



The Probe

Est. September 1999

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ottawa

August 2009, #48

The First Decade

On September 22nd, 1999 the Probus Club of Alta Vista held its first meeting, so our August 2009 meeting completes our first ten years.

In September we will celebrate with a Birthday Cake and a special edition of *The Probe*.

Better Late ...

... well, it's hard to know if our Annual Picnic was *better* for being a week late but it was certainly very good. This was the first time we had set up our new location with tables and chairs so there was a little uncertainty which was soon dispelled.

Catering was by *Mooney's Bay Bistro* and **Morley Craig**, who not only put the icing on the cake, he baked the cake! **Morley** also led the set-up team. **Ada McEwan** made the arrangements and organized the presentation of the picnic spread.

Our thanks to **Ada** and **Morley** and everyone who helped out.

Darcy McGee and the Fenians

If Dr. David Shanahan's talk had been reviewed as fiction it would have been dismissed as "too far fetched". Rebellion, flight, war, politics and murder were all part of Darcy McGee's story. Born in Comerford, Ireland, in 1825, McGee emigrated to the US when he was 17. He returned to Ireland a few years later and became involved with the Fenians. At this time, Ireland was the most densely populated country in Europe with a population of about 11 million - nearly three times today's numbers. After the *Young Irelander* rebellion in 1848, McGee avoided arrest by fleeing to the United States.



Thomas Darcy McGee
1825 - 1868

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10-minute Talks

Medals, homes, a watchdog, countries and opera. Possibly operas could be found for each of the other four but there is no apparent connection except that they were the subjects of the 10-minute talks before our picnic.

Mike Charrier started off with a story of heroism in the Spanish-American War. There was some expectation that this would be about Teddy Roosevelt charging up San Juan Hill, but no! Two long-boats rowed close to the shore at Cienfuegos and, under heavy fire, grappled two trans-Atlantic telegraph cables connecting Cuba with Spain. They rowed away from the shore, sliding the cables through the grapples until they were far enough from the shore to make repairs difficult and then cut the cables. Two sailors were killed and 4 marines plus the officer in-charge, were wounded. Two Canadians in the boats, a sailor and a marine, were awarded the Medal of Honor, America's highest military honour.

Ed Borza followed with a talk on *Habitat for Humanity*. Although *HfH* was not formally founded until 1976, the work was started by Linda and Millard Fuller in Georgia



Ed Borza discussing *Habitat for Humanity* with John Kruithof

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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.

Russ Hammond & Bob Gayner

We are saddened to note the recent passing of two of our members, Russ Hammond and Bob Gayner.

Russ was the 'father' of our club, its first President and since then our President Emeritus. He did much of the work to get the club going. The first step, Rotary sponsorship, was easy as Eva Hammond is a member of Ottawa Rotary Club. Russ recruited Jim Rader, who he knew from their careers at Bell, and they quickly involved Allan Mac Lellan, pastor at Pleasant Park Baptist. Russ' efforts came to fruition on September 22, 1999 when about 20 people heard Frank Fesco talk about *History Learned through Coin Collecting*.

Our sympathies go to Eva and their family.

Bob Gayner joined in June 2008 soon after the death of his wife, Mary, from cancer. He travelled extensively in the year that he was a member and attended only a few meetings before also succumbing to cancer.

McGee's Funeral

"It is April, 1868, and politics is already a fierce and contentious topic in the brand new nation. One of the Fathers of Confederation, D'Arcy McGee, struck down by an assassin's bullet, is accorded an enormous public funeral down Montreal's St. James Street. By 9:00 am the streets are crowded to suffocation with 60,000 mourners. The stores and offices are shut tight. At least 20,000 men march in the funeral procession, which takes close to three hours to pass by."



Probus Canada News

Probus Canada has three new clubs - #201 Probus Club of Durham West; #202 Women's Probus Club of Saugeen Shores; and #203 Probus Club of Muskoka Lakes. We welcome them to the Probus family.

