

# The K.R.T.A. Bridge

## Spring 2016

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**Our motto: “It’s great to remember but the bliss is to forget.”**

Online The Bridge may be seen at: [www.krta.ca](http://www.krta.ca)



**Photo Don Ehman**

Oh up to the hills at a gallop to fly –  
have no fancy frills but the clouds in the sky!  
If with confidence I could take every turn!  
My youthful energy, so boundless, return!  
At least, if not that, then just not to be told:  
“You can't do that now, because you're too old!” (F. V.)

## **Kamloops Retired Teachers' Executive for 2015-2016**

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### **Kamloops Retired Teachers' Association Cottonwood Centre 2016 General Meetings**

**Jan. 29, 2016**  
**Feb. 26, 2016**  
**Apr. 08, 2016**  
**Apr. 29, 2016**

### **Summer Planning Meeting Sept 8 or 9 2016**

### **2016 Executive Meetings**

**Jan. 19, 2016**  
**Feb. 16, 2016**  
**Mar. 15, 2016**  
**Apr. 19, 2016**

## **KRTA /KTRTA Life**

OCTOBER saw us get a little closer to the wild side of life with our bearded presenter Frank Ritzey talking about wild life and people getting along and a troupe of Halloween stalwarts lead by Sandi Baird. Donna Sharpe (in the clown costume on the photo below) has written a thorough report about Ken and Kim Wong's presentation about Chinese New Years Celebrations, below, not to be missed.



NOVEMBER provided our lunch-goers with a Christmas feast catered by Harold's Restaurant. The meal was worthy of the reputation of this venerable institution that always manages to produce quality meals it seems , no matter how many and under what management it operates. We had a full course turkey dinner with all the fixings and an assortment of drinks and desserts to boot that set the mood for a happy sing along with the Kamloops Ukulele band. Marie Laroche was spied at the end of the row, playing her ukulele and helping to lead us in singing.

DECEMBER is a too busy a month for all of us as all the different roles we play converge on us all at once at Christmas and we are too short of time to meet.

JANUARY is less hectic, and by this time we are back in the groove. But some celebrations do carry over into the new year, like Orthodox Christmas and the Chinese New Year. And so...

Kim and Ken Wong, presenters.



January's luncheon had a Chinese New Year theme with Chinese Food from Moon Wok Restaurant and guest speakers, Ken and Kim Wong, who presented a very interesting talk and slides about the Chinese New Year, or Spring Festival, as some call it, in the Guangdong region in Southern China. This celebration takes place over several days. It starts with everyone paying attention to house cleaning. Then they go shopping for the special foods needed to prepare the New Years feast. As well they shop for new clothes, and paper cut decorations. Now they are ready to decorate the house. There are a lot of red and gold signs and figures. Red is the symbol of health and good luck. On the day of the feast they will prepare 8 or 9 special dishes. 8 stands for good fortune and 9 stands for long life. One thing that I found interesting with this meal is that the chicken is cooked and served with the head and feet still on. The fish, too, is served with the head and tail still on.

Some of the other customs of this celebration are fireworks to scare away the evil spirits and red envelopes with lucky money. These are given to the children or unmarried women. They also hold parades including the lion or dragon dance. The lion dance is in Northern China and the Dragon dance is in Southern China. One of her photos even showed Mickey Mouse characters participating in the parade. Disney has come to China too. During this time people pay respects to their ancestors by taking special foods to the temple.

Children have a 14 day school holiday with 1 week before and 1 week after the New Year's day. On the last day of the celebration will be a lantern festival with glowing lanterns sent into the sky or if they are by a lake or ocean the glowing lanterns will be sent out on the water.

This year Vancouver will have a Chinese New Year parade in Chinatown on Sunday Feb. 14th, 2016.

Submitted by Donna Sharpe

## **We are fund raising for Harambee in April – Pat Petley reports**



Photo from the Harambee Website

Mambo! ( Swahili for “Hello”)

The date for our CHES fund raising Silent Auction is April 8. ( This is a change from the March meeting date as it fell on Good Friday.) CHES is also known as the Canadian Harambee Education Society. To quote a director of CHES “ one of the root causes of poverty is a lack of education and all individuals should have a right to education.” CHES provides everything that a carefully selected

(very) needy girl requires in order to receive a secondary education. That could include text books, school supplies, room and board, fees and other essentials. The girls are gathered together from their scattered, and sometimes very isolated schools, for annual workshops. The workshops may focus on hygiene, writing a resume, Math, English Immersion and learning styles for examples. We fund raise every 2nd year and have been successful in raising the funds needed for 2 years of sponsorship which is now \$600 per year. CHES operates in both Kenya and Tanzania but our focus is on a girl in Tanzania which is an even poorer country than Kenya. ( Linda Breault , from Kamloops and our speaker at the end of April meeting, was in large part responsible for the CHES program starting in Tanzania.)

In the past we have been very successful in raising the funds required for a sponsorship. Even with a suffering economy, generosity has continued to be wonderful. Contributions that have successfully raised funds at the Silent Auctions have included : \* Consumables such as wines, jams, bread, buns, cakes, cookies, preserves and more wine. ( 2 smaller baskets/boxes of consumables might raise more \$ than 1 larger basket. Also: a recipe or napkin or some other add-on might increase a bid.) \*\* Services or an experience such as computer or cooking lesson or a home–hosted tea or luncheon, an outdoor picnic etc have always been very popular. \*\*\* Plants or planters or promise there of. \*\*\*\* Gift certificates – you may have 1 or 2 that you can pass on, or purchase one from a favorite coffee shop or luncheon venue or perhaps from a florist. If you have a good relationship with a business owner they might donate a certificate or product. Consider: Thoughtfully chosen used items have received active bidding. \*\*\*\*\* And of course some members have lent support by writing a cheque or donating cash for which a charitable tax receipt can usually be given.

