



The **InFormer**



**We Will Meet Again**





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# Introduction



**I**t came swiftly and silently. It seemed that almost overnight a lethal amorphous cloud shrouded the globe. Then suddenly someone had a name for it: COVID-19. This coronavirus disease 2019 came from Wuhan, China. The understandable involuntary reactions were incomprehension and fear. As the infection spread the medical message became crystal clear: stay home, wash your hands vigorously and often. Political leaders across Canada sang from the same song sheet. “Follow the Science,” with the refrain “stay calm,” almost became a national anthem. And, it was time for snow birds to fly north. Those adventurous Canadians scattered around the globe were urged to return home.

We quickly learned that this wasn’t going to be like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which Canada, along with 25 other affected countries, experienced in 2003. This was going to be more expansive, more virulent. How many of us knew we were going to experience the worst planet pandemic since the Spanish ‘Flu, 100 years ago?

## **One Member – Two Pandemics**

On September 24, 1917 when Charles Morris (Bud) Godfrey was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania he had no way of knowing that ultimately, he would live through two pandemics. Our oldest living former Member of Provincial Parliament came into this world one year ahead of the greatest pandemic since the 1300’s and in a city which

would experience in 1918 the earliest lethal hit in the United States.

Dr. Charles Godfrey recollects, “Father was in the Cavalry regiment in WW1 and his regiment was among the first shipping out to the UK. The horses were acting up on the St. Lawrence. He went below to settle them, was kicked in chest and had to be taken ashore. His convalescence was in Philadelphia where I was born. He recovered and our family moved back to Canada where he then joined the Niagara regiment. On the steamer two soldiers “named” my younger brother and I “Bud and Mick.” It stuck. Fortunately, we missed the major pandemic. Father and I were both in the RCAF in WW2.”

## **How to Respond to Dark and Dire Circumstances**

We were in a war! Not a military war, but a life and death struggle with an invisible enemy. As with any war, courage and determination are essential qualities in the quest for victory. Calmness in the face of a frightening situation along with a collaborative approach must be the order of the day. We are in this together. We will win this together. Thus, some 80 years later, “We’ll Meet Again,” an inspirational song sung by Vera Lynn during the battle of Britain, is resurrected as our survival anthem. Mid-March marks the beginning of a national “lock down” in Canada.

# We'll Meet Again

## Our first chapter, April 1st

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*We'll meet again  
Don't know where  
Don't know when  
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day  
Keep smiling through  
Just like you always do  
'Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far  
away*

Some of our members may remember the Vera Lynn war time song, "We'll Meet Again." In this war against COVID-19 let's try to roll away those black clouds with some cheery stories. Here are the first contributions. Send me your stories so we can share them with our colleagues. You can help roll away the black clouds!

"Anne and I, our family and friends have been experimenting with another way to stay connected while maintaining self-distancing. We have participated in some virtual dinners and get-togethers with family and friends using Zoom. It works pretty well and is quite fun."

- Bud Wildman

"With the assistance of our tech-savvy daughter and son-in-law, we were able to have game of euchre on line with our grandchildren. At the same time, I connect us via speaker phone so we could chat while playing cards. I must admit the event was more interesting than I thought it would be."

- David Warner

The following is a multi-faith prayer sent in by Karen Haslam:

"O God, we gather together separated by life-saving distancing, but united more than ever in spirit. We know we are in a war against COVID-19, and the more together we are, the better and stronger we will emerge. We know the challenges are enormous, yet so are the opportunities and that whether we are in isolation with loved ones, or alone, we will have abundance of time. We commit to using that time to the max, to help those in greater need in whatever way we can. We give thanks for those who are on the front line taking care of those who are not well. We give thanks for the researchers who are working at breakneck speed to find cure and vaccine. We give thanks for our leaders, federal, provincial and local, for their dedication to all of us. We give thanks for the providers of our daily needs who go to work despite the risk. We give thanks for those who have ramped up their ability to produce life-saving supplies. We pray for the well-being of all our life savers, for those who are not well, that they recover fully. For those enduring difficulty, that they may overcome their challenges. We pray that a cure and vaccine will soon be available, and that we all – family, friends, all Canadians, the entire world may be healed in body and spirit. We ask you, O God, to bless our leaders, our front-line care givers, our life savers and life enhancers. We ask you, O God, to bless Canada, to bless the world, to bless everyone. Amen."

# SOCIAL HAPPINESS

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”  
– William Shakespeare

Chapter two, *Social Happiness*, April 2nd, prompted heart-warming stories about connecting when isolated.

*“So will you please say hello  
To the folks that I know  
Tell them I won’t be long  
They’ll be happy to know  
That as you saw me go  
I was singing this song” \**  
\*verse 2, “We’ll Meet Again”

*“Just as despair can come  
to one only from other  
human beings, hope, too,  
can be given to one only by  
other human beings.”*  
- Elie Wiesel

“My wife and I have been in self-imposed isolation for 3 weeks. We started early since we are in the over 80 categories. We have the blessing of this view over Nottawasaga Bay in Collingwood and it was warm enough today to sit outside in the sun. We try to take a short walk each day and I go for a drive on my own every afternoon. I stick to back country roads in Simcoe and Grey and always manage to find a gem of a few which I have never seen before. We use FaceTime and Skype and Zoom to stay in touch with our family members in Toronto and Dublin, Ireland. Our granddaughter is 24 on April 2 and will graduate with an M.D. degree in June 2020 from University College Medical School in Dublin. Zoom has been a wonderful app for conference calls involving 4 locations. I wish you and Mobina good health and I thank you for keeping in touch with me and my OAFP friends.”

- Alan Eagleson

“We have found an innovative way to deal with distances too. Our eldest daughter lives in California with her family and our youngest grandchild is in British Columbia with his mother while our son and other daughter live here in Toronto. Prior to Covid-19 David and I had planned to go to California where one of our granddaughters was starring in the school production of the Lion King. That of course fell through. So, last Sunday, we held a video conference from California to British Columbia to Ontario during which the whole family was treated to a fantastic variety show: a musical production from California, a comedy routine from Kelowna and great laughter and cheers from all of us. I can only imagine what we will plan for Easter! Covid-19 is changing the world in which we live. Still we are all finding ways to keep us strong and engaged. And maybe we are becoming just a little bit better.....”

- Annamarie Castrilli

# The Joy of Walking

April 28, 2020

The last several weeks have provided many of us with a unique walking opportunity. Perhaps the motivation was simply to get outside.

However, we may have also discovered features of our neighbourhood we didn't know existed or exchanged friendly greetings with strangers, or met some neighbours for the first time.

Over the centuries, the joy of walking has been expressed poetically.

According to Thomas de Quincey, William Wordsworth (1770-1850) clocked up an estimated 180,000 miles during his lifetime, walking around his beloved Lake District (to say nothing of the Quantocks, where he lived near Coleridge during the 1790s). In this sonnet, 'Sweet Was the Walk', Wordsworth recalls a walk he took along a narrow lane at noon, and reflects on how the intervening years between childhood and adulthood have changed his view of the scene as he remembers it. \*

\*[www.interestingliterature.com](http://www.interestingliterature.com)

## Sweet Was the Walk

Sweet was the walk along the narrow lane  
At noon, the bank and hedge-rows all the way  
Shagged with wild pale green tufts of fragrant hay,  
Caught by the hawthorns from the loaded wain,  
Which Age with many a slow stoop strove to gain;  
And childhood, seeming still most busy, took  
His little rake; with cunning side-long look,  
Sauntering to pluck the strawberries wild, unseen.  
Now, too, on melancholy's idle dreams  
Musing, the lone spot with my soul agrees,  
Quiet and dark; for through the thick wove trees  
Scarce peeps the curious star till solemn gleams  
The clouded moon, and calls me forth to stray  
Thro' tall, green, silent woods and ruins  
grey.

-William Wordsworth



“Am one year away from mandatory retirement. However now working only every second day because of pandemic so am home much more. In last 2 months have realized how much I enjoy spending more time with my wife. Now looking forward to next year.”

- Ernie Parsons

# The Joy of Cycling

April 29, 2020

## The Wheelman's Joy By Paul Pastnor (1883)

The shadow of my silent steed  
Flies over hill and vale,  
As swiftly as the clouds that speed  
On Notus' fav'ring gale.

No whip, no spur, its sleek thigh  
wounds;  
Nor galls the chaffing rein;  
But, free as Helios' steed, it bounds  
Along the shining plain.

Fly on, fly on, my glorious wheel,  
And round the belted earth  
Go flashing with thy spokes of steel,  
Like star on heaven's girth!

My toils, my cares I leave behind;  
Away, away I spin.  
The birds that travel on the wind  
Seem all my kith and kin.

Look how the groves go by the fields,  
The fields go by the groves!  
What joy the flying 'cycle yields,  
As swiftly on it moves!

Now cleaving with its noiseless hoof  
The white dust of the plain;  
Now sliding down the mountain's roof  
Like a silver drop of rain!

Oh, merry are the wheelman's days;  
His dreams are deep and sweet;  
He glides down all life's troubled ways  
With velvet 'neath his feet!

"I have a 20 km. "exercise route" which takes me along some delightful pathways which are lined with shrubs, evergreens, the occasional patch of wild flowers and adjacent creeks. The highlight is a large pond with a waterfall, home to geese, ducks and seagulls. A great spot to pause and soak in some of nature's beauty. Exercise, appreciation of nature and a time to reflect. A refreshing, exhilarating part of the day!

As with walking, there is a long history of poetic tribute to cycling."

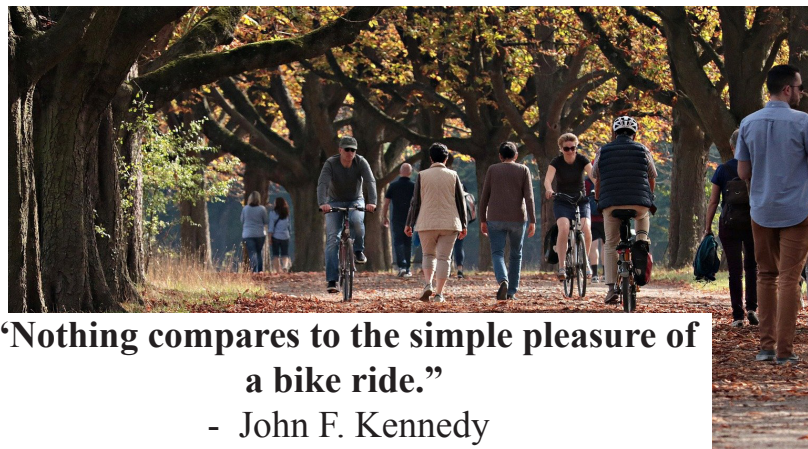
- David Warner

"One of the wonderful things about "COVID house arrest" is how much time my husband and I are now spending together. Over the years, our careers frequently took us away from each other so now we are enjoying making up for lost time!"

- Janet Ecker

"The bicycle is just as good company as most husbands and, when it gets old and shabby, a woman can dispose of it and get a new one without shocking the entire community."

- Ann Strong, Minneapolis Tribune  
(1895)



**"Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of  
a bike ride."**

- John F. Kennedy



# Spring Is Here!

April 3, 2020

“You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep Spring from coming.”

— Pablo Neruda (Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet-diplomat and politician)

This is a very different spring than last year. We are in the midst of a serious health challenge. Yet, spring, with all its beauty is here.

“For oft, when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils.”

— William Wordsworth, last verse of “I Wander’d Lonely as a Cloud”

The above is in tribute to a wonderful poet, William Wordsworth, born April 7, 1770 (250 years ago).

Perhaps you will be outside, (2 metres apart from others) and have the opportunity to appreciate nature. If you photographically capture spring flowers, a waterfall, a robin, other signs of spring, please send me a copy. I would love to share those photos with our membership.

“April hath put a spirit of you in everything.”