There was no election in our District (Ontario #1) this year but in Districts 2, 3 & 4, **Hank Puersten** →

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The Fenians opposed the British rule of Ireland and, over the years, carried that opposition to Canada where they launched the "Fenian Raids". Many of the Fenians had taken part in the American Civil War and were battle hardened veterans. Their aim was to bring down the Canadian Government and establish a new country. There were five raids between 1866 (Campobello and Fort Erie) and 1871 (Pembina, North Dakota - intended for Winnipeg). The raids were generally abortive but were one of the factors which caused the formation of Canada in 1867.

By the time McGee moved to Canada (1857) he was a seasoned newspaperman and founded the *New Era* in Montreal. He hoped to be part of the creation of a new nation which would be free of the sectarianism of Ireland and he became opposed to the Fenian Movement which he had once supported. He was a natural politician, being willing to talk at length on any given subject whether he knew any thing about it or not, and was elected to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada in 1858. Within a decade he became one of the 'Fathers of Confederation'.

McGee's assassination, by a pistol bullet to the head, was supposedly by a Fenian supporter, Patrick James Whelan. Dr. Shanahan disputes this and was very critical of the circumstantial evidence and the trial procedure which led to Whelan's conviction and hanging.

In responding to the many questions, Dr. Shanahan noted that the Irish formed the largest ethnic group in Canada at the time of Confederation. The consequence of their decision to be part of Canada and not to foster a breakaway country led directly to the Canada we know today. When asked to project the experience of the Irish to the current immigration of Indians, Pakistanis, Somalis, etc. who have also left behind their homeland and everything they grew up with, he commented that there were two basic needs. The need for them to give up some of their ways and the need for Canadians to be more accepting.

John Wright introduced Dr. Shanahan and **Paul Stumes** thanked him on our behalf. We were given a direct connection to the Fenian Raids when **Audrey Reekie** showed us the sword carried by her great-grandfather in defence of Canada against the raiders. We know of at least one member who visited Darcy McGee's Pub, on Sparks Street, for further research.

(Bracebridge), **Judith Saunders** (Central Burlington Women's Probus Club) and **Maureen Irving** (Guelph & District) were elected to the Board of Probus Canada..

10-minute Talks .. - continued from page 1

(US) in 1968. They started to build homes and, using the bible's teachings on usury, the homes were sold without profit but on a 20-year mortgage. Between 1976 and 2000, 100,000 homes were built and over the next 8 years, 200,000 more, in 96 different countries. *HfH* relies very heavily on volunteers and one of the reasons that the organization is so successful is that it allows and encourages any adult to come and work. *HfH* does not get any Government funds, but it will accept gifts of land. On a local note, in 2003, 8 homes were built in Ottawa in one week.

The background to **Ken Dye's** talk was a series of cartoons featuring Ken and some of the politicians with whom his work as *Parliament's Watchdog* (looking very fierce in the first cartoon) brought him in contact -



sometimes more clash than contact. These included Marc Lalonde sweeping liabilities under the carpet; Lloyd Axworthy unhappy with attention to Ports Canada; Herb Gray when President of the Treasury Board ("Well, Herb, I see you've got a tight grip on the purse strings. Where's the purse?"); Sinc Stephens and Don Mazankowski over West Edmonton Mall financing; and, of course, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Brian Mulroney. One cartoon was particularly intriguing. The setting was the Aberdeen Club in Hong Kong for which the Canadian High Commission had bought memberships for staff members. One of the characters was saying, "Ken Dye has it all wrong. We're not here to relax ... we're in training for a Senate appointment". As a footnote, when the High Commission sold off the memberships (Ken's influence), they made a profit!

Hungary is a country of Ungars. Germany is a country of Hermanns. Russia is a variant on 'red' and Austria is a simplification of Osterreich. **Paul Stumes** explained all these telling us the steps through which history and circumstance developed the modern names. Hungary and

Austria are fairly short steps from their origins but Germany and Russia took a little more explaining. Deutschland comes from a 7th century word *diutisc* meaning 'the language spoken by the people'. The 'people' became differentiated as 'peasants (or slaves)' and 'nobility'. The nobility were 'Herr', hence Herrmann and a short step to German. 'Red' is often associated with modern Russia and communism. Paul told us that the name started from a small race of predominantly red-headed people which long ago disappeared or were assimilated. These *Rosiy* somehow gave the name to the many ethnic groups and the huge country which is now Russia. This makes good sense to many Europeans - rouge (Fr), roja (Sp), rose (En) and russo (It) all mean red.

