

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

June 9th, at Michelangelo's. Starts at about 11:30 with happy half-hour followed by a delicious lunch (which is subsidized by your Association) and a short business meeting.

WINE TOUR

July. Wine Tour to Niagara College and Jordan (

TAP DOGS

August 12th: "Tap Dogs" - The Reinvention of Tap Dancing - King's Wharf Theatre in Penetangishene

DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

September 8th, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, Shaw Festival Theatre, Niagara-on-the-Lake

FALL TRAIN TRIP

October 6th. Fall Colour Train Trip, Orangeville - Brampton and Return

CARMEN'S

December 14th. Carmen's



RETIRES ASSOCIATION OF MOHAWK COLLEGE NEWSLETTER



Spring, 2010

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Please e-mail your contributions
to submissions@fodoweb.ca

Retirees Association of Mohawk College Newsletter

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**Into the
Wilderness**
with
Jack Freiburger

**OUTPOST 4 DER'S
WALLED LIFE 'ERE.**

Some of eet eez on four laigs, some on due, some on non. Dis Outpost ees about the four-legged an two-legged wans. Only seezies eat feesh. Certainly the cutest of the four-legged walled life are the foxes. There are grey fox, red fox and silver fox, which are really black with white feet and white markings. They are the town pets and will approach people for food, and often are right outside the door at the two convenience stores. They will trot along beside a person like a pet. They can be aggressive and rabid, especially for salt and

vinegar potato chips. Stick to sour cream if foxes are in the area.

There are no wolves on "de Awland" (Newfoundland) as they were extirpated by hunters for their bounty years ago, around 1930. Now there is a serious overpopulation of moose on the Island, often causing serious accidents in collisions with vehicles. Moose are too stupid to learn to avoid vehicles and people,



as most other animals do. One ran for the Conservatives in the last provincial election and lost; that's hard to do in Danny Williams' Land. It favoured selling Churchill Falls Power Station to Quebec. My neighbour has a moose "rack" of antlers on the back of his snowmobile. He says moose chase him wanting to head-butt and he just keeps going until they drop. Moose tastes like beef. So the wolves are all here in Labruhdor. A pack of them howls every morning about two blocks away down by the arena, awaiting tired, drowsy early skaters. Lone wolves rarely attack people unless they are really hungry and set aside acquired fear. If you see a bib, make tracks (or water – they won't invade your territory. Ask Farley Mowat.). Don't wear red capes with hoods; that attracts them. But red does make it easier for seachers to find your remains in the snow. Wolves can range in size from 4.5 to 6 feet and in weight from 75 to 140 pounds, depending on the weight of the grandma just eaten.

Coyotes are the geniuses of the animal world. They arrived in 1985 by surfing to de Awland from Nova Scotia on the spring ice floes. Only one has been seen in Labrador; de teory iz dat eetz a French-Canadian scout fer the Montreal mafia, looking for Italian restaurants to bomb. Gooed lug foindin' un 'ere! The coyote is really thriving on de Awland because its enemy and rival for small game, the wolf, is gone. They can't surf.

Both critters like hares. Arctic hares are found near the barrens; snowshoe hares are found all over Labrador and de Awland. About 1.5 million are trapped and eaten by humans every year. It's a good thing they multiply like rabbits! They can be from two to four pounds, but half that without footwear. Dem what loiks golf gets eden by lynx. Fort'nutly, der's no golf curse een

Labrador. Thus, no Tiger gulfrenz neidder, eh b'y!. Rabbits' meat is brown and tastes like brown chicken meat.

Eet's too wahm fer dem polar bears here. We have 10,000 black bears in the whole province, weighing about 200 pounds for b'ys and 150 for gulls, but they can range to 650 pounds. Depends on the hiker consumed. Licenced hunters can kill two per season; that's why bears travel in threes. Hunters travel in twos; as long as you can outrun your buddy it's all good for you. Bears have a nasty habit: they fight each other standing up, teeth against teeth. So it's stupid to yell at a bear before taking out your dentures. That's why most bear-mauling victims have their faces ripped off, so save the oskee-wee-wee until you get home with a pelt. Don't run away, back away slowly, even if you took Cialis. That's not what's on their mind. And don't say, "Here Winnie, here Winnie" and hold out a treat. Drop or toss the treats to the side (not at them) and slowly back away. Peanut butter and jam sandwich-frizbies are the best, then say, "There Yogi, there Yogi." Don't wave your arms; bears are near sighted and could mistake them for grouse wings, a delicacy for them. Keep your hand in your pocket as you say your rosary. And hold onto your water (wiff udder hand?); the wolf trick doan't work wiff bears. Bears hibernate, even though they are best dressed of all critters for winter.



