



In January, we heard about...

## **“The Real Miracle of the Rideau Canal”**

**from Bob Sneyd,  
CEO, Centre for  
Sustainable Watersheds**

~reviewed by Mary Watters

Bob Sneyd grew up spending his summers on the Rideau waterway. His U. of T. Masters thesis topic was the Rideau, and this year, 2007, will be the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rideau Canal.

Bob gave us a very informative presentation on the history of the Canal and how it came about. He solicited input from the audience on what we thought was the “real” miracle of the Rideau Canal. He then focused on two responses: the canal is an engineering marvel, and the fact that it got built at all.

Bob explained that there was only a narrow window of time during which the Canal could have been built. After the War of 1812, the British military needed a secure route from Montreal to Kingston, to supply the military defending Upper Canada from the United States. In fact a route was surveyed in 1814, but Britain, suffering economic hardship after the Napoleonic War, did not have the political will to undertake a major colonial project.

The Duke of Wellington supported the military's need for the Rideau Canal, and had the vision, astuteness and political skill to make it happen. In 1826, as Master-General of the Ordnance, he obtained funding for the canal and appointed Colonel John By of the Royal Engineers to oversee construction. In 1827, the Duke was elected Prime Minister of England, ensuring continued financial support.

The project was started in 1826 and was completed in only five years. It is the finest specimen in the world of a stone masonry canal. Untold numbers lost their lives during the project through accidents and swamp fever (malaria); the largest unmarked grave is found at the Isthmus where the Newboro locks are located.

One of the major engineering feats was the dam at Hogsback. It was built three times, as two dams were swept away by Spring run off. Colonel By himself was nearly swept away there.

By 1830, the Reformers were in power in England. Although the Canal project was finished, the new government did not see value in the colonies and surely would not have approved the building of the canal. The canal was built because of a unique synchronicity of events and people. The real miracle of the Rideau is that it was built.



David Taylor thanks Bob Sneyd for his talk on the real miracle of the Rideau Canal.



## THE PROBUS CLUB OF PERTH

Meets first Wednesday of each month, September to June

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### Management Team 2006/2007

## Notes from the Management Team

Probus Canada asks us to remind members that **Rendezvous Canada 2008** will be held in Saint John, New Brunswick, September 25-27, 2008. While it seems far away, keep it in mind. Planning details are appearing now on the Probus Canada website. It seems a group of Australian Probians have already signed on! The Team is still looking for a Member-at-large, perhaps among the newest Probus members (we've had 22 new members this year) who might like to learn the ropes and take on a 'real' task next year.

Speaking of **new members**, John Kittle and Don Sherwin received their pins at the January meeting. They are shown with President Keith in the photo at right.

And a special thank you to Don who has proven you don't have to be an 'old' member to take on a job. He has agreed to become our Club Historian.



## Personal Profile— Don Muir

Don was born in Saskatchewan during the depression era. His father's farm raised cattle, pigs, and turkeys as well as growing wheat. Farm produce and a large garden helped to tide the family over those years of the 'dirty thirties'. Next year was always going to be better, but next year seldom was. When World War II broke out, Don joined the Canadian Forces Signal Corps. He was shipped overseas on the old Queen Mary, and he remembers spending his first European winter camping out in the Black Forest. His company went on to fight their way across Europe.

On his return to Canada, Don studied for his Electrical Engineering degree and then joined Bell Canada in 1951. Bell was engaged in building the microwave system across Canada and in the Arctic and Don was involved in this venture. He and his wife Dorothy lived in Beaconsfield, Quebec, but after the FLQ crisis they moved to Ottawa.

Upon his retirement, Don and Dorothy moved to Perth. They have been married for 55 years. Don enjoys the Curling Club and Dorothy volunteers at the hospital and their church.

### Idle Thoughts on a Retiree's Mind

- 💡 I had amnesia once – or twice.
- 💡 Protons have mass? I didn't even know they were Catholic.
- 💡 All I ask is a chance to prove that money can't make me happy.
- 💡 If swimming is so good for your figure, how do you explain whales?
- 💡 They told me I was gullible, and I believed them.
- 💡 Is it me – or do buffalo wings taste like chicken?
- 💡 How can there be self-help "groups"?
- 💡 The cost of living hasn't affected its popularity.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**20 January:** Annual **Robbie Burns Night** at the Legion. The Probus tables always have the most fun! Get your tickets from your favourite Legionnaire.

**May:** No trip to Magog. Trip cancelled due to insufficient interest.

**30 May:** Gananoque 1000 Island Play-house production of **The Ballad of Stompin' Tom Connors**.

**June 18, 2007:** The **Annual Probus Golf Tournament**, organized this year by Dale

Nugent. Golfers, mark your calendars!

**10-12 October:** Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake. The two plays are **Summer and Smoke** by Tennessee Williams and the musical, **Mack and Mabel**. We will also visit the Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory.

If you have ideas for new events or trips, talk to Denise Mullins (613-267-3479).

## Speaker's Corner

In **February**, we will hear from **Lynn Ball**, former photojournalist for the *Ottawa Citizen*. Lynn's book, co-authored with his brother Doug, and published November 2005 by Wallbridge House, is called **Life on a Press Pass**.

Our Program Coordinator, Ian Doig, (613-264-2707) welcomes your suggestions for future topics and speakers.