

Mooseless in Mooseland

or

D'you know what would really suck?



Montréal to St John's
by Westfalia
July-August 2013
Bill, Fran, and Thomas



F'n B Productions, Laval, QC
April 2016

Mooseless in Mooseland

In the summer of 2013, Bill, Fran, and Thomas loaded up the Westfalia for a trip to St John's Newfoundland in search of the Republic of Doyle. The trip took three (3) weeks and we only experienced one major delay due to problems with the Westie! Nevertheless, there were—as you will learn—several minor van malfunctions that created some anxiety for Bill along the way.

This is a travel log of some of the highlights along the way. The stories are often told from three points of view (POV): Thom's, Bill's, and Fran's. The Blog entries (black background) are Thom's, the main journal entries are Fran's, and the occasional additions/reflections in *italics* are from Bill.

The trip got off to a rocky start. Thom's flight out of Victoria was delayed and he missed his connection in Vancouver. This resulted in some frantic nationwide calls while the travel agent (Artos) figured out what to do. It was then that we realized that we'd given Thom no information about how to contact us in case of an emergency: no phone number or even our address! We'd forgotten it was his first solo trip to Montréal and had assumed he knew the drill, like his siblings before him. The third child syndrome strikes again!



Fridy July 5, 2013

The Journey



Getting to Montreal was somewhat worrying. I got dropped off at the Victoria airport and went over some things with my dad. After security I knew where to go because the gate was right in front of me, it was a really small airport. I was going from Victoria to Vancouver but my flight got delayed. 3 Times! I was going to miss my connection but then I went up and told them I needed a new connection. They gave me 15\$ for food at the airport as compensation. I got it, looked at my map of Vancouver airport, found out where it was and waited to for my plane. I finally got on and the ride was pretty shaky. I sat right next to the emergency exit, that was kind of unnerving. I got off fine and found my gate. Then went to get food. I got on the plane and sat down. I had a middle seat. Since I was young and traveling alone I got a free meal. I then watched a couple of movies to pass some time. When I got off at Montreal I was a bit lost because I didn't know where to go but the people sitting beside me helped me out. I went down and me and my Grandparents waited for my bag but it wasn't there. The person who deals with that told us it was on the next plane. We waited a bit more and there it was. We got home, ate dinner, and went to bed. For me it was only 6 PM but it was 9 PM where we were. The first adventure had been completed.

Transformer ready for the bathtub



Transformer exploring the Bigras woods



Saturday July 6, 2013 ☀

11:35 am: Ready to hop in the car. Guess what!! It wouldn't start. Jump start by hooking up to the Echo.
11:45 am: Finally on route to Québec City. Taking the North side of the river. Pick up gas on the 440—now we really are off. AND we can see: Thom cleaned the windows. We still need a car wash, at least according to me. Bill first at the wheel; Thom set the timer for an hour.

3:30 pm: Arrive in [Quebec City](#). Turning on to René Levesque and heading to [Grand Allée](#) and the van just stopped—no nothing—and it wouldn't start. We called the CAA and then waited in the middle of a turning lane while cars maneuvered around us. Bill suggested that Thom and I head out to the Citadel à pied while he waited for the CAA folk. We headed off in the heat and stumbled through the gate of the walled city about 4:45 pm. First: to the washroom. Second: did some texting to the Victoria crew and Bill. No word from Bill but Steve suggests we need ice cream. Third: walk into an air conditioned tourist shop and find Thom's first magnet (a Québec robot with a fleur de lys on its chest). Fourth: got the ice cream. Walked a bit then sat down to enjoy it on a wall near the Boardwalk. See a Crêperie—le Petit Chateau—and decide on Crêpes for supper. Explore the Boardwalk and then learn by text that Bill has the van at a Westfalia dealer. We can sleep in it but it won't get it looked at until Monday. Thanks to the magic of cell phones he joins up with us at the bandstand near the Boardwalk. Bill agrees on our choice for supper: Thom orders a vegetarian crêpe and loves it! Bill orders some other type of crêpe; I go for the ordinary crêpe Québécoise. It is the least interesting of all three!!

Bill's POV

After Thom and Fran headed off to catch a bus (at least that is what I thought they would do) I sat in the heat as the cars made their way around us—the drivers looks turning from frustration to amusement as they discovered our dilemma. When the tow truck arrived he verified that the car wouldn't go on its own so hauled it up on his flatbed and we set out in search of a VW dealer that might be able to take a look at it on a weekend day. He suggested a garage in one of the suburbs that was full of Westfalias. His description was quite accurate. We pulled into a lot between 2 vans just as a car was making its way out. The driver of the car stopped and reversed to make room for us, then stepped out, leaving his female partner in the passenger seat. It turned out that the driver was the owner of the garage - M. Robert Pharand. M. Pharand told my tow truck driver to put our van in the empty spot next to the garage and asked us to wait for about 15 minutes while he and his wife completed an errand. It took both me and the tow truck driver to manoeuvre the van into the spot and straighten out our account before the owner returned.

M. Pharand and I pushed our van into the garage and he hoisted it up for a quick look. He identified the starting motor or solenoid as the problem, but informed me that he could not fix it until Monday when the parts would be available. He added that we would be able to stay the two nights in his lot, however. We

Thom sets the timer



"en panne" in Québec City



pushed the car back to a spot next to the garage and he hooked us up to the electricity so that we would have light and power for the fridge. He also left the bathroom door open for us. Then he called up a taxi so that I could join Thom and Fran in town.

9:40 pm: Back at the van (a 20-minute \$38.00 taxi ride).

10:30: Lights out but Thom and I writing in our journals.

Pedometer 10,016: not bad for a driving day!!



Riding the cannon on the Terrasse
Dufferin: JP, Zach, Sam (1999), Zach
(2004), Thom (2013)



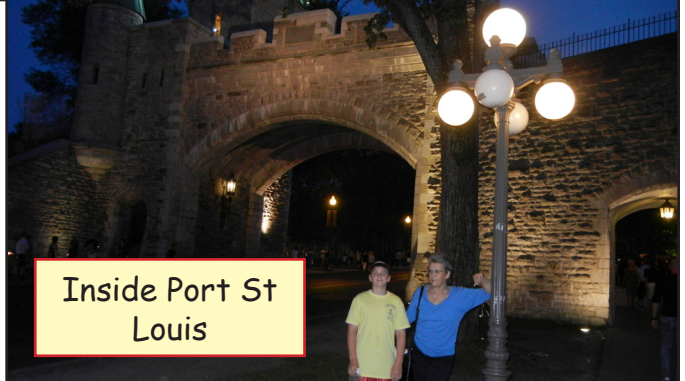
Awaiting our crêpes at Le Pêtit Chateau



Scaling the walls of the Old City
- from the easy side!



Our first over-
night



Inside Port St
Louis

Sunday, July 7, 2013

Broken car Broken Schedule

At the start in the westfalia we were getting ready we started the car and it stopped. We had to get the small car to jumpstart it. It worked fine. after some time on the road we stopped and got ice cream. We got to Quebec city and the plan was to drive and see the citadel. We were stopped in the turning lane of an intersection. There were some people who were waiting behind us not knowing we couldn't move and some people honking. Me and my grandma walked down a street for an about an hour until we got to the walled town and walked down a street. We got to a souvenir shop and I got my first magnet. I was collecting magnets from everywhere I went. We got ice cream and sat on a bandstand until we got news from my grandpa that we will have to stay in Quebec city until Monday. Bill got to us and we went to dinner. We went to a place called "Le Pêtit Chateaux". It was a place with crepes fondu and raclette. Next we wandered a bit and went up to the entrance. and got a taxi back to the parking lot of a westfalia garage that we now called home. We set up our beds and slept. The next morning the owner of the garage told us that we had stopped probably because of dirty gas and we couldn't start up again because of our solenoid, told us their wi-fi password and he gave us a courtesy car and we had breakfast at "Chez Cora". We explored the old town in Quebec city some more. We also got a tour of the Citadel and had a snack on the plains of Abraham and later ate lunch at a place called "Casse Cou". We wandered a bit more, watched a couple of street preformances and ate dinner at a restaurant at the end of an alley full of artists. We will see what happens next.