There is lots of interesting information about CHES if you google Canadian Harambee Education Society on your computer. Asante ( Thank you). Pat Petley

## 2015 TRU Awards Ceremony – Bev Maxwell reports

On Thursday, November 19. 2015, the KRTA and R. R. Smith/KRTA Bursaries were presented at the annual TRU Awards Ceremony. Darrel Johnson, Donna Walsh, Barbie Williams and Bev Maxwell were the presenters. The two KRTA Bursaries of \$1,500.00 each were presented to **Nina Mercuri** and **Brenda Mahon**. The R. R. Smith / KRTA cheques, amounting to \$ 1,000.00, were presented to **Kieran Rankin**. The students were very appreciative of being chosen to receive the bursaries. The Awards Ceremony is always a rewarding experience. We look forward to having the students in attendance at the April 8<sup>th</sup> luncheon.



## Dream a little? Why not?

A Charming Life in Italy's Alluring Alps for \$2,000 a Month By Anna Lebedeva

"We are living in paradise," say Sonya Saldana and Adam Bowman about the town of Morgex, Italy, where they moved less than two years ago from San Diego, California. "Some of the most beautiful spots in the Italian Alps are a short walk away from our house."

But it wasn't just the beauty of the formidable mountains that attracted the couple to Morgex. The quiet Alpine town could not be more different from bustling San Diego with its sunny, sprawling beaches...and that is exactly what Sonya and Adam were looking for: "We wanted to slow down and live in a small, friendly community."

With a population of less than 2,000 people, Morgex is small yet comfortable with excellent infrastructure, bars, and shops. There are several fantastic restaurants that serve hearty traditional dishes, a pizzeria, a tiny bakery selling delicious, freshly-baked bread, pizza slices, and cookies. For special occasions, locals and tourists go to Cafe Quinson, a Michelin-starred restaurant with a warm, Alpine ambiance and outstanding wine cellar.

At the lively weekly market, farmers sell fresh seasonal produce, cheeses, and charcuterie. On sunny days, you can sit at an outdoor table in one of the small bars in town, gorge on a rich creamy pastry, sip a coffee...and admire the snow-capped mountain peaks surrounding Morgex. The town is also home to high-altitude vineyards that produce exquisite white wines appreciated by connoisseurs across the world.



"Amazingly for our times, there is no crime here, so we often leave the front door unlocked when we go shopping," says Sonya. There are very few foreigners living in town, however, the community is friendly and welcoming. "We have befriended many locals and the fact that some of them speak English really helped us at the start."

Once or twice a month the couple participate in community dinners with the neighbors and friends and Adam enjoys skateboarding with the local kids. Sonya loves going for brisk walks with the couple's dog Bella. "I often watch birds, deer, and foxes going on their daily business undisturbed."

Although the cost of living in the Italian Alps is higher than in other parts of Italy, Sonya says it is only a quarter of what she used to spend in California. The couple rents a beautiful traditional chalet-style, two-bedroom house with two bathrooms, three balconies, and a small garden for just over \$1,000 a month including utilities. Add the groceries and some household items, internet connection, and the total monthly cost for the couple comes to about \$2,000.

They admit that eating out is not high on their agenda but they do enjoy hearty traditional dishes at a small local restaurant, Da Beppe. A three-course meal with wine never costs more than \$25. "Here we spend more time outdoors rather than shopping and eating out," says Sonya.

The couple decided not to buy a car, which saves them the cost of gas and maintenance. The supermarket, bakery, bars, and restaurants are all within a walking distance and going everywhere on foot gives them an excuse to meet the locals and chat. "When we want to go to the nearest city of Aosta, we get a train at the station that is less than five minutes from our house," says Adam.

For a spot of snowboarding or skiing, they hop on a bus to the winter resort of Courmayeur at the foot of the formidable Mont Blanc, only six miles from Morgex.

A stress-free, comfortable life in the Italian Alps, what's not to love about that?

## **Closer to Home: About the BC Interior Council on Aging Society**

The stated purpose of this society, incorporated in 2014, is "to bring awareness to and offer possible solutions for issues affecting an aging population through research and by drawing on the knowledge and experience within relevant sections of society." Many seniors express that government is not listening to them or just doesn't care. Others express confusion between organizations and service providers, so many seniors fall through the cracks as a result. In addition organizations are usually competing for the approval of a limited number of grants and government funding. Also, a percentage of programs that are funded do not have accurate statistical evaluations or reporting services to determine the level of success or failure for a particular funded service. Despite volumes of research papers that outline the needs, there has been little action to support the research results. We view seniors as a population engaged in the planning, actions and implementations in the work of the COA and will be the voice for other seniors.

Want to get involved? Call the Seniors Activity center @ 778-470-6000

## **Rally for Public Health Care**

36 billion in Federal Conservative Government cuts mean in B.C. that 5 billion less will be spent on hospitals and other public health facilities at a time when the need for services is on the rise. Patients are forced to stay in hospitals for months beyond needing to be there waiting for "the first available bed" in care facilities. (For a concrete example, M. V. waited from September 15, 2015 to January 7, 2016 to be placed in a home, receiving no rehab in the rehab ward at R. I. H., condition deteriorating to the point of being able to get out of bed.) The government has changed, the situation has not. People must put pressure on the new government to affect change. Write to

Cathymcleod.ca

janephilpott.ca

The Trudeau government has promised to renegotiate the health care with the provinces, the Harper Government has refused to do. Let us make sure it happens!

## COSCO News

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together 85 different seniors groups, representing 107,000 members who work on common issues. Anyone may join for a \$25.00 fee by writing to Ernie Beyer, Membership Secretary, 6079 – 184A St., Surrey, B.C. V3S 7P7 (Phone number: 604-576-9734)

ART KUBE On Monday, November 24th, opening day of the B.C. Federation of Labor convention, the Executive members honored Art Kube, a driving force in COSCO and the labor movement. Art has worked for many years as an advocate for social justice, never passing on an opportunity to advance the seniors' agenda. Art reminded labor leaders that unions have a responsibility to support work towards a more civil society. Art is a past president of COSCO. The current President is Lorraine Logan.

