



The Probe

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Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ottawa

February 2007 #36

John Wright - President

At their February meeting, the Management Committee elected **John Wright** as our President for the 2007 calendar year. John has been a member of Probus since 2000 and has edited our newsletter for almost 6 years.

He is our 8th President, following Russ Hammond, Jim Rader, Jim Kingston, John Kruithof, Joyce Wright, Allen Taylor and Jean Lupton. Allen is not only our longest serving president (he was in office when we extended our year from September to December) but also took on the role for January this year.

An interview with John is on page 4.

Good Cheer!

Some things change but many stay the same. Our Christmas Party was a mixture of both. Baritone **Stuart MacKinnon**, accompanied on the piano by **Dianne Fergusson**, provided the entertainment, followed by Allen Taylor. This was a new format, but the party atmosphere and the good food was a well appreciated carry-over from previous years.

Many members already knew Stuart from his concert and church work around Ottawa and everyone quickly warmed to his engaging personality. He sang several solos - carols from around the world - and led the Alta Vista Probus Club Choir in some of the most popular carols and Christmas songs, which, taken together fitted the title, "Sing Noel".



Ada McEwan and **Audrey Reekie** were in charge of the refreshments and did an excellent job of arranging the hall and presenting the array of goodies - cakes, sandwiches, appetizers and punch as well as coffee and tea. **Bob Haughton** was our genial 'Master of Ceremonies' and kept things moving along.

Good Cheer!

As part of our Christmas Party, and following the theme of 'Good Cheer', **Allen Taylor** gave a brief talk on Canada's first social club, "L'Ordre de Bon Temps".

"Champlain, observing the good effects the celebrations ("Neptune's Theatre" and the banquet which followed - see *The Probe*, October 2006) had on the morale of the colonists had an idea: regular feasts might help to ease the monotony and inactivity of the long winter. He discussed his idea with Poutrincourt, an able musician, and with Lescarbot, a poet. Out of these discussions came the Order of Good Cheer.

"Every gentleman of the colony became, in turn, Chief Steward and Caterer of the Order of Good Cheer. Wearing the official chain of office, he then had to prepare a menu and provide food for a feast. The menus were rich and varied, offering fresh fish, duck, goose, grouse, moose, caribou, venison, beaver tails and the meat of otter, bear, rabbit and wildcat (cougar). Most of these dishes were provided by the Micmacs. Their chief, Membertou and visiting sagamores (chiefs) were invited to sit at the head table. Poutrincourt and other musicians played and songs were sung, both old favourites and new ones composed (by Lescarbot) on the spot." (Harry Bruce, "*Illustrated History of Nova Scotia*")

The original membership of the club was the 15 professional and businessmen of the colony, making it North America's first PROBUS club! Despite the Order and its banquets, 5 of the 45-man colony did not survive the first winter.

Allen joined the Order in Annapolis Royal in 1953 and researched its antecedents. He has concluded that Champlain was emulating the "Chaine des Rôtisseurs"- "The Royal Guild of Goose Roasters", founded in 1248, during the reign of Louis IX.

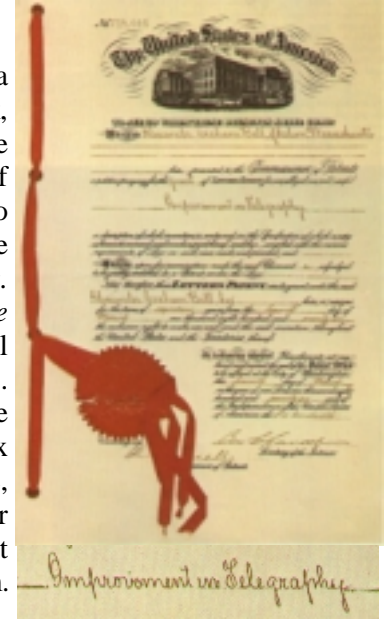
PROBUS' Vital Purpose ...

To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time in life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centred.



