



*Merry Christmas!*  
*... and a Happy New Year*



Newsletter of the PROBUS Club of Ottawa Alta Vista

# The Probe

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## A Story of Hope

**Alexander Hope** went to war as a Merchant Seaman in 1941 at the age of 16. By the end of 1943 he had been torpedoed, threatened with amputations, threatened with detention on a prison ship, bombed and run aground.

**Lois Hope** told us about her husband's nerve-racking war-time experiences at our pre-Remembrance Day meeting in October, starting with a coincidence.

In February, 1982, Alex and Lois had dinner with **Victor and Mary Gray**. Alex and Victor had known each other for about 10 years. Alex asked Victor when he came to Canada - 1942 - same for Alex. What month? February - same for Alex. Why? Torpedoed - same for Alex. What ship? *Empire Seal* - same for Alex. Victor was an Engineer and Alex a Seaman.

The *Empire Seal* was torpedoed by U-96 and the crew took to the lifeboats. Alex' lifeboat moved clear and then returned to pick up another crew member. That crew member was Victor. A second torpedo sank the ship. After 18 hours at 15°F in snow and slush they were spotted by a Catalina which led to a rescue and landing in Liverpool, N.S. Alex was in a bad way and the local doctor wanted him transferred to Halifax for amputation of his legs. **Mrs. MacNeil** ran the local "Cottage Hospital", ignored the doctor and nursed him back to fitness.

Alex next ship was the *Imperoyal*, loaded with aviation fuel for Newfoundland. Next was the *Lancaster Prince* and so back home.

Given a choice of a prison ship or taking the *Empire Scot* headed for Murmansk, Alex volunteered. Of the 12 ships, only 5 survived. *(continued on page 2)*

## On the Marge of Lake Laberge

Bringing to life some of the history of the Yukon and the gold rush, **Allen Macartney** took us with him on a 1300 km canoe trip down the Yukon River. Starting at the foot of the Chilkoot trail in B.C. the voyage continued into the Yukon, through the sometimes rough and often dangerous 54 km Lake Laberge, and finally to Fort Yukon in Alaska.

This was no spur-of-the-moment impulse. When he was 52, Allen decided that, for his 60th birthday, he would make the trip. That gave him 8 years to train - fitness, water skills and wilderness survival.

Allen showed many of his photographs but included the iconic picture of gold seekers struggling up the Chilkoot Pass. The prospectors (30,000 of them) had to have about a ton of gear to survive. Most did not have a clue about the Yukon and striking gold was about as likely as winning a lottery.

The river starts in B.C., about 30 km from the ocean, and ends 3000 km away in the Bering Strait. This summer it was 20% higher than usual and fast flowing. One of the dangers was sweeper trees - trees which had had the earth around their roots washed away so that they fell into the river but remained anchored. Other dangers included bears (keep a clean campsite) and bull moose (1500 lbs of rage). An eagle may have thought that Allen would make a tasty lunch and swooped down on him, sheering off at the last moment when he waved his paddle at it. Allen was sure it was snickering.

The ideal campsite was a sand bar, far enough from the trees to be bug free, but not made of quicksand - which was an unexpected hazard at times. *(cont. on page 3)*

In Murmansk a platoon of Red Army men came aboard with a gang of women and children. Tanks, carried as deck cargo, were quickly uncovered, started up and driven over the side to the dock 4ft below to get them to trains and into action as quickly as possible.

It took about 12 days to unload the cargo by which time German aircraft had found them and made bombing attacks every half-hour. By this time everyone was exhausted and fed up with running to man the anti-aircraft guns. The captain offered time off if they would *PLEASE* go and fire the guns. For three months they waited for a convoy home.

After only 10 days in England, Alex signed on to another ship loading for Russia. This time there was a convoy of 36 ships with an escort of about 70 naval vessels. For three days in the Barents Sea there was a running battle with high-level and torpedo bombers, and, of course, submarines. No ships were sunk.

The next worry was being frozen in for the winter, but the word came that a convoy would leave. Alex' ship was being towed out of harbour when the rope broke and they ran aground. To quote Alex, "I went berserk with rage and fear that we would not get the ship afloat again, or damage the hull and never get home." The ship's own power and a new rope resolved the issue quickly, arriving home in late 1943.

After the war, Alex earned his Master Mariners Certificate and, in 1956, he commanded what was then the largest oil tanker in the world. After their marriage, Lois and Alex visited Mrs. MacNeil who told them that the only other survivor who had visited her was Victor Gray.

Alex died in October 1985 as a Fellow of the Institute of Transport. Lois had teased him that this was "no bad for a wee boy from Glasgow".