— William Shakespeare

# Happy Birthday, William Wordsworth!

April 7, 2020

## Happy 250th Birthday William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud

By William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—xaand gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

While I haven't seen any daffodils yet,  
the crocus in our back garden are close to  
blooming. (photo attached). Yes, spring is on

the way, at least in southern Ontario. Spring,  
always a time of renewal, of hope. As all of  
us do whatever we can to remain healthy, it is  
heartening to see how so many people have  
come together. We have retained that sense of  
community.

The following is from Alan Eagleson, former  
M.P.P. who lives near Collingwood, on the  
shore of Georgian Bay.

“We have been getting a lot of help in  
shopping for groceries from young men who  
live nearby and this allows us to avoid direct  
contact with anyone.

The weather is a bit warmer and I now get out  
on my bike for 30 minute rides to nowhere  
and back. I make sure I avoid any contact with  
anyone who is within 30' of me.

Nancy takes short walks and I still take a short  
drive at the end of the day.

I have moved all the stones I set out to move  
from our beach and will stick to light yard  
work until the virus passes.

Son Allen introduced us to ZOOM and he  
sets up meetings by phone with his house,  
our house, Jill's house, and granddaughter  
Georgina's flat in Dublin Ireland. It isn't as  
enjoyable as seeing everyone in person, but  
in the present circumstances it does boost our  
morale.

We want all of you to know that we think of  
you and the many good times we have shared  
with you over the past several years.  
When this virus has run its course we look  
forward to seeing all you in person.”

# Poetic Spring

April 13, 2020

Oh, Spring!

I want to go out and feel you and get  
inspiration.

My old things seem dead.

I want fresh contacts, more vital searching.

- Emily Carr

No matter the difficulty, the challenges, a very  
different reality for all of us, spring does arrive  
and with it a sense of renewal, of hope, of  
nature's beauty.

Today's chapter features two poems about  
spring, one by a former United State Poet  
Laureate (2001-03), the other by Margaret  
Atwood. Due to technical difficulties we  
could not attach photos

## Today

By Billy Collins

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,  
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze  
that it made you want to throw  
open all the windows in the house  
and unlatch the door to the canary's cage,  
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb,  
a day when the cool brick paths  
and the garden bursting with peonies  
seemed so etched in sunlight  
that you felt like taking  
a hammer to the glass paperweight  
on the living room end table,  
releasing the inhabitants  
from their snow-covered cottage  
so they could walk out,  
holding hands and squinting  
into this larger dome of blue and white,  
well, today is just that kind of day.

## Spring

By Margaret Atwood

It is spring, my decision, the earth  
ferments like rising bread  
or refuse, we are burning  
last year's weeds, the smoke  
flares from the road, the clumped stalks  
glow like sluggish phoenixes / it wasn't  
only my fault / birdsongs burst from  
the feathered pods of their bodies, dandelions  
whirl their blades upwards, from beneath  
this decaying board a snake  
sidewinds, chained hide  
smelling of reptile sex / the hens  
roll in the dust, squinting with bliss,  
frogbodies  
bloat like bladders, contract, string  
the pond with living jelly  
eyes, can I be this  
ruthless? I plunge  
my hands and arms into the dirt,  
swim among stones and cutworms,  
come up rank as a fox,  
  
restless. Nights, while seedlings  
dig near my head  
  
I dream of reconciliations  
with those I have hurt  
unbearably, we move still  
touching over the greening fields, the future  
wounds folded like seeds  
in our tender fingers, days  
I go for vicious walks past the charred  
roadbed over the bashed stubble  
admiring the view, avoiding  
those I have not hurt  
  
yet, apocalypse coiled in my tongue,  
it is spring, I am searching  
for the word:  
finished

finished

so I can begin over  
again, some year

I will take this word too far.”

It was a special day spent in a different way

or

a different day spent in a special way.

## Easter

April 13, 2020

I find it a challenge to figure out which day of the week it is. I have zeroed in on the year and month. Got that straight. Yesterday’s challenge was a bit easier the moment I saw little baskets with the familiar gold wrapped, chocolate bunny sitting on our front porch. Must be Easter Sunday! Not too long after that one daughter, son-in-law, and grandson arrived. I think they were smiling. Hard to tell with the masks on. “Hellos” are shouted from 3 metres away. They are here to collect Easter goodies and in return hide Easter eggs in the back garden for the other daughter, son-in-law and the terrific twin grandkids to find later on.

Sure enough, a couple of hours later, the second group arrives, eager to find the 4 dozen treats tucked away in the shrubbery and the trees. There is a repeat of shouted greetings from 3 metres away. This time, however, something extra is added. “Hold up the iPad Pat so the grandchildren can face time with their other grandmother.” Susan, who lives in Kelowna, British Columbia is able to chat with Jill and Logan. The quartet then resume the treat search. They manage to find 46 of the 48 eggs. Maybe I can find the other two later on. All too soon they are on their way. Quite a day! The thing about a church service

on-line is that you can re-run the music if you wish. We had face-time, not only with Susan but with Radagast, the grandkids’ pet rabbit. We had a visit, albeit at 3 metres away, with our two daughters, and their families. I am convinced that behind the surgical masks were smiles.

There was a smile on my face and warmth in my heart for a day which was as special as it was different. By tomorrow I will likely be back to trying to figure out what day it is!  
- David Warner, Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020.

## The Dandelion

May 1, 2020

Yesterday, late afternoon, the weather was perfect for a walk. Based on my new approach to the lawns, I decided that along the way I would try looking at dandelions differently. Should they really be considered a weed? Perhaps this dazzling, golden yellow blossom has been unfairly maligned all these years. So, every so often I stopped, and peered closely at the dandelions. I did get a few puzzled looks from the owners of whose lawns I was treading on, but such is the price of research. After an hour’s walk and closely observing hundreds of dandelions, I reached a decision.

### The First Dandelion

By Walt Whitman

Simple and fresh and fair from winter’s close  
emerging,  
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics,  
had ever been,  
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter’d grass—  
innocent, golden, calm as the dawn,  
The spring’s first dandelion shows its trustful  
face.

**I'm A Pirate**  
By Annette Wynne

I'm a pirate in the grass—  
Hear ye people as ye pass;  
I'm a pirate bad and bold,  
Taking dandelion gold—  
All my hands and ships can hold.  
I'm a pirate—how the sun  
Glitters on the gold I've won;  
I shall buy you house and land  
And a castle silver-grand  
With the gold within my hand.

\*Annette Wynne, a writer of children's literature, wrote this poem in 1919

Not only is the dandelion a splendid, captivating flower, it symbolizes strength and hope. Trample a dandelion and it will spring back to life. Remove this so-called weed and another will later appear. This glorious flower epitomizes the human quest for meaningful life.

I have decided to transplant the dandelions in my lawn to our front and back gardens where they will be a magnificent centerpiece.

“No creature is fully itself till it is, like the dandelion, opened in the bloom of pure relationship to the sun, the entire living cosmos.” - D. H. Lawrence

“For me the most positive aspect of the restrictions have been to establish closer connections with immediate and extended family thru social media, FaceTime, Zoom and phone calls because everyone's lives have slowed down to a pace allowing a breather for all to catch up. In addition having spent the better part of the last 5 years at multiple

medical appointments and procedures with my partner Brian, telephone and virtual appointments have been much shorter and welcomed, something that could at times continue after Covid-19.” - Cindy Forster

## The Sparrow

May 5, 2020

“Better a sparrow, living or dead, than no birdsong at all.”

Catullus (Latin poet, late Roman Republic)

Thanks to some astute research by David Cooke I can comfortably rationalize creating a beautiful “Dandelion Garden”. A bit more research by yours truly and I have learned that the sparrow is an important citizen of Nature. So, by cultivating instead of crushing the dandelion I am providing life giving sustenance to the sparrow.

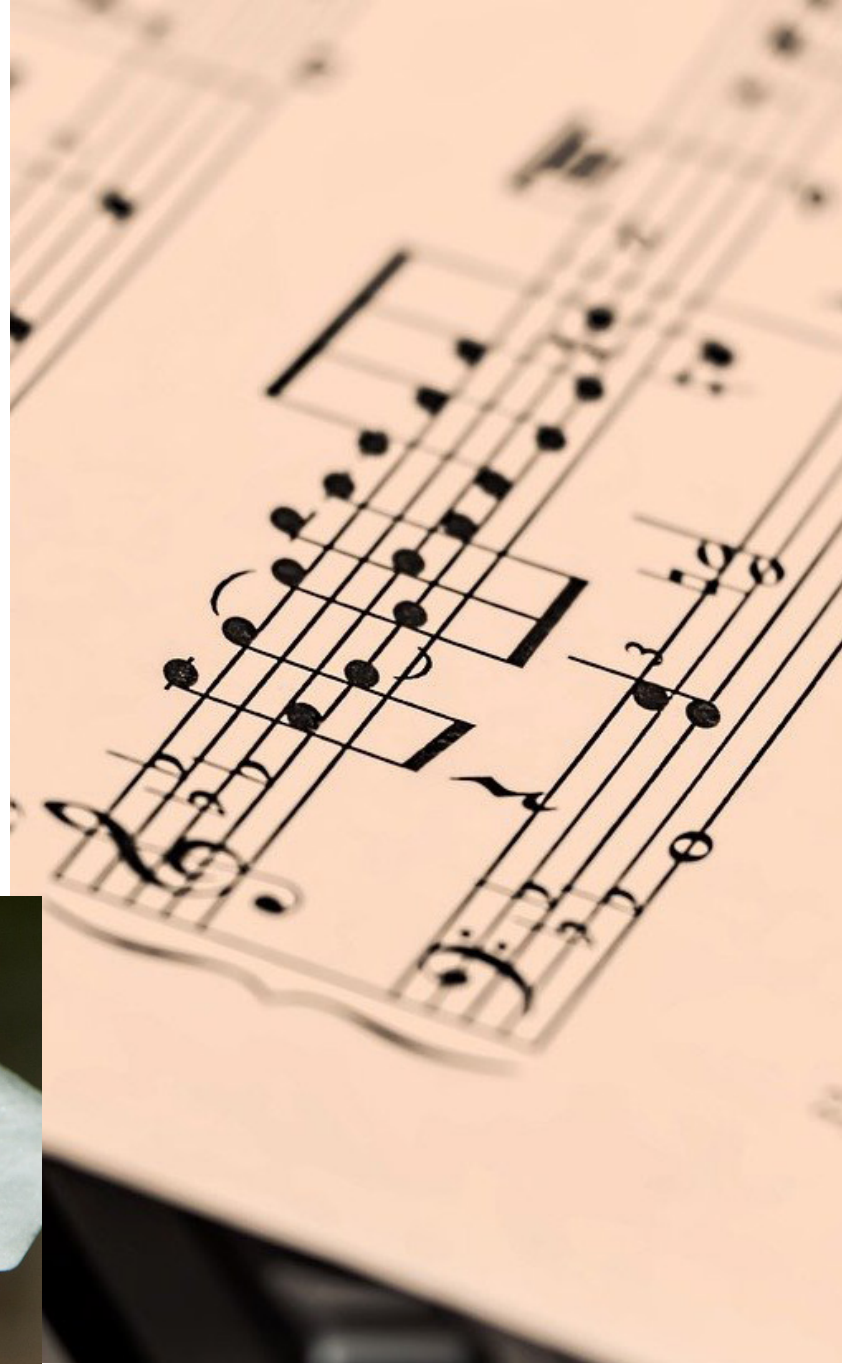
“I live in a wheelchair in a retirement residence and we are subject to very strict rules which forbid us from leaving the building. There is a very small garden to which I can move and try to contact nature. I am in the downtown of the city and so the only birds I have seen so far, this spring have been pigeons and sparrows. This afternoon, I learned something that I had not known for the eighty-two years of my life. I learned that sparrows get nutrients from dandelions. I watch this on several occasions. A sparrow would pause from looking for grubs and stick his or her beak into the flour of a dandelion. I regret the many hours of effort I wasted when I owned a home trying to get dandelions off my front lawn.” - David Cooke



And some are pretty enough,  
And some are poor indeed;  
And now again the people  
Call it but a weed.

