



Retirees Association of Mohawk College NEWSLETTER Autumn, 2009

McMaster Planetarium

Something new and exciting is in store on November 3, 2009.

Lunch will be provided at the IAHS as well as FREE parking before we venture to the McMaster Planetarium for a show designed just for us.



Christmas at St. Jacob's

Once again we are offering a Christmas season junket to St. Jacob's to do a little shopping, enjoy a fantastic meal and watch the presentation of 2 *Pianos 4 Hands*. The enclosed pamphlet has all the particulars. This year, everything is within easy walking distance, so you can spend even more time shopping! There may still be a few seats available, so sign up now!

Le Chinois

We are once again planning to celebrate the Chinese New Year at Le Chinois. The new date is Wednesday, January 20, 2010. Watch for more details with this mailing.

The Jersey Boys

Plans are underway for a junket to Toronto in early February for the hit musical, *Jersey Boys*. The story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.



Churchill Falls, Labrador. See new series starting on page 2.

Retirees Association of Mohawk College Newsletter

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Submissions for the next issue should be received by January 8, 2010.
Submissions@fodoweb.ca
(Add "retirees" to subject line.)

Into the Wilderness

with
Jack Freiburger

Where it's to ... Churchill Falls, Labrador

So when the black bear got into my garbage bin, I didn't go out and tie on a bib. That's what comes from living in one of the 40-year-old "temporary portable" trailers (a concept easily understood by anyone with Mohawk) on the edge of town. Nearer the middle, they only get wolves and foxes. My trailer is 13 feet by 61 feet with an add-on 9x9 vestibule, a sort of air lock between the inside and the -50C possible in winter. The laundry is in the vestibule, so in winter I have to leave a tap running to keep the pipes from freezing. The community has 650 people and I can walk its perimeter streets in 25 minutes.

No, this isn't my idea of an exotic vacation; I'm here to work for a year. The work is somewhat like teaching, but not quite. I've always been very involved in my Catholic church, mostly in teaching roles. Here, I will lead a small Catholic community that doesn't have a priest. I will recruit local teachers and parents to help with First Communion and Reconciliation (confession) courses, lead a weekly scripture service with a "reflection" (can't call it a homily) and communion consecrated by the priest who comes in once every six weeks, organize socials, provide counseling, and repre-

sent the mission" group at functions and on boards in the town. This does not require, nor do I want, ordination of any kind. I'm paid a small stipend and get free room and board and car, with two round trips a year to Hamilton.

I'll spend \$1000.00 on arctic clothing which I keep, but if I went to Africa I'd spend it on bug repellent, mosquito netting and various disease medications. And I'd rather be in a cooler area. As I write this, Hamilton has had ideal weather since I left on August 31 and many of my "friends" hope I never return. On the other hand, it has snowed twice here and has rained almost daily with day highs below 10°C except on rare days. Locals want me to go home. Oh, well, I tried to teach English at Mohawk, so I'm used to being unappreciated.

Local people are wonderfully kind and friendly, but determined to do everything "the way it's always been done." The RC church does have a few rules left, but heaven help me if I try to apply them here, if that's not already the way it is! St. Brendan brought the faith here in 500 CE and it hasn't changed since.

Churchill Falls is roughly in the middle of Labrador and exists only because of a huge power plant here that supplies Labrador, Newfoundland, some of Quebec, the Maritimes and a chunk of the US eastern seaboard. Someone in each family works for NALCorp, the Newfoundland and Labrador Power Corporation. The company owns the town and every stick in it. People are paid so well most wives don't work; schooling is free in the company school (K- 12, total 142 students - I had classes bigger than that!); there is a resident doctor but only a clinic - anything serious, such as childbirth or accident, leaves by company helicopter for St. John's; all housing ex-

penses such as baseboard heat and hydro (electric, so it's free); if anything breaks, company maintenance workers fix or replace it free. Everyone in the family gets \$4400/yr for travel, post-secondary fees and expenses are all paid; students get well-paid in company jobs in summer. So they all speak of having a "sense of entitlement" that is the base of "dis is 'ow et's bin done 'ere, by."