Bell, Book and Charlotte

Charlotte Gray presented a story within a story as she told us about writing her book, *Reluctant Genius*, and about its subject, the passionate life and inventive mind of Alexander Graham Bell. Her first idea was to write the story of Mabel Bell, following the pattern of previous books starting with *Mrs. King*, *The Life and Times of Isobel Mackenzie King*, by taking a woman as the principal subject. The concept changed to 'Mr. & Mrs. Bell' but once they were married Alex became the centre of her life, so he was the story. Alex was beyond difficult - obsessive, compulsive, borderline hyperactive and probably a sufferer from attention deficit disorder. His best working time was between midnight and 4 am.



He rose at noon. His standard breakfast was porridge, on plain white china, and a cigar, with his newspaper. If this regimen was interrupted, he would go back to bed and start over.

Mabel was deaf from the age of 5 (scarlet fever) and Bell wrote much of what might ordinarily be spoken between a married couple. This resulted in a treasure trove of 180 volumes of letters stored at the Bell Museum in Brantford, which the family had already had transcribed.

Although Bell's fame is as the inventor of the telephone, it was just one product of his genius. A study of the wings of a dead seabird on a beach in Nova Scotia, where they had a summer home, started him thinking about flight and eventually winning the Scientific American prize for the first manned flight of over one mile - he also claimed the first manned flight in the British Empire. From this came his designs for the helicopter and the hydrofoil. Among many other things, he worked on improvements to the phonograph, studied genetics (Why do sheep have one lamb while pigs produce litters?) and invented the chemical toilet.

Bell met Mabel Hubbard when he was working as what today would be called a speech therapist. His father had developed a system of 'visible speech' - a series of drawings of the mouth, and instructions, for the production of sounds to make up speech by the deaf. Alex continued this work and was engaged to teach Mabel. Despite a 10 year difference in their ages (27 - 17), Bell fell in love and asked for Mabel's hand.

Hubbard père was a lawyer, and at the crucial time took Bell's invention to the Patent Office in Washington and filed it only hours before Elisha Gray attempted to file

his version. The patent was awarded for "Improvement in Telegraphy" - Bell had been trying to devise an apparatus which would allow several telegraph signals to be carried simultaneously on a single pair of wires, when he found he could transmit voice.

For all his genius, Bell was not an engineer and needed a series of bright young men to translate his thoughts into working apparatus. He was impatient with details, hated paperwork and, if left alone, would rush from one project to another, leaving the first unfinished.

A question period at the end of the talk got into where the telephone was invented. Was it in Scotland, where Alex was born, in 1847, and raised, or in Brantford where he lived until moving to Boston in 1874, or in Boston where he was living in 1876 when the patent was granted? It remains an open question.

Jack Harvey (a retired Bell engineer) raised the issue of a German inventor who claimed a 10 year start over Bell. Ms Gray said that there have been several 'inventors', real and in their heads but even if Bell was not the first to invent a telephone, his patent withstood over 600 challenges.

Asked if she was able to talk to family members, Ms Gray said that there are, today, 75 descendants. She contacted as many as possible and they were very helpful. She asked one grand-daughter, "What did he sound like?" The answer - "Just like you."*

Bob Haughton (another retired Bell engineer) introduced Charlotte, and **John Wright** (yet another) thanked her on our behalf.

*Lowland Scots claim the purest English speech, which would be very similar to Charlotte's 'BBC English'.

Probus Finances

Please note that the figures shown for 2004-2005 covered 15 months ending 31 December 2005. Our fiscal year now matches the calendar year which means that the results shown below are for unequal time periods. This is the last year that this situation will occur and next year will see a report that will compare two similar 12 month periods.

	04/05	2006
Opening Balance	1,162	953
Receipts		
Memberships	2,175	3,335
Loonie Bin	765	620
President's Luncheon	--	928
Other	15	--
Total Receipts	2,955	4,883

Expenditures

Probus Fees	400	878
Probus Pins & Name Badges	200	--
Pleasant Park Church	875	800
Communications	138	92
Office Supplies	--	62
Refreshments	798	587
Bank Charges	25	15
Speaker's Gifts	299	197
Sunshine Cttee	16	8
Membership Cttee	94	49
President's Luncheon	--	980
Special Projects	119	--
Banner	200	--
Christmas Entertainment	--	120
Christmas Donation	--	75
Total Expenditures	3,164	3,863
Closing Balance	953	1,973

Ed Borza, Treasurer

February - Black History Month

Alexander Graham Bell, is not generally known for his stance on civil rights.