CURRENT ISSUES are highlighted by the articles written in their publication, like “Hospitals grinding to a Halt because of stranded Seniors;” “Cooperative housing in Crisis in B. C.”

COSCO is expanding its wide offering of health and wellness workshops. There are 42 choices! Six new workshops are offered. These are: Cancer Screening \* Hypertension \* Navigating the Healthcare System \* Palliative Care \* Skin conditions \* COSCO will be assisting the Senior Advocates Office in naming an Advisory Board consisting of 25-30 seniors 65 + years of age. Interested? For more information consult the website: [www.coscobic.ca](http://www.coscobic.ca)

## Oh Canada!

### SUZUKI: ENVIROMNEMTAL RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

My grandparents came here from Japan at the beginning of the 20th century. Although it would be a one-way trip, the perilous journey across the Pacific was worth the risk. They left behind extreme poverty for a wealth of opportunity.

But Canada was different then, a racist country built on policies of colonization, assimilation and extermination of the land's original peoples. My grandparents and Canadian-born parents, like indigenous people and others of "colour", couldn't vote, buy property in many places or enter most professions. During the Second World War, my parents, sisters and I were deprived of rights and property and incarcerated in the B.C. Interior, even though Canada was the only home we'd ever known.

A lot has changed since my grandparents arrived, and since I was born in 1936. Women were not considered "persons" with full democratic rights until 1929. People of African or Asian descent, including those born and raised here, couldn't vote until 1948, and indigenous people didn't get to vote until 1960. [Homosexuality was illegal](#) until 1969!

In 1960, John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government enacted [Canada's Bill of Rights](#), and in 1982, Pierre Trudeau's Liberals brought us the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with equality rights strengthened in 1985.

We should celebrate those hard-won rights. I'm happy to have witnessed much of the progress my country has made. But there's room for improvement. And in some ways Canada has gone backward.

When I was a boy, we drank water from lakes and streams without a thought. I never imagined that one day we would buy water in bottles for more than we pay for gasoline. Canada has more fresh water per capita than any nation, but [many indigenous communities don't have access to clean drinking water](#). When I was growing up in Vancouver, Dad would take me fishing for halibut off Spanish Banks,

sturgeon on the Fraser River and salmon in English Bay. Today I can't take my grandchildren fishing in those places because the fish are gone.

As a boy, I never heard of [asthma](#). Today, childhood asthma is as common as red hair. And half of all Canadians live in places with unacceptable air pollution.

I also remember when all food was organic. I never thought we'd have to pay more not to have chemicals in our food. Today we can't avoid the toxic consequences of our industrial and agricultural activities. We all have dozens of toxic pollutants incorporated into our bodies.

We may think the highest rate of deforestation is in the Amazon but in 2014 [Canada became the world leader in loss of pristine forests](#).

Surely, in a nation with so much natural wealth, we should expect better appreciation, treatment and protection of the air, water, soil and rich biological diversity that our health, prosperity and happiness depend on.

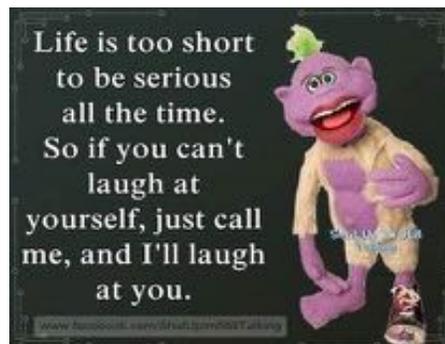
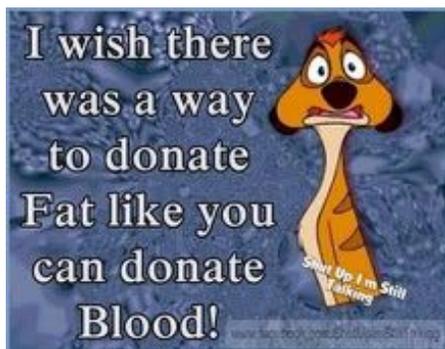
The right to live in a healthy environment is recognized by more than 110 nations — but not Canada. That inspired the David Suzuki Foundation and [Ecojustice](#) to launch the [Blue Dot movement](#) a little over a year ago.

It's exceeded our expectations, with more than 100 municipalities passing environmental rights declarations and a number of provinces considering or committing to the idea. The next step is to take it to the federal level, by calling for an environmental bill of rights and, ultimately, an amendment to the [Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).

The environmental rights campaign is also about human rights and social justice — something recognized by the United Nations, which has appointed a [special rapporteur on human rights and the environment](#). A country and its values are measured not by the number of extremely wealthy people but by the state of its poorest and most vulnerable. Many environmental problems are tied to societal inequities — hunger and poverty, chronic unemployment, absence of social services, inadequate public transit and often conflicting priorities of corporations and the public interest — as people at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards and toxic pollution.

Canada has come a long way, but we can't be complacent. We must work to maintain and strengthen the rights of all Canadians, to build an even better Canada. That means giving all Canadians the right to a healthy environment.

By David Suzuki with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Senior Editor Ian Hanington.



## Food for Thought

### A) Reflections on Alexander Forbes' Poems on CD and the Fate of Poetry and Culture in the Context of social and technological Developments and rapid Change.

Is poetry dead or alive? It was in another big city on the other side of the globe, Budapest, where, my freshly printed book of poetry in hand that represented a lifetime of writing, I came to see the manager of a wholesale book distributor at work. Forklifts were moving huge stacks of books from one place to the next and loading them onto trucks around us, the smell of fresh print everywhere. The manager bent the pages of the book I offered him in half, and let them fly by his thumbs this way then that, before promptly pressing it back into my hands, his face a picture of sympathy and regret.

