

2016

Christmas News from the Browns

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Christmas 2015

Well, here we are after another year of milestone events like our 51st wedding anniversary, Paige turning 50, Ben turning 21, Mathew turning 18. As we both head for 74, milestone events are becoming more tiresome than they are celebratory but, thanks to all of our electronic equipment, we are reminded of these impending events in plenty of time. Originally we would rotate Christmas dinner between the families but, when the kids were small, we decided to have it at Paige and Mitch's place every year so that the kids would have lots of room to play. In addition, it was decided that the women would keep the kids entertained

and out of the way while the men cooked. This arrangement has been going on now for over 15 years but three years ago, Mitch suggested that we move it up a notch and wear our tuxedo or dinner jacket for dinner. That turned out to be a big hit so we continue to do it to this day. Since the kids have grown up the women's activities have descended into drinking wine and playing cards while the guys toil away in the kitchen. The cooking is easy but keeping the women out of the kitchen during the process is a real challenge. Of course they are invited back into the kitchen when it comes time to clean up.



Paige Turns 50



As Paige turned 50 this year, she embarked on a new career as a travel agent. Having sold her shares in the company that we originally founded in 1979, she worked with Mitch to support his company for a while but soon had a desire to distance herself from the office equipment business. After dabbling in a few unrelated projects, she started with a travel company only a few blocks from their home and it soon developed into something she loves. The past year has been filled with courses hosted by cruise ship and insurance companies so she is now a certified as a travel agent.

Ben & Mathew Update

Ben turned 21 years old this year which, in our day, was the magic "drinking age", a notion long since abandoned by new liquor laws. He is still pursuing his apprenticeship in auto mechanics and is learning some valuable life lessons as he and his girlfriend reside in a house they rent with several other tenants. Following his Dad's love of cars, he owns a Nissan Skyline which is in multiple pieces in the process of being restored, a Volvo which, after a motor change works some times and a truck which seems to be his main source of transportation. The other two remain in various stages of disrepair and will likely become antiques before they become roadworthy. Nevertheless, they are his dream and offer him a distraction if he ever becomes motivated to re-assemble them.

Mathew, who turned 18 this year, is finishing his final year of high school and has plans to enroll in college as he prepares to pursue a career in law enforcement. He just graduated from the RCMP Youth Training

Program which was held here in our community this year. It was an eight week introduction to the various divisions of the RCMP and the work that they do. Paige and Mitch were busy so I (Gord) attended the graduation ceremonies and had a chance to rub shoulders with the brass. When I introduced myself to the Chief Superintendent, he looked over at Mathew and said "and this must be your son" . . . big ego moment as I told him Mathew was my Grandson. When I told him that I had graduated from the academy in Regina in 1964, he said, "God, how old are you anyway". With this course along with the volunteer work Mathew has done at the YMCA and a steady job at The Keg Restaurant, he is well on his way into a police force. For the first time ever, he is putting soccer and ball hockey aside in favour of his studies and his Grandfather is grateful that there will be no more standing in the rain on the sidelines or enduring the cold, hard seats in the hockey arenas, although it was an enjoyable run and not many games were missed.



Mathew finishes the Ride to Conquer Cancer event in August. Many hours of fundraising culminated in the two day ride from Vancouver to Seattle with 1,767 other men and women who raised over \$7. million this year for cancer research. This was Mathew's first and Mitch's fifth year of participation in the event and, unlike a wild wind storm of last year, the weather was cool and dry.



St. Lawrence Cruise



As mentioned last year, our fondness for long flights and exotic countries has now become a thing of the past and, after forty six years of international travel every year, we are now sticking to North America. This year it was to Quebec City where we rented a car and saw the Plains of Abraham, Montmorency Falls and Ile D'Orleans with our friends Lesley and

Harold. Leslie was in a group of people that we took to Peru and Ecuador in 2004 and later married Harold. Their honeymoon was spent with us as we escorted groups to the Greek Islands and Egypt and, now good friends, we visit regularly. Harold has had a stroke and was left with limited mobility so, not realizing that Quebec City is far from wheel chair friendly, I

Anniversary Party

Paige and Mitch had promised to host a 50th wedding anniversary party for us but the plans were delayed when they began major renovations on their newly acquired house. A three car attached garage complete with hoist, satisfied Mitch's love of cars and the two car detached garage behind the house became his woodworking shop. Paige has an art studio in the house and they did an amazing job with the basement which has a home theatre, pool room and wine cellar. They literally gutted the house and spent a year rebuilding it from the inside out so it is now a beautiful modern home. They dedicated many hours of planning and hard work to get it the way they wanted and it turned out to be a wonderful venue for our party, albeit a year and a half late.

NOTES

offered to push. Harold is a big man – not fat but tall and solid – so navigating cobblestone streets with two hundred pounds in a wheel chair was a real test of endurance. Good thing I work out at the Y most days or it would have been me having the stroke.

Following our tour of Quebec City and the surrounding area, we boarded the Canadian Empress, a replica riverboat built in 1981. Thirty cabins supported a maximum of sixty passengers but our cruise was the first in the year and we cast off with only twenty six passengers on board. The meals were as luxurious as a large cruise line and the entertainment was brought on board each night as we docked. The cabins were about ten feet wide and twelve feet

long with a tiny bathroom in one corner so the accommodations were tight but comfortable. Most of our time was spent out on the deck or in the lounge where all drinks were supplied free of charge. The cruise lasted seven days and took us from Quebec City all the way to Kingston stopping in Trois Rivieres, Montreal, through the Beauharnois locks, Upper Canada Village, Prescott – where we visited Fort Wellington, Brockville – where we visited Fulford Place and, finally, through the Thousand Islands to Kingston. Travelling with these small cruise lines is a little more expensive but, after so many cruises on very large ships with suppliers and on our own, we have come to enjoy the intimacy of sailing with a small group.

Fall Drive

Over the years, we have had many friends and colleagues escape the busy lower mainland area in favour of rural commu-



nities in the interior of the Province. Although we keep in touch by email, we have not had much personal contact and every one of us is getting older so, on the last day of September, we jumped in the car and headed out to do some visiting. Our journey took us on a southern route through Manning Park, then east to Grand Forks, Christina Lake and Castlegar. We then headed north to Golden, west to Salmon Arm and Kamloops and finally back home. In each place, we stopped to visit friends so it took us nine days to do the loop through the mountains. We had some great visits and, thanks to cell phone technology, we didn't miss anyone. Along the way we were reacquainted with places that we

had been to years ago and explored others we had not visited before. The mountains were alive with the changing colours at that time of year so we were never bored with the drive. Our last day in Kamloops, we had connected with a school chum of Marilyn's at a local Tim Hortons coffee shop. We had only planned to visit for about an hour but the time flew by and we finally began what should have been a three and a half hour drive from Kamloops to Vancouver. As we left Kamloops and started up into the mountains, the first snow of the season started to fall and, because it wasn't that cold, it was also very foggy. Plowing through three inches of slush slowed the traffic down from the posted 110 kmph to about 80 and we were all in a single file on a four lane highway. It was a miserable drive and we thought of stopping for the evening but, as we dropped down into the valley towards Merritt, the snow stopped and the roads were clear so we continued on. Delayed further by an accident on the highway only a few kilometres from home, we finally arrived at Paige and Mitch's for Thanksgiving dinner.