In 1904, after his black assistant of 35 years, Charles Thompson, was refused rooms at a Nova Scotia hotel, Bell organized a public protest in his Baddeck village and later gave a public interview in America protesting against racial discrimination.

With sympathy ...

... to the families of **Frank Fesco, John Howe** and **John E. Wright**, particularly **Joyce, Joan** and **Edna**.

Frank and Joyce were founder members of our Club and Frank was our first speaker - on his favourite topic, *Numismatics*. This picture on the front page of the Ottawa Sun was taken at the Remembrance day service in 2002, and reproduced in *The Probe* the following month. His coin displays were a feature of our 'Craft and Hobby' shows.



John and Joan Howe joined in September 2000. John was a golfer and an avid bridge player and, although his 'official' memorial service was held in Toronto where most of his family live, his bridge, golf and Probus friends held a memorial service at St. John the Apostle. It will be to our lasting regret that we did not arrange for him to talk to the Club about his father, CD Howe.

John E. Wright joined at our 3rd meeting, in 1999. He served on the Management Committee for several years, most recently on Membership. The photograph is of John reading from *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, which featured at several of our Christmas Parties.



John Kruithof sent us this note: Last week, my next-door neighbour and good friend **John Korte** died. His obituary, carried by The Ottawa Citizen, mentioned in part "In lieu of flowers, his family asks that you take the time to sit down with an old friend and share a story or two... remembering that the chances to do so pass us by all too soon." At the subsequent funeral service, eulogy after eulogy spoke of how much John Korte, in his life, practiced that habit, and how much it had meant to many. It seems to me a message PROBUS can take to heart, without requiring any more members to pass on for the realization to sink in how short time really is.

Probe Us - John Wright

John was elected President at the February Management Committee Meeting. We caught up with him soon after.

Probe: Let's cover the basics first, what where when and why?

JW: I was born in Bournemouth, brought up in Leeds, immigrated in 1957, went back and forth a few times, graduated and settled into the Engineering Department at Bell. 'Why' is more difficult. Deciding to live in Canada was the sum of many small things which was hard to explain to friends in the UK.

Probe: Did you settle in Ottawa?

JW: No. I lived in Montreal until 1969, except for an 18-month spell at Bell Telephone Laboratories in New Jersey. Soon after that assignment was completed, I met Joyce. We got to know each other over the fascinating summer of Expo '67 and married in the fall. Peter was born in 1969 and when he was about 3 months, we moved to Ottawa.

Probe: You continued to work for Bell?

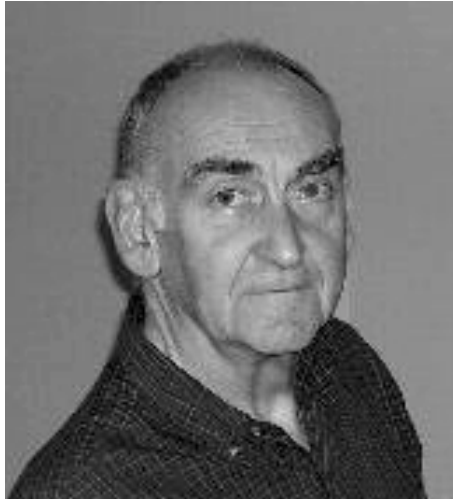
JW: Yes, until I retired the first time in 1993. After that I hung out my shingle and worked as a consultant for a few years.

Probe: Were there any parts of your Bell work which stick out particularly.

JW: My first winter in Canada was spent on construction sites in Labrador supervising the installation of diesel generators. I had a spell of 11 years at Telecom Canada, working with the other Telephone Companies across Canada and spent about a year of that time overseas, two or three weeks at a time, mostly in Geneva, where I would regularly come across Bob Haughton. Bob was one of my first bosses at Bell. Many years later, when he put together a course on telecommunications for 4th year engineering students, he asked me to give some of the lectures. We have been doing this at Carleton for 18 years now.

Probe: What interests do you have outside work?