She finished her talk with the words, "Go in peace and do not Forget."

## Historical Notes

The *Empire Seal* was launched in 1922 as the SS *Californian* for the American-Hawaiian Steam Ship Company. She was given to the British Ministry of War Transportation in 1940 and renamed *Empire Kite*. Later that year she was renamed *Empire Seal*. She was between New York and Halifax (en route to Belfast) when she was torpedoed.

The book, TV series and film *Das Boot* were based on U-96 and its commander Heinrich Lehmann-Willenbrock. U-96 was sunk at Wilhelmshaven in March 1945 by U.S. Army aircraft.

## President's Notes



As we age, inertia tends to increase in all of us and this is especially true in the Ottawa winter. This is when the Probus Wednesday meetings are really valuable, offering the opportunity to meet old and new friends over "coffee and a nibble" before listening to an interesting speaker who provided the opportunity for us to question and learn about a wide range of topics. During the year I have at least heard the expression of a viewpoint different to mine, at best there has been an inspiring description of a dedicated team of people devoting their energy and skills to the advancement of the unjustly disadvantaged. Our club has provided an excellent array of speakers.

The addition of a celebratory lunch and a beverage after some meetings has added to my pleasure and proved increasingly popular, and this program will be expanded.

It took me three years after joining Probus to become significantly involved. But I wish to thank the people who consistently made the effort to make the club function over the past year. This includes those who arrive 20 minutes early and prepare the coffee, arrange chairs and cover the windows. Also the folks who make the many courteous telephone calls to remind us of the meetings. And at the core there is the committee.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with this smoothly functioning, efficient and cooperative group. The administrative meetings have been fun. So far we have not been raided by British organizations (à la Moya Green/Mark Carney) but this may come!

Finally I offer my thanks to all our members for their friendship and support. For our next meeting, bring a guest to see if they enjoy it too.

*Michael Davis*

## Spring Fling 2013

Next year the Annual Eastern Ontario Probus Luncheon will be hosted by the Probus Club of Western Ottawa on **May 7th at Tudor Hall**. Details later.

## Introducing ???

We are always looking for people to introduce speakers and do write-ups for *Probe*..

If you are willing to help out on a general basis or if there is a particular speaker on the schedule you know or admire or if you have a particular interest in the topic, please let Joan or one of the Management Committee know.



The greatest danger, which all his training had mitigated but not eliminated, was getting caught in a storm or squall and being overturned. The river is cold and hypothermia would set in quickly. Allen reckoned that he would have 5 minutes to get to shore if he did get dumped.

His diet was steaks, potatoes and eggs when he was near a village and cans of ravioli and freeze dried food in between - plus ¼ lb of chocolate every day. He lost 10 lbs on the trip and ascribes it to the chocolate.

As we saw in his photographs, the scenery was majestic and ever changing, as were the moods of the river. We saw ghost towns, rotted piers which once accommodated paddle steamers, wrecks of paddle steamers, a recent bear paw print on a sand bar, an old car in the middle of the woods with tyres showing almost new treads.



On August 6th, Allen wrote

*"Aching loneliness. That's what I feel right now after several weeks alone on the Yukon River paddling north. Only a couple more days until I reach Dawson City at the Klondike Valley. But the loneliness is gripping my heart like a fiend. It's as if my bones are made out of spongy material and a sickly, oozing liquid loneliness is slowly creeping through every fibre. Sigh."*

The trip was "fantastic". One reason for making it was the opportunity to be alone with God. *"The silence and solitude were great for short periods."*

There were many questions.

**Temperatures?** Between +40°C and snow

**Footwear?** Sneakers (in the canoe) and rubber boots.

**Return?** Gave away the canoe and remaining peanut butter in exchange for a lift to the airport. Bush plane, then Fairbanks, Whitehorse, Vancouver.

**Canoe?** 17 ft Novacraft bought in Whitehorse.

**Recommendations?** Know how to paddle. Have good rain gear - 75% of days it rained or threatened.

**Pastor Denise Allen-Macartney** introduced her husband. **Michael Davis** thanked him with a Probus pen and a membership,

## Annual General Meeting November 28, 2012



The AGM was convened following our Club Meeting with sufficient members to form a quorum, **Michael Davis** (President) in the chair.

### President's Report

Michael gave a short review of the year's activities, covering the meetings, the pizza lunches and the visit to Perth for the *Spring Fling*. He thanked the Management Committee members and our telephone callers for their work on behalf of the Club and particularly for their support of him during the past year.

### Treasurer's Report

**Allan Porter** presented a snapshot of the financial situation of which the key item is that we have \$2109.89 in the bank. Our club is in sound shape financially and can meet its expenses in the coming year. His full report for 2012 will be published in the February *Probe*.

