



# The Probe

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June 2015, #86

## Henry Larsen and the *St Roch*

**Doreen Larsen Riedel** gave us several stories in one presentation. The prime story was the epic voyage of the *St Roch* - epic because it was the first west to east transit of the North-west passage. Then there were the stories of the ship and her skipper, **Henry Larsen** - Doreen's father. As well Doreen gave us some of the history of Arctic exploration, including the contribution of Dr. John Rae (Probe, June 2013, The Northwest Passage - Hugh Reekie). Finally there were about 100 photographs and maps, part of the collection which Doreen and her brother are collating for the National Archives.



The *St. Roch* in Lunenburg Harbour, 1942 - 43

*The ship picked its way through the narrow channel, its hull grinding against the ice floes. An icy mist held all in silence. Into the dark, icy reaches of the North, the RCMP St. Roch sailed treacherous waters, its only predecessors the ghosts of failed expeditions. With its hardy crew of Mounted Police, the St. Roch patrolled the north for over 25 years, witness to the incredible struggle and unforgiving power of a majestic land. The ship was always equal to the task, surging on to many a safe harbour, each day a test of resolve for craft and crew. Its greatest accomplishment was in conquering the Northwest passage, not once, but twice, plotting a courageous course for a passage into history*

From an RCMP publication, "Passage into History"

## The *St Roch*

The 80 ton schooner, *St. Roch* was built in Vancouver in 1927-28 as a supply vessel for RCMP stations in the western Arctic. She over-wintered in harbour and had a spring ritual of chipping away the ice, especially from the propeller. After 11 years in this service, the government decided that the interests of Canadian Sovereignty required a transit of the Northwest passage.

The *St. Roch* left Vancouver in June 1940. In September she stopped for the winter and did not move until July, 1941. Five weeks later she was frozen-in again until August 1942 and reached Halifax in October.

In Halifax the 150 hp diesel was exchanged for a 300 hp engine and a new higher wheelhouse was added, giving better visibility over the prow.

In July, 1944, the *St. Roch* started her journey back to Vancouver taking a more northern route, never before attempted. Amazingly the route avoided pack ice and the trip took only 86 days.

Later *St. Roch* travelled to Halifax via the Panama Canal, thus becoming the first ship to circumnavigate North America.

Today, she is on display at the Vancouver Maritime Museum.

## Henry Asbjorn Larsen (1899 - 1964)

**Henry Larsen** was born in Norway. He joined the RCMP in 1928 and was assigned to the *St. Roch* as navigator. Henry was an experienced sailor in Arctic waters before he joined the RCMP, and within a year, he was appointed Captain, with the rank of Sergeant.

Doreen did not tell us much about her father, except that he had a passion for the Arctic and he was a man of few words. This was illustrated in his report to the Commissioner on September 24th, 1944, "Left Barrow this date."

The final voyage of the *St. Roch*, in 1964, was from Halifax to Vancouver via the Panama Canal with Superintendent Henry Larsen at the helm.

Superintendent Larsen retired from the RCMP in 1961 as the officer responsible for the Arctic.



### The Crew

The crew consisted of 7 to 12 members. They were appointed as for any other RCMP Detachment for a tour of about 2 years.

The photograph is of the 1944 crew. **Henry Larsen** is at the front right. The crew member at the left rear is **Mitch Owens**. Owens served in the RCMP from 1942 to 1963. He was elected to the Gloucester Council in 1966. On Council he served as Deputy Reeve and interim Mayor.

He lives on Mitch Owens Road, named for him in 1990.

### Navigational Aids

Satellite systems	No
GPS	No
Radar and sonar	No
Weather reports	None
Coast Guard patrols	None
Search and rescue	Not available
Radio	200 mile range
Sextant and stopwatch	Yes
Magnetic compass	Useless
Weighted rope for depth finding	Yes

*Photographs and notes from Doreen's presentation with additional notes by Allen Taylor.*

## August 26th - Wayne Smith

Canada's Chief Statistician, **Wayne Smith**, will be our August speaker. As head of *Statistics Canada* he controls an organization with a world wide reputation dating back to its days as the *Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS)*.