JW: Politics: I have been involved in nearly every election campaign - Municipal, Provincial and Federal for over 20 years. I've been a member of the English-Speaking Union, and educational charity, for about 30 years and have held several positions, including President of Ottawa Branch and Secretary of ESU Canada. Joyce and I were in Santiago last fall for the



launching of ESU Chile. My model railroad has been neglected since I bought my first computer (1978). Computers have allowed me to make up for my atrocious handwriting! I am an opera buff. When I lived in New Jersey, I went to the Met about once every two weeks. Last Saturday afternoon I was enthralled by the Met High Definition telecast of Eugene Onegin at Silver City. Other interests, besides Probus, include Formula 1 auto racing - in recent years our son and I have been to races in Montreal several times, plus Spain, Austria and Germany.

Probe: You do a lot of travelling?

JW: It's in the genes - both my parents had careers in the travel business in England. Last fall it was Chile and Argentina, in 2005 we went to the Normandy Beaches and Vimy, the year before - New Zealand.

Probe: We hear that you are a fitness nut?

JW: Not really. I've always thought that I was built for comfort, not speed but I exercise regularly and try to stay under 80kg.

Probe: What are your goals for the year?

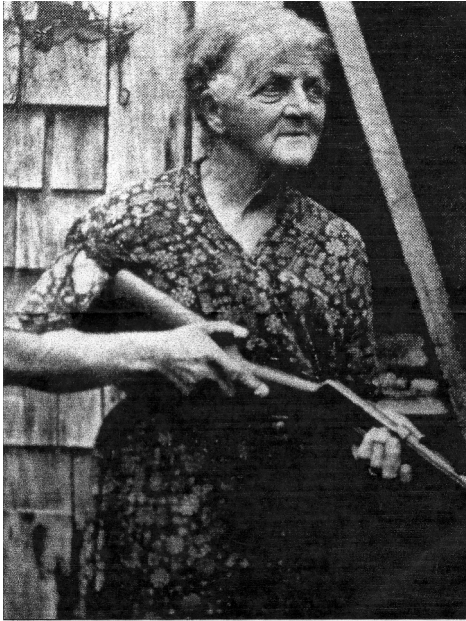
JW: I want to make sure that the smooth-running machine which makes our meetings so enjoyable continues to run smoothly; I want to do everything I can to help our Program Committee continue to find high calibre speakers; and I want to encourage everyone who can do so to share in the running of the club.

Probe: You're talking to yourself again.

March 28th, Chris Lackner - "The Underground Railroad"

Last summer, the Ottawa Citizen sent a reporter, **Chris Lackner**, to walk the path of the 'Underground Railroad'. With more and bigger cities en route, their route had to be an approximation but it started in the right place, May's Lick, Kentucky, and finished correctly, in North Buxton, Ontario. The total journey was about 500 miles. Dogs, heat and blisters were a part of the trek but the other side of the coin was the welcome he and his photographer, **Malcolm Taylor**, received throughout, and the satisfaction of completing the journey in the footsteps of the escaped slaves.

Chris will talk about the journey, its history and the emotions it raised in him.



April 25th - Cougar Annie & Her Garden

Fear not! The rather alarming photograph is not our April speaker but the subject of her talk. **Lesley Sibthorpe** joins us to talk about the life and times of 'Cougar Annie'. In Lesley's words:

"I came with my husband to Canada in 1970, and over the years have developed a love of gardening as well as an interest in, and a deep respect for, the early pioneers. One of these pioneers was Ada Annie Rae-Arthur (also known as Cougar Annie for her remarkable marksmanship with a rifle) and I will share her story with you.

"Cougar Annie was a wily and tenacious person who settled on Vancouver Island's west coast in 1915. In the wilderness, she created a nursery garden, ran a general store and post office, as well as looked after 11 children. The land mostly reverted back to the wilderness in the 1980's and it has since been uncovered by an equally interesting modern day pioneer. 3 years ago we were privileged to be able to visit this isolated and amazing place and learn more of the life on the west coast, then and now."

Spring Luncheon - an Invitation

The Probus Club of Kanata takes great pleasure in inviting the members and spouses/partners of Alta Vista Club to the **Annual Eastern Ontario Regional Inter-Club Spring Luncheon** on Tuesday May 8, 2007 at the Hellenic Centre, 1315 Prince of Wales Drive, Ottawa.