**Elections ...** are covered on page 4.

Formal minutes will be available from the Secretary.

## Speakers 2012

Just a reminder of our 2012 speakers: **Victor Suthren** - *War of 1812*; **Ilsa Zandstra** - *The Amber Coast*; **John Forster** - *The Savoy Society*; **Halley Siddons et al** - *Women of Afghanistan*; **Larry O'Brien** - *Ottawa, Past, Present & Future*; **Sue O'Sullivan** - *Victims of Crime*; **William McElligott** - *Ottawa, Canada*, in photographs; **Grete Hale** - *The Baker's Daughter*; **Lois Hope** - *Alexander Hope's War*; and, **Allen McCartney** - *Canoeing the Yukon*; plus our "In-house" speakers.



## Management Committee 2013



At the AGM in November, the members elected **Joan Evans** as President and **Robin Rousham** as Vice-president. **Bruce Dodd** and **Allan Porter** were re-elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. **Lynne Bond** was elected to the Committee and will work on the Program.

Re-elected Management Committee members are:

**Marie-Neige Atchison** ("Sunshine")  
**Kawsar Kruithof** (Telephone)  
**Wib Neal** (Membership)  
**Audrey Reekie** (Hospitality & Special Events)  
**Lynne Bond** (Program)  
**John Wright** (Program & Editor)

In addition there are three ex-officio committee members:

**Eva Hammond** (Rotary Liaison)  
**Michael Davis** (Past-president)



## The Voice with a Smile

An essential part of our Club's operations is our team of telephone callers.

<b>Ada McEwan</b>	<b>Lorraine Balderson</b>
<b>Bob Haughton</b>	<b>Judy &amp; Derry Foreman</b>
<b>Elizabeth de Bretigny</b>	<b>Elvira &amp; Gerald Matthews</b>
<b>Peggy Kitching</b>	<b>Kawsar Kruithof</b>
<b>Evelyn Clue</b>	<b>Allen &amp; Ruth Taylor</b>
<b>Dorothy MacIntosh</b>	

- are the friendly voices who call every month to make sure everyone knows about our upcoming meetings. We owe them all a big vote of thanks.

By the way, if you do not get called it may be that we have incorrectly copied your telephone number from your membership form. Give **Kawsar Kruithof** a call (613-739-1335) and it will get corrected quickly.

## Is it your turn?

... to give a talk at our July meeting - travel, hobby, vocation, interests - the field is wide open.

## How to find us

We meet at 9:30 for 10 on the 4th Wednesday of each month except December (2nd Wednesday), at Gloucester Presbyterian Church, **91 Pike Street**.

[www.probusaltavista.ca](http://www.probusaltavista.ca)

## Robert Kearney

We are sorry to report the passing of Robert Kearney, after a fall. Robert and Pamela joined in 2006 and have been regular attendees since.

Our condolences to Pamela and the family.

## January 23rd, Terry Green Property Rights

In January we will welcome **Terry Green**, the lawyer representing landowners in the Renfrew/Lanark area regarding their mineral rights. The issue is that land ownership may only be for surface rights and the mineral rights for the property may be owned by someone else. With that ownership comes 'right of access'. No-one is going to dig for gold in your back yard but in farm and cottage country someone may be digging trenches to look for minerals. One source says that graphite exploration threatens thousands of properties between Westport and Perth.

Terry lost his sight as a teenager. After trying out four careers, at the age of 45 he decided to go to law school. As a lawyer he has handled cases under Ontario's "Banned Breed" law and represented people with disabilities.

## February 27th, Robert Kaszanits The Hermitage

Visit St Petersburg and the Hermitage. See the fabulous collection started by Catherine the Great; from the Great Masters to Fabergé Eggs. **Robert Kaszanits**, of the Hermitage Society, will take us on a personal journey to the Winter Palace highlighting some of his favourite pieces and will follow it with a film produced by the Gallery.

## World Views - Winter 2013 Program

### Free Monthly Photo Evenings

#### Bethany Baptist Church

382 Centrepointe Drive West at Baseline Road

Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. - All welcome

Saturday, Jan. 26 - Birding in Costa Rica. By Tony Beck

Saturday, Feb. 23 - Stunning Tahiti. By Alex Bissett

Saturday, Mar. 30 - Canoeing from Ottawa to

Washington. By Max Finkelstein

Saturday, Apr. 27 - Ecuador & the Galapagos. By Rick Whiteford

For more information call Sholto Cole at 613-721-3367.

Information courtesy of **John Kruithof**