You may remember George Burns, a great comedian. He gets the last word today.  
“At my age flowers scare me.”

“The current pandemic lockdown is the first time my wife, Loretta, and I have been together, 24-7, for more than 12 days in the past 17 years (since my initial election in 2003). We are now on week 10 together. It has been a wonderful reminder of why we got married 36 years ago!” - John Wilkinson



**Up next: Music**



# Music and COVID

May 11, 2020

**“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.”**

– Plato

Will it be a lively Chopin sonata or a lonesome Patsy Cline this morning? Or might I start the day with an Oscar Peterson jazz concert, Earl Scruggs, the king of bluegrass, tune in Muddy Waters Mississippi Delta blues, be nostalgic with Little Richard, risk Luciano Pavarotti creating tears or simply enjoy the mellow sounds of Julie London. I do not speak Italian or French, yet Italian and French love songs would be a good choice. Regardless of the decision, I know I will have a relaxing, contemplative start to the day.

## Music As A Response To A Global Crisis

A famine in Ethiopia was the catalyst for the Live Aid rock concert (July 13, 1985). Bob Geldof, vocalist for an Irish rock group “Boomtown Rats” had visited Ethiopia, witnessed the famine, returned to London and organized a global concert. While the focus was London’s Wembley stadium, various countries had their own venue. Barrie, Ontario was one such Live Aid concert location. One billion people from 110 countries watched and raised \$127 million for famine relief. A spinoff was 3 separate singles, all hit numbers and great fund raisers. The Americans created “We Are The World”, the British “Do They Know It’s Christmas” and the Canadians “Tears Are Not Enough.” The publicity of the event encouraged western nations to donate surplus wheat to starving African nations. The world came together to tackle a famine.

**“Music is powerful. As people listen to it, they can be affected. They respond.”**

– Ray Charles

1988 was the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the work of Amnesty International. The Human Rights Now Tour was not essentially a fund raiser but rather an awareness raiser. Bruce Springsteen was the headliner for this world tour which raised money for Amnesty International to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and to focus attention on the lack of human rights around the world. There were two Canadian stops on the tour, Toronto and Montreal. My two daughters, being huge Springsteen fans, were disappointed they couldn’t get tickets for the concert at Maple Leaf Gardens. The concert unhappily coincided with a devastating hurricane in Jamaica. Immediately there was a relief effort underway, with a fund raiser at Toronto’s City Hall Square. I caught a rumour that Bruce Springsteen was to make an appearance at the Square. Midnight found us ambling around in front of City Hall searching in vain for the famous Bruce Springsteen. In today’s parlance, I was the victim of “fake news.”

The world came together to support human rights

**“Music is the universal language of mankind.”**

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

On the 18th of last month, One World, a unique global concert, organized by and starring Lady Gaga raised \$128 million to support healthcare workers throughout the world as they battle the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Rockin' Robin

May 19, 2020

Social distancing was the order of the day. Technology however made it possible for groups to perform their music while each member was in their own home. The concert, with its eclectic variety of artists, encouraged donations to COVID-19 solidarity response fund, but also to local charities providing food, shelter, and health care.

The world came together to fight a pandemic.

At the end of my day perhaps it will be soothing Debussy or melodic Johnny Mathis. An appropriate choice for the end of another "virus day" would be the inspiring Vera Lynn. I can drift off to sleep, humming:  
Keep smiling through  
Just like you always do  
Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away

**"Life seems to go on without effort when I am filled with music."**

– George Eliot

"Our grandson in Toronto, has cerebral palsy. At age 6 he had a very tricky but successful operation in Montreal severing a few nerves in his spine so the spasticity was eliminated, but his balance is somewhat fragile. However, now 13, he can walk, swim, run; he is very good at computers, builds complicated fine-pieced Leggo at lightening speed, does math and plays soccer using his walker. His memory is better than average. However, he cannot, and will never be able to learn to read. So, because he loves stories, Judy and I are reading Gordon Korman books an hour to him via Facetime every Tuesday and Thursday mornings. He curls up with his dog, Charlie to listen in Toronto while Judy and I sit on our couch in Thunder Bay with my laptop and Judy's iPad and read. During Covid 19. life doesn't get any better." - Jim Foulds

"Rock and roll music, if you like it, if you feel it, you can't help but move to it. That's what happens to me. I can't help it." - Elvis Presley

There is a robin's nest on top of the light over our neighbour's garage. I social distanced myself from my fine feathered friends and watched the dad search for worms on the lawn and bring them to the mom in the nest. Watching the robins brought back a memory of one of my favourite songs, "Rockin' Robin". The musical memory in turn triggered wonderful recollections of three very special years during my time at Agincourt Collegiate. Those were the three years I was the school disc jockey. In 1956 I was in grade 10. The Friday night dances had simply collapsed. Those dances were an important part of our high school social life. I convinced some friends that with their assistance we could not only bring back the weekly dance, but make it a huge success. I would be the DJ if they would visit local businesses seeking complimentary gifts we could use for spot prizes.

A Toronto radio station, CKEY, would lend me boxes of vinyl 45's on a Thursday, to be returned on Monday. Local Agincourt businesses were generous. Our little team put up lots of posters. We had a good turnout the first Friday.

"Okay, check your shoes. Are they blue suede? Carl Perkins says Don't Step on them!" The second Friday the gymnasium was packed! I spent a lot of time sorting records each Thursday night; 3 fast to 1 slow at the beginning of the evening, gradually moving to the reverse ratio by the end of the evening. Had to throw in a couple of new

releases for CKEY as part of the deal. They wanted to know the reaction.

Being the DJ was central to my enjoyment of high school. Then, in grade 13, I met Pat. Couldn't dance with her if I was being the DJ. Three memorable years morphed into a lifetime of happiness.

So, as you can easily imagine, I always look forward to seeing robins.

“He rocks in the treetops all day long  
Hoppin’ and a-boppin’ and singing his song  
All the little birds on Jaybird Street  
Love to hear the robin go tweet-tweet-tweet”

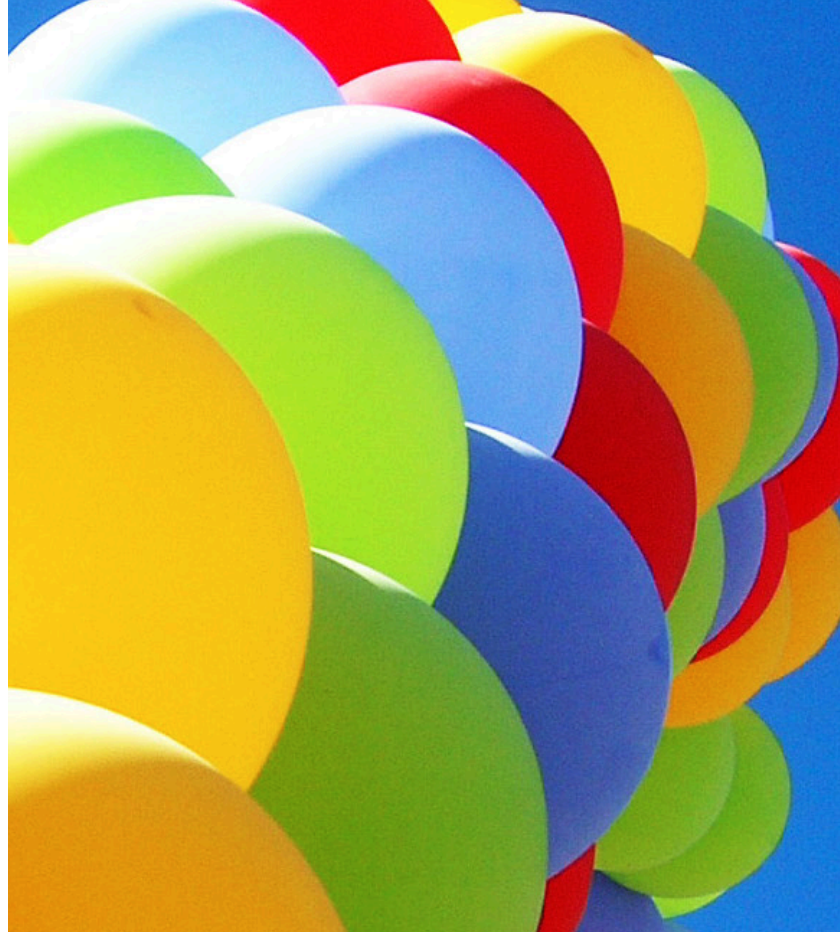
Musical History: In addition to Bobby Day's 1957 hit, “Rockin’ Robin”, this Texan born in 1930 had a number of other hits, including; “Little Bitty Pretty One”, “The Bluebird, the Buzzard and the Oriole”, “Ain't Gonna Cry No More” and “Gotta New Girl”. Bobby, whose real name was Robert James Byrd, played a number of instruments, wrote and produced music. He passed away in 1990.

The 1950's, musically, was a time of transition, from the big bands to rock and roll. Listed below are the top five hits for 1957. Number five is a big band song.

1. “All Shook Up” - Elvis Presley
2. “Love Letters in the Sand” - Pat Boone
3. “Little Darlin'” - The Diamonds
4. “Young Love” - Tab Hunter
5. “So Rare” - Jimmy Dorsey

“What I like about singing is that, for me, it's a substitute for the psychiatrist's couch.” - Patti Page

“I have had a different experience than most just as the virus started I fell and broke my hip and I just got out the hospital on May 20th.”  
- Noel Duignan



## Up next: Special Occasions



# Birthdays

May 7, 2020

**“All the world is birthday cake, so take a piece, but not too much.”**

- George Harrison

To me a birthday is a springboard to a new year in my life, the promise of something new and exciting. As of today, there is a glimmer of the old becoming new again. No, we shouldn't get too excited and stampede into the streets and shops, but our optimism may soon be rewarded.

Today's poem is an unusual one. Love poetry is obviously common enough in English literature, but there are few truly great poems about being in love (and being happy). 'A Birthday' is a fine example of a successful poem which celebrates being in love using colourful and majestic imagery, celebrating the birthday of the speaker's love: \*

\*[interestingliterature.com](http://interestingliterature.com)

## A Birthday

By Christina Rossetti

(English Poet – London, U.K. 1830-1894)

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;

My heart is like an apple-tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;

My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;

My heart is gladder than all these  
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;  
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;  
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,

In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;

Because the birthday of my life

Is come, my love is come to me.

There is no shortage of witty sayings about birthdays or ageing. The concluding one is profound.

“Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.”

- Mark Twain

“The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age.”

- Lucille Ball

“I think all this talk about age is foolish. Every time I'm one year older, everyone else is too.”

- Gloria Swanson

“Put candles in a cake, it's a birthday cake. Put candles in a pie, and somebody's drunk in the kitchen.”

- Jim Gaffigan, comedian

If it is your birthday today, “HAPPY BIRTHDAY!” Celebrate and perhaps raise a toast to a couple of famous people with whom you are sharing this special day.

Jacques Viger, French Canadian politician,  
1st mayor of Montreal (1833-36), born in  
Montreal, Quebec 1787 (d. 1858)

Johannes Brahms, German composer,  
conductor, born in Hamburg, Germany 1833  
(d. 1897)

Willie Fernie, Scottish golfer (British Open  
1883), born in St. Andrews, Fife 1855 (d.  
1924)

Yesterday's chapter about Ice Cream garnered at least one retail sale!

“Your story inspired me to order an ice cream making machine today!”

- Marilyn Churley

“You take away all the other luxuries in life, and if you can make someone smile and laugh, you have given the most special gift: happiness.”

– Brad Garrett, comedian

“To celebrate my birthday, I’m dressed in my pink “I’m just HOT” tee shirt and a flouncy skirt.

