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Weather



TODAY:
30% CHANCE OF SHOWERS

HIGH OF 14
LOW OF 3



TUESDAY:
60% CHANCE OF SHOWERS
HIGH OF 18
LOW OF 10



WEDNESDAY:
40% CHANCE OF SHOWERS

HIGH OF 18
LOW OF 11



THURSDAY:
SHOWERS

HIGH OF 19
LOW OF 7



FRIDAY:
MIX OF SUN AND CLOUD

HIGH OF 25
LOW OF 12

Ingenius planning for a physical distancing 90th birthday celebration!



THE SCOOP MABLE HASTINGS

Who'd ever guess planning a birthday party could be so complicated! If you want to know, ask Fiona Campbell and her husband David Stirling for their take on holding a party during a COVID-19 pandemic. Campbell knew there might be challenges, but she was prepared to take on the task and cover all bases. So two weeks before the event, she sent out her first invitation for an outdoor "shout out" birthday party for John Haberl - a fellow bridge playing friend about to celebrate his 90th.

She wanted everyone to know she had put plenty of thought into the affair, including a cautionary note about the need to maintain physical distancing.

Even so, a couple of people expressed

concern, so Campbell sent out another more detailed message. This one included plenty of details about parking and walking a carefully measured three-metre, orange-cone marked path, where each person or couple could safely sit on a carefully cleaned chair. She was meticulously trying to follow regulations. Atypically and unlike any other event hosted by Campbell and her husband, there'd be no food or libations served. Too complicated! Too chancy, the couple reasoned.

"All chair arms were disinfected between mini groups of visitors, no food or drink served and STRICT adherence to social distancing!" said Campbell. "Organizing was like a top secret military exercise, but all participants followed the rules and it was full on SURPRISE! I am still thrilled with how it turned out," she continued. "John is a total STAR and has a memory like a steel trap!"

However, guests could still shout out their wishes, wave their balloons - forget about filling them with helium, now totally unavailable - and sing happy birthday to the guest of honour, albeit without a guest musician. Instead, guests would be treated with a special MP4-rendition of Happy Birthday and other music from Potton's own Stanley Lake and Almut Ellinghaus.

"As musiciens we are often asked for special requests and to accommodate needs from time to time. As a long time



COURTESY

John making a speech at his birthday party.

friend of John's, it was our pleasure to assure that the physical distancing 90th celebration had just the right touch of lively jazz!" said Ellinghaus and Lake.

Following this, guests would return to their cars, and another group would take their place. In all, the event gathered 19 guests. No question it was a success.

When last seen, the birthday boy was grinning ear to ear. "I didn't have a clue," said Haberl. "I had received a number of birthday cards, and knew Murielle had bought me a birthday cake. And I also knew there was going to a Zoom call from my kids, my grands, and one great grand. But something like this, I never ever expected."

A community activist, John's been connected to the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre (CABMN) for many years as a volunteer (since 1991 when he moved to Potton), including as a Treasurer, Vice President, Personnel committee chair, Health Board rep... Haberl was also a member the Municipality of Potton's Municipal Council. While not a "local," his love for Potton and surrounding area has always been evident. Over the years, he's compiled an over 10,000 person genealogical data base of Potton Township founders; a labour of love that he has long devoted time and effort to.

Physical distancing could not dampen the spirits of the birthday boy nor of the friends and family who found a way to extend their love and best wishes during a very unique set of circumstances.



COURTESY

John and Murielle at his 90th birthday party.

Ben by Daniel Shelton