The luncheon will begin with reception/social time at 11:00 am – a served lunch at 12:00 pm which will be followed by approximately 60 minutes of entertainment. Each attendee is asked to state their preference for chicken, salmon or special dietary needs with their payment. A cash bar will be available during the reception and luncheon. The cost of the luncheon is \$29.00 per person.

For your entertainment, the Organizing Committee has selected: Canterbury High School String Ensemble, Bell High School Concert Jazz Choir, and Mr. Pat McAlpine, a comedian.

John Kruithof will coordinate bookings for our Club. Please let him know if you will be joining us and your menu choice, by **April 8th**.

A Key Safety Issue

One of **Len Vaz'** colleagues put out a notice on a simple security measure. If your car key-ring has a button which sounds the horn (intended for finding a lost car in a parking lot), keep it on your bedside table at night. If you hear an intruder, press the button and the horn will alert neighbours and probably scare him off.

Note: This is probably not useful if you live in a 20th floor penthouse. Check that you are in range before you rely on it.



World Views

John Kruithof has provided the Winter 2007 program for the free monthly photo evenings, "World Views".

March 31 Hiking in Slovakia. Mountains and paradise in the heart of Europe. John Haley and Johanne Léveillé.

April 28 The Thelon River. Where time and light stand still. Max Finkelstein.

Programs begin at 7:30. The venue is, Bethany Baptist Church, 382 Centrepointe Drive at Baseline. Free admission.



We have a little more information on *Rendezvous 2008*. The main hotel will be the Hilton with the Delta as back-up. The Hilton is directly connected to the Convention Centre and the Delta, 3 blocks away, is connected via *The Pedway*, an underground shopping and restaurant complex.

Jim Kingston has already made his reservations, and with a group of 40 Australian Probeans planning to attend, early booking is important.

Jim is thinking of renting a van and driving - a journey he knows well. If you are interested in joining him, please contact Jim directly.

From Probus Centre Canada ...

In recent mailings from Probus Centre Canada (PCC) we have our *Certificate of Insurance*, a new constitution and set of by-laws, revised club 'standard' constitution and by laws, two newsletters and *Christmas Greetings* from the Executive.

Insurance

Out of your annual dues we pay \$2.50 per member to PCC. Of this, about half pays for insurance coverage. We are insured against claims for injury and property damage under a *Commercial General Liability* policy.

Constitution

There are two constitutional changes. One deals with the way the way the \$2.50 assessment is presented. The other deals with the arrangement of territories for the election of PCC directors. Our area is not affected.

Nominations for Director

Stone Avery, who has represented Eastern Ontario for the past 3 years has decided not to seek re-election. At press time there is one nominee, from Belleville.

20th Anniversary

The Probus Club of Cambridge received Charter #1 on March 17th, 1987. Twenty years later we have chartered 184 clubs in Canada of which 181 are still extant, with a total membership exceeding 23,000.

Probus Canada History

As a 20th anniversary project, **Bernie Nadeau** (the PCC web master) undertook to prepare a history of Probus in Canada. You can see the results of his work on the web site (www.probus.org). Go to the Canada page and click "History of Probus in Canada" in the left column.

John Morris, the first President of PCC, **Doris Morris**, **Bud Crookes** and **Margaret Huismans** all contributed to the project.

Poetry Corner

We need no reminders like, *Blow, blow thou wint'ry wynd*, so today we are going for whimsy rather than windy.

Pastoral

Two cows
In a marsh,
Mildly munching
Foddler Harsh,
Cow's mother
Cow's daughter,
Mildly edging
Brackish water.

Mildly munching,
While heron,
Brackish-minded,
Waits like Charon.
Two cows,
Mildly mooing;
No bull;
Nothing doing.

Ogden Nash

And a rueful note on which to finish -

In Extremis

I saw my toes the other day.
I hadn't looked at them for months.
Indeed, they might have passed away.
And yet they were my best friends once.

When I was small, I knew them well.
I counted on them up to ten
And put them in my mouth to tell
The larger from the lesser. Then

I loved them better than my ears,
My elbows, adenoids, and heart.
But with the swelling of the years
We drifted, toes and I, apart.

Now, gnarled and pale, each said, *j'accuse!* --
I hid them quickly in my shoes.

John Updike