We are supporting local restaurants as much as possible. My husband Richard has ordered a lovely Italian three course meal from Baldini’s for tonight. (As a vegetarian, I am so happy many restaurants have great options these days for my kind.) We happen to have a nice bottle of red wine on hand to go with the meal. I also have received many, many greetings on line and video and I received the best presents ever-Kobo and Chapters gift cards. So, all in all, I am having a splendid day.”

- Marilyn Churley

## Mother’s Day

May 8, 2020

**“The Hand That Rocks The Cradle”**

By Glenn Campbell and Steve Wariner

He got here and wrinkled scared and cryin’  
Then she took him up and held him to her  
breast

And he sure was glad to get what mama  
offered

Then he went to sleep and put his fears to rest

It didn’t seem to matter what he needed

He could always count on mama to supply  
And regardless of the sleep she might be losin’

He always found a twinkle in her eye  
There ought to be a hall of fame for mamas  
Creation’s most unique and precious pearls

And heaven help us always to remember  
That the hand that rocks the cradle rules the  
world

She taught him all the attributes of greatness  
That she knew he couldn’t learn away from  
home

And by the time she wore the cover off her  
bible

Her hair was gray and her little man was gone

There ought to be a hall of fame for mamas  
Creation’s most unique and precious pearls

And heaven help us always to remember  
That the hand that rocks the cradle rules the  
world

Yes, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the  
world

This year’s Mother’s Day will be celebrated differently. The physical closeness may not be possible, but the emotional closeness will still be there.

“Celebrations of mothers and motherhood can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who held festivals in honour of the mother goddesses Rhea and Cybele, but the clearest modern precedent for Mother’s Day is the early Christian festival known as “Mothering Sunday.”

Once a major tradition in the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, this celebration fell on the fourth Sunday in Lent and was originally seen as a time when the faithful would return to their “mother church”—the main church near their home—for a special service.

Over time the Mothering Sunday tradition shifted into a more secular holiday, and children would present their mothers with flowers and other tokens of appreciation. This custom eventually faded in popularity before merging with the American Mother’s Day in

the 1930s and 1940s.” \*  
\*history.com

In 1908, Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her mother at St Andrew’s Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia. Her mother had campaigned for a holiday to celebrate motherhood. The idea certainly caught on quickly. By 1911 many U.S. states and Canadian provinces had adopted the concept. In 1914 Woodrow Wilson declared the 2nd Sunday in May to be known as “Mother’s Day”.

### Sunshine

A Mother’s Love

My Mother, my friend so dear,  
Of all the special joys in life,  
Throughout my life you’re always near.  
The big ones and the small,  
A tender smile to guide my way,  
A mother’s love and tenderness  
You’re the sunshine to light my day.  
the greatest of them all.

- Anon

“No mother is ever, completely, a child’s idea of what a mother should be, and I suppose it works the other way around as well. But despite everything, we didn’t do too badly by one another, we did as well as most.”

- Margaret Atwood



**Up next: Food**



# Ice Cream

May 6, 2020

**“Without ice cream, there would be darkness and chaos.”**

- Don Kardong

Don is an American marathon runner, an Olympian, ( He finished fourth in the marathon at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, just 3 seconds away from a Bronze medal). Don Kardong, age 72, knows the importance of ice cream.

National Ice Cream Day is not until Sunday, July 19 however, these are special times. Spontaneous celebrations are in order. What a great way to roll back the black clouds by having an ice cream party tonight!

“Ice cream is exquisite. What a pity it isn’t illegal.”

- Voltaire

Some snippets of ice cream history:

- An ice-cream-like food was first eaten in China in 618-97AD. King Tang of Shang, had 94 ice men who helped to make a dish of buffalo milk, flour and camphor.

- A kind of ice-cream was invented in China about 200 BC when a milk and rice mixture was frozen by packing it into snow.

- The King of England, Charles I, is supposed to have offered his chef £500 a year to keep his ice-cream recipe a secret from the rest of England.

- Ice Cream sundaes were invented when it became illegal to sell ice-cream sodas on a Sunday in the American town of Evanston during the late 19th century. To get round the problem some traders replaced the soda with syrup and called the dessert an “Ice Cream Sunday.” They replaced the final “y” with an

“e” to avoid upsetting religious leaders.\*

\*BBC News

Now, to put your ice cream celebrations over the top here are a few yummy suggestions:

- Roasted Strawberry Sundae - You’ve undoubtedly eaten a strawberry sundae, but what you’ve missed out on all these years is the intensely delicious flavor of roasted strawberries in your sundae.

- Vegan Banana Bread Ice Cream Sundae - This sundae is meant to be eaten for breakfast. File it away for days when you’re facing the boringest of meetings or other weekday drudgery. It’s a fact that breakfast sundaes make everything way better.

- High-Hat Ice Cream Sundae Cupcakes - Are you sitting down? Because this recipe is intense. First, you bake brownies in an ice cream cone, and then you add two scoops of ice cream, dip it all in chocolate, and top everything off with hot fudge, nuts, and a cherry. Best dessert ever? Pretty much.

- Raspberry Rose Sundaes - It’s hard to think of a better way to polish off a basket of raspberries than in a vibrant sundae featuring a hint of rosewater and plenty of hot fudge.

- Chocolate Stout Waffle Sundae - Chocolate stout takes fudge sauce to the next level, while waffles paired with ice cream take your whole life to the next level. (a malt that has been roasted or kilned until it acquires a chocolate colour)

- Salted Caramel Ice Cream Sundae With Cinnamon-Sugar Almonds - Anyone can throw together a caramel sundae with crushed peanuts, but it’s the truly thoughtful hostess who makes her own salted caramel and cinnamon-sugar almonds.

- Caramel Stout Brownie Sundae Floats - Can one recipe really cover the diverse culinary bases of chocolate stout brownies, Irish cream caramel, chocolate ice cream sundae, and a

stout float? Yep. Totally.

- Cranberry Caramel Sundae With Ginger and Cardamom - Strawberries and bananas appear in sundaes all the time, but almost any kind of fruit goes with ice cream! Try some cranberries for a little autumn flavor.

“Life is like an ice-cream cone, you have to lick it one day at a time.”

Charles M. Schulz

“Looking out my study window this morning I see six ships; 4 Salties (i.e. ocean going vessels) and 2 Lakers (ply only the Great Lakes & the St. Lawrence). We sometimes get “Coasters” which venture, reasonably enough, as far as the Eastern Seaboard, but none this morning presently at anchor waiting to move into the slips of the grain elevators for wheat, which is mostly Durham for making pasta in Italy and/or canola for making cooking oil in the Middle East, South America, the USA, and occasionally China. It’s cheaper to ship through the Great Lakes and through the Panama Canal from the eastern half of the Prairies than by rail over the mountains through the Crow’s Nest Pass to the west coast and Vancouver. Go Figure.

Anyway, in this Time of the Pandemic in 2020, Thunder Bay is enjoying the best start to its shipping season ever! I don’t want to jinx it. But take that Covid 19!”

- Jim Foulds

## Something Missing

May 20, 2020

The highly educated, professionally trained health experts working for Health Canada have achieved excellent results in their quest to provide our nation with a Food Guide,

a pathway to good health. Having plenty of vegetables and fruits, protein rich food and whole grain foodstuff is indeed a recipe for healthy living. I truly appreciate the thoughtful, thorough approach; setting before us a table laden with suggestions about going easy on the salt, consuming fewer processed foods, doing more cooking at home and not dining alone. All laudable.

But, hold the thunderous applause.

One crucial element has been left off the dining table. An elixir of life. A stimulant to intelligent thought. An antidote to sadness. A propellant to vitality. Indeed, the ingredient which thrusts us to a celestial realm. CHOCOLATE.

Surely the good people at Health Canada know that as far back as 450 BC the Aztecs recognized the value of chocolate. The cacao seeds were a gift from Quetzalcoatl, the god of wisdom. Societal advances over the centuries have coincided with more refined uses of chocolate. Bake a chocolate cake, drizzle chocolate over a cake; make chocolate ice cream, melt chocolate to pour over ice cream; mix in a cocktail, mix with bread or cookies when baking, or dip fresh fruit in melted chocolate.

So, perhaps an on-line petition campaign is how to remedy this serious flaw in our otherwise excellent Food Guide. A nation which doesn’t promote the consumption of chocolate is depriving its citizens of a sweeter life.

I seek your support to have chocolate included in Canada’s Food Guide.

The informed voices of others:

“More than any other food, chocolate delights

# A Canadian Elixir

June 4, 2020

and enchants ... chocolate tantalizes and it comforts. Chocolate has soothed fretful children and welcomed tired travelers; mountain climbers have saved their last piece of chocolate to celebrate reaching new heights; suitors have given chocolate to show the depth of their devotion. Chocolate has been used as a stimulant, an aphrodisiac, and [even] a form of currency.”

- NEVA BEACH, The Ghirardelli Chocolate Cookbook

“The tantalizing aroma of chocolate involves more than three hundred chemical compounds and the flavor can have more than five hundred components.”

- Lori Longbotham, Luscious Chocolate Desserts

“Life is like chocolate: you should enjoy it piece for piece and let it slowly melt on your tongue.”

- Nina Sandmann

“A little bit of sweetness can drown out a whole lot of bitterness.”

- Francesco Petrarca

“Chocolate is food from the gods; it’s energy, vitality, oneness.”

- Murray Langham, Chocolate Therapy

Positivity in a time of negativity

“The LCBO was named an essential service and has remained open”! - Patrick Reid

“All Parliamentarians can attest to the fast pace of life with little time typically left for those we cherish the most when in politics. A positive experience over the last few months has been the slower pace of life especially at home spending time with our family.”

- Michael Harris

The aroma of the freshly cooked chicken coming out of the oven was tantalizing. Tasting it was even better. Sheer ambrosia! I experienced a subtle sweetness with every bite. I glanced over at our host who was seated at the end of the table. Our Cuban friend, Leida, whose house in Varadero we were visiting, was smiling. “Do you notice anything different about the taste of the chicken?” she asked.

I responded, “The chicken is amazing. Yes, there is something different, but I don’t know what.”

Leida revealed her cooking secret. “I basted the chicken with some of that Canadian maple syrup you brought me earlier.”

## The Winds of Maple

Anonymous

When the wind’s in the west,

The sap runs the best.

When the wind’s in the north,

The sap runs forth.

When the wind’s in the south,

The sap runs drouth.

When the wind’s in the east,

Sap runs least

The Many Uses of Maple Syrup on pancakes, on waffles, in porridge, on ice cream, as a liqueur, in a recipe for salad dressing, warm over apple crisp, warm over apple pie.

“A waffle is like a pancake with a syrup trap”

- Mitch Hedberg, American comedian

Unique Benefits of Pure Maple Syrup

- reference [www.sugarbushhill.com](http://www.sugarbushhill.com)



- Delivers more overall nutritional value than many common sweeteners and has one of the lowest calorie levels
- Provides enhanced anti-oxidant levels compared to other common and popular foods, such as apples and broccoli
- Contains three essential minerals; potassium, calcium and magnesium and is a nutritional Alternative to other sugars and sugar substitutes
- Excellent source of manganese, an essential cofactor in several enzymes important in energy production and antioxidant defenses and a good source of zinc
- Contains phenolic compounds that have antioxidant and anti-carcinogenic properties

“If you subscribe to the approach ‘if it tastes good then it must be good for me’, maple syrup has to be right up there as a great food item!” - David Warner

“My wife Nancy had a minor surgery on her leg on May 14. We have dealt with one surgeon, one assistant to the surgeon, and five nurses during the last eight days. Every one of them has been kind, courteous, and committed to her, in spite of the Covad19 threat they face every day. We thank all front-line workers.”  
- Alan Eagleson

## Don't Let the Cookie Crumble

June 12, 2020

**“Keep Calm & Eat Cookies”**

- the Cookie Monster

“Would you like a cookie with your coffee?”  
Tea, coffee, milk all seem to be more enjoyable accompanied by a delicious cookie. And, oh there are so many kinds of cookies; ranging from chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin

to gingersnaps, snickerdoodles and of course, peanut butter. To whom should we sing our praises for this delectable culinary creation? It seems that 14 centuries ago in Persia, shortly after sugar became relatively common in the region, the cookie was created. A short while later a cookie invasion of Europe was launched with the Muslim conquest of Spain. By the 14th century the cookie was king, from the streets to the palaces.