Posted by Thomas Jones at 8:50 PM

2 comments:



Samantha Jones July 9, 2013 at 9:17 PM

Knew it was gonna break down.

Replies



Thomas Jones July 10, 2013 at 6:54 PM

Not very supportive - are you???

Sunday July 7, 2013



7:00 am: Alarm sounds and we wake up in a Westfalia parking lot. The garage washroom was left unlocked for us. Very clean but cold water only. The garage owner came by and said he'd give us a "loner car" to go for breakfast.

8:00 am: So we are about 3 clicks down the road at Chez Cora's. AH!! The food has arrived. After our breakfast, we take the car into town for a day of exploration around [Québec City](#) (including the old city). We include a tour of [La Citadelle de Québec](#) in our activities. Lots of walking, lots of exploring. We even saw the cannon ball in the root of the tree that we heard about in one of Stuart McLean's stories.

10:43 pm: Back at the van and washed for bed.

Pedometer: 10,801



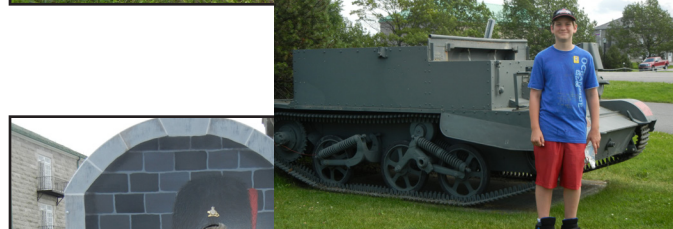
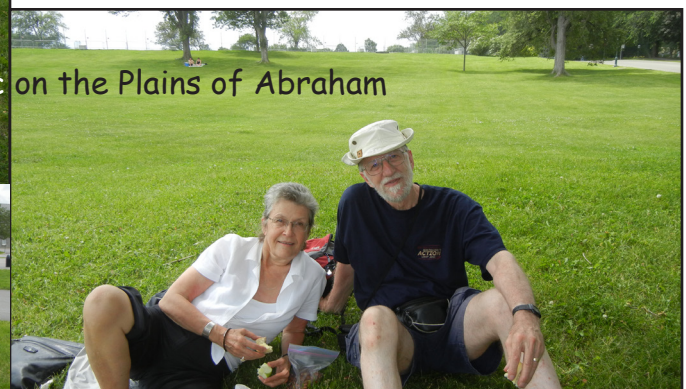
Our first night "camping"



The cannon ball



Picnic on the Plains of Abraham



Thom the Mascot

View from the Citadel





JP and Daegan at the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Québec in 1975 - Fran and Thom 38 years later



Escalier Caisse-Cou



Lunch at Caisse Cou

Mural on Rue Notre Dame



Official poutine tester



Sunset - looking out over the lower city



An Interruption Ice-cream treat

Monday July 8, 2013 - Destination Rimouski ☞

6:40 am: Up and washed to get the van ready for the repair.

8:00 am: Back at Chez Cora's for petit déjeuner. Then checked Canadian Tire for cup holders and clear duct tape: the screen and sheets need mending. Then we hit up a Wal-Mart for some Polysporin and microfibre cloths for Bill. When we got back we learned that the part wouldn't arrive until the next day. The garage owner's wife also came out to visit with us and offered us access to their web account so we could get on the internet. So we set up for some work and lunch: our first real meal in the van.

12:30 pm: Checking email. Concordia Media picked up the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* story on my research (posted 5 hrs ago). The *Hamilton Spectator* picked it up as well. Then: Good News!! The part has arrived! So we set up the car again to ready it for the hoist. The mechanics get to work and we head to Ste Foy looking for a good coffee shop while we wait. Find one in a shopping mall but I don't think it is the one we hung out in when we all lived in Cap-St-Ignace. Send off a batch of post-cards to family members.

We returned to find them putting the final touches on the van. They replaced the starting motor (but couldn't replace the solenoid since they didn't have the parts or a replacement).

As soon as the van was running again, we reorganized the interior for travel, said our thank-yous and goodbyes, took a photo, and headed out to fill up. At the fill-up station Bill topped up the gas, but found that when he did it leaked gas all over the ground. We headed back to the shop and the owner said that the problem was a faulty gasket at the top of the gas tank. He suggested that we just don't fill it all the way up and get the problem repaired when we returned home. It was a very acceptable work-around for Bill since he was eager to get on the road.

We headed off for the Québec Bridge and route 20 east. On our way past [Cap-St-Ignace](#) we dropped down to the 132 to check out the Station, school, church, and a few places around town.

11:00 pm: We arrived at the Motel Lyse near [Rimouski](#). It's a 2nd rate motel with a friendly manager who was very apologetic about the only room available being a smoking room. Since it was the only 2-bed room available in town we were happy to find it. The beds were comfortable, the water hot. The internet was weak, but free. Note: Because of our 'stay over' in Québec City we have to forgo our visit to the Gaspé.

Pedometer: 3153

Game 1: Interruption ice-cream treats

These were ice-cream cone treats (a favourite of Bill and Thom) that Fran would have to buy for them every time she interrupted Thom to enhance his story or answered a question directly specifically at him. Since this is a bad habit I have yet to conquer, it happened a lot. They got to eat a lot of ice-cream!



Thom, Fran, and M. Robert Pharand
(our host and mechanic)



Our first real meal in the van was lunch in the garage parking lot



Thom et l'église à Cap-St-Ignace



Nap-time in the garage parking lot



Sunset near Rimouski



Tuesday, July 9, 2013

First day camping

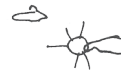
We stayed at a motel called motel Lyse and they had a promise of internet and breakfast. They broke the first promise but held the second one. We were staying in a smoker room but they tried to air it out. After we woke up, we got some breakfast and packed up. Then we were off.

The drive was supposed to be four hours but it took longer. We arrived in Campbellton and we got to an information and a gift shop. I got a couple more magnets and my grandpa exchanged stories. We hit the road again but this time got some gas and propane. I don't know what happened after that because I had a great nap. I woke up and it was time to eat. We got McDonalds and went to buy milk and hashbrowns and I had yet another nap. I woke up and I was awake until we got to the campsite, paid, set up, and then we ate dinner. After dinner I got firewood and walked to to the campsite. We pulled out the hatchet and started to make kindling. We got our fire, roasted marshmallows and then made our beds then proceeded to use them. We will see what is yet to come.

Motel Lyse



Tuesday July 9, 2013 - Destination New Brunswick



11:24 am: Packed and ready after a leisurely morning. I managed to stave off a headache. Our first task is to buy propane—not sure why we didn't fill it up before leaving Ile Bigras...too busy, I guess.

12 noon: Downtown Rimouski. Great view of the St Lawrence and its tidal bays. Tide is out. Decide to visit [Point-au-Père](#): It includes a museum about the Empress of Ireland, the submarine Onondaga, and the Pilot's house. A tough decision since we only have time for one visit. Thom chose the musée so we learned about the sinking of the Empress of Ireland, May 29, 1914.

2:00 pm: On the road again. Now heading down 132E to Bathurst, NB. Quick stop at the McD's for lunch.