As a language person, I can't resist analyzing Labspeak. Rule 1: Switch "o" and "u." Thus, "The porpoise of this meeting is to save the purpose from extinction." Rule 2: Replace "th" with "t" or "d." Thus, "Me mudder's name was Reeda." Rule 3: In nearly all instances, use only the third-person singular present-tense form of verbs. Thus, "Yesterday, me and the wife gets a call from me brudder." Rule 4: singular possessive pronouns don't exist. You've seen that already. Rule 5: Replace "j" at the beginnings or words with "ch." Thus, I am "Chack." If my father were also Chack, I'd be "Chack Chunior." Rule 6: pronounce "ay" and "ai" to rhyme with "die." One would think teaching spelling here would be difficult, for, to our ears, they don't pronounce according to spelling. But figure out why we pronounce "said" to rhyme with "red," and not "dyed." Who's right? And it really helps to get the accent if you speak with clenched teeth. That's to keep out black flies in summer and prevent tongue freeze in winter.

Anyhow, it's a great way to shake off a lifetime of Southern Ontario (Suddern Untaryo) dust afore Ay puds up me paws. Effen Fred leds moy, Ay chuzt moyd do id agin.

- Jack Freiburger

Convergence



Spinning the Web (and other tales)

By
Fred Oldfield

With this issue we welcome a new feature: Jack Freiburger's report on life in Labrador's Churchill Falls. We also welcome another instalment of Geoff Brooker's farming experiences. This time Geoff talks about the dogs in his life.

For some years now, we have been dog owners as well. Back in '93 we purchased two Bichon-Poodle pups and named them Brandi and Amber. Brandi displayed more Poodle with her long graceful legs while Amber was more Bichon-like with her short stubby legs that moved in a jerky, robot-like fashion.

I was initially drawn to Amber who appeared to be the runt of the litter, but Brandi decided that I was her master. Amber adopted my wife, Sharon, as hers.

Life was good, but there were problems. At one point the only way I could get any work done around the kitchen was to put Brandi in a knapsack on my back!

Unfortunately, we lost Brandi in '02 when her immune system starting attacking her. So for the last seven years, Amber has been our only pet - one that we both shared. Since I've been retired for most of that time, Amber was mine during the day and Sharon's during the evening.

This spring, however, our daughter-in-law called and asked if we were interested in another dog. We had discussed the possibility of adding another to our family but had decided that with Amber being 17 years old, a new puppy might be unfairly taxing on her. Besides, our life-style had changed and we were taking trips where pets could not go.

Nevertheless, when we heard the sad story of this dog, we caved in. She came to us as Floppy because her ears were her biggest, most noticeable feature. We renamed her

Sandi because she appeared to have a slightly off-white coat.

Sandi was, we believe, a purebred Bichon. She started life in a puppy mill where she was placed in a cage and produced litter after litter. Finally rescued from that fate, she went to a home where the children roughly dragged her around on a leash, damaging her oesophagus. Then she went to a home where the husband mistreated her. Finally, she found a home with a woman. Unfortunately, the woman's mother died in the United Kingdom and the woman left Sandi with a neighbour as she flew back home to attend to her mother's affairs. She then phoned the neighbour to tell her that she had decided to stay in England and Sandi should be put down. The neighbour, Anne, was loath to do that but since she also had three dogs of her own, was unable to keep Sandi.

That's where we entered the picture. We took her home and introduced her to Amber. At first, as we suspected, Amber wanted nothing to do with her. But little by little they learned to at least tolerate each other.

Sandi came with her own set of problems. Having been kept in a cage for years, she had never been properly house-trained. If you happened to notice that she was up and about, you quickly opened the door and she would dutifully do her business outside. But if you didn't notice her, well...