Continued on page 4 ...

THE TOPP METHOD

"ITS BLACK KNOT", said Ted.

"It looks like a black fungus or smut like you get on corn" I chimed.

"Well, whatever you call it, it will kill the trees : he added.

I'd seen the same stuff on some sour cherry trees across the small pasture and within two years six trees were dead.



"Deader than a maggot" proclaimed my friend Ted. Ted had a hundred acres and raised beef cattle and kept two horses. "Pets, that's what they are".

I had shown Ted the plum trees fifteen years before and by careful trimming and then burning up the blighted branches (always the ones bearing the most fruit) I had managed to keep the two trees: one Italian prune and one damson — alive and bearing fruit. It had been a lot of effort but the plum and damson jam has made it worthwhile. Lynda has also earned some prizes from her plummy submissions to the Caledonia Fair.

The trees were in a small orchard mixed in with some apples and pears; neither of which seemed to produce very tasty fruit, although the red delicious tree frequently produced some reasonable eaters if the worms weren't too bad that year. You may have guessed I am far from religious in my preventative spraying, in fact most years I don't spray at all. "Perhaps if the apples were galas and the pears bartletts" I mumbled defensively responding to Ted's admonishing glance. "Why don't you graft some others onto the branch?" This idea struck me as a revelation. There was a snow apple tree on its last legs in one of the nearby fields; the last tree in what I

concluded to be a hundred year-old orchard. My neighbour, Hubert, now over eighty, had attended our one room school house (now our home) and had, on more than one occasion, told me of eating snows on the way home with his older sister. Hubert still lived on the home farm but had spawned four who had in turn, produced many more. Rita had married and moved to Canborough, a once-bustling mill town, now just a few houses at a cross roads. Snow apples had red skin but had snowy white flesh. Unfortunately they were smallish and didn't store very well. Consequently they had become unpopular, losing out to the durable "Mac". "Perhaps you could show me how to do it" I said looking earnestly up at my friend who surpassed me

The Farming Life By Geoff Brooker

by about ten years and five inches. "Give Bob Topp a call, what I know I learned from him so why not cut out the middle man".

The next day I telephoned Mr. Topp introduced myself and presented him with the situation. You say Ted gave you my name" he rasped. "That's right". "Whereabouts do you live?" I explained where we were. "That's only three or four miles, I'll come right over".

Its an amazing thing in the country how the "reference" system worked. You have to get to know a few people fairly well. People who were long time residents, preferably born in the area, and then you could use them as references. Meeting people for the first time usually was a lei-

surely process where you established rapport by talking about crops, weather and prices etc. and then you worked around to the point. This time I had chosen to telephone and surprisingly it worked. I had just arrived back from the old snow tree with a couple of branches when a large blue Ford pulled into the driveway. Bob slowly opened the door and stood up. He was of average height with thin hair and very "thinning" teeth. Like many older farmers cosmetics were quite unimportant. He was about eight-three.

"Are these the trees?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"Yes", I replied, already feeling guilty but not sure why.

"Have you got some branches, an exacto knife and some black electrical tape, he asked, using his fingers to list each requirement as he counted them off. I responded affirmatively and returned with the items.

The knife and tape were kept in one or two of those "junk drawers" in the kitchen where all those "might come in handy" articles are kept.

"Don't you need melting paraffin wax", I asked (I had been reading up on the subject - this is no town dummy).

"Nope" that's what the tape's for", he said reaching for his bits and pieces. First he held up the tape and nodded; then the knife and tut tutted (not very sharp) then the two branches and just looked sad.



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Errata

In our last issue we printed some acronyms. These were actually taken from the OCRA web site (www.ocraretirees.ca) And are regularly updated by Derrick May. Our Apologies.

Continued from page 2 ...