5:15 pm: But my phone just alerted me that we're in a new time zone, so it is 6:15 pm. Whoops! We didn't build the time zone change into our schedule.

6:40 pm: Stop at the [Campbeleton](#) Tourist information centre. Got lots of travel info and a chance to tell our 41-year old story about travelling with Daegan on my back and our tent and clothes on Bill's back. BTW: the tourist building is built to look like the old train station just as it looked on our trip. It closed at 7:00 pm so we just made it. Thom got some great magnets. Filled up (3/4 so the tank doesn't leak) and head to [Parc Malybel](#) about 1 hour down the road. We phoned and are assured of a place: site #227 is assigned to us.

Pedometer: 4234





Parc Malybel: Our first real 'camping' on this trip

Thom was a great fire-maker and seemed to enjoy it



Settling in for some journaling and texting before bed



Wednesday July 10, 2013



4:05 am: Up to pee and check email.

11:05 am: Packed up and ready to leave. Phoned a CBC reporter in Kitchener-Waterloo. Re-jigged trip after chatting with our neighbour in the little cabin next door. He had heard us talking and came over with the phrase: “Oh, I don’t have to pretend to speak French.” We are now planning to go to [Caraquet](#), then [Moncton](#), and the [Bay of Fundy](#). The result is that we go around the peninsula instead of cutting it short to make up time (as we had originally planned).

12:15 pm: [Village Historique Acadian](#): an interesting history being told here. We ate lunch at the Acadian restaurant in the village: corn soup, salted cod in white sauce, and salted pork stew. Soup was good (Thom’s choice) but the pork stew was the best. Poutine à trou and white cake with brown sugar sauce for dessert.

7:00 pm: Settle in at [Kouchibouguac National Park](#) (Site #276). Made supper and had a great fire—Thanks to Thom.

Supper: Fried fake maple ham; baked beans; pretend Latke and crudités with ranch dressing; Acadian pain au fess for dessert with black current jelly. Tried forever to get on line but am getting tons of updates so all is slow like molasses. Decide in the end to leave it running and go to bed. Am out before either of the guys even go to bed. It rained in the evening but our awning was up and we had finished supper well before it began.

Pedometer: 6,687

Village Historique Acadien





Village Historique Acadien



Kouchibouguac National Park

Site marker and visitor (photo by Thom)



another fire by Thom



Thursday July 11, 2013 - Destination Bay of Fundy and PEI



6:45 am: Grass wet with rain but no longer coming out of the sky.

7:00 am: Up to pee and stayed up to check my email but not enough strength to send. So read some of Fang's thesis. All up for breakfast by 9 or 10 am: It was all wet from rain so I ordered hot porridge with granola, coffee, and toasted fess bread with butter and jelly. Once packed up we went driving around looking for a stronger internet connection. Found one near the toilets/showers so parked while all 3 of us got on line to do some work.

12:15 pm: On the road to the park entrance to pick up a magnet. I got a frog for on the dashboard. Fran drives first in a bid to avoid falling asleep at the wheel. Head to [Hopewell Rocks](#) to see the Flower Pots and large tides of the [Bay of Fundy](#). Arrive at 2:53 pm—just in time for high tide.



Caught him smiling!



On the road
(photo by Thom)

5:15 pm: Leave Hopewell Rocks for [PEI](#).

7:00 pm: Arrive at [Confederation Bridge](#) (12.9 km long—the longest bridge over ice-covered water).

7:15 pm: At the [Charlottetown](#) Info Centre and getting instructions to [Cavendish Campsite](#).

8:13 pm: After picking up meat for supper and buying gas we arrive at the campsite (#15). Supper is: quesadillas with meat and cheese, etc. Thom splitting wood but OH it is hot and humid and the mosquitoes are out, big time. Bill struggles to put up the back screen from the inside. He is sweating buckets by the time he finished but we feel an improvement. The boys have showers.

11:45 pm: We are all in bed. We get to stay 2 nights so will have time to rest and explore PEI.

Pedometer: 5,898.



Bay of Fundy and Hopewell
Rocks



Napping
on the
road



At least Fran is in the
passenger seat!!





Confederation Bridge and PEI
(where everything is fake!)



Cavendish campsite



Friday July 12, 2013

Cavendish Campsite



8:00 am: Up to pee and wash. When I get back Bill has the water on the boil so coffee is on the way. It rained for a while last night so Thom closed the upper screen. Standing up, at least for Bill, meant heading into some heavy fumes (thanks to Thom). Thank God our back screen was still in place.

8:45 am: Enjoying my coffee and prunes, journalizing, and a chapter of Fang's thesis. My comments are long overdue. Bill has had his porridge and is futzing around. Thom is awake but lounging in the top bunk.

11:00 am: To the beach for a stroll in sand.

12:30 pm: Back for lunch and naps.

3:00 pm or so: Set out to visit [Anne of Green Gables](#). Arrive at 3:45 pm (so have 1 hour and 15 min.) to explore. We check out the house and the Haunted Wood Trail. Then it was the Cavendish Visitor Centre to check out a restaurant for all our tastes. Computers were available so we checked our email.

[Carr's Oyster Bar](#) for supper: Thom chose a cheeseburger and onion rings. Bill had the haddock and I had the special: lobster, crab cakes, etc. The only good thing about the lobster was the butter!! Back at camp, Bill downloaded photos and Thom built us a fire. All very idyllic! Then I discovered that the shelter right next to us has screens, tables, a stove, and electricity. Too bad I didn't check it out last night when we were so hot, humid, and bothered by mosquitoes!!!

12 midnight: Thom and I in bed. Bill still up working to get photos on Thom's blogging tablet.

BTW: The maple ham of Wed July 10 isn't the only thing that was fake on this trip!! Thom has decided that everything about PEI is fake!!!

Pedometer: 6791.

Walking the beach at Cavendish Campsite





The wood walk near Anne's house

Game #2: Thomas the Grump. This became a game. Thom grumping for photos...it wasn't easy to get a photo of him smiling.



Boardwalk to Cavendish Beach



What are you up to at Anne's house?



View from the oyster bar



Carr's Oyster Bar



Another fire by Thom



Cavendish Beach

Saturday July 13, 2013 - Destination [Halifax](#)



8:00 am: Up and to the toilet to pee and wash. Just when I finished the water slowed to a drip and then stopped. Now the toilets are locked!! NOTE: Sinks do not have plugs. So, like last year, I've learned to take the wash-up basin. It just fits on the rim and holds my hot water.

10:05 am: On the road. Destination: [Wood Islands Ferry Terminal](#) with stops along the way to buy magnets for Thom and post letters/postcards.

12:40 pm: Just made it in time to keep our reservations. Bill said that at 20 minutes to sailing time (1:00 pm) we would lose it. But I made it by going way over the speed limit on the Charlottetown-Wood Islands run: had to pass several slow going vehicles in the process. Have lunch on the ferry (a 75 minute ride).



About 5:30 pm: Arrive [Woodhaven Campground](#) (just outside [Halifax](#)) but the van is acting up again. After buying gas an hour earlier it wouldn't start. Bill did some banging around and it started again. When we stopped to register at the campsite, it wouldn't start again. We got a tow to our site (D2) by the camp manager about 6:45 pm. Once settled in (around 7:10 pm) the car starts. I guess it just needed to cool down. Bill thinks it may be the solenoid this time (apparently it was the starter before).

7:20 pm: Start supper: really scraping the bottom since we did not shop. Managed to pull off a 4-egg cheese omelette, tomatoes, KD, and fried zucchini—all quite tasty. Oh yes, we had carrots and red peppers with humus as an appetizer.