Today is National Peanut Butter Cookie Day!

As you savour a bite or a nibble of a freshly baked peanut butter cookie, you are likely wondering who created this yummy cookie. In the early 1900's, in Alabama, where they grow peanuts, George Washington Carver of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute published a peanut cookbook to promote the crop of peanuts.

“A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.”  
- Barbara Johnson

Ode to Cookies by Alma Nkemla

Oh, Cookies

You are the best ever

You have manage to beat icecream

And now you're in my life

Even though I've tasted you once

I knew you were the one for me

Oh cookies

You've changed my life

From boring to loving you

I love you cookies

And I know we'll forever be together

Bar-Cookies by Chris Schop

Grandma's in the kitchen today

With a bunch of dough and butter.

I see the dough, so there I stay,

Watching her cut the dough with a cutter.

I knew what she was making now,  
A batch of cookies, for the house.  
I instantly thought about the ‘wows’  
Which would come from all over the house.

But as I looked at the cookies,  
They seemed to be square, and very thick.  
“I know!”, I thought with a big smile,  
“Grandma’s making some bar-cookies!”  
So with a big grin, I sat down,  
And indulged with joy, not a frown.

I like to think of the sharing of home-baked cookies as a sign of friendship. Perhaps at summit meetings which are designed to find solutions to seemingly intractable international disputes, the meetings should start by sharing a variety of home-baked cookies. The opening discussions then would likely centre around cookie comparisons, baking recipes leading to recipes for peace.

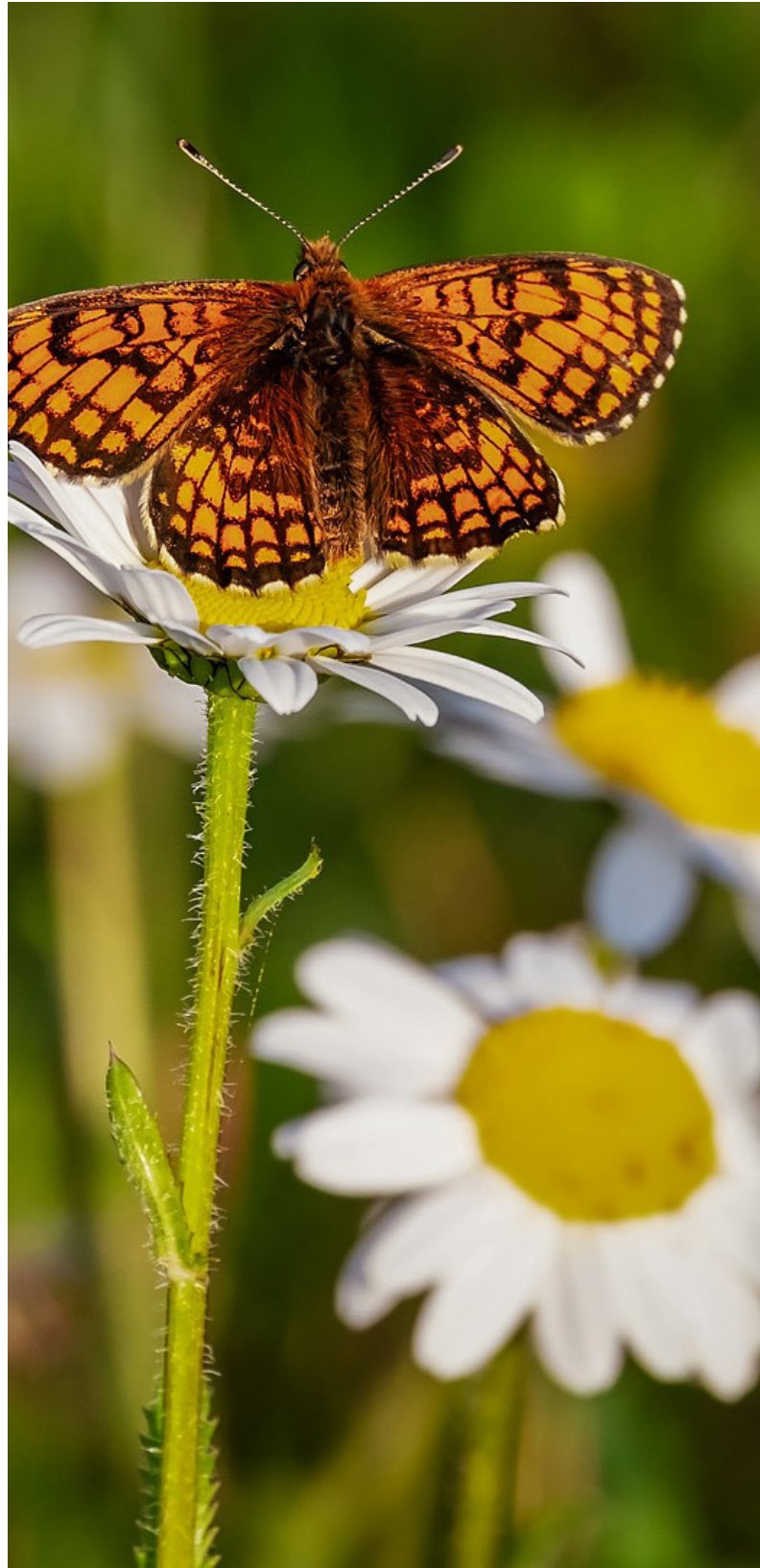
“In the cookie of life, friends are the chocolate chips.”

- Salman Rushdie

John Parker provided a list of the positive aspects of the virus situation:

1. Regular delivery of Roll Away the Black Clouds.
2. Daily 7:30 pm episodes of banging pots and pans with my neighbours.
3. Everyone seems to be making a point of being pleasant with one another all the time everywhere and under all circumstances.
4. I am reading more books.
5. Discovery of Meet the Press and Face the Nation on Sunday mornings
6. Daily episodes of the What-Will-Trump-Do-To-Disgrace-Himself-Today show.
7. But, most seriously, 3 above. (And 1 above, of course.)

## Up next: Calm



# Confinement Widened My World

May 21, 2020

**“So will you please say hello  
To the folks that I know  
Tell them I won’t be long  
They’ll be happy to know  
That as you saw me go  
I was singing this song”**

**\* a verse from “We’ll Meet Again” by Vera  
Lynn**

Mid-March and new marching orders for everyone, coast to coast to coast. Apprehensive curiosity on my part. What would “social distancing” look like? Restrictions were added and older folks, a category to which I apparently belong, were advised to stay in as much as possible. This got translated in our family to mean that a daughter and son-in-law would do our weekly grocery shopping. Not only did I not have to visit the local supermarket, but there was a guaranteed weekly visit by our grandchildren. At our end, a take-away family dinner was prepared, one which might include something barbequed, for the family delivering our groceries.

While the regular visits of those we love was treasured my world was slowly shrinking. A stabilizer was needed. Enter the advice “stay calm”. Over the succeeding weeks, that calmness helped peel back the cover on my suburban world.

The daily walks have been an amazing window into my surrounding neighbourhoods. My wife, Pat, and I, along with our neighbour Marilyn are a cheerful trio meandering our way along streets and crescents, through parks, along nature trails and bike paths. Once we had navigated each street within a short

circumference of our house, we ventured further by driving a short distance, parking the car, then exploring. Great opportunity to garner gardening ideas, appreciate the various house renovations or re-builds that have occurred. This painless source of exercise is punctuated with brief stops to chat with someone who is mowing the lawn or planting flowers.

Suburban living promotes the use of a car. These last couple of months our feet have been our mode of transportation. Ambling through the various neighbourhoods has given me a better appreciation of our “suburban world”. Out of a difficult and stressful situation has come an appreciated opportunity for personal growth.

## The Grass

By Emily Dickinson

The grass so little has to do, —  
A sphere of simple green,  
With only butterflies to brood,  
And bees to entertain,  
And stir all day to pretty tunes  
The breezes fetch along,  
And hold the sunshine in its lap  
And bow to everything;  
And thread the dews all night, like pearls,  
And make itself so fine, —  
A duchess were too common  
For such a noticing.  
And even when it dies, to pass  
In odors so divine,  
As lowly spices gone to sleep,  
Or amulets of pine.  
And then to dwell in sovereign barns,  
And dream the days away, —  
The grass so little has to do,  
I wish I were the hay!

“This evening, I experienced my first Zoom

Virtual reunion with some of my former staffers from my MPP days (1996 to 2004). It's really difficult to describe the sheer joy of sharing reminiscences from memorable days past. Notwithstanding the challenges that Covid has wrought upon us all, I truly believe that our Canadian Culture has equipped us with a far better way forward in forging our future because, no matter what, notwithstanding our political divide, in times of crisis, we need, indeed **MUST** stand together. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts and for everything you're doing to help us keep it together." - Marilyn Mushinski

## **Do You Have a Walden Pond?**

June 9, 2020

Henry David Thoreau visited Ralph Waldo Emerson's Walden Pond where he found solitude, and an opportunity to reflect. He wrote, "There can be no black melancholy to him who lives during Nature and has his senses still."

Do you have a "Walden Pond?" If not an actual place perhaps something which creates calmness, allows reflective moments.

### **The Peace of Wild Things**

by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives  
may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great  
heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still  
water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting for their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

### **Nature**

by Henry David Thoreau

O Nature! I do not aspire  
To be the highest in thy choir, -  
To be a meteor in thy sky,  
Or comet that may range on high;  
Only a zephyr that may blow  
Among the reeds by the river low;  
Give me thy most privy place  
Where to run my airy race.  
In some withdrawn, unpublic mead  
Let me sigh upon a reed,  
Or in the woods, with leafy din,  
Whisper the still evening in:  
Some still work give me to do, -  
Only - be it near to you!

For I'd rather be thy child  
And pupil, in the forest wild,  
Than be the king of men elsewhere,  
And most sovereign slave of care;  
To have one moment of thy dawn,  
Than share the city's year forlorn.

"I tend to resort to reading and reciting some of my favourite poems in an attempt to receive some solace from the heartbreaking images currently flooding the very fabric of our way of life."

- Marilyn Mushinski

"I too find that reading poetry, especially William Wordsworth or other of the nature poets creates a cherished reflective time. Cycling through a wooded area, or alongside a stream allows that all important connection to nature. I treasure the times when I can

canoe at daybreak. Only the dip of the paddle shatters the surface of the lake. A precious contemplative time is created.”

- David Warner

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was an American essayist, poet, and philosopher. A leading transcendentalist, he is best known for his book *Walden*, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, and his essay “Civil Disobedience”, an argument for disobedience to an unjust state.

“Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth.”

- Henry David Thoreau

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was an American essayist, lecturer, philosopher, and poet who led the transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century.

“In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says, -- he is my creature, and maugre all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“We have a camp (In southern Ontario, it would be called a cottage.) on a small inland lake called McCarroll (or ‘McCarrell’—It’s spelt both ways.) Lake, one end of a chain of three adjoining water bodies in the boreal forest, about one-half hour’s drive east of Sault Ste. Marie. We call it “Buhkwujenene” Camp, which is Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) and translates in English as “Wild Man” (or “Man of the Wilderness”) Camp.

Buhkwujenene was a Chief of the local Garden River First Nation in the late 19th century. His late grandnephew, Garden River Elder and hereditary Chief Dan Pine Sr., did me

the honour of bestowing his great uncle’s Anishinaabemowin name on me many years ago.