Care-boo hunters can also shoot two per season, but, as I've said afore, it's much easier to just drive into a jaywalking herd with a van and pick up all the road kill you want. There are over 450,000 (fly over, count the prongs, and divide by 22) in the province, known as the George River herd. A subherd, the redwine caribou (comes with a tag beverage list for gourmet hunters) is between Churchi' Faws and Goo's Bay. Its numbers are down around 85 and it faces extinction. Hunting was banned several years ago for white folks and natives recently agreed to cease hunting redwines as well. When one encounters a herd on the road, follow at their speed until they make way; they are very long-legged and would come through the windshield. If they are crossing in front of you, wait. Wish you had a Hummer. So far, nobody's given me no care-boo.

Willow and rock ptarmigan (a Greek word: silent "p" as in "psychology," Greeks like to "p" silently), sometimes called partridge, abound, as do spruce grouse. The latter are called "fool hens" here because they are tame and don't fear humans. On a hike I came close to picking one up several times. The male grouse has a red comb over the eyes; females carry rat-tail combs in their fantails and wear white T-shirts with a soft pack of Camels rolled into the right sleeve. Ruffed grouse do take flight with a very noisy whirring of their wings. Migratory birds are of many kinds, with ducks, geese and snipe as the main groups. They don't overfly Churchill Falls, but some use the lakes that are part of the hydro reservoir on their ways north and south. We doan ged no manna landin' neidder.

Beaver, otter, mink and various other water mammals are trapped

for their pelts, and people do eat beaver, including the tail. To roast the tail, cut it off, stretch and nail it to a board, salt and season, and roast it in an oven at 350 degrees for seven hours.

After that, take it out, throw away the tail and eat the board. De rest of dat meat tastes like wood too.

I offended the whole town, so no one's Labspeaking me. I won a big prize at Thursday bingo, turdy bugs (\$30). I was the only guy there. So I'll mention that Ontario's 17 dialects of Ontspeak are often distinguished by how one names the province's capital: Tor-on-to (Kingston), *Torr-onto* (Ottawa Irish), Tronta (Oshawa), The City (Toronto), T.O. (Hamilton, means "ticked off"), Tronna (Windsor), The A-Aiches (Thunder Bay). Similarly, Labspeak dialects vary in pronunciations of "Goose Bay": Guz Boi (Goose Bay), Gooz Bye (Happy Valley), Gooz Bye (Churchill Falls), Guz Bye (Labrador City). (emphasis on italicized word).

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, an' Doan led yer andlers freeze!