Recently, her dry coughing spells which occurred every time she got excited became worse and towards the end she sat almost comatose or would shake uncontrollably. We were about to make another expensive trip to the vet with her when she died, peaceably.

However, just before she died, we had another addition to our family. I had just returned from grocery shopping and was returning the reusable bags to the trunk when out from under the car came two adorable little kittens. From their size, I judged them to be barely

six weeks old. There was nothing for me to do but bring them in the house and feed them - dog food since that's all we had. The fluffy gray one was quickly named Smokie. But what to call the other one. We tried various names but finally settled on Blaze because she/he had a white spot on her otherwise tabby-like back.

The next day, I took my two new charges outside for a walk, and as I walked around to the front of the house, I noticed a truck in our driveway. It was my brother-in-law unloading some wood for our fireplace. After assisting him, I suddenly heard mewing. Looking around, I spied two kittens walking towards us. At first I thought it was Smokie and Blaze. But I quickly saw that these were two different kittens. Our family had grown yet again.

The new charges were named Bandit (Smokie and the Bandit) who happened to have white from the nose down and black from the nose up and Flash because of the large lightning-like patch of white on his/her back.

Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that Smokie had a problem. Smokie spent a lot of time just sitting and resting and I noticed some blood in its stool. A day later, Smokie died. Two days after that Sandi died.

The rest of our brood, three kittens and a dog, are doing fine. Amber will even tolerate the kittens lying all over her - barely.



**The
Farming Life**
By
Geoff Brooker

DOGS

Farms and dogs seem to have a natural affinity. That is not to say that farmers all love dogs. I've seen too many dogs chained at the end of a driveway. The dogs usually become nasty and act as watch dogs which was the intent and probably the only reason the owner kept the poor creature. As it happens most dogs on a farm, will act as your early warnings system, tethered or not, and they will, often as not, greet you with thrashing tails once they have made their announcement. One of my good friends, Walter Anders, seems to accumulate dogs.

Walter shifted from cattle to sheep about ten years ago but like most of us has no sheep dog. Border collies require attention and love to work and Walter's dogs are just a gang that barks "someones here" although Walter assures me that they keep coyotes at bay.

Walter is not a big man in stature, in fact he and his wife are downright short. Nevertheless they both make very big contributions to the community. During times when I was away he has driven the three miles to my place to drop off straw and even to bury a dead sheep. Walter isn't only a farmer he is a member of various local boards like the credit union and has been a truly honest elected official. I once asked Walter why he gave so much of himself. He was running quite a large operation of several hun-

dred sheep, after retiring from an industrial management position in Hamilton where he also took on community responsibilities, and I was actually worried that he was overdoing it. Walter, never "Walt", paused and said that he wasn't born in Canada, (I knew, that from a minor accent), but was from Poland and had lived in Germany. He said while pushing licking hounds aside: "I've lived under Hitler, and I've lived under communism and I'm very glad that I'm here". He went on to say that he was making his contribution. Talk about your food for thought, I really felt that I was "letting the side down". I'm sure his giving style was also the reason why so many canines found their way to his place and just stayed.

I've been told by men who have long been resident in the area that it used to be the youngest teen's duty to take on aged or sickly dogs out to the woods. Once there, they had the unhappy chore of shooting the dog. Nowadays I don't know any locals that would do that. Instead they go to the vets, usually several times, to try to relieve the ailing hound, and finally take the dog to the vet for its last trip. After the deed is done insult really is added to injury when the medical bills for Rover keep coming in; bills are into the hundreds of dollars, local vets all having moved to the high tech animal hospital model.

We have shed a few tears when a loyal companion had to be put down. Dogs ask little and give all they are able to give. I honestly feel worse when a pet dies than when a human dies. I guess I'm a little strange.

We have had six dogs since living on the farm. Usually we have them in pairs as we believe that they do better. They have company and don't get into trouble from boredom; especially if one is older and has had a proper socialization. Dogs learn from one another. Dogs also have a lot in common with each other even though they all have personality traits unique to themselves and to their breed. Regrettably one feature they all share is a relatively short life span. We generally have larger breeds and ten short years seems to be about average.