Anne and I will be spending our 33rd consecutive summer at the camp this year. We open up the camp on May 24th weekend each year, when I take my first dips in the lake, no matter how cold the water might be. We spend June weekends at camp and then stay all of July and August there, only going into town one day each week to do laundry, cut the lawn and tend the gardens at home and do grocery shopping. We also spend weekends in September at camp, before closing it up for the winter on Thanksgiving weekend.

Our children and grandchildren have all grown up, spending much of their summers at camp. The lake is busy on summer weekends, but is usually quiet and peaceful during weekdays. Anne and I start our daily camp routine by having a cool, leisurely, early morning swim, rather than a shower. Then, I go for a solo paddle in my canoe around our bay and out onto the main part of McCarroll Lake. If it is windy, that part can sometimes be quite a workout! On calmer days, I enjoy communing with nature, watching Blue Heron, ducks, loons or sometimes a hawk, an osprey or even an eagle. One morning, I watched as an osprey circled far overhead and then suddenly drive-bombed into the surface of the lake...to emerge, struggling to gain altitude with an enormous lake trout in its talons. One other day, a yearling bear crossed my bow, swimming across the lake. (He would probably have been the previous year’s cub of a very large sow bear, who lives in the area and whom we sight with her cubs, occasionally, most summers—hopefully not near our camp--. She would have sent him on his way to fend for himself, so she could care for her new cub[s].) Those were, indeed, rare

sightings and seeing them from my canoe on quiet mornings were great ways to start the days' activities.

We also enjoy rides around all three lakes in our 17 foot, 90 horsepower motor boat. The kids enjoy it more than the canoe. They are excited by the higher speed and the noise of the motor. But I prefer paddling the canoe and watching nature on peaceful mornings.

Then, a few evenings each summer, when I can persuade Anne, we end our days with hot saunas and jumps into the cool, refreshing lake water under black, starlit skies before turning in for our nights' rest."

- Bud Wildman

## Rainbows

June 10, 2020

"And when it rains on your parade, look up rather than down. Without the rain, there would be no rainbow." – Gilbert K. Chesterton

As a child, I was always enthralled by rainbows. If one was spotted while we in the car I would try to keep this magnificent, multicoloured arch in sight for as long as possible. There was something magical about its sudden appearance and later its evaporation.

According to the scientist a rainbow is a meteorological phenomenon that is caused by reflection, refraction and dispersion of light in water droplets resulting in a spectrum of light appearing in the sky.

A rainbow is beyond that. Just ask Dorothy, Tin Man, Scarecrow or Cowardly Lion.

"Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high  
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby,  
Oh, somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue  
Clouds high over the rainbow, makes all your

dreams come true"

\* from Wizard of Oz

Or ask Kermit the Frog

"What's so amazing

That keeps us stargazing

And what do we think we might see

Someday we'll find it

The rainbow connection

The lovers, the dreamers, and me"

\* Rainbow Connection", Muppet movie

"In life, you either choose to sing a rainbow, or you don't. Keep singing."

– Kathleen Long

The mystique of rainbows has been reflected in song and poem for centuries. A symbol of hope, a brighter life after the storm. There is of course the elusive pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. But, who can catch a leprechaun.

"Rainbows introduce us to reflections of different beautiful possibilities so we never forget that pain and grief are not the final options in life."

– Aberjhani

### **The Rainbow Never Tells Me**

By Emily Dickinson

The rainbow never tells me

That gust and storm are by,

Yet is she more convincing

Than Philosophy.

My flowers turn from Forums—

Yet eloquent declare

What Cato couldn't prove me

Except the birds were here!

"Life throws challenges and every challenge comes with rainbows and lights to conquer it."

– Amit Ray

While the challenge of COVID-19 is not over, we have experienced rainbows along the way. There continue to be so many selfless people who are helping others; families and friends supporting one another, health care workers tirelessly doing everything possible to save lives and politicians trying their best to do the right thing. Our future will not be as elusive as the leprechaun's pot of gold. We will come through this and when we do, part of our reward will be the opportunity to address the societal flaws which this pandemic has revealed.

“A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dreamt of.”  
- Nelson Mandela

“Low millage on car to refills at drug store, low credit card sums our local son buys all groceries/deliveries and from time to time delivers a fully cooked Keg style meal. I have made many personal telephone calls and one Zoom reunion. I do not need to go to funerals of which there have been some in the 77 days of isolation. Up to date on my reading book, and some office clean up. My cooking is only slightly improved. Granddog visit not hindered by COVID and does not change as he is just as crazy and excited to barge into the house on grocery delivery to get the treats.”  
- George Taylor



## Sunrise

June 11, 2020

“We can only appreciate the miracle of a sunrise if we have waited in the darkness.”  
– Sapna Reddy

Ms. Sapna Reddy [[www.sapnareddy.com](http://www.sapnareddy.com)] is an American photographer and physician who tries to capture the symbiosis between humans and nature. Her stunningly beautiful photographs of nature, including the splendour of sunrises are inspirational.

Being able to sit quietly and witness the gradual ascension of the sun is an exhilarating experience for me. A wonderful way to start the day.

“Every sunrise hold more promise, and every sunset hold more peace.”  
– Anonymous

The daily rising of the sun has been paid tribute in song and verse for centuries.

### Dawn

by John Charles McNeill (1874-1907)

The hills again reach skyward with a smile.  
Again, with waking life along its way,  
The landscape marches westward mile on mile  
And time throbs white into another day.  
Though eager life must wait on livelihood,  
And all our hopes be tethered to the mart,  
Lacking the eagle's wild, high freedom, would  
That ours might be this day the eagle's heart!



*“As when the golden sun salutes the morn,  
And, having gilt the ocean with his beams,  
Gallops the zodiac in his glistering coach,  
and overlooks the highest-peering hills.”*

- William Shakespeare from Titus Andronicus

Some songs are poetic, emotional and  
inspiring.

### **Sunshine on My Shoulders**

sung by John Denver

Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy  
Sunshine in my eyes can make me cry  
Sunshine on the water looks so lovely  
Sunshine almost always makes me high

### **(Reach Up For the) Sunrise**

sung by Duran Duran

Now the time has come  
The music's between us  
Though the night seems young  
Is at an end

Only change will bring  
You out of the darkness

In this moment everything is born again

Reach up for the sunrise  
Put your hands into the big sky  
You can touch the sunrise  
Feel the new day enter your life

*“My sun sets to rise again.”*

– Robert Browning

Greeting each day with optimism, energy and a sense of purpose is how we are navigating our way through this pandemic. Along the way, we are creating lots of stories for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Stories of courage, sacrifice and love.

*“The darkness is at its deepest. Just before  
the sunrise.”*

– Voltaire



**Up next: The Poet**





# A Fine Poet Who Never Published

May 29, 2020

Dorothy Mae Ann Wordsworth (1771 – 1855) was the sister of William Wordsworth. While her forte was keeping diaries and penning reflections, she also wrote poetry. She was age six when her mother died. Dorothy, an avid naturalist, enjoyed daily nature walks with her brother William. Images from the notes she took on these walks often recur in her brother's poems. The siblings lived together in Dorset and Alfoxden before William married Dorothy's best friend, Mary Hutchinson, in 1802. Thereafter Dorothy Wordsworth made her home with the couple.

Most of Dorothy's writing explores the natural world. She published nothing during her lifetime, and spent the last twenty-five years struggling against physical and mental illness. E. de Sélincourt, who published her journals in 1933, has called her "probably... the most distinguished of English writers who never wrote a line for the public."

## Floating Island

by Dorothy Wordsworth

Harmonious Powers with Nature work  
On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea;  
Sunshine and cloud, whirlwind and breeze,  
All in one duteous task agree.

Once did I see a slip of earth  
(By throbbing waves long undermined)  
Loosed from its hold; how, no one knew,  
But all might see it float, obedient to the wind;

Might see it, from the mossy shore  
Dissevered, float upon the Lake,  
Float with its crest of trees adorned  
On which the warbling birds their pastime

take.

Food, shelter, safety, there they find;  
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;  
There insects live their lives, and die;  
A peopled world it is; in size a tiny room.

And thus through many seasons' space  
This little Island may survive;  
But Nature, though we mark her not,  
Will take away, may cease to give.

Perchance when you are wandering forth  
Upon some vacant sunny day,  
Without an object, hope, or fear,  
Thither your eyes may return--the Isle is  
passed away;

Buried beneath the glittering Lake,  
Its place no longer to be found;  
Yet the lost fragments shall remain  
To fertilize some other ground.

## The Cottager to Her Infant

by Dorothy Wordsworth

The days are cold, the nights are long,  
The North wind sings a doleful song;  
Then hush again upon my breast;  
All merry things are now at rest,  
Save thee, my pretty love!  
The kitten sleeps upon the hearth,  
The crickets long have ceased their mirth;  
There's nothing stirring in the house  
Save one wee, hungry, nibbling mouse,  
Then why so busy thou?  
Nay! start not at the sparkling light;  
'Tis but the moon that shines so bright  
On the window-pane  
Bedropped with rain:  
Then, little darling! sleep again,  
And wake when it is day.

# The Poet Musician

June 2, 2020

Orpheus was a poet, musician and prophet. Debating whether he was real or a legend is not as important as realizing that there were poets who were musicians in ancient Greece. The lyre would accompany a musical presentation of poetry. From Orpheus to Kendrick Lamar, with lots of stops along the way, there has always been a poetic approach to music.

In 2016 Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. His work over 50 years has blended the musicality of language and rhythm.

## Not Dark Yet (Time Out of Mind, 1997)

by Bob Dylan

I was born here and I'll die here against my will

I know it looks like I'm movin' but I'm standin' still

Every nerve in my body is so naked and numb  
I can't even remember what it was I came here  
to get away from

John Lennon wrote poems that were quite personal, either related to his life or his thoughts, ideas and emotions. Often putting a poem to music created a memorable song.

## Imagine

by John Lennon

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion, too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace

Then there's Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow

Taxi", a musically poetic ecological statement.

## Big Yellow Taxi

by Joni Mitchell

They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
With a pink hotel, a boutique  
And a swinging hot spot  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Til it's gone  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot

Kendrick Lamar, in 2017, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music with his album DAMN. The album looks at the complexity of Afro-American life, every song a story. The first cut on the album is "Blood."

So I was takin' a walk the other day  
And I seen a woman—a blind woman  
Pacin' up and down the sidewalk  
She seemed to be a bit frustrated  
As if she had dropped somethin' and  
Havin' a hard time findin' it  
So after watchin' her struggle for a while  
I decide to go over and lend a helping hand,  
you know?  
"Hello ma'am, can I be of any assistance?  
It seems to me that you have lost something  
I would like to help you find it."  
She replied: "Oh yes, you have lost something  
You've lost... your life."

There are other poet musicians you may wish to re-visit or listen to for the first time; Paul McCartney, Jim Morrison, Leonard Cohen, Tupac Shakur, Patti Smith, Lou Reed, Gil Scott-Heron, and Kate Bush.

Then there are the poet orators. But that is for another day.

# The Poetic Orator

June 3, 2020

**“Great is our admiration of the orator who speaks with fluency and discretion.”  
- Marcus Tullius Cicero**

The art of public speaking was praised and prized in ancient Greece and Rome. Demosthenes of Greece and Cicero of Rome distinguished themselves with their command of the language, their ability to stir their listeners’ emotions. While I cannot state categorically, I can easily imagine that they had refined the rhythm and cadence to create a musicality pleasing to the ear, resonating with the heart and exciting the mind. A poetic orator.

Over the centuries numerous orators have exhorted the public to an action of one kind or another.

There is a long list of powerful and important orators whose oratorical prowess lies in their musically poetic use of language.

Winston Churchill May 30, 1940 House of Commons - “You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory despite all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory, there is no survival.”

John F. Kennedy January 20, 1961 Inauguration - “The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavour will light our country and all who serve it — and the glow from that fire can truly light the world. And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America

will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”

Pierre Trudeau 1969 Washington, meeting with President Nixon - “Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.”

