



The Probe

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Twentieth Anniversary

On March 17th, 1987, the Probus Club of Cambridge held its first meeting, which was the first Probus meeting in Canada. There are now over 180 clubs operating in Canada with well over 23,000 members. Three other clubs will celebrate their 20th 'birthdays' this year, White Rock/South Surrey, Burlington and Collingwood.

July - Picnic and ...

Following the pattern of recent years, we will have an 'Indoor Picnic' after our July meeting.

... something new

Instead of a speaker we are going to have 4 or 5! If anyone would like to give a 10 minute talk on any topic, we would like to hear from you. It can be travel, gardening, quilting, volunteering, book reviews or pretty well anything else except, perhaps, politics, religion and surgical procedures.

Talks can be illustrated - we have a 35mm slide projector available and a computer projector which can show still images or videos.

Our Program Committee will select the topics from those proposed. Please contact George Toller, Tony Goldsmith or Joyce Wright with your ideas.

Something else new

We now have our own computer projector. There have been a few times in the last year or so when we have had to do without pictures or borrow a projector. Chris Lackner's talk was the most recent case. We went to a rental company which graciously waived the charge but made it clear that it was a one time arrangement.

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.

Wib Neal - Vice-president

I am pleased to announce that Wib Neal has accepted a nomination for the Vice-presidency and that the Management Board has voted him into that office.

John Wright - President

Inside the Ivory Tower

In the grand scale of things, Carleton University (1952) or even its predecessor, Carleton College (1942), is a 'Johnny-come-lately' among universities.



Spruce Riordan, who retired as the Vice-president (Finance & Administration) of Carleton, started his talk with a look at some of the older universities, including Al-Karaouine (Fez, Morocco) which was formed in 859 and has operated continuously since then. Laval (1636) and UNB (1785) are Canada's first universities in French and English, respectively. Although Ottawa has been a university town since 1866, the need for a non-religious institution of higher learning led to the founding of Carleton.

Spruce offered a rather prosaic definition of the

university - A body of scholars forming a vertically integrated, degree-granting, knowledge enterprise - which came to life when he described its purposes - to preserve knowledge, to advance knowledge, to produce an educated populace and to act as an economic engine. He went on to describe its bicameral nature, a Board handles the corporate side and the Senate is responsible for the academic side. The titular head is the Chancellor, currently Marc Garneau, a role without executive power but with tremendous influence.

A university's reputation is very dependent on its research. Industry is always looking for new products and will turn to universities for ideas and basic research. Applied research has to be about 10 years ahead of commercialization. Before that, it is probably pure research; later, it is competing with developers. Spruce had to 're-invent' his career several times to stay in the right time frame and avoid 'dead ends'. The transistor, invented in 1948, quickly put his work on electron tubes into the shade and he turned his attention to the 'chip' which started with two transistors and which today may contain millions. From there he went on to systems for automation and control and what were then called 'micro-computers', followed in the 70's by work on corporate networks, in the 80's by work on cellular telephones and in the 90's by work on very large distributed databases. The 10 year lead period was clearest to his audience in the last two. Cell phones started being widely used in the early 90's and the internet, which is essentially an extremely large distributed database, bloomed in the mid to late 90's.

He concluded his talk by leaving the academic and looking at the 'other activities'. Carleton is like a town with a population of over 20,000 people. It has a police force, a communications system, sports and services such as accommodation, retail, food, medical, graphics, printing and mail. These are in addition to its internal departments such as finance, audit, human resources and a small army to look after the physical plant.

Carleton's goal is to attract the best faculty and students to ensure excellent teaching and world-class research and to create an internationally recognized centre of excellence. Its challenges are funding, availability of faculty, enhancing its image and being competitive in the digital age.

'Inside the Ivory Tower' almost became literally true. The initial architect's plan for the Dunton Tower, which today dominates Carleton's skyline, had it clad in an ivory coloured sheath.

John Wright introduced Spruce and Bob Haughton thanked him on our behalf.