Our first dog was Tora, a fancy cut standard poodle with ribbons in its black curls. We soon straightened him out but not those tight curls which were dirt collectors and when in the house he was nick-named Sifting Sam. He was a pure bred and actually won at the local show. Of course he was the only one in his category. A really patient old guy who would endure little children crawling all over him and would lay quietly while his ears were plucked; an unfortunate breed induced necessity. Nevertheless he looked far larger than his forty-five pounds and was a very vigilant guard dog especially if "his children" were about. August was a yellow lab Berman shepherd cross. Unlike Tora, who was granted to us by a city couple having marital difficulties; Auggy was a "pound" dog. He was also an "outside" dog and the only one that we were able to keep that way. If there was a thunder-storm, however, he knew how to develop the shakes and look forlorn and was allowed into the mud room. The dog had a doggy flap door into the barn and would keep quite warm on the hay bales and could look out one of the windows. We also think he learned how to turn the barn lights on; but that was never proven. August was an incredible jumper who could clear five foot fences with ease and he was a great companion to Pam our sheep-girl daughter. Unfortunately Auggy could wreck car interiors.

Chris, our sixteen year old son had managed to "buy" his first car. In a moment of haste one day Lynda had to leave the farm for an hour and put the dog into the "new" car (with windows left

partially open, of course). Upon returning she was dismayed to find out that August wasn't pleased with forcible confinement and he had scratched the dash and chewed the seats. Our son Chris came home a short while later and before the school bus had gone one hundred yards he went to admire his machine. Admiration changed to grief, then anger, and it was days before he spoke to his mother. As a good Brooker he didn't hold the dog responsible. If I recall, a dish of crepes ("English Pancakes") rolled with sugar and lemon juice inside finally brought

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him to his knees. He still is a sucker for English pancakes but he never let "Mom" entirely off the hook.

Karl, a pure bred Doberman Pincher, who couldn't walk on a slippery floor without doing the splits was killed on our gravel road by a driver who never stopped. He was replaced by Jake.

We first saw Jake in an apartment building in Hamilton. I had been to a saxophone quintet practice and Lynda had travelled with me that evening. We had seen the advertisement in the paper and an earlier telephone call had allowed a hint of desperation in the voice at the other end. They wanted fifty dollars but I'm sure we could have had him for free; we settled on thirty-five. He was waddling down the hall leaving a trail of dog droppings behind him. However, he looked great to me and we took him. Lynda tried to hold the struggling eight pounder and later said that his hyperactivity should have been a message to us about how he would "turn out". It "turns out" that he was a Rotweiler crossed with an English Bull Terrier. He had the personality of the terrier but approached the size of the "Rotty".

Now everyone knows that the books indicate "a firm hand is required". This is indeed true. My own approach was to give a puppy a bone then watch their reaction when you take it away. His reaction was to bite me; my reaction, partly out of shock, was to thump him several times. After retreating to the mud room he eventually came back lured by the same bone. I used the same approach, using my unbandaged hand in a glove, and he was fine. The ground rules had been made plain and we were great buddies for many years. He did have a habit of growling — breeding induced, I think, but the only time he really proved his metal was in the barn when he was about five.

Our grain bin is just inside the main entrance on the right. To the left of the corridor is the sheep pen. The usual routine is to throw some hay into the two home-made mangers then open the two buttons on the grain bin door and scoop a small pail of corn, wheat

or some other mix from one of several sacks. The grain is then distributed into the two grain troughs. This method has worked well for years and as each sack is emptied I remove it and fold it for potential refilling. However, it was pretty clear that the sheep were unknowingly sharing their grain with someone else, for each time I picked up a sack there was a lot of seepage and when I folded them I could see that the gremlins had been at work. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that little scurrings were becoming quite noticeable and when I finally paused to look around inside, after my eyes had adjusted to the almost total blackness, little tails could be seen sticking out from under the lumber frame.