John Diefenbaker March 9, 1972 Empire Club Toronto. “Parliament only lives so long as men and women stand for what they believe in. Parliament isn’t business. Parliament has a soul. It represents the freedom of Canadians as a whole.”

Tommy Douglas 1944 excerpt from The Story of Mouseland. “He said to the other mice, ‘Look fellows why do we keep electing a government made up of cats, why don’t we elect a government made up of mice?’ Oh, they said, he’s a Bolshevik. So, they put him in jail. But I want to remind you that you can lock up a mouse or a man but you can’t lock up an idea.”

Other orators of note: Martin Luther King Jr., Billy Graham, Susan Aglukark, Jann Arden, Roberta Bondar, Stephen Lewis, Bob Rae.

Yesterday’s chapter elicited a wonderful quote from Judy Marsales.

“One potentially very negative element of the Covid-19 is the impact on mental health. Poetry allows the mind to express itself and the music gives it soul.”



# A Symbol of Hope in Uncertain Times

By Annamarie Castrilli

In early February of this year, my husband and I set off to fulfil one of our long-held dreams: to trek through the Amazonian jungle of Ecuador and then continue through the Andes to reach Macchu Picchu in Peru. In the past, there had always some reason not to go but this time we were determined.

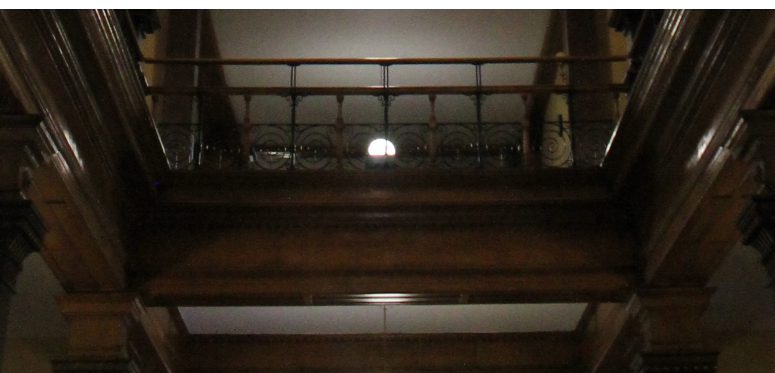
The experience was more adventurous and fulfilling than we had imagined. Yet little did we know that this would not matter very much considering what was to come.

Since we were to be away for some time, our youngest daughter moved into our house to take care of things for us. She was expecting her first child and we were all extremely excited. We had considered cancelling our trip but then were persuaded by the argument that we would be back in plenty of time for the birth of the child.

We did not know when we left that we would be facing the wrath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At first everything in South America seemed normal. There was no talk of COVID-19 anywhere we went, and life proceeded normally. In the cities of Peru and Ecuador there was no inkling of any problem nor in any of the villages and towns en route to Macchu Picchu. People were plentiful in the streets, in shops and restaurants. There was not even the slightest hint of the virus and certainly no one wore masks. The treks were exciting, and no one feared any outside dangers.

**Up next: Stories**



Then towards the end of our trip, vague rumours began to surface but still danger seemed so distant.

Exhilarated from the adventure and having reached our goal, we arrived in Toronto on March 6 and soon realized that ours was one of the last planes to leave Lima for Canada. Once home, we learned the distressing news of the illness that was gripping the world. We immediately isolated for 14 days, worried all the time about the potential dangers of COVID-19 to our daughter and our grandchild to be. At the end of the isolation period, we breathed a sigh of relief since neither of us had any symptoms and we could begin to return to some semblance of a normal life.

Over the next month, the world's panic grew as more and more countries recorded more and more cases of illness and death. No one had an answer, let alone a cure. We washed our hands constantly, bought masks and practised social distancing, not knowing if any of these measures would really help. In addition, we were terrified for my 96-year-old mother, afflicted with Lewy Body dementia and a resident in a long-term care home. Would she be next to die? And with no one by her side? And what would happen to our other daughter and her family in California, one of the hardest hit areas of the United States?

During all this, a miracle happened. Our daughter gave birth to a healthy baby boy. The hospital experience had been difficult. There could not, for instance, be the normal support from family members. Only one individual could accompany the person admitted. There was protocol to follow, masks and garments to wear, limits on who could go where. Once in the hospital, it was forbidden

to go out and come back in. I felt both privileged and frightened that my daughter had chosen me to attend to her.

There had been complications with the labour and both mother and child suffered considerable distress. This continued for two days as they set up a cot for me in the room. Worry was constant and sleep impossible. At 2:00 a.m. on April 4, our daughter was wheeled into the operating room. The doctors were worried about the well-being of the child as well as hers. They had to proceed with an immediate caesarean section.

Shortly after, he was born: a perfect, lovely little boy, wailing at the top of his lungs signalling to the world that life will not be denied. And our daughter, though extremely weak, was fine as well. That night our family was granted two miracles. And we continue to be grateful for both.

Since then, because our daughter had been staying with us, she returned to our home and we all went into another 14 days of isolation. But this was not for us a reason to be unhappy. We had experienced something magical: the birth of a new life who had to fight to be born, who asserted his existence forcefully through his cries, and the love of a young mother prepared to do anything to ensure his survival. The last three months have been a joyous and thoughtful period for our family. During difficult times, and with all the suffering and deaths that have occurred the world over, a little baby and his mother have taught us something important: that hope exists even in the most uncertain times. And their smiles confirm that every day.

# Confessions of a Suburbanite

April 15, 2020

By David Warner

It is said that confession is good for the soul. While I am not sure about that, better safe than sorry. So, I will unburden myself with a secret I have harboured for more than 50 years. Strangely this public revelation is an unintended consequence of the current viral scourge.

In 1968 Pat and I moved to a newly constructed neighbourhood in Scarborough, a development grandly named “The Fields of Agincourt.”

Once the original euphoria of our first house, and to date our only house, had worn thin I had an enveloping feeling that I was in some sort of limbo. This wasn't central Toronto with its electrifying energy, its cultural arms reaching out to touch you; art galleries, jazz clubs, sporting venues, pubs and so much more. Nor was this nature's wellspring with lush foliage, waterfalls, birds and creatures of the wild. No, I was in the middle of curlycue streets which sported identical houses. My reaction was to drive everywhere; to the grocery store, the movie theatre, sporting events, even to our local church.

More than five decades later COVID-19 strikes ferociously. We must stay indoors, except for some outdoor exercise, such as walking. Good citizens that we are, Pat and I follow the instructions. We go out almost every day for a one hour walk. To counter a potential walking boredom we choose different routes each day, aimlessly wandering, trusting we won't get lost.

What results is an epiphany! There are grand houses where modest nondescript ones once were, older renovated homes featuring luxurious gardens and patios and delightful little parks I never knew existed. I have traversed streets, avenues, boulevards and cul-de-sacs hither too unknown to me. *Mia culpa!* I have seriously wronged suburban Scarborough all these years. A new day which has dawned may never had happened if the pandemic had not struck. Whether or not my soul is saved remains an open question.

“Never give up, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.”

- Harriet Beecher Stowe

## The Weekend

April 21, 2020

The “week-end” has an interesting, detailed history. Part of the story is found in Staffordshire, England, where according to an English magazine called *Notes and Queries*, 1879, “if a person leaves home at the end of his week’s work on the Saturday afternoon to spend the evening of Saturday and the following Sunday with friends at a distance, he is said to be spending his week-end at So-and-so.”

Another part of the story is that “in 1908, a New England mill became the first American factory to institute the five-day week. It did so to accommodate Jewish workers, whose observance of a Saturday sabbath forced them to make up their work on Sundays, offending some in the Christian majority. The mill granted these Jewish workers a two-day weekend, and other factories followed this example.”\* \*The Atlantic-Aug. 21, 2014. Around the same time Henry Ford gave his workers a two day weekend. He realized that his workers were some of his best customers.

The weekend was a good time to sell cars. These days trying to identify the day of the week is a bit of a challenge. Ever made a “smoothie”? The yoghurt, blueberries, bananas, strawberries are all sitting on the counter. I can easily identify each of them. Put them in the blender, push a button and you can't identify any of them. So, about this past weekend.

The temperature skyrocketed to 5 degrees one day, so out came the bike. Time to explore some of those curlycue streets. A couple of those streets sported new, elegant townhouses. Back home another opportunity to hone our pizza making skills. A large deluxe one this time with 5 toppings. Absolutely delicious. Under normal conditions we have pizza every Friday evening at our local restaurant. What am I going to tell Helen the next time we visit? My grandson produced two films for his 2nd year university Film Production course, posted them on YouTube. We watched them, then joined the filmmaker, parents, and his other grandparents via “zoom” to chat about the films. A long walk each day, without getting lost. A grocery delivery by my other daughter, son-in-law and grandkids, with chatter from 3 metres.

Great extended weekend. Not sure which days they were, but they were fun!

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." - Nelson Mandela

## **A Childhood Lesson**

April 22, 2020

**The Tackle Box**  
By David Warner

My dad loved to fish. So did I, and my

younger brother Paul. My mom loved to eat fish.

I enjoyed looking in dad's tackle box. It was the kind where, when you opened the lid there were a couple of shelves which swivelled up. In the little compartments there were a variety of lures, hooks, spools of nylon line and of course a sharp knife to gut the fish. Whenever we were in a fishing tackle store dad would check out the latest lures, always looking for the one guaranteed to land a large pickerel. According to my dad the best place to fish for pickerel was fast flowing water, like you would find at a dam. And, the best time to catch pickerel was early in the season, even better to be there when the season started!

The opening of the pickerel season was special, primarily because it opened at midnight. Pretty exciting for an eleven year old boy to be fishing at midnight. The trip to Bobcaygeon was about a two hour drive. We needed to be there in time to find a spot out on the dam and get our gear ready for the midnight start. Paul and I were not only eager, but nervous. We had been cautioned that likely there would be very few kids. Midnight fishing was for adults so we needed be very grown up. As well, fishermen were very serious about the sport of catching fish. That meant be quiet. No one talks when fishing.

My dad found what he said would be the perfect spot to land a pickerel, right in the middle of the dam. The walkway across the dam was narrow and long, with no railings. I was surprised at how far across it was from one side to the other, and how fast the spring water was flowing. I was not about to admit to my dad that I was a bit scared as I peered at the furiously tumbling water. As midnight

approached fishermen started to quietly take their places along the dam and the banks of the river, and we tried to control our excitement.

Dad opened his wonderful tackle box and Paul and I each selected a special lure, the one we each knew would entice a fish. While I could never remember all the fancy names, I would select one of the colourful ones which were in two parts. I figured that the wiggling motion of a two part little wooden fish would be irresistible. Dad helped us get our lures and lines ready, then the three of us were ready to venture out, single file, along the top of the dam. Once we had the spot which would be ours, we waited for a signal to start. Someone yelled “midnight” and lures were swiftly hurled toward the rushing water. Although it was dark I could sense when some men were reeling in a catch. And, I kept casting. Cast after cast, no luck.

We were there a long time. But, no fish. Not for me, nor my brother, nor my dad. Funny enough, I didn't really care about not landing a fish. I was excited to be, along with Paul, the only kids there. We were with the men, fishing at midnight.

Dad suddenly said he needed a coffee and perhaps we would like some hot chocolate. Great idea! “Leave everything here.” instructed dad. “No one takes someone's fishing gear.” So, single file again, we head off in the dark, along the dam. Well, not quite. In the darkness, without even moonlight to guide me, let alone a flashlight, I could barely see where I was going. I took one step, nudged the tackle box with my shoe and in a flash my dad's treasured tackle box tumbled into the swirling waters below. Gone!

In the next few minutes I learned a lesson for life, one that has aided me in raising

my family. The tackle box was a cherished possession and I had stupidly knocked it into oblivion. Dad did not get angry or upset. My dad's response was, “No more fishing tonight. I know you are upset, but you didn't do it on purpose and it is only a possession, not a person. No more crying, let's go get some hot chocolate.”

