings we encountered a porcupine that chased us for

several hundred yards. Fortunately we were able to walk faster than it could run. We have been exploring other possible hikes, not only for our own benefit, but for the CFUW hiking group too.

In the summer, Frank Corker, our Probus club president, invited us to come with him for an outing on the Trent Canal. He has a very powerful motor boat that took us over several miles of the canal, passing through the lift lock at Kirkfield on the way. A very enjoyable day.

Once again, our summer activities centred around the cottage. In the spring, we advertised our sailboat and managed to sell it for the same amount that we paid for it forty years ago; of course, the value of that money has depreciated a great deal over the same time. It actually gave me a sense of release, as I am no longer feeling any guilt about owning it and not using it. James and family, and Rebecca joined us

at the cottage for several days where it was a joy to have Aiden around. One day, Sue, Rebecca and I took the



Monet

motor boat and launched it close to Huntsville then took a tour across Lake Vernon up to the Hoodstown Rapids and back, ending up in Huntsville for ice cream. Another very pleasant day.

Other activities at the cottage included splitting up the wood from the trees that we had felled three years ago, stripping and painting the windows in the front of the boat house, and chopping down and cutting up a couple more unwanted trees. This last activity caused a bit of consternation when one of the trees got hung up in another tree on the way down, and Rebecca and I had some strenuous and dangerous activity in shifting the base of it, attaching a rope as high as we could and pulling it down through the branches of the other tree.

Another project over the summer was to address the poor water quality testing results we have been having with the water from the well. We already had a whole-house filter, an ultra-violet system and a ceramic filter, but coliform bacteria were still getting through. We decided on adding yet another whole house filter with smaller pores in our pump house, but some bacteria are still coming through. Next step – re-dig the well?

In the fall a tree across the road was struck by lightning, knocking about twenty feet off the top. The bolt then jumped to a dead tree close by which then exploded, sending shards of wood up to seventy feet away. At the same time, it hit the electricity pole near our gate, knocking out our telephone line, and sending a surge of electricity through the wires in the cottage which fried our microwave oven and damaged a couple of breakers in the panel box. Later, Peter Gysbers (Sue's ex-student) and I investigated the damage and decided that the panel box has to be replaced. That's a project for the spring.

Last winter, Sue planted some tomato seeds in two pots that she put in our south-facing bedroom window. They grew to about four feet tall before the spring when we migrated them down the stairs and into a new raised bed next to our side porch. After a brief spell when they struggled with the new conditions, they started growing manically and threatened to block access to our side door.

In the end, they produced hundreds of small yellow pear-shaped tomatoes (many of which are in our freezer) until the fall when we finally hacked them all down. Besides those, Sue managed to grow various other varieties of tomatoes, runner beans, green peppers and potatoes.

We have a new member of the family – Chris' cat, Monet. She was living with Chris in his 23<sup>rd</sup>-floor apartment, and finding it too constraining, at one point walking along the railing of his balcony to reach the next apartment's balcony. Chris's first reaction was to look down to see if

she was splatted on the ground below. He asked us to look after her for a couple of months over the summer, so she accompanied us to the cottage whenever we went there. Originally an indoor cat, she has now become an outdoor cat, and clearly loved being at the cottage. She has now become a permanent resident in our home. Unfortunately she is a predator, and after she killed a chipmunk we fitted her with a bell collar. However, she managed to kill and half eat another, so we added another bell. If she continues on her killing spree, we will add more bells until her presence is unmistakably made known to small animals, even though she may end up dragging half a pound of bells around with her!

From the start of the pandemic, I have been baking all our bread, and experimenting with different recipes. However, I've found that using a bread machine on the dough cycle takes a lot of the work out of it. All that's left is to allow the dough to rise for half an hour, then to bake it in a pre-heated covered cast-iron casserole dish at 400 degrees for 35 minutes. The results have been very successful and tasty.

### James, Elsa and Aiden:

Aiden finished up preschool in August and started in junior kindergarten in September. This meant moving from an intimate group of five kids to a large class of thirty, with masks on, so it's been an adjustment, but one that he's adapted to well. Current interests are volcanoes, scootering, reading, exploring nature, building forts and generally being upside down.

Canadian Architect magazine officially gave up its physical office mid year, so Elsa is now permanently working from home. She taught a first year course at the University of



Waterloo called Architectural Ideas and Communications and will be teaching a fourth year course at Ryerson University in the new year. Reduced COVID restrictions in the fall allowed for in person instruction, but things have moved online again with the rise of Omicron. For a while, Elsa was able to take up contact dance again.

In August James started a new position at The Architect Builders Collaborative, a mainly residential firm specializing in energy efficient and low carbon design. This was a significant switch after having spent the past 20 years working on institutional projects, so he is still in an adjustment period, figuring out the terrain. Outside of work he has taken up oil painting in sporadic bursts and picked up his yoga practice that was interrupted by the pandemic.

As a family, the Mallinson-Lams spent some time at the cottages (Oudaze and Christian Island), visited Ottawa, took up kayaking in Lake Ontario, led a Christmas parade, and generally explored Toronto by bike.

### Rebecca:



During 2021, Rebecca has continued to work from home and limit her in-person interactions. She was briefly able to resume her aerial silks classes from August to November, but things were shut down again in December, so in an attempt to remain limber and connected to her aerial silks comrades, she started a WhatsApp stretching challenge group and tries to post her progress each week. Over the summer, when covid numbers were lower, Rebecca was able to spend two separate weeks at the

cottage, which she enjoyed thoroughly. Rebecca is looking forward to the end of the pandemic, but is not looking forward to a return to commuting to the office, and so is seeking other employment opportunities.

### Chris:



Chris has been hard at work on a publisher/investor hunt for his next video game project and is close to securing a partner. He's been enjoying his area which has plenty of green space - although the nearest and best park has been nearly gutted and shut down for four years of construction! Monet (his cat) was living with him until we (David and Sue) adopted her because of the bigger indoor space and chance to be outside. He surely misses his cat but knows she's in a happier place. Chris is hoping COVID restrictions will become significantly lessened this year so he can more comfortably fly to visit his business partner in Indonesia.



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

*David and Sue and Family .*

Pix



The Manic Tomato Saga – In the bedroom, migration to garden, eventual size.



Cottage Scenes



Results of bread-making



The over-friendly porcupine



On a fall hike



Fall scene on a very rugged hiking trail



Sometimes we have a very strange family!  
(Note Rebecca's deltoid muscles from aerial silks.)



Screaming Heads exhibit



Libby and Bill



Sue's COVID hairstyles – Coiffeur by Chez David



The tree that exploded



Rachel and Lisa  
Muumuus by Sue



On a family hike



Sue's successes