There were two cats in the barn at that time but it was obvious they weren't doing their job. One of them, Midnight, a youthful black was my first choice. I would throw her into the bin and let her clean house. Jake, beside me was getting worked up, a common happening when he sensed action and was jumping four feet into the air and yelping when I put Midnight into the bin. I didn't think it right to leave the door shut so I opened it about two inches. Midnight flew past me and disappeared up onto the trusses. Jake was, by that time, quite frantic and I finally remembered that rattling (in, this case mousing) was in his genes. I lifted him into the bin. The bin was situated about thirty inches above the floor, it was basically a six foot cube. Jake was all over the inside of the bin. I was totally awed by his speed, diligence and jaw snapping tenacity. He was well....dogmatic in his pursuit. He flew from one mouse to another, snapped it in his powerful jaws and moved on. In five minutes he had killed twenty-two mice. It was clearly his day, his karma had come and his destiny fulfilled and yes dogs really can smile; I'm sure he was sticking his chest out.

After that incredible performance I never had to call upon his talents again although if asked he did thoroughly enjoy chasing the chickens out of my workshop. Jake: the wunder dog.

Tilly and Pudge were an item. They were neutered females; all our cats

and dogs had been "fixed". Tilly was older and had been another city escapee. The yellow lab was a one year old when we visited a relative who had just returned from being dragged around by Tilly. Lynda liked the pup's looks and her ever wagging tail and said that if Tilly ever needed a home, we had one. One week later we had a new dog.

Now Labradors usually have a good disposition but they are likely to wander and they love water no matter the temperature. Tilly was a model lab and was to give us much pleasure and much anxiety over the next ten years. Like all our dogs we loved her but certainly she was the most lovable and didn't know how to complain or grumble.

On one occasion after I had returned from the barn we couldn't find Tilly. She was up to her wandering ways again and we grew worried. There were hunters about and accidents had happened. We walked the entire property, then telephoned neighbours and drove around the concessions. Finally just before dark we returned truly worried but as we drove in we saw her doing her standard up and down prance. She was in the barn, where she had been all along since I had done the chores — never barked a word. Pudge, a pure bred Rotweiler, was Tilly's protege. Six years younger, Pudge, who as a puppy lived up to her name, studied under Tilly who was a surrogate mother to the six week old pup. Gradually as junior outgrew her mother, she began to assert herself. Tilly, being easy going, didn't much care and because their dutiful owners always ensured equal food and water opportunities there was no reason to worry. Ironically Tilly would sneak some of Pudge's food but never the reverse. Tilly continued her roaming ways and Pudge, true to her breed became full time guard. As Pudge grew up she followed Tilly less, but we have many pictures of them squeezed into a large cardboard box snuggling.

Our custom was to go once or twice weekly to the woods to cut firewood. Tilly would run on ahead while Big Bones would ride with Lynda on the trailer. She did, however, have to trot

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back, the trailer being full of wood. Yes, we did leave a little spot for L.B. — I believe the requirement is eighteen inches per bottom.

Like the dogs before them these two were much more of a hindrance than a help when it came to herding sheep. They also proved questionable hunters although Tilly did present us with a nice muskrat; then stood afar knowing we weren't too pleased. She just couldn't help herself. On one wooding trip while we paused, a herd of deer ran by within twenty feet of us while our erstwhile hunters were dashing about. The dogs hadn't seen them.

One of our neighbours who keeps Ak-bash dogs to guard his flock couldn't believe that our girls would leave snakes unmolested. These dogs can be trained and, I guess, hunting wasn't really for them. Next to our old school house home is the remains of the original cistern home for wintering garter snakes. Each spring dozens emerge on a sunny day and while we can't stop the purple grackles from dining on small ones, I guess they look like worms — we were able to keep the dogs from attacking them with very little difficulty. Dogs are pretty surprising.