Chack b'y

~~~  
**OUTPOST 5:  
 DEH HEGTIG LOIF OF  
 CHURCHI' FAWS**

**S**ince every household in Churchill Falls has at least one person working at the power plant, that makes my household the laziest one here. The Anglican/United priest also serves Rigolet on the Atlantic coast one

week a month, and the two-minister Pentecostal couple must contend with each other. They provide Sunday School and Wednesday evening adult Bible study which, to date, I don't. I will be offering Bible courses through the winter. My sacramental preparation courses are some balance to their Sunday School. Also, except for a few visiting grandparents, I'm the oldest person in town, as retirees must leave. So I'm not a fair judge of the busy day that seethes beneath a tranquil surface, like feesh below de oiz.

Fitness is big here. The company provides a free arena which offers five hours of free skating on weekdays. Evenings there are hectic with children's hockey (Atom through Midget), female teen hockey (several girls have made the provincial team), figure skating, female broomball, men's fun hockey league and seniors' fun hockey. Each league has at least two teams which play each other and combine to engage in reciprocal tournaments in Lab City or Goose Bay. Parents are always there to support and cuss. When the midget gulls beats de midget b'ys, der's no datin' fer a week or more.

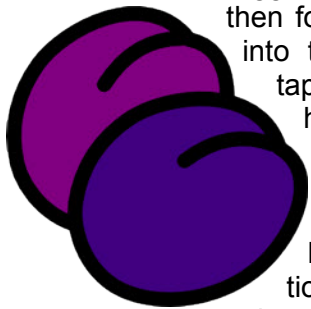
The school fitness centre doubles as a community facility and includes a four-sheet curling rink, a free large pool and a fitness room with a sauna. There are men's and women's leagues in curling, but the mixed beginners' league did not run, so I won't get to be a rock star. Dey's feared Oi moit tink oi'm bowlin' an' pud a rock trough de wall, ledding in deh freezin' col' wind. Now that it's moiniz twendy an' sinkin' fass, I'll skate and treadmill instead of walking outside. Evenings offer swimming lessons

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"Well", he breathed making a noise, "It's the wrong time of year and your twigs are a bit frail, also they don't look too well" he said breaking off a dead leaf but we can give it a try".

The exacto was a bit rusty so he ended up using his pocket knife (all farmers have one) and, saying it wasn't really sharp enough, cut a deep 'V' into the butt end of a stout host branch. Then with two quick cuts he made a point on one of my bedraggled donors. He



then forced the point into the notch and taped it. "You have to bind it tightly so as to keep all air out". After both operations were completed he came in

"for a coffee and cookies" and after a short chat left with a few of our brown eggs and our thanks. He said that the Spring was the best time and that I should call him. He had a good snow apple tree and some good pears as well both of which had lasted many grafts.

The winter past and the grafts didn't look like they would take. To worsen the situation the old snow tree had been removed from the field. As I had heard through the rural telegraph that Bob Topp's health wasn't good I decided not to call him, not wanting to bother him. However one March day the phone rang. " This is Bob Topp, I've got some snow and Bartlett twigs for you if you are interested". His voice definitely sounded weaker but his enthusiasm was still there. I told him I'd be around in the morning. I had previously driven down the Town-line Road to see where he lived. His wife answered the door, acknowledged who I was, then turning me over to Bob, she retreated to the kitchen.

He was sitting in surely his favorite chair and didn't get up. He asked me to sit down then handed me two packages. "This one contains the pears and this the apples. You know what to do so it's up to you" he said.

"You've lost a bit of weight since last we spoke" I said, trying not to look too concerned.

"Thirty-five pounds", he paused "it doesn't look good".

I didn't know if he wanted to stay on the health subject but I felt uncomfortable so I slid on to safer ground and we chatted about farming. I didn't stay long but told him I'd go back home and use the Bob Topp method saying that he would have to come by some time to inspect my work.

"Why not wait til summer and we'll see if I had any luck" I called over my shoulder as I showed myself out clutching my loot".

"OK, see you later" he replied from his chair.

I'm still not sure if any of my grafts have held: knowing how and doing are clearly not the same thing. But I'll keep trying. Bob Topp never came by again, and I heard through the country telegraph that he had died from cancer in the same house in which he was born eighty-five years before.

The longer I live in the country the more older people I meet and inevitably lose. Bob left a host of children and grandchildren and among other things he left me the Bob Topp grafting method.

*Continued from page 4 ...*

from beginners' level on up. Step aerobics sessions are offered Monday, Wednesday and Friday for \$2/session, to buy new music. De tapes is getting' priddy warn. Private music lessons, quilting clubs, ceramics classes and such go on steadily.

Once we had two feet of snow on the ground, around the end of No-

vember, snowmobiling began. Integrated into the town plan is a skidoo trail network of access and main routes. Since these trails cross streets in unmarked places, and since

drivers