“My dear sir, nobody reads poetry in Hungary.” He followed my questioning gaze on all the books around us. “These? Fiction, magazines, rock star stuff, foreign bestsellers, bios, government-sponsored print of all kinds... But thank you for coming. It's good to see some people still write poetry.”

In my youth everybody read poetry. Hungarian culture venerated its poets, looked to them for guidance and, along with the rich tradition of folk songs, memorized poetry constituted much of the body of the culture. But that was 1956, this almost 2006. And, as I well knew, “nobody read poetry” in Canada, either. The clientele of literature has switched from the learned to the common, the medium from print to television; from books to records, to tapes, to cassettes, to CD-s in rapid succession. Poems didn't sell; poets took up songwriting. In an increasingly mercantile world culture became a commodity. Poetry, as we knew it, became a thing of the past.

Hardly a complaint here: poetry, as Alex Forbes's CD-s about Vancouver, *The beauty of the city in the last hour of the night* and *Portland Al* attest, is enhanced, not stifled thereby, even though the corollary tenet: “but some things gained but some things lost” is true. The widening of the audience must be regarded as a good thing, even if the common denominator pulls on the quality a bit. The collaboration of multimedia artists – in this case Alexander Forbes (poetry), Tina Moore (reading), Henry Small (music), Angelo Renai (photos) and Kristine Bradshaw (video) – is likewise a good thing, the potential problems of one interfering with another or breaking the unity of the work notwithstanding.

The question is: can the audience take all of this in at once? Isn't poetry to be mulled over, digested slowly, paused and pondered over, word by word? I found myself tuning out one medium or the other – often all but one – completely. Viewed separately, the components were not of the same import: the visual lagged behind the auditory both in impact and in quality. Yet the blend worked: I was not jarred out of the flow, just listened more than looked throughout. Perhaps this is as it should be: the main creative piece (in this case), is the poem, the others were more in the realm of performance enhancement: assists to the rendering of the poems. Otherwise the line separating the various media is not so clear. In multimedia presentations any one of the disciplines may dominate. I did not recognize the music, so it may have been originally created, perhaps for this CD specifically. Its slow introduction, subdued presentation and hauntingly wondrous quality did nothing to suggest otherwise, and it did enhance the listening experience, though mostly at the subconscious level. The CD-s begin with the reading, and the music comes in imperceptibly, remaining subdued throughout. Of course photography can also stand on its own as a creative art form. The photos are certainly site-specific and perhaps historic. Artistic? Less so, I thought. Perhaps just as well? It ought not to have competed with the poetry in any case. Concentrating on hearing the poem I found myself staring at the photos, but barely seeing them. It took another run of the CD for me to really see them. Professional work, all the right angles and framing, but nothing to arrest one, nothing that made a statement, nothing that awed. The one attractive picture, showing trees in bloom (corresponding with the words “there is no denying

of the beauty of the city” in the text), was incongruous since in the poem the beauty comes from the people of Vancouver, not from its sights. A tip of the hat to the beauty of nature perhaps? One thing is for certain: Tina Moore's performance stands out, and she conveys the poem with all the rich texture of sense and feeling, including all the subtleties the many-voiced text contains. Good writing makes easy reading, and all she has to manage really is the inflections and the volume, which she does admirably well. Her timing is impeccable: no hesitations and the speech speeds up or slows down as the need dictates. Well done indeed! Since my interest is in the poems, I shall say of the CD only that it works: it enhanced my experience of absorbing the poems. Poetry has left print, but found an effective new vehicle to reach me.

I knew the Vancouver the poems describe well. I lived until I was twenty in Budapest, but I spent my twenties in Vancouver, a city much different then than what it is today. The West End consisted almost entirely of wooden “doll houses,” with green and yellow moss and lichen encroaching the roofs. At the same time the south shore of Burrard Inlet – virtually from the C. P. Station to the end of the inlet – was lined with self-built rafts made of mismatched logs tied together and anchored to piles, topped by makeshift boathouses on which the homeless of today lived on seafood they harvested themselves. There were no homeless people then. The soup kitchens the Salvation Army provided were a treat as much as providing the vegetables to round out the diet. The city fathers removed these colorful rafts “for safety reasons,” but the newspapers spoke of the event as “cleaning up the waterfront.” The gentrification of the city along West Vancouver was well established, and the rafts became an eyesore. Nothing “unseemly” was to be allowed! There were no food banks or long lineups for food anywhere in the city. Prostitution existed subtly. “The Lord's day” was the Lord's, not yours, until commerce, overtaking all, pushed the Lord aside as well. The bars in the hotels were segregated into “Men” and “Ladies and Escorts Only.” The waiters brought two glasses of beer unasked and placed a salt shaker on the table beside them. “Entertainment” consisted of getting good and drunk. All but the incapable drove their cars home afterward routinely. There were accidents.

Canada was a Dominion then, church towers could still be seen among the large department store buildings, banks and hotels, the largest of which still belonged to the C.P. R.. The tallest building in town was The Empire State Building on the waterfront – still there but dwarfed today. It was a beautiful city then as it is now, in a dreamlike natural setting – parks with cathedral high trees, several lakes with much fowl life, fish-bearing creeks, the North Shore Mountains facing the city with only the bottom parts developed. I remember swimming across the mouth of False Creek, from Kitsillano to Sunset Beach or to English Bay, even while the sawmills with their beehive burners were still in operation and a rail yard occupied the space of The Olympic Village, and Granville Island was a place for warehouses, not a tourist attraction. Rafts of timber were waiting to be towed off Spanish Banks where huge freighters are anchored today, waiting to be serviced in the port. Industry was an anomaly then; the city could be called pristine as well as beautiful. Then and now, the air was always washed clean by the rains, and when the Sun came out, the city shined.