*StatsCan* is not just the census. If you check your newspapers you will see that there are few weeks without a story that says, "With data from Statistics Canada", or "From Statistics Canada's Report on ...". Sometimes it is a *StatsCan* press release.

Mr. Smith will tell us about the work of his organization and how it impacts our daily lives.

## Building Bridges

**Brian Hartley** tackled the sensitive theme of the need to build bridges between Aboriginal Canadians and the rest of us. He is convinced that, in the next one to two generations, there will be a revolutionary change in the relationship as better bridges are formed.

Brian spent his last 3 years in the Public Service as the federal negotiator in three major claims advanced by aboriginal communities in western Canada. Before that experience, he says, "I was as uncomprehending as most other Canadians of the history of our aboriginal neighbours, and of their current predicaments."

In 1977 Brian became involved in the first of these claims, that of the Nisga'a people. The claim was that the lands had never been relinquished to the Crown, they had not been defeated in battle and they had never agreed to become Canadians, therefore negotiations would be between two nations. There were three parties involved, the Nisga'a, the Province and the Federal Government. The Province took a hard line, being concerned that if the claim was settled in favour of the Nisga'a, most of BC would follow. The Federal Government wanted a solution that would be acceptable to all parties. It took several changes of governments and 21 years to reach a settlement under which the Nisga'a title to 2000 square kilometres was confirmed, with compensation of \$200 million.

The next claim was by the Squamish Band. It was rooted in a forced exchange of land. More land was given than taken but the value of the land was much less. The sticking point in the deal was that the Band demanded interest at the rate paid on long-term government bonds - for 55 years. Final agreements were reached in 2008, 96 years after the original land swap. One of the effects is that the Province pays rent for the land occupied by the north pier of the Lion's Gate Bridge!

The starting point, in 1975, for the 'Northern Flood Agreement' was an armed confrontation! Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro wanted to generate more hydro-electric power and proposed to flood parts of reserves. The issues quickly moved to the negotiating table in the presence of a mediator. An agreement was signed in the fall of 1977, not without a last-minute hiccup when Manitoba elected a new government and no-one was sure how the new Premier would react.

Brian touched on the Residential Schools issue which he characterized as a dismal experiment in social engineering, and noted that the Federal Government pays less per capita for aboriginal children's education than for non-aboriginals.

There were several questions for Brian. One point he made in response was that, when he was involved, there were few aboriginal lawyers and doctors. Now there are many. Another was that there are some adroit land managers, particularly the Squamish. However, there were indications that not all the audience were with him. Giving grants without accountability was one issue. Another may be paraphrased as, "We made our way through life, why can't they?"

During his the negotiations, one of the chiefs leaned over to Brian and said, "We Indians made a terrible error in the past. We adopted the wrong immigration policy."

## July 22nd "In-house"

We have a full complement of speakers lined up for our '10-minute talks'. - if fact we had to ask that other talks be held over.

**John Wright** will open the proceedings with a slide-show taking us from Frankfurt to Copenhagen via Belgium, Norway and Sweden.

**Ken Dye** has been involved in international volunteer work which takes him to Bangladesh. He has a positive story from there, an aspect rarely considered in the popular media.

**Lenore Porter** will talk Turkey - note the capital T.

**Keith Walker**, our resident aviation expert, will give us his views on the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370 somewhere in the South China Sea, or maybe ....?

To close out the session **Robin Rousham** will help us celebrate the 800th anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede on June 15th, 1215. One of the clauses states, "To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right or justice.". An enduring principle of English/British/Canadian common law.

## Picnic Time

After our round of 'In-house' speakers at our July meeting, it will be picnic time.

Following our usual pattern, the event will be catered and indoors so no worries about what to bring or being invaded by uninvited little guests.

Everything is in the capable hands of Marie-Neige. Just be prepared to sit back, relax and enjoy.

Oh, and Morley Craig will bake a cake.

## Spring Fling 2016???

**Lynne Bond** represented us at the District 1 (East) meeting held immediately before the 2015 Spring Fling in Kemptville, and chaired by **Harold Miller**, our District 1 Representative on the Probus Canada Board.