are often children, driving a vehicle calls for more attentiveness now than in fall. Skidoos may suddenly launch over an eight-foot snowbank onto the road, so the company cuts passes through for riders and hopes they stop before crossing a road. Look for a white strip across the road, left by a skidoo track, as a crossing point. If the centre of the track has a brown strip, there was a near miss. If it's red, well ... Most families have a skidoo (\$15K+) for everyone over age ten. Those teens without skidoos but driver's licences prowl the roads looking for "road kill," then mount track tread segments on the sides of their trucks to record successes.

Thursday night is Lions' Club bingo night. I was only here two weeks when a comely lady asked me to join the "Loins' Club." I did a double-take before realizing it was all in the pronounciation. Bingo's changed since I took Mother, many years ago. One plays eight cards at a time; game patterns include: single line, double line, X, lucky 7 (top row, then diagonally down to left), post-age stamp (square of four numbers), six-pack (joined rectangle like stamp), phony bologna (whatever first number called ends in is removed and all with that last number, so if 27 is called, 7, 17, 37, 47, 57,

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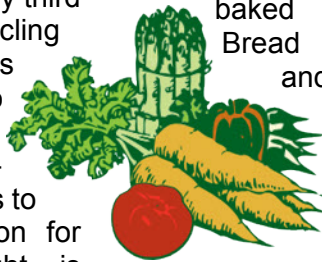
67 all go) and "fool card." No corn kernels anymore, and one needs to dab with both hands. All this in high-speed Labspeak - "under de ain turdy-foiv." They like having me there; I never win.

Friday night is men's darts night, and Sunday night is for ladies' darts at 8:00 pm. Since our liturgy is now at 6:30 pm Sunday, I know if I am longwinded the ladies will first look darts at me, then let fly so I get the point. Several provincial champs have reigned from here. Every third Monday night, I help with recycling of cans, bottles and plastics with the Lions' Club, who raise money for children's toys at Christmas. They tolerate that I twist off the can tabs to earn wheelchairs (2.5 million for one chair). Saturday night is "seniors fun hockey" for those over 30. I would get twice as many shifts because I'm past double the age minimum. This is why retirees leave.

Friday night on NTV News, birthdays and wedding anniversaries of long vintage are celebrated for those anywhere in the province. The adventures of two native sons in the NHL are also recounted and "this day in history" reminds us of our heritage. This may be "the land God gave to Cain," (John Cabot) but folks here love it. Weekends have occasional skit nights as benefits or musicals passing through, or hot times at the pub or Legion. New Year's Eve, for example: DJ, hot lunch and champagne at midnight, \$25 per couple. There's no taxi service, but it's a short walk home. Don't mind the wolves; they're just revelers on all fours. Superbowl Sunday will be huge.

Der's mony koinds o' folks 'ere. Eef you leeves in a town or siddy, you're a "townie." Coastal village fisherfolk are "baywops," if you've gone to the "mainland" to get edju-

kaded and come back spoutin' eet, you're a "beento," and if you're from Sudden Untaryo you're an "Upper Canadian." Both provinces agree on one group, though, those in the legal profession are "liars." If you have in mind a noiz deesh for supper, one dat puds 'air on yer chaste, consider a jigs dinner. Peel and soak carrots and potatoes overnight, then slow boil them with salt beef and cabbage, seasoned to taste. Other meats may also grace the table, such as chicken, moose, caribou and of course the board from baked beaver, a staple. Bread pudding is added, and perhaps a baked dessert.



"Alouettes" are butterflied ptarmigan breasts wrapped in bacon and roasted. A swill of screech (Jamaican rum with moonshine alcohol added, so high-test that after a drink you inhale in a screech) washes it all down, me darlin'!

As a man said when I first got here, "If you're bored in Churchi' Faws, y'ain't payin' 'tension."

## Recent Events

### THE JERSEY BOYS

On the snowy morning of Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 50 retirees waited at Mohawk College for the bus to arrive. It was a little late but eventually we saw the large Farr's bus come around the corner.

After boarding the bus we left for North York where we were to have lunch and see the musical. The place where we were to eat was called Moxie's classic Grill and they had arranged a menu for us so the menu was distributed on the bus so the folks would have a chance to pick out what they wanted when we got there.

It was a quick trip to North York and after circling the block a few times the driver found a space to let us out. They were ready for us at the restaurant and the service and food were outstanding. I think the two tall blonde waitresses with their rather short black dresses were a hit with the men. I heard nothing but positive comments about the restaurant.

Around the corner we went to the theatre. Our seats were good and the show was well worth the price. The music, singing and acting were all well done. We know a lot of the songs as they were from our era. Many times you wanted to sing along. At the end of the show you felt happy and left singing the songs. The only complaint was that a couple thought the music was too loud.

While coming home on the 401 we could hear a bumping sound and many thought the bus might have a flat tire. The driver pulled over and got out and inspected all the tires as the traffic rushed by. He came back on the bus and said the tires all looked fine but he thought it sounded like the webbing had shifted. He phoned the office and the end result was that he continues to drive us home but wouldn't go above 80km. We made it safely back to the college.