9:00 pm: Bill doing dishes, Thom at the fire, and I'm journaling. I joined Thom at the fire. He leaned over and whispered to me that it would be nicer if Bill were to join us. I went to the van where Bill was fussing over the VW manual (worried about the van). I mentioned to him what Thom said. He joined us at the fire for a lovely end to the day!

Pedometer: 2,929



Grumpy Thomas shows up again



Getting the propane tank so we can start up the stove for supper

Woodhaven
Campsite



Suppertime



Game 3: D'you know what would really suck?

This was our version of the `however` game. It usually started with "D'you know what would suck?" then expand to many, many "really" sucks.

- Mosquitos suck...but it would really suck if they were as big as bats.
- D'you know what would really suck?...if they had proboscics the size of drinking straws.
- That **WOULD** suck, but d'you what would **REALLY** suck?...

Sunday July 14, 2013
Wood Haven Campground



7:45 am: Up for pee and coffee made in car. (Bill often didn't let me use the lighter plug since he worried about the battery so this was a real treat!) Worked on Fang's thesis.

9:20 am: Packing for a daytrip to Halifax. The car starts—we can go to Halifax. Yea!!

10:45 am: Arrive at the [Two if by Sea](#) Restaurant to meet Janelle (Bill's student). Out of this world croissants!

12 noon: [Farmers' Market](#) on the Pier. Buy some stores for the car: beans, mushrooms, peppers, zucchini, sausage, etc. Pack them in the van. Walk the Boardwalk; then climb the hill for our visit to the [Halifax Citadel](#). It's about 2:45 pm when we arrive. Because there are fewer people, we—with Thom's permission—decide to take the French tour. It is a great time! We stayed at the Citadel until about 4:45 pm. Then, back to the car and the Superstore for more perishable goods unavailable at the Farmers' market. Car starts!!

5:45 or 6 pm: Back at our campsite. Supper first: roast chicken; grilled zucchini; green beans with mushrooms and red pepper. After supper: a swim in the pool (great swim) a shower and then back to our site for dessert (blueberries and bananas with yogurt) and a campfire.

Pedometer: 7,559 (before our swim).



Thom surprised us by reading all the information signs - and remembering most of them!

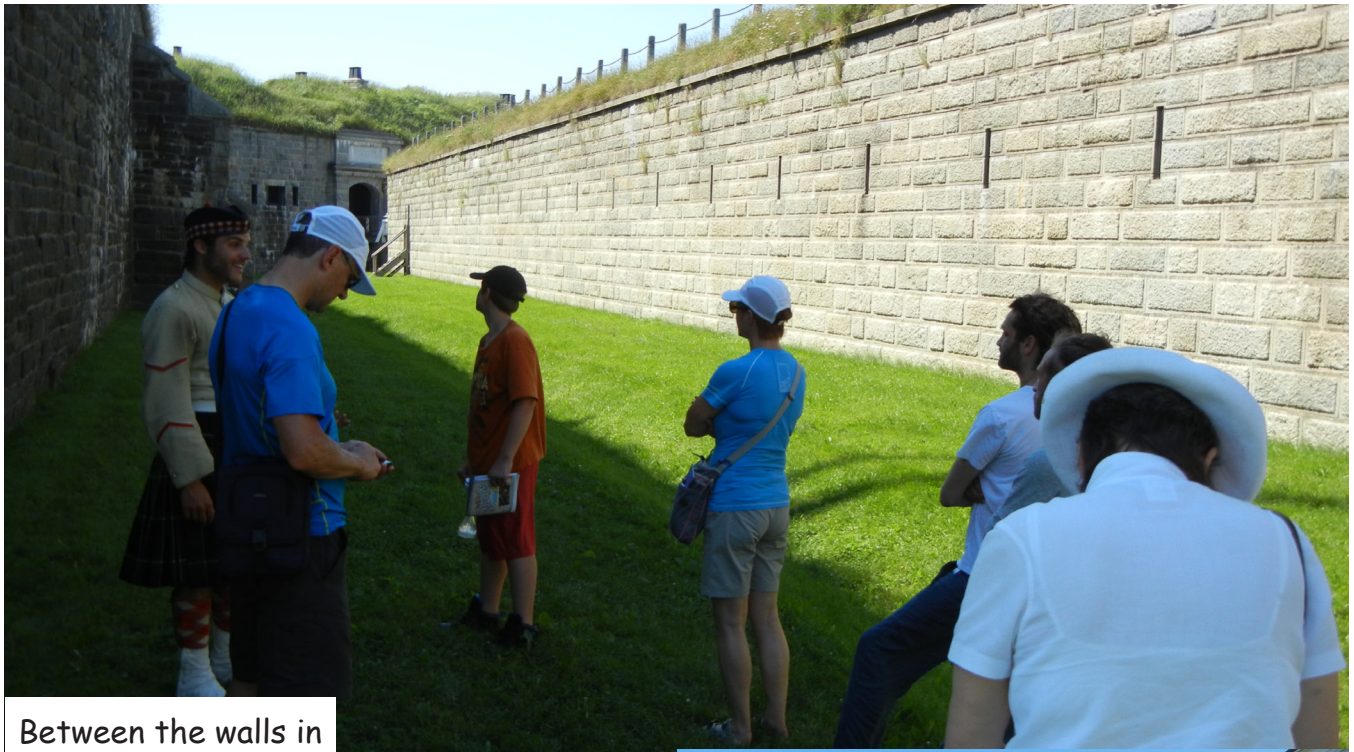


Waiting for our tour of the Citadel



Halifax Citadel

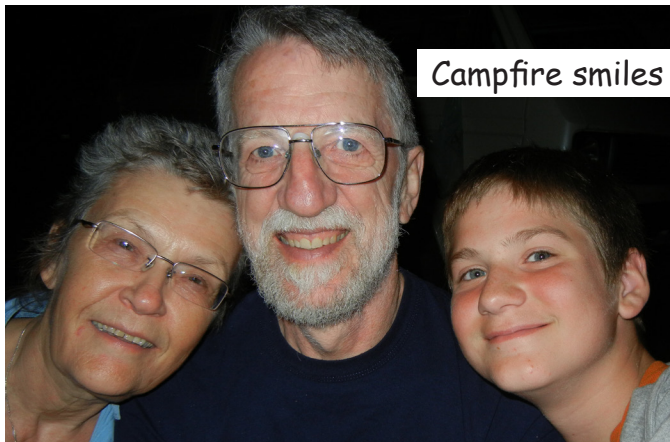
A cannon demonstration



Between the walls in
the Citadel



On the way back to the car



Campfire smiles



Wednesday, July 17, 2013

Camping so far

So far we have been to 4 campsites. Malybel in New Brunswick, Kouchibouguac national parc in New Brunswick, Cavendish in P.E.I., and Woodhaven near Halifax. Before we got to Kouchibouguac we went to the historic Acadien village. Once we got to the Kouchibouguac campsite it was 7:00 PM. We set everything up and for dinner we had hashbrows, baked beans, and maple ham. I made a fire, sat near it, and drank my hot chocolate.

At Cavendish we stayed there for 2 nights. On the first night we bought wood and they gave us a bag and told us to go to a shed and fill up the bag. We found lots of wood and I even got a chopping block! When we got to the campsite it was extremely hot and humid and we were all complaining. We set up a screen for the bugs in the trunk and watched the fire that I made glowing at night. The next day, we went to a beach and sat there on a log. On the way back I found a lobster that was missing a claw and named him Jarvis. Then we went to Green Gables. When we got back, I made yet another fire and then we slept in a cool night.