However, for Forbes, “the undeniable beauty of the city in the last hour of the night” comes not from the natural environment, nor the buildings and the bridges, but the beauty of the humanity there: folks with their own lives and fates, as they are, each living his or her own reality, what it is, for what it is. There are no ranks here and no outcasts: the gamblers and the fortune tellers are as beautiful people as the students and the artists, the watchmen and the clerks. The cabdriver is mentioned in the same breath as his grumpy fare. The Walt Disney tune comes to mind: “Everything is beautiful in its own way.” Really.

Everything is everyday here, but nothing is superficial. Forbes' encapsulating comments stem from a comprehensive knowledge of these people and their lives. The sketches seize intimate moments of life that characterize as well as depict, typify as well as describe. We meet each soul as a person and walk

with them some distance in their shoes to where their roads take them. The engineers on the train, whose idling engines smell up Portland Al's neighborhood while they are drinking their coffee are followed on their route as is the food delivery man to Cherry Creek and beyond. The hinterland of the city is part of the city. The details add up and come to life. As the poet says: "Everything is connected together because everything is happening at once." Yet the slice of the city Forbes exposes is decidedly East Side Vancouver. People here are not trying to keep up with the Jones-es: they are trying to meet their daily needs. Nobody is successful here, yet everybody is, sort of. Nobody gets ahead: life is a non-ending struggle, and success is measured not by progress but by survival. Imperceptibly, like snowflakes, the unique stories, each set in its own pattern, add up, and become overwhelming, but never weigh you down. The unifying mood of the poems is wonder and awe, and they inspire wonder and awe.

The two CD-s belong together not just topically but intrinsically, like story and setting, though each has a life of its own, and can stand on its own. One is a cross section of the city where the unheralded live, and the other a case study of one of these lives that show how special and important the unheralded really are. The hero of the second CD, Portland Al, is perhaps the most wondrous everyday hero of all. He never makes the newspapers but everybody knows him. He is a one man cultural establishment. "The King," Elvis Presley comes to see Al twice the only time he ever came to Vancouver. Al is the one whose stories everyone listens to. Al is a merchant, sort of. An importer, sort of. A hippie, sort of. A passionate collector, sort of. A grocery store clerk, sort of. An ambassador of Portland, sort of. A source of American culture – in deed. Leave out "sort of," and Al is Establishment East Side – all by himself. He comes from nowhere and disappears to nowhere. The store closes. The fixture on Third and Main – there forever – is gone forever.

The soul music, borne out of southern misery, with more upwelling than ever in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, is destined to live on, and rock music, the commercial mainstay of American musical culture is as loud as ever. But it was likely the technological hurricanes caused by the cassettes and CD-s that Al fell victim to. Nobody was buying records any more. Perhaps illness and death has followed. The only certainty is that Irreplaceable Al, Vancouver's Portland Al, is gone, but his history and legend is preserved in a poem riding on a CD. At least until the next technological hurricane.

There is a lot of name-dropping in the poems, but each name is an icon, bound to rekindle memories for many. In today's computer age each are subject of research, and each open a different window on the city, or light a flame for a fame. These are people and establishments, all well known: Presley, Jaeggart, Hendricks; The Quadra Club, The Buddha, The Penthouse, The Railway Club, Isis... icons and metaphors all, each connected, each adding to the wonder of it all.

Portland Al is now gone and gone is the city of the poet's youth and mine. Are poetry and culture gone with it? I don't think so, but much has changed. Nobody reads poetry in Budapest or Vancouver, but poetry does live on on CD-s and in songs, and will live on for as long as humanity. The struggles of the nameless many are more likely to continue than ever. Thankfully, the air will continue to be washed clean by the rains. Poetry, it seems may need to hop from one vehicle to the next, but survive it will, for as long as we have people like this poet, Forbes, for whom life itself is an inspiration. We hope.

A measure of greatness in a poem is that the more one looks at it the more one finds in it. In special cases the less is more. There is no political grandstanding in these poems, no calls for social justice, even as the many struggles of the disadvantaged, the fate of the marginalized are carefully documented in cutting to the core detail. Yet Forbes does not sit on the fence politically. His choices are very clear. Setting out to write of the beauty of Vancouver, he deliberately chooses the least beautiful location and the least likely time to appreciate beauty: darkness. He writes of Vancouver East Side and the night. Vancouver is truly a beautiful city that begs to be shown off for the beauty of its environs, wonderful architecture and the enviable life of its many well to do. It is in his choices that much is revealed about

Forbes, the man. He sets out – and finds – awesome beauty at the worst possible place, but not at the worst possible hour. It is still dark, yes, but this is *the last* hour of the night. The morning is coming, as it must. There is hope. There has to be, for as the last line of the poem wistfully acknowledges, this poem “would be a cold elegy if there were no morning.”

Forbes' sustenance: hope and philosophy. There is a discernible philosophy behind the awe with which the beauty of humanity in the unfortunate are viewed. There is reason to be awed by these people and their struggles. There is no need to feel sorry for those who struggle because, philosophically, the meaning of life is struggle, and those live life to the fullest, who struggle most. What does not break us makes us stronger. Our humanity is brought out and enhanced, not destroyed by hardship. Those who work among the poor find them the most understanding, the most helpful, the most willing to share. Walking the East Side Forbes finds his own reflection of “the silent man [he] once knew.” Himself perhaps? It is now only a reflection, but he once belonged here, walked in his own well worn shoes here. He was connected to all this, himself a part of this city where everything is happening at once. Perhaps the reflexive question he is asking of himself in this poem is: “Have I really made it when I 'made it?'”