The Underground Railroad

In words and images Chris Lackner re-created his 500 mile walk from May's Lick, Kentucky to North Buxton, Ontario, following some 40,000 escaped slaves along 'The Underground Railroad'.

The opening part of his talk covered some of the historical background, the preparations for the trip and made the point that Canada may have represented freedom but it was no paradise for the escapees. It was a leap into the unknown and the newcomers faced the same hardships as other early settlers and there were prejudices to contend with. Canada was not without its own history of slavery. Perhaps if we had been a plantation economy ? Nor was Canada the final destination for many; about half returned to the U.S. once slavery was abolished.

Chris finished with a selection of photographs from his trip which included a jail cell where he spent a night.



Chris Lackner surrounded by Probeans eager to ask more questions.

The trek started on June 10th, 2006, but only after 8 months of research and pre-interviews and setting things up. His journey ended at the homecoming celebrations in North Buxton on Labour Day weekend, attended by hundreds of the descendants of the original settlers, from all over North America.

While Chris walked every step of the way his companion and photographer, Malcolm Taylor, drove a mini-van and handled the logistics and commissary. The

air-conditioned vehicle was used for 'non-trek' travel between interviews and sites Chris wanted to visit. The van was not always handy when needed. Near Riply, Ohio, four dogs leapt off a porch and had to be fended off with a walking stick until a passing motorist rescued him.

A day's walk would be about 10 miles, often under a hot summer sun, and Chris needed about 4 litres of water to avoid dehydration. Days could start at 5 am and with the walk, interviews, writing his articles, as well as putting a blog on the website, could stretch until midnight.

The research and contacts made before the journey meant that he was expected and welcomed at every stop on the way. He visited museums and talked with descendants of slaves, including a 97-year old whose grandmother was a slave. His night in jail was in a jail used for recaptured slaves which operated as the town jail until the 1970's that is now an historic building.

Some of the stories he told were harrowing. One was of a slave who killed her daughter rather than have her returned to slavery. One of the museums was originally a place where chained slaves were kept, pending their sale, and later became a stop on the railroad.

The conductors on the railroad included white abolitionists and slaves. One slave, with a lax master, helped about 1200 others on their way. There was a constant battle of wits between the conductors and bounty hunters who were trying to recapture slaves.

Chris said that his objective was not to recreate history but to report on it. He also said that there was a lesson for modern times. A small segment of the population saw that there was something wrong and took it on themselves to do something about it. An example that a small, dedicated, group can effect major change.

The journey in words, photographs and maps with a wealth of background material, is on the Citizen website (www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/features/freedom/index.html). It is well worth a look.

Guest of Rotary

As the new President of our Club, I was invited, with Joyce, to be the guest of the Rotary Club of Ottawa at their lunch on March 19th. Rotary has a system of 'Happy Dollars' - for \$3 I told them that I was happy to announce the 20th anniversary of Probus in Canada, happy to be there and that we would be happy to see any Rotarians at our meetings.

Our thanks to Dan Kelley for the invitation.

John Wright

"Thank You", Jean

Capone's was the venue for a lunch after our February meeting with Guest of Honour, Jean Lupton, accompanied by her husband, John. The occasion was to thank Jean for her leadership and work during her year as President of our club.

Also as our guest was Richard Shantz, president elect of our sponsoring Rotary Club. He gave a brief talk on Rotary's work in Ottawa and worldwide, including the polio eradication program with which Eva Hammond is closely associated.

Spring Luncheon - May 8th

If you have booked to go to the Eastern Ontario Spring Luncheon, don't forget that it will be on Tuesday, May 8th, starting at 11am with lunch served at Noon.

The venue is the Hellenic Centre, 1315 Prince of Wales Drive. It is south of Baseline/Heron and north of Hog's Back/Meadowlands on the east side of Prince of Wales. There is a large parking lot.

After lunch there will be performances by the Canterbury High School String Ensemble, the Bell High School Concert Jazz Choir, and Pat McAlpine, a comedian.