I believe a good day was had by all

- Isabel Kerr

## LUNCHEON AT SCOTTISH RITE

**Guest Speaker:**  
**Margaret Houghton**  
**Topic: Vanished Hamilton**

On Tuesday April 6th, the Mohawk Retirees met at the Scottish Rite, a historical, beautiful building in downtown Hamilton. Often the site for films and scenes from "Detective Murdoch", a Victorian Toronto mystery series, the locale was appropriate to host our luncheon where we gathered to listen to the guest speaker, Margaret Houghton, on vanished landmarks of Hamilton.

Margaret Houghton is the Special Collection Archivist at the Hamilton Public Library and author of several books, *Vanished Hamilton, I, II, III*, *The Hamiltonians*, *Hamilton Street Names* and *Hamilton at War* to name a few. She is involved with the seven historical societies in the Hamilton-Niagara area and is President of the Head of the Lake Historical Society.

After a delicious roast beef dinner, she showed us photos of "Vanished Hamilton" landmarks and gave us their background. Did you know that Hamiltonians built a house in 24 hours to celebrate the 1913 centennial and that it passed city work inspection? Did you, like me, see your first ballet at the old Palace Theatre, a theatre which hosted such acts as Burns and Allen, the Marx Brothers, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Red Skeleton? Do you

**Even more of  
the Farming  
Life**

By Geoff Brooker

remember the "Shorty Greens", the fountains that were installed each spring and ran continuously? What a cool drink on a hot summer's day and what a delightful spray when aimed at an unsuspecting friend! The Hamilton Forum, also known as the "Barton Street Igloo", "The Arena", "The World's Largest Penalty Box", saw the birth of the Hamilton tradition of Vince Wirtz, the original Pigskin Pete, who led the "Oskee Weewee" chant during hockey games.

Many more tidbits of interesting information were told to us by Margaret about Hamilton and its history, The Alexandra, the Barton

Street Jail, and the important use of horses to pull paddy wagons, fire trucks, deliver mail, bread and milk. The last horse-drawn milk wagon, a Royal Oak Dairy one, was driven to City Hall for the official retirement celebration in 1960 hosted by Lloyd Jackson where "Flo" received a certificate "from a mayor of 72 to a mare of 20".

On a rainy spring afternoon, those of us in attendance thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to dine well and to discover more about our home town, Hamilton.

- Beverley Dunlop

## NASSION

It wasn't a very nice day. True, the daffodils were almost in bloom and the snowdrops had never been better, the buds on the poplars were colouring up, but the weather reflected my mood. The sky wasn't leaden but a dove gray and the rain had eased off to a light drizzle. My job choice to tune up the 51 Ferguson and work on an axe handle to replace the one gone to rot after I'd carelessly left it out all winter, had only lasted the morning. After lunch I was less than enthusiastic about returning to the barn and I was sitting, looking and growing somewhat morose.

Perhaps it was the sudden appearance of a war-torn tomcat who had decided to join our neutered female, Noot, in the barn. It was certainly warmer than the outside and now that the chicken flap was open he had a way in. He likely sneaked some of Noot's food when she was strolling. He had tried it once before when our old barn cat had been feeding and even though much larger the visitor had backed away when Noot had hissed and spit. I started to reflect upon cats we had had.

We had lost and owned quite a number of barn cats over the years. They were well fed pets really but they did certainly keep the rodent population down. Some cats had simply disappeared, others had been seriously hurt and had to be put down and one, Howard, a lovable neutered male had been killed on the road.

Howard had come from the SPCA and we had given him to Lynda's parents who seemed in need of furry sustenance but he had an unfortunate voice that really was a howl. He had originally been named Boots but they had renamed him Smudge and when we reacquired him (they were worried his voice would bother the neighbours in the senior's residence) I named him Howler. A very young grandson mispronounced it into "Howard" and the name stuck. He had been a very lovable old thing but in his later years he uncharacteristically crossed the road. I found him in the ditch.

Just yesterday we had lost a second chicken on our gravel road. Unfortu-



nately city people who merely sleep in their rural one-eighth acre bit of country, drive very fast and some, at least, don't consider that farm animals might have to be avoided. The day before I'd had to bury our house cat of eighteen years who, I'm glad to say had died of natural causes. Her name was Nassion.

The little black and white was a typical tuxedo-wearing mite who never weighed more than five pounds. She was just a kitten when we acquired her.

Lynda and the girls had been shopping at a large mall in Hamilton. Our animal loving kids always gravitated to the pet store and the subject of another cat had arisen on many occasions. I had been stern and admonished firmly that no more animals would be needed on the farm especially a female who would undoubtedly reproduce her kind.

