



**THE PROBUS CLUB  
OF PERTH**

P. O. Box 20131,  
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Probus meets the first  
Wednesday of each month,  
Sept. to June.

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## Apropos ....

Most of us have heard about Philae, the robotic European Space Agency lander that accompanied the Rosetta spacecraft until its designated landing on comet 67P on 12 November 2014, almost 11 years after departing Earth. Philae achieved the first-ever controlled touchdown on a comet and its instruments obtained the first images from a comet's surface. Comet 67P is so far away it takes radio signals 28 minutes to travel from Rosetta to Earth. For comparison, it would take about 8 minutes for a radio signal to travel to Earth from the sun.

Without a doubt the Rosetta and Philae are a stupendous technical achievement. Indeed, the technical achievements we see daily are nearly incomprehensible. Yet, in spite of our technical prowess, we have not solved many of the problems that plague our planet and affect our social well being. We are now accepting that our climate has passed the "tipping point" and irreversible change is inevitable. We will never again enjoy the predictable seasons our ancestors took for granted. And, rather than eliminating poverty and hunger, we see both increasing here at home and around the globe at an alarming rate.

As the New Year approaches it seems proper to reflect and reconsider. Technology has not solved our problems. The only "magic cure" is in the heart of every person. Until each of us awakens to see every other as deserving of love, respect and assistance, the holidays will remain a time of lights and tinsel. Let us all strive to make this holiday a time of rejoicing and celebration of the incredible gift of life on this wonderful planet.

*(Apropos reflects the views of the Editors but not necessarily those of the Club.)*

## Alfred von Mirbach – Walking Meditation on El Camino



Inspirational is the only word that adequately describes Alfred von Mirbach's talk about El Camino de Santiago de Compostela, which he delivered to a near capacity crowd that turned out despite a morning of fog and drizzle following overnight snow. The unpretentious delivery in his sonorous voice was mesmerizing.

Alfred walked the Camino Francés in 2013. The Camino Francés runs from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port on the French side of the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles on the Spanish side and then another 780km on to Santiago de Compostela through the major cities of Pamplona, Logrono, Burgos and León. A typical walk on the Camino Francés takes at least four weeks.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## El Camino.....continued

Alfred decided to make the trek on the spur of the moment in response to a suggestion from his brother, and in response to some major life changes he had been going through over the past few years. Some of these changes included coming to terms with his depression, a separation from his wife of more than 20 years, and embracing a simpler life without a home of his own, or most of his possessions. Doing the Camino was, for him, a way of testing whether this new, simpler life style was really the right choice.

Alfred informed us that the El Camino pilgrimage began at least as early as 900 AD and was most popular around 1400-1600, when at least 200,000 made the trek annually. In those days most “pilgrims” walking El Camino were of advanced age and many reputedly died en route. Today, Alfred considers El Camino to be more of a spiritual exercise than a religious devotion, and noted that most travelers on the route were neither Catholic nor openly professed a religion. To him the trek was a walking meditation that should be spontaneous, unfettered and undertaken with a mind “in the moment”.

Alfred offered little advice about how to approach the walk along one of the many routes of the El Camino. He did, however, advise that you: go in the spring or the fall to avoid the heat and the summer throngs; be certain to have good, roomy footwear because your feet are going to swell with 6 or more hours of trekking per day; pack as lightly as possible – remember you have to carry it all and occasionally to high elevations (he recommends that your pack weigh at most 10% of your body weight); pack one change of clothing, a sleeping bag good to 10° C, and a few light things to give to others or to leave at shrines along the way; walk mindfully; avoid trying to do too much; and, allow a few days to “phase in” prior to the walk and a few days to “phase out” after the walk.

Alfred advised that the El Camino was not expensive if you are willing to have a “pilgrims” dinner (9 Euros with beer or wine), and sleep in a communal sleeping room (10 Euros). More gourmet food, privacy and comfort drives up the cost considerably. You do require a “passport” to be able to take advantage of pilgrim dinners and communal accommodations. The passport is available, for example, from [www.santiago.ca](http://www.santiago.ca).

Alfred experienced a noticeable cycle on the Camino, such that the whole route seemed an organic being with a detectable “breath” that caused everything to ebb and flow in a cyclic pattern. And he took comfort in knowing that every “down” moment would be followed by an “up” one, albeit in no predictable time frame. He also learned to have unfaltering faith that every real need would be satisfied, without fail, and observed that “magical” moments were frequent because the Camino is so steeped in intention and positive energy. He felt more grounded than ever before while treading paths that have been trod by so many millions of feet before him. At the same time he felt incredibly light because he was so very much in the present of his moments on the Camino.