Forbes is not hiding himself in these poems; he is revealing himself. He did not have to write a documentary poem. He chose to do that. While the act of documenting may be politically non-committal, to choose what to record is to make a statement, take a stance. His stance is revealed by what he chooses to document. So what does he document, exactly? “The most promising composer of his generation whose works few will play before it is forgotten.” A comment on the cultural life of the city if there ever was one! “A man stands up unsteadily at Thornton Park where he had fallen – yesterday.” A comment on the social services of the city, its desensitized inhabitants if there ever was one! Many comments are more subtle, but just as telling. The watchman, who “knows he will never be able to afford the goods he protects.” A comment on the lack of social mobility perhaps? “A pensioner smiles to himself in a rooming house on Princess [Street], knowing he will return to the [race] track at noon.” An innocuous comment on a society that discards its elders, and families who leave them to themselves to fend for themselves? Of them still futilely chasing their luck well into their old age? And on and on... the mother, the baker, the bailiff. “Everything is connected with everything because everything is happening at once?” Or are they connected because they share the same fate in the same society? The little details add up to a large picture of a city and a culture that governs its communal life. This is a documentary poem on a grand scale. This, too, speaks of the man, as does the sensitivity of his portrayals. These are so carefully ordered, that sometimes their juxtaposition alone can make them evocative. Like the pale faced mannequin in the window and the pale faced prostitute, objects both, until we follow the prostitute home to find her to be a mother, arriving dutifully home to get her children ready for school on time, and we see a human being engaged in what is perhaps the ultimate act of self-sacrificing altruism. People are the beauty of the city in the last hour of the night indeed!

In discussing poetry whether in print or on a CD, we must speak of the language of the poem. Insofar as the CD's intended audience is the common man of whom Forbes is writing, it is appropriate to hear the intended audience being addressed in its parlance. The Portland poem begins with “Man! Oh man o man!” and colloquial expressions are used throughout in both poems, perhaps in order to remain in touch with the audience, but the language is far from common. For the poet is Dr. Alex Forbes, a Professor of English Literature, and it shows. He uses language like an instrument and he plays on it like a virtuoso – high notes or low. Between the colloquial “don't you know-s” the poetry flows. Indeed, Forbes' genuine love of the language is hard to miss. All the techniques of the trade are used from frequent alliterations to a full range of rhetoric devices suitable for maintaining movement in these lengthy epics. The tone is as it should be: unified, which helps preserve the unity of the work. Tina Moore just needs to add her breath and her voice of wonder to bring it to life. I am more used to

reading poetry than listening to it, and it required some adjustments and repeated hearing to appreciate the language fully, but then I remembered that poetry originally belonged to the oral tradition and poets were sometimes blinded to prevent their wandering away from the tribe. So perhaps the CD is where poetry belongs, and social as well as technological change has been good for poets and poetry after all!

From the ample humanity depicted in these poems emerges the ample humanity of the poet. Forbes is a sensitive man with a social conscience, whose love of language is matched only by his love of man. It takes one to know one: the man who offers us Portland Al is none other than Vancouver Alex.

Frank Veszely

## **B) THERE ARE BENEFITS TO AGING**

1. Kidnappers are not very interested in you.
2. In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first.
3. No one expects you to run--anywhere.
4. People call at 8 PM and ask, "Did I wake you?"
5. People no longer view you as a hypochondriac.
6. There is nothing left to learn the hard way.
7. Things you buy now, you won't ever wear out.
8. You can eat supper at 3 PM.
9. You can live without sex but not your glasses.
10. If your teeth hurt, you put them in a glass.
11. Your supply of brain cells is finally down to manageable size.

## **C) ARE WE THE ONES WHO ARE NOT ALL THERE?**

**This is the question I found asking myself after a number of experiences.**

### **ONE**

Recently, I went to McDonald's and I saw on the menu that you could have an order of 6, 9 or 12 Chicken McNuggets. I asked for a half dozen nuggets. 'We don't have half dozen nuggets,' said the teenager at the counter. 'You don't?' I replied. 'We only have six, nine, or twelve,' was the reply. 'So I can't order a half dozen nuggets, but I can order six?' 'That's right.' So I shook my head and ordered six McNuggets (Unbelievable but sadly true...)

### **TWO**

I was checking out at the local Wal-Mart with just a few items and the lady behind me put her things on the belt close to mine. I picked up one of those dividers that they keep by the cash register and placed it between our things so they wouldn't get mixed. After the girl had scanned all of my items, she picked up the divider, looking it all over for the bar code so she could scan it. Not finding the bar code, she said to me, 'Do you know how much this is?' I said to her 'I've changed my mind; I don't think I'll buy that today.' She said 'OK,' and I paid her for the things and left. She had no clue to what had just happened. (But the lady behind me had a big smirk on her face as I left)

### **THREE**

A woman at work was seen putting a credit card into her DVD drive and pulling it out very quickly. When I inquired as to what she was doing, she said she was shopping on the Internet and they kept asking for a credit card number, so she was using the ATM thingy. (Keep shuddering!!)

### **FOUR**

I recently saw a distraught young lady weeping beside her car. 'Do you need some help?' I asked. She replied, 'I knew I should have replaced the battery to this remote door un-locker. Now I can't get into my car. Do you think they (pointing to a distant convenience store) would have a battery to fit this?' 'Hmm, I don't know. Do you have an alarm, too?' I asked. 'No, just this remote thingy,' she answered, handing it and the car keys to me. As I took the key and manually unlocked the door, I replied, 'Why don't you drive over there and check about the batteries. It's a long walk....'

### **FIVE**

Several years ago, we had an Intern who was none too swift. One day she was typing and turned to a secretary and said, 'I'm almost out of typing paper. What do I do?' 'Just use paper from the photocopier', the secretary told her. With that, the intern took her last remaining blank piece of paper, put it on the photocopier and proceeded to make five blank copies. A Brunette, by the way!!