I must confess, however, that teaching dogs not to "doghandle" chickens is a bit difficult. They generally have to dispose of one before we can catch the dogs in the act and suitably admonished, they quickly "catch on". Incredibly given their reputation Pudge, the Rotweiler, is the only dog we have owned that never killed a chicken.

Nassion, the housecat, was 'fair game' for pestering. The dogs are not allowed beyond the tile floor of the kitchen into the rest of the house. Luckily for Nassion, they only bothered her until that invisible border was reached; then she was safe. Pudge left us at an unusually young age of five years. Nassion and Tilly acted just as they had always acted but if we came home quietly and peeked in the door we would see them lying together in the cardboard box. Dogs and cats, really are full of surprises and should never be underestimated.



Recent Events

September Trip Shaw Festival Theatre

Could there be any better way to end the summer and begin the fall than to take a scenic trip along the Niagara Parkway on route to the Shaw Festival Theatre in Niagara-on-the-Lake? Now you will need to correct me on this but was it 45 retirees and friends on bus 52 or was it 52 people on bus 118. Well I stand corrected. It was 45 people and the bus was the only one with a big red horse on the side of it so we did not need a number at all. What a bus it was! Driven by Kevin Purdy of Farr Bus Lines it was smooth, quiet and comfortable. Someone referred to the ride as being similar to riding in a Mercedes-Benz.

For lunch, we stopped for a terrific meal at Betty's Restaurant in the village of Chippawa. We are the efficient "Mohawk College Retirees" and as such we arrived at Betty's just before our scheduled time and completed lunch early so we were then able to take our time on the rest of the trip to the theater. We followed the Niagara Parkway past the "Falls" and along the scenic route giving us time to appreciate the beauty of the changing colours and wonderful gardens that the Niagara Parks Commission provides for the enjoyment of the public. The leaves are turning, the flowers and plants are still spectacular and of course the power of the Niagara River will always be impressive.

Ann Dunn was the hostess for this September 30th event and Geoff Brooker entertained us with amus-

ing short stories, history about the area and nap time for those who wished. Our hats are off to Ann and Geoff for a fun filled day.

Bernard Shaw's classic "The Devil's Disciple" was the theatre production. This play includes everything from drama, history, romance, sacrifice, wit and comedy. The story is based on the time when the Americans were striving for their independence and it makes fun of the mismanagement of the revolution by the British. The main character, Dick Dudgeon is portrayed as being a bit of a rogue. He refers to himself as the Devil's Disciple; however he turns out to be a caring and noble man while the Reverend Anthony Anderson reverses his role as the respected minister to become the leader of the rebels.

The play was witty and enjoyed by all.

We arrived back at Fennel Campus ahead of time even though we hit a bit of traffic on the way. The day was good. The weather was cool but we managed to miss the rain. The time spent with friends was perfect and of course a little bit of culture never hurts anyone!

- Ellie Latta

ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

1. [ACAATO www.collegesontario.org](http://www.collegesontario.org) 416-596-0744 This is an old acronym for Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario now known as Colleges Ontario (CO). It is an outreach and advocacy organization, serving the interests of all community colleges in the province, and acts on behalf of the Boards of Governors of the Colleges.

Colleges Ontario is responsible for identifying the "Employer" representatives who sit on the Board of Trustees and the Sponsors' Committee of the CAAT Pension Plan.

Colleges Ontario is also closely linked from an employer perspective to the College Compensation and Appointments Council ("the Council", formally the Council of Regents). Currently the President and CEO is Linda Franklin Tel: 416-596-0744 x 226 franklin@collegesontario.org

COP - The Committee of Presidents is a committee of Colleges Ontario, and consists of the Presidents of all 24 colleges. Their names and college contact information is available on the Colleges Ontario website. Effective July 2009 the chair of COP will be Tony Tilley (Fleming) Tel: 705-747-5559 ttilly@flemingc.on.ca