

FRANK & MARION 2009 NEWSLETTER



Marion & Frank in our finery

What's Inside:

- Toronto vacation
- Marion's accident
- Community activities
- Vacation
- Marion's mother
- Chinese Canadian friends

TORONTO VACATION

We decided to spend the month of August as if we were visiting a foreign city.

When I was a youngster I visited my cousins in Ottawa, coming south with brother Brian from the unsophisticated Kirkland Lake in Northern Ontario. Our mother's sister, Erma McLaughlin (née Brennan), had a family of four about the same age as the O'Hara children.

First cousin, Tom McLaughlin, asked me, "What would you like to do?"

"I'd like to go up in the Bell Tower in the Parliament Buildings." I said,

"So would I," said Tom.

In Toronto, we live almost next door to the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). We're also members; yet we rarely visit. Too easy. We can do it anytime!

So, every day we made a point of visiting some place we had not visited before, such as small museums devoted to early settlers or specialties such as The Textile Museum. We also added places we didn't visit often enough, such as the AGO, The Royal Ontario Museum and the Gardner Ceramic Museum. As well, we attended plays, the opera and concerts and took a field trip for several days to Niagara-on-the-Lake to attend plays and do wine tastings.

What did we discover?

- Toronto is a great city.
- We'll do the same thing next year.

ACCIDENT SETTLEMENT

When someone in Ontario is involved in a car accident the insurance company must pay certain medical expenses immediately. But when it comes to "pain and suffering" they can take up to five years. Judging by our experience, they do.

Marion's lawsuit was finally settled in mid-October, just a few weeks before the deadline.

Actually, Marion's problems over the past five years have been onerous. Initially, the problem was a fracture and three torn ligaments in her right knee. One of her ligaments was so badly shredded that it had to be replaced with one from a cadaver. Subsequently she had other problems. She is still dealing with pains in her back and is as skittish as a kitten when it comes to traffic. (My terminology.)

Anyway, Marion's on the mend and having the matter settled put us in a good frame of mind to take a big trip. (See details next page.)



**PREPARED BY FRANK, WITH
CRITICAL HELP FROM MARION**

REPOSITIONING CRUISE

Marion and I noticed a small news item in The Globe and Mail about a cruise starting in Venice and ending in the Caribbean. We had been discussing spending some quality time in the Tuscany region of Italy. Maybe we could combine this with an interesting cruise.

We flew to Rome and joined a bus tour, starting with a day in Rome (which we had visited before) and continuing to Siena, Florence and ending in Venice. It was only a week but it gave us a good idea of Tuscany and helped us to decide what we might like to see in more depth at another time.



In front of San Marco cathedral in Venice.

We boarded our ship, La Poesia, in Venice. We've taken a number of cruises but never on a large ship. This one took over 3,000 passengers, not the largest on the seas these days but certainly big enough by our standards. As mentioned above, this was a repositioning cruise. That means that this ship tours the Mediterranean during the Summer months and the Caribbean during the Winter. So we got to experience what it's like to cross the Atlantic Ocean. We did it a lot faster than Christopher Columbus – five days.

Our first port of call after Venice was the city of Bari on the east coast of Italy. Bari has the honour to host the remains of St. Nicholas. Apparently, his body was stolen by some enterprising Italian traders from what is now Turkey. So we learned the important fact that

Santa Claus actually does not live in the far northern climes of Canada but in Italy and in a place that has no snow. We didn't see any reindeer either.

After a day at sea, next stop was Tunis. Carthage was near Tunis. On another trip we learned there is almost nothing to be seen where that mighty city state once stood. The Romans did a thorough job of razing it.

However, on the outskirts of Tunis is the palace of the governor from Ottoman times. As governor of this area, he had a marvellous abode. It is now the Bardo Museum and houses wonderful mosaics and statues from Carthaginian and Roman times. Best in the world they say and we would concur.



Tunis – our ship in the background.

Next stop was Malaga in Spain. From there we took a bus to Alhambra. (That means "the red", on account of the red bricks used to build the palace.)

Alhambra lives up to its billing.



Marion and a friend, Susan Fletcher

We expected to be dazzled by the buildings but the fountains and gardens were a delightful surprise.

CRUISE, CONTINUED

Next stop, after another day at sea, was the Azores, namely Funchal on the island of Madeira. The Azores are 300 kms from Africa and further south than we had realized. Thus the weather is warm – hot as a matter of fact. It was mid 30s C. Furthermore, the city of Funchal is on a hill. Not exactly conducive to hiking but we struggled through nevertheless.