The main item of discussion was the future of Spring Flings. No club has come forward to host in 2016 and there was general concern on the cost and burden of hosting. The result was that the Spring Fling will become a bi-annual event (2015, 2017, etc.) with a Regional meeting in even numbered years.

Details, venues and dates, will be decided at the fall meeting.

## Transitions

There comes a time, and it varies for all of us, to make the changes required in our lives to simplify our existence. This past year was that time for me. Staying in my current house, with its stairs and upkeep became too much. So, to use the current term, downsizing was required and the sale of the house would be the first step. Now, the whole real estate industry is very aware of the number of us out there who will be doing this over the next few decades. The process they recommend is staging. I will outline the steps I followed to do this and the great success I had in dealing with some local firms

First, I interviewed two companies who come in and work with you to declutter. I employed a company called "**Moving Forward Matters**" who worked with me to assess my property. Each item was checked and its fate decided - keep, donate or trash. This is unbelievably exhausting and it really helps to have someone working along with you. Also they had contacts who accept donations and they were all worthy causes. Next I had the whole house painted in neutral colors. There is a new company called "**WOW 1 day painters**", who were able to completely freshen the property and fix any visible flaws. After that, I had an environmentally conscious group come in to clean, "**Enviropure**" did such an amazing job that my 15 year old carpets looked NEW.

To sell, I used **Judy Stephaniuk**, a real estate agent with Royal LePage in the Blue Heron mall.

So, the house sold in less than 3 weeks and I am happily relocated on Kilborn Avenue, in a one level apartment. I would be happy to provide links to any or all of the companies that I worked with through the whole experience. They all made one of life's greatest stressors into as positive a transition as could be hoped for.

*Lynne Bond*



## At the Spring Fling

Some of the Probus Alta Vista members enjoying Spring Fling 2015.

Clockwise from top left:

**Ed and Cathy Borza**

**Derry and Judy Foreman**

**Bonnie Barber and Lynne Bond**

**Keith and Joyce Walker**

Photos by **Bob Atchison** (next time include a 'selfie', please, Bob)

We woke up to another beautiful spring morning, stopped to pick up a couple of coffees, and headed out to Kemptville, arriving at the Municipal Centre about 10:30. After checking in and finding our table, we were treated to a concert by St. Michael's High School Band - then some visiting with folks we often see at these Spring get-togethers, before lunch.

Everything went off without a hitch, right on schedule, and finishing up about 14:30. Everyone seemed to enjoy the delicious lunch, and drinks, then a welcome by **Emile Lajoie**, North Grenville Probus Club president, and an updating by **Harold Miller**, our District 1 Director. Sharp at 14:00 we moved into the Theatre and were treated to "**Lost for Words**" - three musicians that provided an "eclectic mix of traditional and contemporary songs and ballads, as well as some toe tapping Irish/Celtic, Appalachian and Quebecois tunes at times accentuated with some clogging." They were so enjoyable that afterwards we contacted them to see if they would consider coming to us for our Christmas party . . . .! ('nough said!)

Sixteen of our members attended (two were missing) and we learned that the total attendance was 226, not bad at all, and a pity that it will only be held every two years from now on, i.e., in 2017! – sorry that most of you missed it!

*Bob Atchison*

## Management Committee

Lynne Bond President  
 Robin Rousham Past-president  
 Keith Walker Vice-president  
 Bonnie Barber Secretary  
 Allan Porter Treasurer  
 Marie-Neige Atchison 'Sunshine' & Special Events  
 Barbara Wilson Telephone  
 Bonnie Barber Hospitality  
 John Wright Editor  
 Wib Neal Membership  
 Bob Atchison Membership

We need a Program Director and help in the kitchen.

## How to find us

We meet at 10 am on the 4th Wednesday of each month except December (2nd Wednesday) in the Hall of Gloucester Presbyterian Church, 91 Pike Street.

Members start arriving soon after 9:30 for coffee and chat. Guests are welcomed.

## **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-centered.**