## **Happy Birthday Shakespeare!**

April 23, 2020

**William Shakespeare**

**1564 – 1616**

Actual birthdays were not registered during the era, however, according to the Book of Common Prayer, it was required that a child be baptized on the nearest Sunday, or Holy Day, following the birth, unless the parents had a specific excuse not to do so. There is also another view that infants were baptized three days following their birth. The date Shakespeare's birth is, therefore, customarily set as the 23rd of April. This date is the feast day of St. George, the patron saint of England. Historians record that William had 3 brothers, Gilbert, Richard, Edmund and 4 sisters Joan who lived only 2 months, a 2nd Joan, Margaret, and Anne. I did my own research and discovered there was a 4th brother, Robert. Here is Robert's story.

### **The Forgotten Brother**

Robert Shakespeare (1568-1636)

By David Warner, with information gleaned from Encyclopedia of Obscure Hysterical Information

Robert Shakespeare was the younger brother by four years of the world famous playwright, poet, and actor, William Shakespeare. Robert, who idolized his elder sibling, was known, from the earliest days by his family and



friends as Bobby. Interestingly, until William established himself as a writer, he was known locally as Billy. By all accounts Billy and Bobby both did well in school, although Billy impressed his teachers with his written work; especially his poetry.

Years passed and Billy, having reverted to his given name William, at age 26 published his first play, Henry VI – Part One. While Bobby was happy for his brother's success, he harboured a deep desire to also be recognized. So, Bobby turned his hand to writing a play, deciding to write something very different from his brother's first play. He also decided to do as his older brother had, revert to his given name. It took Robert two years to write "Agnes and Abraham", a story about two 'star crossed lovers'. The plot briefly described was that Agnes, daughter of the town Mayor falls in love with Abraham, son of a local crime boss, Rory. Rory has cornered the snuff market. The two lovers are shunned by their families. Agnes and Abraham decide to elope. They are married by a sympathetic monk and head off to Welford-on-Avon, a small town not far away from their home town, for a honeymoon. Abraham had brought some of his father's product with him to help their celebration. Sadly, Agnes, who had never tried snuff, got a bit carried away. She was carried away the next day. While the play was published it didn't do well on the stage. Discouraged, but not destroyed, Robert decided a change of direction was in order. Playwright to song-wright. Robert back to Bobby. He quite cleverly dipped back into music of the past and borrowed heavily from the early middle-ages. His first song was a re-make of "I Joust For Your Love", a number which had been quite a hit 100 years back. He changed the lyrics and went up-tempo on the melody. Bobby was excited, but a bit cautious. Since his brother, William, was now

famous, Bobby thought that perhaps having the same last name was the reason for his success. So, Bobby applied to the Court and changed his name from Robert Shakespeare to Bobby Mandolin. Sadly, as it turned out Bobby Mandolin was a 'one hit wonder'. He never achieved the star status of his older brother and likely because he was mostly known as Bobby Mandolin, the world has forgotten that the famous William Shakespeare had a younger brother.

## **The Armenian Genocide**

April 24, 2020

For quite a few years now, on April 24 I would be in Ottawa for the annual Armenian Genocide commemoration held on Parliament Hill. A large crowd, mostly from Montreal, Toronto and Cambridge would be in attendance for a very moving ceremony. Someone from each of the political parties would address the crowd, then we would march along Rideau Street to the Embassy of Turkey, conveniently located adjacent to a city park. There, Armenian youth have organized a program of music, poetry, and a few speeches. My involvement goes back to 1979 when Sarkis Assadourian, who later would be a Member of Parliament, asked me if I would co-sponsor an all-party Resolution in the House recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Not wanting to display my lack of knowledge I replied that I would give it consideration. I headed to the library. What I read there horrified me. The genocide of 1915 is well documented, not only the systematic killing but that Turkey was responsible. The survival of the Armenians was truly remarkable. 1,500,000 Armenians of a population of 2,000,000 were killed. Survivors scattered around the world, many of them coming to a very welcoming Canada. The Ontario Legislature passed the all-party

Resolution. Over the years the House of Commons, Senate and the Government of Canada also passed Resolutions recognizing the genocide.

In 1980 both Stephen Lewis and I were invited to the Armenian Community Centre in North York for the April 24 Commemoration. Stephen was the guest speaker. He had researched the topic even more thoroughly than I had. His eloquence and passion confirmed for me that I needed to be supportive in whatever way I could. So, for the past 4 decades I have had the privilege of working with the Armenian Community Centre in the cause of justice for the Armenians. Theirs is a just cause that Turkey should acknowledge its guilt and begin the process of reconciliation.

“I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia . See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia.” - William Saroyan

William Saroyan (August 31, 1908 – May 18, 1981) was an Armenian-American novelist, playwright, and short story writer. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1940, and in 1943 won the Academy Award for Best Story for the film adaptation of his novel *The Human Comedy*.\*

\*wikipedia

# A Robbery

May 14, 2020

A Robbery – Then Fifty Years Later  
A true story as told by Phil Gillies, M.P.P.  
(1981-87)

Old Brantfordians will remember the name W. Ross MacDonald. Mr MacDonald served as Brant MP (L) from 1936 to 1953. For some of his time in Parliament he was Speaker of the House of Commons. After leaving the House, he was appointed to the Senate where he served as Government House Leader. In 1968 Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau appointed MacDonald the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, an office he held until 1974.

Ross was a familiar and much loved person around Brantford and presided over numerous community events. Yes, the Ontario School for the Blind is named after him. He lived in a fine old house out near App's Mill.

One night, Lieutenant Governor MacDonald was alone at home when a burglar broke into the house. The robber locked Ross in a cupboard, ransacked the house and made off with quite a haul of household items, including several books.

This is where I come in. When I was 17 (so 1972) I was browsing around a used book store on Colborne Street in Brantford and a small burgundy coloured volume caught my eye. It was a 1955 edition of the Canadian Parliamentary Guide. Inscribed clearly on the inside front page was the signature W. Ross MacDonald. I bought it, I believe, for 75 cents. A friend of mine who was related to the MacDonalds arranged for us to go and see His Honour at the house. I took the book with me.

Ross confirmed that it was his, and had been taken in the robbery. I offered to give him his property back but he was insistent that I keep it with his best wishes.

So I have had the book for almost 50 years and it is, predictably, in pretty bad shape. See the attached photo. On a whim, I wondered if it could be restored. Checking online I found Kate, a well-reviewed book binder. She works out of her house near Queen and Lansdowne in Toronto. I emailed Kate and sent her the photo. She replied, yes, the volume could certainly be restored and I should bring it by.

This afternoon I walked the hour or so to Kate's house and we met on her front porch - 6 feet apart of course for the whole visit. She told me in detail the steps she would take to do the restoration. I was fascinated. I've never met a book binder before and the handiwork she would perform sounded like something from Dickens' era.

We agreed on a price. And she says the book will look as good as new and ready in about a month.

And I walked home. It seems like a small thing, but that book has always meant a lot to me, and it's certainly a part of Brant-Brantford's history. I can't wait to see it when Kate has worked her magic!

Biographical Snapshot of the Hon. William Ross MacDonald

(December 25, 1891 – May 28, 1976)

- Born in Toronto, studied law at the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall, then moved to Brantford to practice law.
- Served overseas in World War I as a Lieutenant in the 4th Battalion
- Member of Parliament for Brantford 1935 – 1949
- Member of Parliament for Brantford City

1949 – 1953

- Speaker of the House of Commons

1949 – 1953

- Senator

1953 – 1967:

- Leader of the Senate Opposition

1957 – 1963

- Leader of the Senate Government 1963 – 1964

- Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

1968 – 1974

- Officer of the Order of Canada (1974)

- The Ontario School for the Blind in Brantford was renamed W. Ross MacDonald School

## The Road Trip

May 27, 2020

**“I take to the open road, healthy, free, the world before me.”**

**– Walt Whitman**

“Take your feet off the back of the front seat.”  
“No, you can't put your feet out the window.”  
Another road trip was underway. A family outing, for a day, a weekend or longer was something us three kids enjoyed. There was of course, before we got underway a verbal battle over who would sit in the front seat, not in the middle but by the window. Being the eldest I naturally thought I had first say. My dad didn't seem to think that there was such a thing as age seniority. He thought it was a better idea that each child should have a turn in that coveted location.

When I think about those car trips, with the exception of going to Niagara Falls, it didn't really matter where we were headed. The journey was more important than the destination. Some things don't change when you get older. The trip from our home in Scarborough to Niagara Falls was at least 3

hours, roads not being what they are today. The long, somewhat boring drive was easily endured by us three kids because we knew what was at the end of the journey. Beautiful Niagara Falls! What a magnificent sight. All that tumultuous water, crashing and cascading over the precipice while we stood transfixed, gazing with a mixture of awe and fright. That mixture would be repeated when we had our first voyage on the “Maid of the Mist”. This marvellous day would include a picnic lunch, ice cream cones, and a rare treat, dinner at a restaurant. My brother, sister and I didn't need to worry about a boring ride back home, as a long, active day allowed sleep to capture us. My dad had an intense interest in history, so a trip to Kingston, which included an overnight rental cabin on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, also meant learning about the history of the area, including a visit to Fort Henry. Since we didn't have a cottage, staying in a cabin by the majestic St. Lawrence River seemed to be the next best thing. Even better, however was when we took a trip to upper New York state because we would then stay in a motel. There was a routine for staying in a motel. First, mom and dad had to agree on the outside appearance of the place. If satisfied, the next step was for dad to inquire if he could look at the room they would be renting. If satisfied, then we moved in. What seemed to be ignored, as far as us kids were concerned, was the most important question. “Was there a pool?”

Only in later years did I realize that those road trips helped create the strong bond of love among the five of us. The day excursion, weekend jaunt, week long vacation all provided much more than a diversion from daily routines. We learned more about each other. We also learned about ourselves. We discovered qualities and characteristics about each other.

Treasured times, those road trips.

One of our members has a long distance celebration:

“Our family of 9 planned to celebrate our 60th Wedding anniversary, of April 16, in Dublin Ireland May 1st, after we watched our only granddaughter graduate from Medical School. COVAD 19 caused us to cancel all of our flights to Ireland. It also turned her graduation into a virtual one and we all watched it, streamed to us in Canada.

Our daughter Jill took a photo of the graduation diploma as it flashed on the screen and her name was called by the Dean. Dr Georgina Eagleson will start practicing in Dublin on May 8,2020. She has an Irish (EU) and a Canadian passport and will practice in Ireland for 1 or 2 years and then come home to Canada. It was a great day for the Irish and for our family.”

- Alan Eagleson

## Conclusion

June 16, 2020

Rapt attention to medical advice and an overload of patience has aided us in our pandemic battle. It appears that a bright horizon is not far off. So, in that spirit of optimism that better, healthier days are looming, this will be the end chapter of “Rolling Away The Black Clouds”.

“Still I Rise” was written in 1978. Its powerful message resonates resoundingly today.

### Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

### Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

“An acclaimed American poet, storyteller, activist, and autobiographer, Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri. Angelou had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actress, composer, and Hollywood's first female black director, but became most famous as a writer, editor, essayist, playwright, and poet. As a civil rights activist, Angelou worked for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. She was also an educator and served as the Reynolds professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University. By 1975, wrote Carol E. Neubauer in *Southern Women Writers: The New Generation*, Angelou was recognized “as a spokesperson for... all people who are committed to raising the moral standards of living in the United States.” She served on two presidential committees, for Gerald Ford in 1975 and for Jimmy Carter in 1977. In 2000, Angelou was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Bill Clinton. In 2010, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S., by President Barack Obama. Angelou was awarded over 50 honorary degrees before her death.”

***“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”***

- Desmond Tutu

(Source: [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou))

## Resources

“The Great Influenza” by John Barry, Penguin Books, 2005, New York, New York.  
Global News [www.globalnews.ca](http://www.globalnews.ca) – posted March 3, 2020 updated March 6, 2020  
Toronto Star July 18, 2020

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