At our next campsite (Wood Haven) we stayed 2 nights. Our car broke and we got stuck. we pushed the car into some shade and waited. We tried and tried again but it was no use. We got someone who worked there to jumpstart us but that didn't help so he then towed us to our site. When we were there we tried to start it and it worked. We set up our site and we ate dinner later. I made a small fire because I was requested to even though all we did was sit in the car. The next day we went out to a market and got ice cream in Halifax and we went to the Halifax Citadel. When we got back, we set up our beds and we slept. The next day, we hit the road.

Monday July 15, 2013
Destination [Cape Breton](#)



8:00 am: Alarm rings. Up to pee, wash, and have breakfast.

9:35 am: Van packed so we get ready for a swim. Absolutely lovely!!

10:00-11:00 am: Swim (Thom and Fran) and read in sun with my coffee. Like a lazy holiday.

11:15 am: The car starts & we can leave the site for Pieter and Georgi's (at East Lake Ainsley).

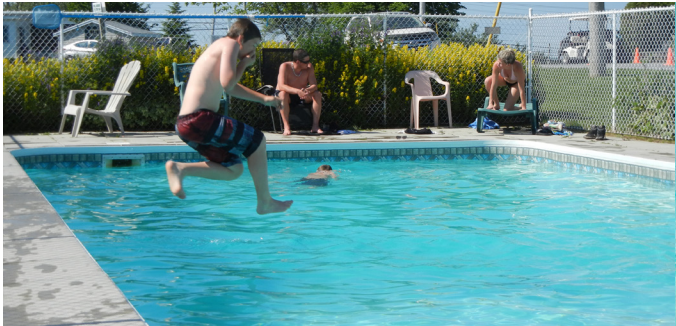
1:15 pm or so: Find a provincial campsite 30-40 minutes outside of [Truro](#). Just after lunch is over and the car packed we spy a swimming hole down on the river. We are all up for it: Bill and Fran to cool their feet and Thom for a full swim. Fantastic!! We enjoy watching a young mother with two kids and a babe in arms and a dog paddling in the water when we get there. They must be taking a break to cool down. She certainly has her hands full and the dog is nuts!! He keeps fetching huge rocks and dragging them with his teeth up on the side of the river bed.

2:45 pm: Back on the road: Bill at the wheel. The car started so it must have enjoyed the chance to cool down as much as we did.

3:50 pm: Buying gas just off the [Cape Breton Causeway](#). But the car doesn't start. We roll it into the shade. Bill tries a new trick—hitting the starter with a broomstick while I turn the key. It works!!!

About 5:30 pm: Arrive at the deVries' ([East Lake Ainsley](#)) without further incident.

Pedometer: 1,718.

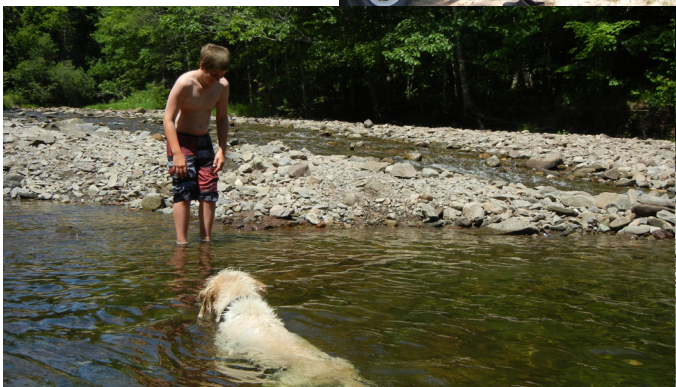


Swimming at Wood Haven Campsite



The dog who liked fetching rocks

Lunch break just outside Truro





Laundry day at the de Vries', East Lake Ainslie

Reconditioning at the deVries

Our visit with the deVries' gave us time to do our laundry, but also to pay attention to some of the Westy-issues that emerged between Montréal and Lake Ainslie. Pieter and I headed off to his garage in search of a fix for the awning since the bracket was rather loose.

We dropped in to the local machine shop in our search and came up with some nice metal pieces that looked like they would do the trick. Another stop at the local hardware meant we returned home with metal and screws to do the job. In fact, I think we improved on the Westy design - nice and snug!

To top it off, Pieter came up with a lovely metal broom handle to replace our make-do solenoid smacker that served as our fail-safe for a stuck starting motor. The handle rides with the van even today - 3 years and 6,500 km later.

It felt like old times with Pieter: fixing problems in a make-do way!

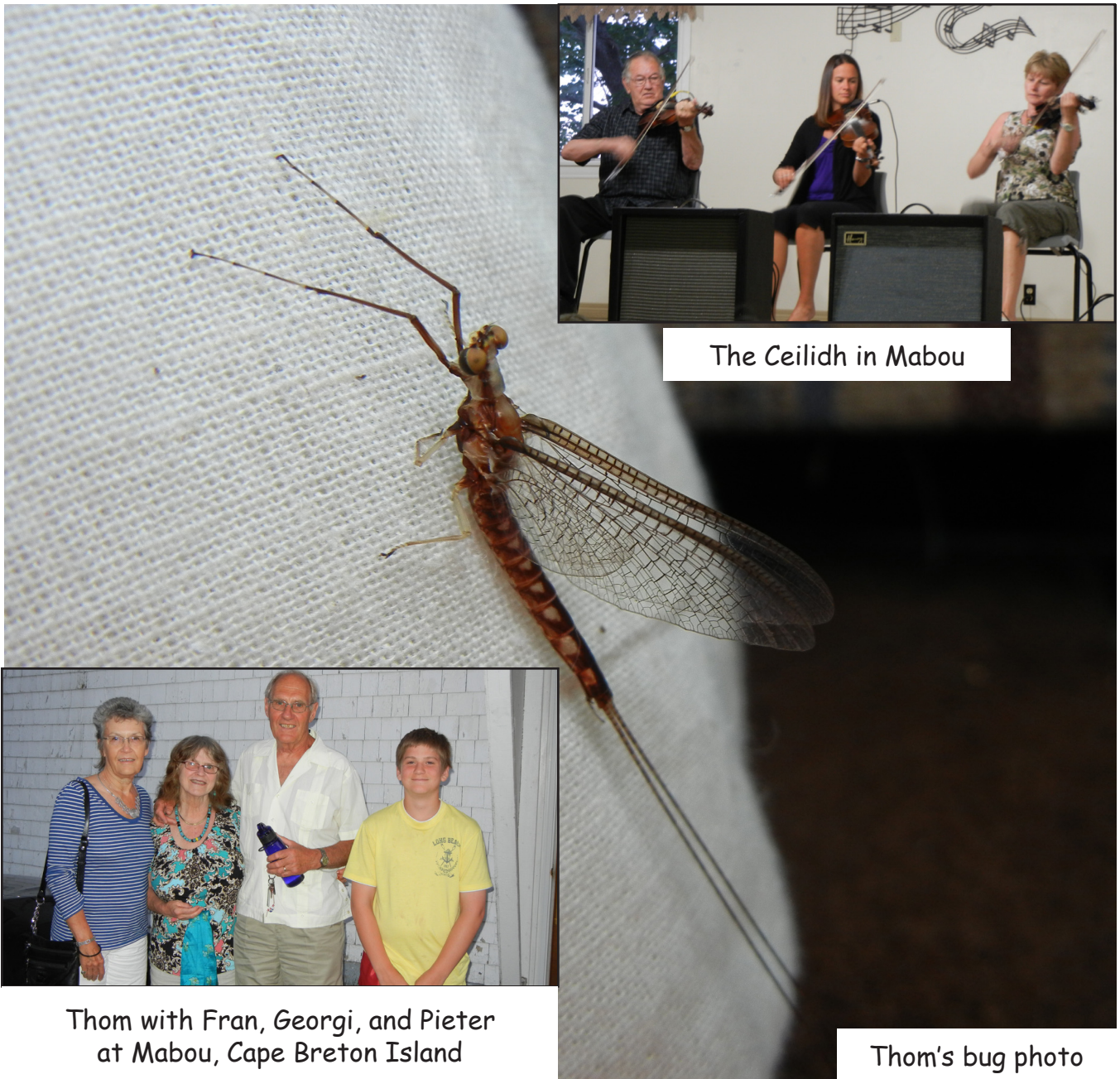
Tuesday July 16, 2013



Coffee and fruit in bed. Laundry day and we hang it on the line. Thom swims in the morning with Pieter and in the late afternoon with me. The deVries, especially Pieter, are very impressed with Thom. I'm not sure what he is doing right but it sure is impressing Pieter and Georgi. Pieter has gone out of his way to mention this to both Bill and me.