### **SIX**

A mother calls 911 very worried asking the dispatcher if she needs to take her kid to the emergency room, the kid had eaten ants. The dispatcher tells her to give the kid some Benadryl and he should be fine. The mother says, 'I just gave him some ant killer.....' Dispatcher: 'Rush him in to emergency right now!' Someone had to remind me, so I'm reminding you too. Don't laugh....it is all true...I

## **In memoriam**

RALPH SHAW 1926 - 2016

The educator who helped establish the McQueen Lake Environmental Centre, leading to him receiving the Order of Canada in 1984, has died. Ralph Shaw — hunter, fisher and author — passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, Jan. 7, leaving behind a family and a legacy of conservation work that is unlikely to be surpassed any time in the near future. Born on June 20, 1926 in High's Stopping House, Ardmore (halfway between Cold Lake and Bonnyville, Alta.) to a pioneer family who trapped and fished for a living, Shaw came by his outdoor skills naturally. He fished, trapped and hunted with his brothers. His fishing career started when he was about six years old. When he was about 13, Shaw's family moved to trout country, where his career as a master fly fisherman began.

Shaw's father had a sound conservation ethic, which encouraged his own interest in fish and wildlife conservation practices. While a teacher and principal in Kamloops, Shaw helped establish the McQueen Lake Environmental Centre, 16 kilometres north of Kamloops. It is today owned by the Kamloops-Thompson school district and used by classes for field trips. Shaw worked for the Simon Fraser University Summer Institute at McQueen Lake, specializing in wilderness survival and outdoor skills. During the 1960s and 1970s, he spoke throughout North America on conservation and outdoor education.

Shaw was a contributing member of several conservation groups and a founder of several more. He was involved in the B.C. Wildlife Federation, receiving the Ted Barsby Award as Conservationist of the Year in 1984 and the President's Awards for his work on saltwater fisheries in 1990. In 1998, he was appointed to the B.C. Sport Fishing Hall of Fame. A past chairman of the Sport Fishery Advisory Board, Shaw was a member of the Pacific Salmon Commission for two years. He was a staunch advocate for the recreational fishery at the conference board of the International Pacific Halibut Commission. One of the many awards to come Shaw's way was in 2007 when the B.C. Lieutenant-Governor invited him to a reception in Victoria to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Nature Trust of BC — a group he was instrumental in creating. Shaw's retirement years provided him time to concentrate on his writing and his weekly column in the *Comox Valley Record* newspaper and *The*

*Island Fisherman* and *The Island Angler* magazines garnered several awards.

He contributed chapters to several books, none more successful than *The Pleasure of His Company — The Fishing Diaries of Jack Shaw* in 2008 that was a tribute to his good friend (and no relation) Jack Shaw. Proceeds from the sales of the book went to the McQueen Lake Environmental Center and the Freshwater Fisheries Association of B.C. to teach children how to fish. “The role of the successful fisherman and hunter is to share the produce. That’s a very critical aspect,” he said in 2008. “It’s not just sharing the catch. It’s sharing the knowledge and techniques. Getting young people and other people involved.”

A service for Shaw was held on Saturday, Jan. 16 at the Courtenay and District Fish & Game Protective Association clubhouse. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made (by mail, phone or email) to: The Nature Trust of BC, 260-1000 Roosevelt Crescent, North Vancouver, V7P 3R4.

By Earle Couper, Comox Valley Record

#### THE RALPH I KNEW – A PERSONAL STORY

The year was 1969. Brown suit and tie, I was waiting in the lobby of the SD 24 office, waiting to be interviewed. Next to me on the wooden bench sat a middle aged man I took to be a janitor from his clothes and fisherman from his talk. Waiting, we chatted for a while. No, I said, I did not fish, I played chess for amusement. Anyway, I was a city boy, now living in Vancouver, which I found to be more an overgrown village than a city. But, I added hopefully, living in Vancouver may have made me better prepared for Kamloops than I might have been otherwise. Our conversation was interrupted by the District Superintendent who came out to usher me into his office. After checking out my paperwork he said there was a principal interested in me, and that he just better leave us to ourselves and get out of the way. Out walked he and in walked my janitor-fisherman, who hired me on the spot. I had just been through four years at UBC, all fired up to spearhead change in this lighthouse district. Ralph thought it better if I learn to teach first. He handed me a pamphlet of a few pages on what I was supposed to teach, gave me a key to the school, told me he considered me a professional and expected me to behave accordingly, and with that he left me alone. At our first staff meeting he handed everyone a copy of Toffler's *Future shock*, and soon left the building. He considered all of us professionals. It seemed that he was more out of the building than in it. Involved was not just his favorite word, he *was* involved.

He was just putting together the deal to create the McQueen Lake Environmental Center, was active in the Rotary Club, a working alderman of the City of Kamloops. But he did find time to invite the staff to the pub on Fridays and the guys to his cabin at Hvas Lake. He took me out in his boat to fly fish for trout. It was a terrifying experience with the line and the hook whizzing by my ears until I realized the control he had. He put his fly within a foot of the fish's nose we saw thirty feet away. Those who wanted hands-on support for teaching were disappointed at times, but the educational leadership he provided was unerring. He lent us the confidence sailors feel when they know the ship is in good hands, whether they see the captain or not.

Frank Veszely

#### DAVID WYNDHAM DENBIGH 1947 - 2015

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the sudden loss of David Denbigh who passed away the evening of Dec 7th surrounded by his family. He is survived by his mother Anne, wife Libby, daughter Sarah (Brian), son Ian (Gina), brother Tony (Gerri), nephew Charlie and niece Mary-Anne, as well as grandchildren Cesar, Sumiko, Yuma and Olyn.

He is predeceased by his father Ian Denbigh and his daughter Rachel (Aaron).