When the NAC cancelled its Summer Opera Festival in 1984 it looked as though the National Capital would be an opera wasteland. Opera Lyra Ottawa was formed the following year and has now grown into a highly-rated professional company. **Ute Davis**, a board member of OLO, showed some spectacular slides from several of its productions



Ute Davis in front of her table of information on live opera in Ottawa

over the years. One of the international stars who performed with OLO until her retirement in 1997 (*Aida*) is Maria Pellegrini.

Mme. Pellegrini formed *Pellegrini Opera* in 2004 and produces several performances each year with piano accompaniment. Ute also covered *The National Capital Opera Society*, *Pocket Opera* and *Ooh La La Opera*, making a convincing case that opera is alive and well in Ottawa.

John Wright provided the continuity between the presentations having started with a warning that while the 10 minute allowance had some flexibility, any speaker seen as keeping hungry Probeans from their picnic would do so at their own risk.

Bob Haughton



In the late 1980's, Bob Haughton recognized the need for a practical introduction to the telecommunications industry for students about to graduate in electrical engineering. Carleton's Dean of Engineering, Spruce Riordan (our February 2007 speaker), liked the idea and Bob recruited lecturers from industry and government. The course has been given at times at McGill, Western and the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal but Carleton has included it in their curriculum every year. The photo is of Carleton President, Dr. Roseanne Runte, presenting Bob with a 'Certificate of Distinction' on the completion of 20 years of his course.

A Letter from Cornwall (UK)

Stratford Probus club received this note:

"Hello, whilst surfing the net I came across your very interesting newsletter. It was of particular interest because your club being the Probus Club, I live in the village of Probus, Cornwall, England. I realise the Clubs are not connected or named after the village, but it sort of makes you feel connected to the world wide Probus organisation.

Out of interest, the village is very old, there have been settlements here since before the Romans, it is now a village of many old houses and the highest church tower in the whole of Cornwall, the church is Norman – 11th century.

Keep up the good work and best regards, Yours sincerely,

**Scott Hall,
Probus, Cornwall."**

September 23rd - Michael Chambers

Michael Chambers is a partner in the offices of the Ottawa law firm Maclaren Corlett LLP. However, he will be speaking to us as President of the Canadian Olympic Committee and a Director of VANOC - the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Michael joined the Board of the Canadian Olympic Association in 1984 as the representative for Canoeing and Kayaking. Since then he has held several positions in the organization and was elected President in 2001.

With the Games due to start on February 12th there are many demands on Michael's time and we are delighted that he has agreed to talk to us.

October 28th - Capt. Serge Bertrand

Every October since the Club was formed we have had a military speaker. Continuing that tradition into our second decade will be Captain (Navy) Serge Bertrand. Capt. Bertrand commanded HMCS Annapolis from 1993 to 1995, one of seven warships on which he served.

His topic will be *Canada's Navy in the 21st Century* drawing on real-world examples to describe what Canada's navy does in the nation's service. He will discuss the impact of rapid change in the Arctic and what this may mean for all Canadians

Help Wanted!

One of the guiding principles of Probus is that there should be a constant turnover of Management Committee members. Presidents serve for one year only so they have the highest turnover rate. Elections for the 2010 club year will be held in November and all positions are open (except that the VP will normally become President). The specific needs are for a Secretary and someone to work on Program and later take over. There is room for members-at-large (to get to know the workings of the club) which is where we look for **future Presidents**.

As always, we need speaker introducers and thankers and people to write reports of meetings and other items for *The Probe* (please see Ed Borza or John Wright).

How to find us

We meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month except December (2nd Wednesday - our Christmas Party) in the Hall of Gloucester Presbyterian Church, 91 Pike Street (corner of Lorry Greenberg).

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