7:30-9:00 pm: Head off to a Ceilidh in [Mabou](#).

Pedometer: 1,789



The Ceilidh in Mabou

Thom with Fran, Georgi, and Pieter
at Mabou, Cape Breton Island

Thom's bug photo

Wednesday July 17, 2013 - Destination Alexander Graham Bell Museum



Coffee and fruit in bed. A lazy morning at the deVries'. Then good-bye!

1:00 pm: On the road to [Baddeck](#) and the [Alexander Graham Bell Museum](#).

1:45-2:15 pm: Check in and check out our campsite: [Bras d'Or Lake Campground](#) (#49A).

2:25 pm: Arrive at the G-B Museum. Have a good look around and then Thom buys (actually I buy one for him and pick up a large Raven puppet and two small ones for JP and his kids). The kite (the Eagle) is a super flyer and Thom has no problem getting it into the air.

5:00 pm: Baddeck Co-op to shop for groceries.

5:30 pm: Heading back to our site. The wind has picked up and it is getting cool. We set up our site with the awning and expect rain. Once we're set up Thom wants a swim so after I make coffee we head over: Thom to swim in the pool while Bill and I email and read respectively. It is 7:30 pm before we head back to make supper: Italian sausage, couscous and sautéed veggies with Asian sauce. Oh yes—Thom starts off with an ice cream drumstick from the campsite store. It is so windy we decide to eat our supper in the van: a first on this trip. After supper and cleanup a gentle rain began but we were all snug inside working on our projects. Thom and Bill managed to upload some photos to his blog.

Pedometer: 4,676



Breakfast at the de Vries'

Thom's self portrait on the road



The Eagle in flight



Bill and Thom
with the Eagle

Bras d'or Lake Campground



More smiles from Thom



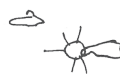
Thom's smiles are hard to get, given his
"grumpy" game



Inside away from the wind

Thursday July 18, 2013

Destination [Louisbourg](#)



It rained in the night. A very relaxed morning: coffee in the car and then breakfast at the table.

11:00 am: Thom and I head for the pool—Thom to swim, me to read—while Bill cleans up breakfast. Then it is almost 1:00 pm and the owner wants us to move. Apparently 1:00pm is check-out time! The next group for #49A (our site) has arrived. Bill had just arrived at the pool (2 hrs to cleanup!!) so we moved the van and packed it up.

1:15 pm: We are on the road to [Louisbourg, the Fortress](#). Arrive around 3:15 pm and visit the Fortress from 3:30 to 5:00 pm closing time: a short but very pleasant visit. The buildings and guides are much more developed than on our last visit. Buy bread and chat up Donna's son at the forge (Donna is the Minister at Pieter and Georgi's church).

5:30 pm: In our site (#21) at the [Louisbourg RV Campground](#). Thom is cranky and doesn't like the site: no fire pit, no trees, are in town, etc., etc. After supper I set the alarm for 7:30 am, must be on the road by 8:50 am. Sometime in the night I wake up with a migraine so set up in the Campsite Gazebo on lounge chair, with water, a vomit pot, and a blanket. Bill finds me early in the morning and brings my coffee and fruit. I am up and functioning by the time we have to leave for the ferry.

Pedometer: 3,836.



Main gate to Louisbourg



Exploring the fortress at Louisbourg



No smile this time -
even when having a good time



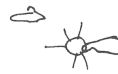
The campsite. It's only
charm was the gazebo



The gazebo at Louisbourg RV Campground

Friday July 19, 2013

Destination the Ferry at Sydney and then NL



9:03 am: Left the campsite.

9:45 pm: Arrive at the Ferry Terminal in Sydney and “The Blue Putties”: our ride to NL.

12:00 noon: Ferry leaves. Since the trip is so long (7 plus hours) set up time is complicated and the organization significant. The whole show is quite fantastic. And we can’t stay down with the car during the trip. The waves etc. can get too high to choppy to make it safe. Donna and her husband (the DeVries’ minister) are on the same ferry so we have a quick visit with them during the trip over.

6:00 pm: Arrive Port aux Basques; it is raining lightly.

6:30 pm or so: Arrive at Hotel Port aux Basques. Get settled in our room (#208). Check our email etc. and at 8:00 pm head down for supper.

9:24 pm: Showered, hair washed, and I’m ready for bed. Lots of rain, so we’re glad we are in a hotel.

Pedometer: 2,837



Loading the ferry at Sydney



Fran, Donna, another friend, and Thom on the ferry

The Blue Putties Ferry



Hotel Port aux Basques



A caboose from the Newfy Bullet - the Newfoundland and Labrador narrow gauge railway

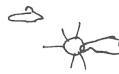


Game #2 rears its ugly head



The Port aux Basques Hotel

Saturday July 20, 2013
Destination [Corner Brook](#)



8:00 am: Up to check email, pack, and head for breakfast.

11:15 am: On the road. Postcards mailed at the hotel and we're checking out Island Treasures (a tourist shop) for magnets and gifts. [Stephenville](#) and lunch on a rocky beach on an ocean inlet. There was a fantastic wind so Thom went kite flying. Met Cecilia and Mikael for snack in town. Anika and the other two women bikers showed up as well.

6:00 pm: Arrive at Kelly Vodden's in [Corner Brook](#). Do some visiting and then headed out for sushi supper. Thom knew exactly what he wanted and proceeded to order it. I was surprised. He wanted Green Tea Ice cream for dessert but they didn't have any, unfortunately. Next we went to the university observatory but the sky was too cloudy to bother looking through the telescope; caught a lecture and had a nice tour of the facility and telescope, however.

11:30 pm: Washed up and settled in the van for the night.

Pedometer: 2,764



Lunch on a rocky beach in Stephenville, NL

The Eagle flies again!





Thom and Mikael in Stephenville



Thom, Fran, and Kelly Vodden on our tour of the telescope in Corner Brook



Sunday July 21, 2013
Destination Gros Morne



8:30 am: Up with a slight headache. Lighter-heated coffee in the van with prunes.

9:30 am: Head down to Kelly's house for breakfast. It turns out to be a 2-course feast: loads of fruit salad with yogurt and cereal, then a pause and cooks get started on bacon, ham, hash browns, scrambled eggs, and toast.

12 noon: Set out for Gros Morne after negotiating with Thom how to fit in sea kayaking, puffins, whales, and Gros Morne. Actually, after buying gas, meeting up with Badra from St. John's—who started a chat with Bill—and checking out the Newfoundland Emporium, it was closer to 1 pm when we set out.

3:30 pm: Arrived at the Rocky Harbour RV Campsite and found our site (#38). It is built for RVs and they come in by the 10s and 15s!! Too bad we don't have one of the enclosed campsites. But, all are taken, or reserved, when we arrive to check in. After we are settled we explored the town and local shops. Went to the lighthouse and had a lovely chat with the tourist guide there. Thom flew his kite and we had a nice taste of the wild strawberries in the field before returning to the Visitor Centre for a swim. It is a great set up and provides weekly swimming lessons during the summer for kids living up-island. Parents come down with their kids and camp and the kids take lessons. Thom and I play catch in the pool and another young boy joins in. After our swim we head out to a restaurant for supper.