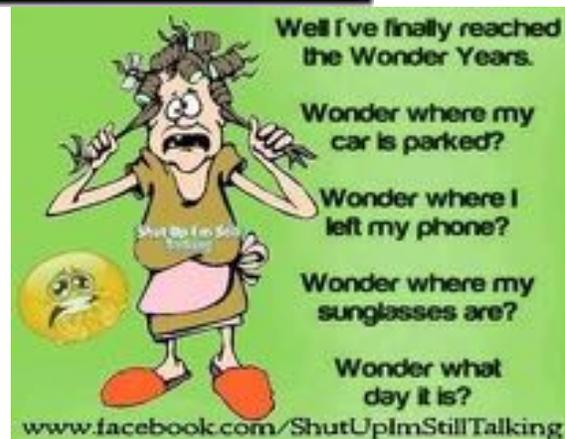
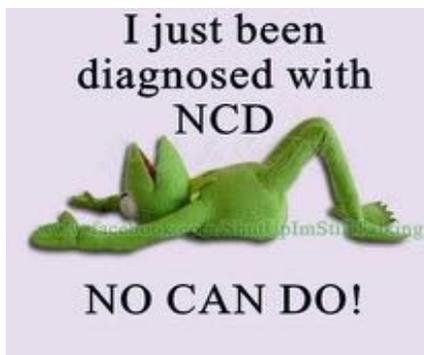
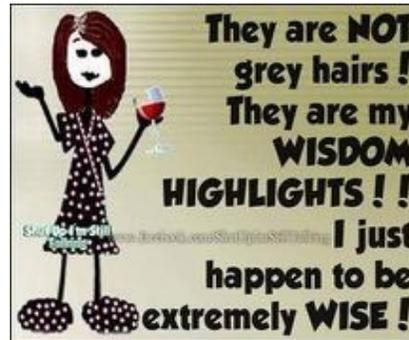
David lived a full and rich life. He was passionate about teaching and his career with school district 73 spanned over 30 years and included high-school to elementary to adult education. He did not just teach within school hours but spent immeasurable time coaching and refereeing basketball, directing children's plays, driving to field trips and many other activities. He loved to ski, golf and fly fish. Teaching his grandchildren these sports was a joy for him. In retirement, David, and his wife Libby took to traveling. Together they have visited many countries always returning with vibrant pictures and interesting stories.

The family has asked that donations be made to World Neighbours Canada, Box 177, Oliver, V0H 1T0 or [www.worldneighbours.ca](http://www.worldneighbours.ca) Friends and family are invited to an open house style celebration of life held Jan 2nd from 12 noon to 3 pm at Hoodoos Restaurant located at Sun Rivers. There will be opportunity for guests to speak briefly if they wish starting 1pm. The family has asked for privacy on that day before and after the celebration.

### **Picture Essay: The 2011 Dream Home in 2015**



# The Funny Page



## Remembering working People

The BC Labour Heritage Centre is inviting the BCRTA – branches included – to participate in the new **Remembering Working People: Plaques Around the Province Project**. I've attached an Information sheet and nomination form. The BC Labour Heritage Society engages in partnerships and projects that help define and express the role that work and workers have played in the evolution of British Columbia and its impact on the present and future shaping of the province's social policy and economy. Ken Novakowski, a BCTF Past President, is the Chair of the Centre's Board of Directors.

A number of BCTF locals have already identified topics that they will be nominating for plaques. Victoria, New Westminster, Terrace, Surrey and Langley are all working on nominations. The events they are looking at all had to do with the **evolution of full collective bargaining rights for BC teachers**. But there are many other significant events that happened in our communities or regions that involved teachers, and others that may have centered on other working people in your area. This is an exciting project that will increase public awareness of the history of working people in British Columbia in a permanent way and I encourage you to look for ways in which you and your branch members may participate.

Bob Taverner  
BCRTA President

**BACKGROUND** In 2010, The B.C. Labor Heritage Center partnered with the Vancouver Convention Center on the installation of a series of educational panels along the interior and exterior of the new Convention Center. The Convention Center covered the cost of producing the panels and we provided the research. Building on this success the LHC has launched the "Remembering working people: Plaques around the province project."

**CRITERIA includes but is not limited to \* defining events, actions, episodes, movements, or experiences** that played a significant role in the history of the labor movement and working people of British Columbia. **\*\* Groups and individuals** that made a lasting contribution to labor and working history **\*\*\* Places** that hold a direct association with a significant aspect of B.C or Canadian labor history.

**A BRONZE PLAQUE (18x29 inches)** is to mark the place, at a cost of approximately \$ 5,000.00 each. Nominators are asked to contribute at least one third of the cost of the plaque. The Labor Heritage Centre helps research your nomination.

**INVENTORY PROJECT** Seeks to identify existing plaques that meet the same criteria.

**CONTACT INFO** Write to BC Labor Heritage Centre, 301-8988 Fraserton Crt, Burnaby, B.C. V5J 5H8 Project manager is Donna Sacuta 604-833-1193 (cell)

**APPLICATION FORMS** Exist. They call for a full description of your suggestion, perhaps supported by pictures, etc., and whether you could assist in the funding or help with the fund raising. Personal information requested on the form includes your name, address, e-mail, and phone number. A sample is provided on the back page.

**\*\*\* NOTE \*\*\* OUR MARCH LUNCHEON WILL TAKE PLACE ON APRIL 8, BECAUSE THIS YEAR THE LAST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH IS GOOD FRIDAY.**

**REMEMBERING WORKING PEOPLE NOMINATION FORM – PLAQUE PROJECT**

Return to BC Labor Heritage Centre, 301-8988 Fraserton Crt, Burnaby, B.C. V5J or e-mail to:  
plaques@labourheritagecentre.ca

**Describe the defining events, actions, episodes, movements, or experiences** that played a significant role in the history of the labor movement and working people of British Columbia. **\*\* Groups and individuals** that made a lasting contribution to labor and working history **\*\*\* Places** that hold a direct association with a significant aspect of B.C or Canadian labor history. **Attach extra information and photos as necessary**

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**Suggest a location for a new plaque**

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**Are you able to assist financially or willing to help fund raising?**

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**Your contact information**

Name:
Address:
Telephone:
E-mail

