

2009 Christmas News from the Browns

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Worst Winter Ever



What a strange year for weather in South Surrey - from record snowfall in the beginning of the year to the sunniest summer in

recent memory. Good thing we are retired. As requested, the snow started to fall on Christmas Eve but just didn't quit until the first week in April. There was so much snow in our little back yard that there was no longer a place to put it. Gord eventually got the car out of the garage on Christmas day but quickly became hung up in deep snow. After a frustrating few hours of digging, he was forced to park at a nearby shopping centre where the car remained for over a week. Fortunately, anything that is needed to maintain house and home is well within walking distance so it was no hardship in the end. To ensure no snow this year, we went out and purchased a new Toyota 4Runner with All-Terrain tires so we're ready for snow in July.



On November 19th, Gord's dad, Jack Brow, was inducted into the Okanagan Sports Hall of Fame. Jack died in 1980, shortly after retiring as Recreation Director for the City of Kelowna, a career that spanned 25 years of dedicated service to sports in the community.

HALL OF FAME

His career was not without its controversial moments as he was always fighting for the kids to find ways of providing services without fees. One of his greatest battles with the City one cold winter was when he suggested that the City flood their many lacrosse rinks so that kids could experience outdoor skating. This would also relieve the over-taxed indoor skating rink that often had parents attending hockey practice at 5:00 in the morning. Soon after his request was rejected by the City, Jack was having a beer with his buddies at the Royal Ann Hotel. Some of his pals were firemen and as the evening progressed a solution to the problem was found - they loaded up one of the fire trucks in the middle of the night and made



This year is the 45th year since Gord graduated from the RCMP academy in Regina. We joined other retired or ex-members and their wives in Halifax, NS, to celebrate the occasion. This gathering was timed to meet the arrival of the tall ships in the Halifax harbour and it turned out to be a great party. The whole harbour-side was packed with vendors and the visitors were shoulder to shoulder. There was a fireworks display every night and the bars and restaurants were all overflowing until the wee hours of the night. In the spirit of the occasion, many local people dressed in period costume, wandered around the dock mingling with the visiting tourists. To make the visit more interesting, KISS was also in town which added to the general rowdiness. We had never been to Nova Scotia before so we teamed up with one of Gord's troop mates and his wife, rented a car and spent 10 days circling the Maritimes. From Halifax, we followed the south coastline all the way up to Louisbourg. The rural roads were interesting but very sparsely populated and the ocean view was blocked most of the way by trees that had grown up from abandoned farms

RCMP Reunion

along the shore. We should have blasted all the way up to Sydney on the four lane divided highway and started our tour from there. From Louisbourg, we drove the Cabot Trail, and then took the ferry over to PEI where we stayed at the home of one of our troop mates. Andy and Florence were the perfect hosts, treating us to a mussel and lobster dinner and later showing us Charlottetown in the evening where we watched a Confederation presentation that was projected on the City Hall building. It was a wonderful visit but we had to dash off the next day, crossing over the long, narrow Confederation Bridge to New Brunswick where we stayed all of about 45 minutes! Back into Nova Scotia, we stopped at Springhill - home of Anne Murray and the Anne Murray museum. Then it was off to the Annapolis Valley which was the most picturesque part of our trip. The long winding road through rural communities that dot the northern shoreline was like stepping back in time. We ultimately, crossed over to the south shore once again with a visit to Peggy's

Matty Gets Involved in Soccer Again

On any cold and (usually) rainy day on the weekend, you will find Gord in his rain gear at the sidelines of a soccer game somewhere in Surrey. Matty plays in a league and is also on his school team so he is kept busy with practices after school. After attending a couple of soccer schools this spring, his game has improved and their teams have done very well. The activity is keeping him fit which is always a concern these days with so much in the way of electronic entertainment which sees the kids hooked to a keyboard or ear-bud most of the day. Ben continues with marshal arts and has taken a keen interest in taking things apart. Putting them back together again is another matter!



the rounds, flooding all of the lacrosse rinks in the City. Jack was immediately fired but the community rallied behind him and forced a civic election. The old guard was thrown out and the new one rehired Jack as Recreation Superintendent, a position that he held until he retired in 1980.



Death in the Family

We were in Nova Scotia when Marilyn's eldest sister, Greta, died. She had lived happily on the farm in Wolseley, Sask. all of her life which was just a few months short of 90 years. She had been in poor health recently and had just been admitted to a nursing home where she was receiving excellent care. Time just ran out and she died peacefully in her sleep. Last November, while visiting Cuba, Marilyn's second oldest sister died. Out of four original siblings, a brother and three sisters, only the two youngest remain - Marilyn & her sister Ruth. Gord's two sisters & two brothers are still healthy.

Cove. It was crowded with tour buses that had deposited hundreds of people in the tiny settlement. We had a glimpse of the famous light house on the rock but it was very foggy as well as crowded so we opted to forgo the experience and have a quiet lunch by the sea just three kilometres down the road. Our tour ended where it began - in Halifax and our general impression of Nova Scotia is that it has a long way to go before it beats the beauty of British Columbia.