From the Azores it was five days at sea to the U.S. Virgin Islands – St. Thomas to be exact.

I took lots of video of the trip. If your curiosity is piqued, I'll gladly send you a DVD of the trip.



St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands is hilly. Actually were more than 100 steamy steps.



After another day at sea, Puerto Rico
Marion sees right through me; so seeing through her hat was no problem!

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Now that I have been cast off by CESO, having passed the age of 80, yet still going strong several years later, I am anxious to be occupied and useful.

With much experience dealing with family members suffering from mental problems, I decided I might be useful in that area. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is the umbrella organization charged with this responsibility in Ontario. So I called a contact at CAMH and was referred to The Family Council.

The Family Council helps parents and siblings who are dealing with family members afflicted with addiction and/or mental health problems. By coincidence, the day I arrived to get more information, the Family Council had scheduled a meeting to discuss how to do a better job. I was invited to attend. The meeting broke into groups for discussion. One of the group breakout responsibilities was “promotion and community outreach”. This was the logical group for me to join. The first item that arose was the need for a website for the Family Council. I said, “I can help with that.”

Here's the link to the website that resulted: www.thefamilycouncil.ca.

I was also introduced to a Schizophrenia Peer Support Group. Here's the website I volunteered to design for the group: www.thesearethandshake.ca.

One thing led to another. I am now on the Board of Directors of The Family Council and was recently elected Vice-President.

Most recently, I joined Management Advisory Services (MAS). This organization provides volunteer consultants to not-for-profit organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. My speciality, of course, is marketing/sales.

Along with my other activities, such as upgrading my French, mentoring recent immigrants from French speaking countries, participating in a musical group that performs at Seniors' Homes, and keeping the love of my life happy, not much time is left for day-dreaming.

Happy New Year – Bonne Année

Raycheba siblings: Sylvia, Ilona, Marion, John



MARION'S MOTHER

Helen Raycheba turned 97 last May. All her life she has been a very active person – both physically and mentally. Her Order of Canada medal attests to that.

Helen lived by herself in a Toronto condo within a short walk of both her son John and Marion. Not only did she look after her own needs but she also kept John, Marion and me supplied with fresh-baked bread and buns. I particularly liked the cinnamon buns. We miss them now.

Fortunately, Helen has retained “all her marbles”. However, she doesn't have the physical strength she had taken for granted. Helen certainly raised her children to be loving and caring. Now she is reaping the reward. Nevertheless this has been a trying year for Marion's family. Helen found it difficult to move to a nursing home. It finally reached the point that a nursing home had to be found without delay.

The first home was in the outskirts of Toronto: not convenient and Helen didn't like the place. Another place became available fairly close to John's and Marion's homes. That lasted a few months. Now her last move is in sight. Helen speaks fluent Ukrainian. So a nursing home catering to that community is ideal. The new place is on the very edge of Toronto so will require more effort to visit. But Helen should be happy there and that's what is important.



Grandchildren & Great-grandchildren

CHINESE CANADIAN FRIENDS

Some eight years ago, I bought a new sofa. Having grown up in the Great Depression, I hated to throw out this old sofa while it still had some life in it. I was living in an apartment at the time; so I asked the superintendent if there was anyone that he could suggest might like the old sofa. He mentioned a Chinese family who had just moved in and had very little furniture. So began a great friendship.

Jackie and Ray had a son five years of age. They spoke rather halting English, had been in Canada for six months and, not able to find work, were thinking of returning to China.

I helped them to prepare professional, Canadian style résumés. They both had an accounting background and Ray had worked in a bank. I suggested to Ray that he try for a job with the Bank of China. He showed them his résumé, which impressed the Bank with his English, and got a job. He earned several promotions and last year was head hunted and is now vice-president of a Taiwanese bank newly arrived in Toronto.

Marion encouraged Jackie to take a temporary position to replace a woman at the YMCA who was going on maternity leave. That grew into a full-time position and promotions. In the meantime both Jackie and Ray completed their CGA (Certified General Accountant) degrees.

Marion and I have become surrogate grandparents to son Max, now age 13, and three-year-old Thomas.

Another family of Chinese origin became known to us as a result of someone we met in China. Flora is a physician. It's not easy to qualify here; so we've been helping Flora to improve her English and the pronunciation of medical terms. Flora's son is now going to the University of Toronto, intending to be a doctor, like his mother (but without all the hassles).

For the past several years we've held a special Canada Day celebration on our terrace. These two families and a long-established other friend have arranged with the elements for sunny days to go with the sunny dispositions of all participants.