Lynda had left Wendy looking at gerbils while she window shopped next door. The young teener ran the thirty feet to catch her mother and greatly perplexed announced that someone had returned a cat to the store and after an argument with the clerk stating that they couldn't accept the animal, the man had deposited the cat on the counter and strutted out. The clerk announced that the cat would have to be destroyed..... Wendy to the rescue. After a few minutes of deliberating, mother reluctantly agreed to accept a neutered male. A few minutes later with the kitten pressed firmly to her chest the family was on their way home. Needless to say the cat was an unspayed female.

Our eldest daughter, one and one half years older than Wendy had read biology books and when they noticed the kitten's uneven colouring around the nose area they persuaded the rest of us that Nassion would be a good name. Unlike Howard, her name stuck.

Now a young kitten is almost as cute as a young lamb and father was easily won over and would pay for the visit to the vet for the 'operation'. This was to be the first of many visits to the D.V.M. Nassion really did have nine lives; one or two are worth mentioning.

The kitten was quickly absorbed into the Brooker household and after a short post neutering convalescence started to venture outside. Tora, our "inside dog", a standard poodle was totally

forgiving and would endure the kittens' abuses without complaint, however, August our "outside dog", a lab shepherd cross was not so forgiving and when the kitten pounced on him he instinctively snapped. The kitten was gently brought back into the house by a worried trio of young ladies. It didn't look good. The dog had reacted normally and was not a vicious animal but he had the strong jaws of his ilk and had actually broken both of her back legs. Back to the Fisherville vet.

We had once had a cat which suffered two legs amputated by a mowing machine and L.B. and I were resigned to another unhappy ending. After examination the vet said that the cat could be saved and that stainless steel rods would have to be inserted into the legs. He would do the job for three hundred dollars. We knew that as a regular customer we were getting a good deal but our "free" cat had already cost us for one operation perhaps this would be considered chasing good money after bad and broached it in this tone to the four Brooker children. The result, not unexpectedly, was tumultuous and the outcome was that each party would contribute \$50.00 towards the cost. And so it came to pass. We were on the road of no return.

On the farm you expect that there will be a cost to maintaining livestock and we have had to "bite the bullet" on many occasions on the grounds of sensible animal husbandry. This might include selling a troublesome sheep for as little as fifty dollars. Yet somehow when it comes to pets, most farmers that I know will become positive spend thrifts. I guess we were typical.

Nassion recovered even though the rods slipped out after three weeks and her health was good for years until the strokes. She was perhaps eight or ten in human years and I happened to be sitting and reading in the living room. She always arrived to sit on your lap from anywhere in the house -- as if some inner sense alerted her no matter how quietly you moved. On this day she had jumped down and was crossing the rug. She let out a yowl and fell on her side. After thrashing for a few minutes she tried to stand but couldn't. After another ten minutes she was able to bring herself to an upright position by

digging her claws into the rug and pulling herself to vertical. As always there was great anguish in the family but this time I didn't rush to the vet. We usually tried to "doctor" our other animals and this time we would 'wait and see'. This proved to be another of her nine lives experiences and she would recover. After a few days she was tottering around and within a month she was almost back to normal apart from a permanent tilt to her head which would join the other peculiarities; most particularly a swinging gait, a leftover from the broken legs.

She was no mouser. We once saw her chasing a mouse which had strayed into the house and caught it but then let it go. When she hung around the bird feeder they soon learned that she was harmless and enjoyed the grain in front of their dinner-dressed audience (she was a 'tuxedo' cat). She wasn't all goody, goody, however and could be a positive pest. Her gentle tapping on your leg when she wanted you to sit down and provide a warm lap or when she wanted a crumb dropped from the table -- bran muffins were a particular favourite. Her particular dislike, a veritable fetish, was of closed doors. She would throw herself at a closed door and howl until it was opened. Of course, if the door wasn't properly closed it would open whereupon she might become a bedroom voyeur or catch seated lady visitor in a position unable to arise. You simply got used to her as our guests did.

Another idiosyncrasy of hers was to scale the back cupola, then walk across our lower roof and attack the guest bedroom window. More than once visitors had been awakened in the night by some "wild animal" at the window.

A type of solution was achieved when we could assign a bedroom to Nassion after the kids had left home. Of course this meant another closed door. Oh well.....

At this time in my nostalgic summation eighteen years later its definitely not cause for upset, if indeed it ever was, and now we just miss her. I buried her in the "pet cemetery".

I'm starting to feel better and the sun has come out.