Whale Watching

We were at an outdoor/sports show in Abbotsford not long ago and entered a draw for two nights in a hotel and a day of whale watching. We won the trip and it turns out that the whale watching boat was head quartered in Campbell River. Gord dives in this



area all the time but Marilyn had never seen this part of the coastline from the water. The skies

were sunny for weeks before the tour but, on the appointed day, as we boarded the 12 passenger Zodiac for our run up Discovery Passage, the skies opened and it began to pour. Not just normal rain – more like torrential rain. They issued us with survival suits and goggles and off we went in the rain. Turns out that survival suits are not entirely waterproof and we returned after the 6 hour tour soaked to the skin. Apparently the wildlife was not impressed with the weather either and must have taken shelter because we saw only one mink, one bear, and one eagle - not a single whale. Fortunately, the water was calm which allowed the Zodiac to skim along at about 70kph. We had sense enough to sit in the back but the rain felt like needles as it bounced off our faces. The fresh air was good !



Egypt and First trip to Jordan

Escorting a tour to the Sinai and Jordan was an add-on to the yearly escorting job and the first for the us. After finishing with the Egypt tour, we boarded a bus in Cairo taking us east through a tunnel under the Suez canal and on a seven hour bus ride along the desert highway south to the tiny settlement of Santa Katarina, nestled at the foot of Mount Sinai (Gebel Musa) where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Many of the guests got up at 1:AM to travel up the mountain on the back of a camel but we did not feel the need for such a religious or spiritual experience at that time of the morning. The idea was to see the sunrise on Mount Sinai. As usual, the camel drivers agreed on a fee to take them up the mountain only to demand an even higher fee to bring them down. Apparently a big argument developed at the top of the mountain and the tourist police were called to settle the matter. Eventually our guests walked down the mountain and returned to the hotel exhausted. The hotel in Santa Katarina will forever be noted in the Brow book of world records for being the filthiest on record. Not to dwell on the negative, the bus left early the next morning to meet the ferry at the port of Nuweiba. The ferry arrived late and left in the dark, three hours after the original departure time so not much was seen of the Gulf of Aqaba. After two weeks in Egypt, Jordan was like another world. Very westernized

with modern buildings and well manicured boulevards – they even stop at stop lights, something unheard of in Cairo. Our first tour was Wadi Rum where Lawrence of Arabia had his base camp. The jeeps spirited the group off into the desert where sheer mountains of granite and sandstone rose from the sand like massive islands. Once in the canyon, a stop at a Bedouin camp provided everyone with tea while they examined the hand made goods offered for sale by the Bedouin women. The next hotel was situated right next to the entrance to Petra which was the highlight of the Jordan tour. Although the site is made famous by the “Treasury” – pictured here, there are hundreds of other temples carved in the face of the rock all along a six kilometre canyon. The weather was sunny and hot but, in the canyon, it was cool and the guests were well advised to have a jacket handy. The walk into this site is downhill but, luckily, there were carriages that could be hired for the return journey out of the valley because it was a very long walk for most. The Royal Heights group started early in the morning but, later in the afternoon, the site was crowded with cruise ship tours that had come all the way from the Port of Aqaba just for a quick afternoon visit. You really needed the whole day to see this site. The ancient Roman city of Jerash was the next stop. Eight kilometres long easily made it the largest and most interesting site on the itinerary. A trip to Jordan would not be complete with-

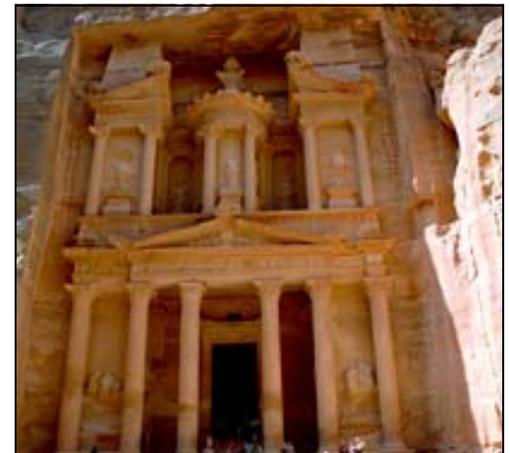
SCUBA Corner

Gord is still actively diving. In February, he was off to Sunshine Coast on a live-aboard dive boat for some incredible diving. This was followed by Quadra Island in June, Mamro Dive charters in Port Hardy in September and Discovery Pass in November. The Port Hardy trip introduced him to a photographer named David Hall – www.seaphotos.com – from New York. He has had his photos used on many magazine covers and has published a series of 10 children’s books. He is a retired radiologist and his photos are truly spectacular. Have a look at his website. Our oldest grandson, Ben, was certified for SCUBA this summer. Mitch and Gord took him on a dive boat called the Sea Dragon. The boat was well equipped for new divers so it was easier and safer to have Ben’s first real dive experience with the aid of a live boat close by. He did extremely



well, following Gord and Mitch to 60 feet and experiencing all of the interesting sea life that can be found on the West Coast. With new divers, their anxiety level causes them to go through a lot of air on the first few dives. We were surprised to see that Ben was as good on his air as an experienced diver. Once Mathew gets certified, we’ll be able fill the whole boat for a private dive tour.

out a visit to the Dead Sea. Only about an hour from the City of Amman, the sandy beach front looks like any other popular sea



side beach. Access to the water is gained by paying a fee to one of the many beachside swimming pools that are also used to rinse off after bathing—floating rather—in the very salty, buoyant water. The buoyancy made it impossible to swim but the guests all waded in while we took pictures and offered encouragement to the faint of heart. The accommodations in Amman were outstanding. Home to many seven star hotels, LeMeridien was amazing. To make it even better, we were all upgraded to suites. What a life !

