



The PROBIAN ~ November 2010 Edition

~ Contributing Editor: Glen Pettinger ~



THE PROBUS CLUB OF PERTH

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Probus meets the first
Wednesday of each month,
Sept. to June.

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Apropos..... by Glen Pettinger

Nancy Wildgoose from the Perth Food Bank made a brief appeal at the November meeting for support from Probus members. The Food Bank, with its sixty plus volunteers, has distributed more than 5,000 hampers of food this year without any Federal or Provincial funding. Money or volunteer help is much needed as the Food Bank prepares to move into newly acquired quarters which have many advantages - 65% less in premise costs and a locally planted and tended truck garden that will lead to cheaper vegetables and better diets for needy families. Check out their website <http://perthfoodbank.com/>.

A More Optimistic View of Afghanistan by Glen Pettinger



Brigadier-General Dabros ~ on Afghanistan

Our November speaker, Brigadier-General Michael Dabros, was introduced by a proud father-in-law, Don McNaughton. Mike was educated at Royal Military College and then joined the RCAF where he still pursues a gratifying career at senior strategic levels. He has had two tours of duty in the Mid-east and also in Bosnia, but more recently, in the last year, he has been busy in Afghanistan. There, as part of the NATO Air Training Command near Kabul, he has helped to organize a program to accomplish something he considers terribly important - winning Afghani "hearts and minds". His job was to help build an effective Afghan Air Force. Mike gave us a fascinating picture of his nine months as an "embedded partner" in Afghanistan and showed us helpful pictures of the people and aircraft that he worked with. In the "Combined Air Power Transition Force" (CAPTF), he contributed to building an independent Afghan Air Force that by 2016 will number 8000 recruits. Right now they have about 3500 Afghans in their air programme.

Afghanistan is difficult geographically, politically, and any other way that you want to look at it. About 31,000,000 people live in a country about the size of Texas with mountainous regions as high as 18000 feet and limited highway access. Their Air Force was practically non-existent in 2005 with poor Russian equipment and no prospects. Their pilots were few and their average age was 43. Progress has been made, however, and by August 2010, they had 57 aircraft, some of which were of Russian origin and amazingly maintained by Afghan technicians. Several of their new aircraft are Italian transports (C27s) and as a result of having to deal with this and other Western technology, Afghan mechanics are learning English. Then last December Afghan crews performed their first ever air assault, accompanied by NATO forces. In addition, a "forward observer" training course has been developed and last April a "mujahadeen" victory day was celebrated with an Afghan Air Force flypast. Also encouraging was an independent Afghani Air Force rescue recently of stranded Afghans near Kandahar at the 16000 foot level.

Mike's experiences in training Afghans have led him to view Canada's mission there very optimistically. He saw a huge change in his nine months. When he arrived he had to wear full body armour, but nine months later, at the end of his tour in August, armour was not necessary.

Afghanistan ~ Continued

Mike saw lots of other positives in this tour of duty: only five of the 38 provinces now grow poppies, the source of heroin; trust in Afghan Security Forces has grown; war lords have less influence than ever before. From what Mike saw, for most people, survival is much more important than ideology. A recent recruiting drive for security forces had a significant success when they offered \$25 a month more than the Taliban was offering. These successes may seem minor, but if we build on them and hang in there, we in Canada can reduce our investment in military and money. Also, when the Afghan Security Forces can operate independently, the U.S.A. can reduce its current \$100 billion per year to an estimated \$6 billion annually.

Mike was thanked by Eric Devlin for a presentation that left all of us feeling encouraged about Afghanistan and proud that Canada has such outstanding leaders as Brigadier-General Michael Dabros representing us and working for our protection around the globe.



Management Team Notes

- "Movember" contestants Jim Dean, Bob Black, Dale Nuggent and Chris Landry will go whisker to whisker at the December 1st meeting for the best moustache grown in the month of November. The winner will be crowned at the December 9th Christmas party.
- General Clive Addy laid a wreath at the November 11th Remembrance Day ceremony in Perth on behalf of the Probus Club of Perth. The ceremony was very well attended, with numerous Probus members among those paying silent tribute to fallen soldiers.
- The Probus Christmas Party is fast approaching. At the party we will be giving out gifts and prizes. We are looking for gifts that you could donate for this fun. This might be a gift that you would like to regift or a unique item that you believe would be fun to share. Maybe you have an interesting question that you would like asked at the party to claim your prize. Please let Mary know if you can help.
- **Final call for members who have not yet paid their fees for 2010-2011.** There was a renewal form attached to the Summer edition and one can also be found online at www.probusperth.ca/membership.htm. Please fill out this form and send it together with your cheque to Probus Box 20131, Perth, Ont., K7H 3M6.
- George McLure is scheduled to give his personal profile at the December meeting
- Thanks to Glen Pettinger for his contributions to this edition. Don Sherwin is on scheduled to be the contributing editor for the December Probian.

Self-introduction ~ Norma McFarlane

by Glen Pettinger



Norma McFarlane proved to be an interesting and worthy self-introducer as indeed have all our Probian autobiographers. Born in Montreal, she moved to Toronto in 1951 where she received her early education. Much later, after three children and a divorce, she enrolled at York University and graduated nine years later with a degree in Geography. This obviously led to a job in Labour Relations at Air Canada, a work-place she remembers fondly, not only because of the opportunities it gave her

to help people. In particular she remembers helping a Spanish boy of eleven at The Hospital For Sick Children who had an inoperable cancer. She arranged to have him flown back to his family in Madrid. Air Canada also gave her the "experience of a lifetime" and a "deafening thrill" when she stood at the end of a runway as a huge aircraft, an L1011, landed at Toronto. Norma retired to Perth and keeps busy with many activities including being on the board at "Inge Va".



Speakers' Corner

- **December 1** - Roy (Sandy) MacSkimming to talk about his latest book 'Laurier in Love'. There will be a book signing opportunity after the talk ~ just in time for Christmas you say? More information at www.roymacskimming.com/

Special Events

- **December 9, 2010** ~ Our Annual Christmas Dinner will be held at the Perth Links O'Tay Golf Club, starting at 6pm with dinner at 7pm. There will be live entertainment "Two for the Show" featuring Steve Hanna and Mike Irwin for your dancing delight and, of course, the usual great traditional turkey dinner. Also featured will be a Christmas sing-along and the crowning of the Movember moustache king. Tickets are \$35 each and you can still get yours at the December meeting – or call Glen at 613-267-9747. Please let Glen know your preferred seating arrangements (tables of 8).
- **Feb. 2-6, 2011** ~ Possible trip to Quebec City ~ details at the December meeting