10:30 pm: Back at the site and all in bed about 11:30 pm.

Pedometer: 3,828

Breakfast at Kelly's in Corner Brook



The Eagle flies at the Rocky Harbour Lighthouse



Looking for wild strawberries



Tried again to catch a smile
- it didn't work!



The pool at the Visitor's Centre - Rocky Harbour

Rocky Harbour sunset



Monday July 22, 2013



7:30 am: Alarm rings so up to wash etc. after only 1 or 2 snooze alarms. Breakfast coffee using the kettle in the campsite shelter.

9:10 am: Fully packed and head out to buy gas and propane. Propane only available at 4 pm but we're told to check Deer Lake.

9:30 am: On the road to the Table Lake Discovery Centre at [Woody Point](#).

10:30 am: Arrive—Thom fast asleep but does come inside to check the Centre out. Gorgeous views of [Bonne Bay](#) and the surrounding mountains, including Gros Morne. Learn that moose were introduced to NL: a pair in 1878 and a second pair in 1904. Now there are more than 100,000 on the Island.

11:30 am: Head for [Deer Lake](#).

12:30 pm: Deer Lake; stop for propane.

2:30 pm: [Springdale Info Centre](#) for lunch and another ice-cream break for Bill and Thom.

3:20 pm: Fran drives. We're listening to more Vinyl Cafe stories and driving through lovely country toward [Gander](#). Thom says NL is his favourite province. Still no moose: as Thom says, "We're mooseless in Mooseland."

6:45 pm: arrive at [Terra Nova Park](#) Registration only to find it closed at 6:00 pm. Lucky us, a park official was prepping for the 7:00 pm movie night and she directed us to [Newman Sound Campground](#) where we paid for an un-serviced site (#87). Supper: creamy KD with grilled peppers and hot dogs.

9:00 pm: Off to the internet café: Bill and Thom for another ice cream fix; Fran to check her email. **THIS is our last night camping with Thom!!!**

10:45 pm: All of us in bed with the alarm set for 7:30 am. Bill and Thom have a Kayaking date tomorrow at 10 am at the main Visitor Centre.

Pedometer: 4,897

Rocky Harbor RV Campground



So far the only moose we've seen are carved



Desperate in Mooseland



Ice cream stop - Springdale Info Centre

Long Shadows at Newman Sound Campsite



Tuesday July 23, 2013

Destination [St John's](#)



7:00 am: Up to wash and put my lighter plug coffee water on.

7:30 am: Enjoying my coffee and prunes. Bill is up getting the stove set up for breakfast. We brought it all in last night for the 1st time because of the bear warnings. We had other rodents nibble at our garbage bag (on the mirror) on at least 2 other sites before we learned to bring it in. But no bears visited us last night. Still no moose sightings in Mooseland and as Thom would say, we remain "Mooseless in Mooseland. You'd think that with ~120,000 on the island we'd see at least one!!!

It is a chilly morning so I've ordered porridge from the cook. We drive to the Visitor Centre to meet up with our kayaking guide. Thom and Bill head out on the water with the guide and I settle into the coffee shop to work on Fang's thesis review.

Thom and Bill returned to report a lovely kayaking session. According to Bill they headed across the lake, wandered around some of the inlets and coves, then returned back after an hour or so. The weather was beautiful, wind light, and the conversation with the guide was interesting and informative.

12:30 pm: Lunch at the little shop in the Visitor Centre.

2:30 pm: Head for [St John's](#) with a detour for ice cream at [Shoal Harbour](#) (one of the many suggestions from Rob Greenwood)

5:40 pm: Fran awakes to find Rogers Airwaves back in operation so her cellphone is back in working condition.

6:00 pm: Arrive at Rob Greenwood's house and to a fine supper with lots of conversation.

11:45 pm: To bed after a hot shower.

Pedometer: 2,709



Newman Sound Campsite



Fran is wearing a mask of the morning sun

Kyaking: The Visitor Centre
at Newman Sound Campsite



Wednesday July 24th, 2013



Lots of rain last night and overcast this morning but we are still excited about our exploration of St John's and environs.

9:00 am: Up for breakfast, etc. Not off to the best start: we had to use the broom handle to get the car going this morning. Thankfully it worked! We were heading out to [Bay Bulls](#) and O'Brien's Boat Tour, absolutely not an event to miss.

The tour was fantastic. We had nice swells in the water to pitch the boat back and forth, up and down—Thom loved it!! We not only had a great look at the puffins, but hung around a couple of whales sounding multiple times just off the puffin island and quite close to the boat. The Captain has lots of tales to tell about the Puffins: mate for life and often reunite at the same burrow site each year; females lay one egg; both parents take turns incubating it and caring for the chick; are excellent swimmers (awkward walkers), can dive to depths of 200 feet. After about 6-weeks the puffin chick is an 'adolescent'. The Captain pointed out a group of them to us "strutting around like they were on George Street."

1:45 pm: Lunch at O'Brien's.

2:45 pm: Head to [Cape Spear](#) (Canada's most easterly point) for photos and a tour of the gun emplacement and tunnels there.

5:30 pm: Meet Rob at [Signal Hill](#) to check out the eagle's nest. The young eagle was getting ready for his first flight, so there were several photographers on the ready to record the event. We walked down the trail to [the Battery](#). Meet up with Rob and his wife (Jackie) and head to Ches's for supper. This is a fish and chip place and is the venue for Rob's first date with Jackie. The cod tongues are delicious but there were not enough of them. We then drive over to George Street and Water Street for a walk around before heading home. Thom demonstrates his wit and intelligence once again but making mention—right out of the blue—of the "George street strutters" looking like puffins!!

10:45 pm: Back home at Rob Greenwood's for the night. Thom's last night in NL.

Pedometer: 9,059

Game #3: Photo-bombing by Mr Grumpy

Fran & Thom at Bay Bulls
(between a smile and a grump)



The Greenwoods' patio





Our tour boat awaits



Thom enjoying the pitch of the boat



Whale sightings



Counting the puffins



Cape Spear: Canada's most easterly point



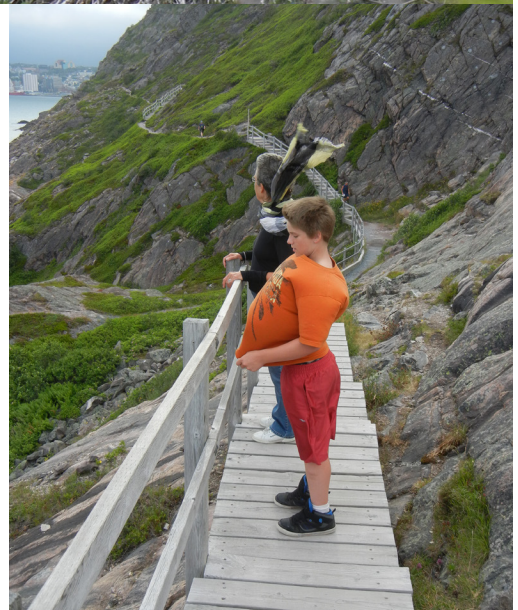
Adventures on Signal Hill



Getting the courage to fly

Checking out the eagle's nest

Battery Hill walk. It is WINDY!!





Still trudging down

Fran & Thom resting and watching after our trudge down from Signal Hill



Traditional fish & chip supper at Ches's

Thursday July 25, 2013



9:30 am: Up for breakfast. Thom packs for his trip home. Have a leisurely breakfast and then visit [Signal Hill](#) again to buy a souvenir for Thom in the tourist shop, then visit several other shops. Enjoyed a quick tour of the [Johnson Geo Centre](#) as well.