*Brian O'Connor thanking Alfred von Mirbach*

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## Management Team Notes

- We plan to honour new members of the “90 and Over Contingent” at the January Probus meeting. If you qualify, would you please let Jean Crowley know at 613- 267-3306 so that you will be included.
- The book exchange will continue to be offered at our monthly meetings. You are invited to bring in up to 4 books and take away as many as you wish, whether or not you have brought any books in.
- Best possible wishes to all Probus Perth members for the holiday season and the New Year.



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## Quote for the Month

“Speak the truth, do not become angered and give when asked, even be it a little. By these three conditions one goes to the presence of the gods.”  
— **Gautama Buddha**

## Personal Profiles ~ Janet & David Osborne

Janet and David Osborne shared the podium to present us with an interesting and entertaining snapshot of their colorful lives.



Janet was born in Hamilton, Ontario, and graduated from the Westdale High School business course. She took employment at McMaster University until she married her first husband in 1963 and moved to Vancouver where he pursued a PhD at the University of British Columbia. They had two sons during the next five years while Janet worked part time at UBC, and then spent two years in Canberra, Australia, where her husband worked on a post-doctoral thesis. Once that was completed they returned to Vancouver and Janet pursued her dream of an academic degree. So while her children attended school, Janet did too and after eight years she obtained a degree in Canadian History. However, she did not stop at one degree and returned to get a teacher's certificate, and being aware that teaching jobs were scarce in lower BC, she qualified as a teacher librarian and found a job in a bookstore where she felt completely at home.

Eventually her marriage ended amicably and she was able to buy the Valley Book Shop here in Perth, which she considers to have been the best job in the world. In 1994 she met David Osborne and they were married in 2004. She sold the Valley Book Shop in 2006 and now lives with David in Trillium Estates. She loves Perth, but longs for a shorter drive to a good shopping mall.

David grew up in the Toronto area. He attended the University of Waterloo and graduated with a degree in statistics and psychology. Like many others at the time he travelled to Europe. Unlike many others he managed to stay on and get work in Ireland, first on the oil rigs and then as a carpenter. He enjoyed Ireland so much he stayed on for 11 years.

In 1983 he returned to Canada with his three sons and settled in Almonte. He did carpentry work in Almonte until 1984 when he moved to Perth and went to work for a local contractor. Because of his heritage building experience in Ireland, he was approached by Algonquin College to teach some evening courses in carpentry, and he found that he thoroughly enjoyed the interaction with the students. Eventually he was hired to develop the Heritage Carpentry Program at Algonquin. Since he was committed to teaching, David attended Queens University where he obtained a diploma in Teacher's Education in 1988 and was hired to teach the Heritage Carpentry Program at Algonquin which began in 1989 and is still successful today. He became coordinator of the carpentry department and continued to teach at Algonquin until he retired in 2011.

David now builds fine furniture for this oldest son, Quinlin, an architect in Montreal who designs custom furniture for his clients. This keeps David as busy as he could possibly wish to be.

David and Janet are grateful for the life Perth has afforded them and they have no plans to leave.

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## Special Future Events

- **January 24** - Robbie Burns Dinner & Dance Perth Legion. Dinner is prime rib. Tickets \$25, available in January.
- **February / March** – Dinner / Theatre event – details to come



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## Speakers' Corner



Our speaker on January 7<sup>th</sup> will be **Dennis Staples**, the recently retired and long-time mayor of Smiths Falls, who will speak about the collapse of the employment base there and the Town's subsequent efforts to build a new economic base. Dennis is also a long time member of the Perth & Smiths Falls Hospital Board and has provided direction and leadership to the broader community for years.

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## Lunch After January Meeting

To be held at the Maximilian Dining Lounge  
99 Gore Street, Perth

## Christmas Party 2014

Christmas Party was held at Lion's Club Hall



With music by Simon Clark and dancing by all.



Thanks to Mary, Ted & Gail for this great event.



Comments from many "We're glad that we went!"



**New members welcomed at the December meeting**  
(LtoR) Jean Crowley (President), Gary Dickson, Douglas McCue  
Bill Michie, Don McDiarmid (Membership Director)



# Season's Greetings to All