There are no tickets - we have provided a list of names which will be used for signing-in.

Tim Haitsma - Director

Tim Haitsma, Past-president of the Probus Club of Belleville, will be our representative on the Board of Probus Canada for the next three years. He succeeds **Stone Avery**, who visited our Club in August 2004 soon after he was elected. Stone decided not to put his name forward for a second term.

Tim was the only candidate from District #1 (Eastern Ontario) and will be "Elected by Acclamation" at the Annual Meeting of Probus Centre Canada this month.

We hope to meet him at the Spring Luncheon.

Seize the Moment

An announcement on Air Canada that the plane would be landing *momentarily* must have upset passengers who had expected to be on the ground long enough to deplane in comfort.

Not as bad as *of* for *have* (I should not *of* done it), but poor English usage.

May 23rd - Walter Prystawski

Until his retirement last Fall, Walter was the only concertmaster the National Arts Centre orchestra had known. Originally engaged by Mario Bernardi, he served with Franco Mannino, Gabriel Chmura, Trevor Pinnock and, most recently, Pinchas Zukerman. His long and distinguished career includes many performances at the NAC and on tour with the orchestra. Often on tour he, and other members of the orchestra offered master classes to local musicians.

Under the topic *Life of a Concertmaster* he has much to tell.

June 27th - Michael Potter

Michael Potter is well known for many reasons - for founding the high-tech company *Cognos*, for his sailing exploits and for his love of vintage aircraft. It is the last of these which he will be telling us about in June.

Michael started his collection of vintage war planes in 2000 and expanded his hobby into a foundation called *Vintage Wings of Canada*, housed at the Ottawa/Gatineau airport. They currently have 14 aircraft including the 1945 Supermarine Spitfire which Michael regularly flies on ceremonial occasions.

Gardeners Wanted!

This item appeared in the May 2002 issue of Canadian Federation of University Women / Ottawa "Capital Carillon":

"A well run organization is like a well planned vegetable garden. First we plant a row of peas: we need purpose, people, passion, patience, perseverance. Then we need a row of squash: squash the gossip, squash the negativity, squash the 'buts'. Continuing, we need a row of lettuce: let us be faithful, let us be resourceful, let us be discerning, let us be farsighted and fair-minded, let us be supportive. Finally, a row of turnips: turn up for meetings, turn up for special events, turn up when it is your turn to turn up. Turn up when it is convenient and turn up when it is difficult."

From the Internet - Useful Notices

"In case of fire please inform any member of the staff."

"Please check your values at the front desk."

"Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar."

"Customers who find our waitresses rude ought to see the manager."



If you are thinking of going to Rendezvous 2008, please let the organizers know as early as possible so they have firm numbers with which to plan the events.

SIGs

Looking at the Newsletters of other Clubs shows that we have a fairly typical club. One or two clubs have Special Interest Groups which operate semi-autonomously from their parent Probus clubs.

When you completed the application form, you were asked to name your interests and the August 2002 issue of *Probe* presented a summary. Top of the list were *Travel, Reading, Music and Gardening*.

Would you be interested in organizing a SIG? The Management Committee would be willing to help get things going. We would talk to the Church about use of a room if this would be a suitable location and, of course, we would put details in *Probe*.

Paul Stumes - Membership

Paul has been seriously ill for some time and until that happened we had not realized how much we depend on him to look after membership. Usually lists 'appear' with the names of guests and of new members which we copy into the next issue of *Probe*, attendance sheets are laid out for members to check-in and memberships and renewals are taken care of.

We hear that he is improving slowly. We wish him well and look forward to seeing him behind the membership desk as soon as possible.

How to find us

We meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month except December (2nd Wednesday) in the Hall of Pleasant Park Baptist Church, 414 Pleasant Park Road in Alta Vista.

Our meetings start at 10 but members start arriving soon after 9:30 for coffee and chat. Try it - you'll like it!