Around 3:00pm head to the airport. Stop for lunch at A&W on the way.

5:05 pm: AC 695 to Toronto and then a switch to a Victoria flight. Thom flies home on AC695. He almost forgot his souvenir—he managed to signal this through the windows to us up in the visitor's gallery—and we are able to get it to him thanks to a cheery and helpful ground attendant. Flight is 45 minute late leaving.

Bill and I head back to Rob's. We are on our own again!!

Pedometer: 3,009



Hey Mum - can I get a dog?



The Geo Centre on Signal Hill

At the airport: one last photo of us all. Thom smiles for this one!



Heading through security and home

- *D'you know what would suck? If you left your souweser in the van.*
- *That would suck - but do you know what would really suck? If the ground attendant had a heart attack before she got it to you.*
- *That would suck - but do you know what would really suck? If the commotion meant that your flight would be delayed so you missed your connection.*
- *That would suck - but do you know what would really suck? If the only flight available after that was to Victoria via Mexico.*
- *That would suck - but do you know what would really suck?*

Bill wrote a letter to Stuart Mclean about our cross-country adventures with Samantha and Thomas. Here is the letter he wrote - along with Stuart's responses.

On 2013-11-05, at 12:00 AM, Bill Reimer wrote:

Dear Stuart

I expect you receive many letters thanking you for enriching our lives through your stories. At the risk of overwhelming your ego, I would like to add one more to the list since it brings such joy to us.

It began about two years ago during the annual visit with our Victoria-based grandchild. For the last nine years Fran (my wife) and I have brought one of our grandchildren for a three or four-week visit to our home in Montréal. It remains a special event for us to get reacquainted – without the distractions of siblings and parents. Last year (2012) it was Samantha's turn to make the trip.

"Can we take the train this year," she asked, "rather than fly directly to Montréal?" "I want to visit Spuzzum," she added.

We were totally surprised that a 14-year-old girl would want to visit Spuzzum. In fact, it amazed us that she even knew it existed. Recognizing that a train trip would not give us the opportunity to visit places along the way (let alone see what remains of Spuzzum), Fran immediately seized upon this as an opportunity to fulfill her dream of another cross-country trip in a VW van. She recalled fondly just such a trip with her parents and our 14-year-old son in 1984.

As you can imagine, this was a suggestion that no self-respecting grandparent could refuse. So Samantha was given the task of 'googling' Westphalias for sale in Victoria and we followed up by purchasing a 1984 Westphalia when we visited them at Christmas. After some mechanical attention during the winter, we flew out to Victoria in July, packed up our van, and headed east with Samantha.

The trip provides a lovely collection of stories itself – some of them nicely suggested by Samantha's blog along the way (see <http://billreimer.net/workshop/?p=250>) – but my purpose in this e-mail is to pass on how you came along for the ride.

You joined us somewhere in the Shuswap. Samantha discovered a few of your stories on my smart-phone so by the time we reached Calgary she insisted I download several others for our traveling enjoyment.

This wasn't the first time that she was introduced to your world. She and her two brothers were occa-

sional listeners to your show, but on a busy Saturday morning, the stories get interrupted by the demands of breakfast, lessons, and sporting events. This was different – both for Samantha and for us.

The story of Stephanie tree-planting melded perfectly with the climb up the western foothills of the Rockies, the I Ching of Kenny Wong's father made perfect sense as we stopped in for lunch at the inevitable prairie restaurant advertising Chinese and Canadian cuisine, and the long journey through Northern Ontario was enriched by hearing of Dave and Morley's camping experiences. Even the anxiety and frustration of our breakdown in Schreiber was mitigated by the promise of adventure implied by Dave and Morley's snowstorm experience.

I expect you will also be pleased to hear how your stories stimulated those of our own. It was a smooth transition for Samantha to move from questions regarding your train show to those about the many ways in which trains and their legacy were part of our landscape. Her curiosity gave us license to pass on our own family stories as we visited my father's birthplace in Herbert SK, my mother's now broken-down farmhouse near Rocanville, SK, Fran's one-room schoolhouse in Sydney MB, and her father's former churches in Sydney and Fort Garry. It was a perfect context for passing on our family history – seamlessly moving from your world to ours as we travelled across the country.

We were delighted this year when we heard from Thomas, Samantha's 13-year old brother that he wanted to use his turn for a road trip as well. "I want to see a moose and visit the Republic of Doyle" he said.

This sounded perfect to us, so on July 6th we set off in our Westfalia for a meandering journey to St John's. This time we were prepared with a full roster of your stories – and were not disappointed when Thomas kept requesting them along the route. It meant that our visit to Québec city was partially guided by Sam's adventure (Thomas even found the tree with the cannonball in it), our travels along the Acadian coast were punctuated by laughter as Dave found birders and the remains of a waterslide in his back yard, and we were quizzed about exploding trees and the location of Big Narrows as we traversed Dave's island birthplace.

We remained "mooseless in mooseland" during our Eastern tour, but we did get to see 'The Duke' the RNC, and Signal Hill, so Thomas considers the trip a great success. Thanks to your inspiration, Fran and I got to tell stories about la chute du Québec, the Acadian expulsion, and the Louisbourg Fortress. It can't get much better than that!

As you can see, your stories have become the perfect companions to our road trip adventures. Although the messages are place-less, their content and telling conjures the sights and encounters across the country. We are particularly thankful for the way in which they have deepened our relationships with our grandchildren in the process.

Best wishes,
Bill Reimer

Tuesday November 5, 2013

Bill,

thank you for your lovely letter
it is late
it was the last thing i read before heading to bed
it leaves me speechless
it was thoughtful of you to write
and what you wrote was most kind
i envy your grandchildren's their time with you

warmest regards,
~ stuart mclean

Sunday November 10, 2013

Bill,

I think I replied to your lovely note the other day
but I am so caught up in Xmas deadline story writing i am not sure I did
I did want to be sure I acknowledged your note
and told you how much I enjoyed your kind words
so here I am again
(or perhaps not)

warmest regards,
~ stuart mclean

Sunday November 10, 2013

Hi Stuart,

Yes you did.

I considered replying but was restrained by an image of you hunkered over your keyboard, desperately trying to clean out your inbox. I greatly appreciate that you take the time to respond – especially during this period of time. I face Christmas story-telling pressure as well, since I have 6 grandchildren in BC who enjoy stories from their grandfather – but I enjoy a much less demanding audience.

I will continue to look forward to the fruits of your labour each Saturday morning (or Sunday, if life intervenes).

Best wishes,
Bill

Reflections on a road trip with our grandson

This trip introduced us to a Thomas we'd never met. We thought we knew what to expect - but failed to remember that this was formed amidst the chaos and confusion of family dynamics.

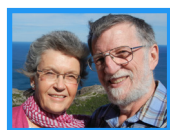
We knew that Thomas had a good sense of humour, but didn't anticipate its clever, convoluted, and creative aspects. We knew he was observant, but were surprised how much he retained details, then integrated them within new circumstances to provide clever grist for his comedy mill. We knew he was compassionate but didn't know that this was manifested in such a wide variety of circumstances - from a washed-out lobster to a stressed-out grandfather.

We were so fortunate to have this wonderful time with our grandson. Next year, or the year after, life will take him to a place where grandparents are no longer the main feature - but with luck, we will always remain in the wings. Thank you, Thomas, for giving us such a wonderful place in your life.

*Love,
Fran and Bill*



For Thom: one last look for a moose



F 'n B Productions
April 2016