

# **Gaspé and Canadian Atlantic Provinces 2013**

A tour by RV caravan

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## **EPILOGUE**

August 28 – near Mont Mégantic, Quebec

# Gaspé and Canadian Atlantic Provinces 2013

A tour by RV caravan

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## CHAPTER 1 - MAINE

### June 17, 2013 – North Little Rock, Arkansas

(Bert) “Oh, no, not again!” I exclaim. Shari is none too happy either, remarking, “I told you we should have replaced ALL the tires.” This is the fourth tire problem we have had since leaving the Lower Rio Grande Valley June first and we are still in Texas. First it was a flat tire I discover when we are ready to pull out of our campsite at Lake Corpus Christi, to be changed for the spare in Mathias, and replaced with a new Firestone tire in Corpus Christi. The manager assures me the rest of my 6000-mile-9-month-old tires are fine. We get to Livingston and again a tire is flat. The dealer tests the tire in a water tub, finds a loose valve stem and we are on the road again.

Fifty miles south of Dallas we have a terrible blow-out on the inside dual rear-tire that wraps the metal mud flap around the tires, destroys the sewer hose storage tube, and punctures the black-water tank. We replace the blown tire and one other that has a bit of wear, but the Goodyear manager says the other three tires look fine. It takes three weeks to get a new black-water tank manufactured in California and installed in Livingston. We leave town and get 130 mi. and have another blow-out, again damaging the mud flap and destroying much of the plumbing descending from the black water tank, but fortunately not damaging the tank itself. This time we replace all three of the remaining tires in Fairfield. Reaching Lewisville, I test the tire pressure and they are all over the psi scale. Driving new tires, mixed with hot road-driven tires, in 98° air, may be part of the problem. But why does one tire only register 30 psi? I suspect the valve extender, inflate the tire, and remove the extender. We must be jinxed, because Shari rides with our daughter on a shopping trip and the car has a flat tire and our daughter replaces four tires. Fortunately, my mechanically-talented son-in-law is able to rebuild the sewer pipe system after we buy eight PVC elbows, pipes, and valves and he links together the three-dimensional puzzle pieces.

On today’s drive I check the tire pressure five times. It goes up with temperature, but none loose air. Are my tire problems solved? I hope so. We want to be in Maine in week.

### June 23 – Hermon, Maine

(Bert) It never fails. If I write about an RV problem I am experiencing, you readers send e-mails offering either advice or one-better stories of similar disasters. Something about RV’ing generates hair-raising stories that elevate us above the humdrum of ordinary life.

So, when I open my e-mail today I read about tire pressure, Goodyear tires, Michelin tires, helium inflation, tire jinxes, tire balancing, measuring inflation ... I don’t know

what our problem was, and I doubt it was a single cause, but our tire problems disappeared once we left hot Texas and are now in cool Maine.

However, in an effort to top one scary story with another, two nights ago we were camped on a cliff overlooking Lake Ontario in upstate New York. It has been awhile since I plugged into 15/20-amp power, using my 30 amp to 20 amp convertor. Immediately, the circuit breaker pops on the electrical box. I check the wiring and see the outlet is properly grounded but even using an alternate convertor cord, I cannot keep the circuit breaker from disconnecting. During the next hour of trying to diagnose the problem, I discover that a 15-amp fuse in my coach has melted into its socket and has caused the short circuit. Yes, I really mean “melted” as in black plastic smoothly merged around the blue plastic of the fuse and surrounded by wispy trails of smoke residue. Our refrigerator has stopped working—stopped working on A/C, stopped working on D/C, stopped working on propane, even stopped displaying the lights on the front panel. Where do you get RV repair at 6 PM on a Friday night?

I'll shorten this story and just say that at 7:45 AM Saturday morning a young man—so young I wonder if he has finished high school—takes a look at the circuit box, retracts it from the wall, examines the wiring, moves a block of four circuits from the melted section to an unused section, attaches the wiring block, and walla!, the refrigerator is now working. I must be old when a kid as young as he knows how to fix something I don't know anything about. Then again, I am so non-mechanical it should be no surprise that I am dumbfounded. [Later this evening, when I explain the problem to a fellow Wagonmaster, he says the 15/20-amp outlet was probably outputting voltage so low it cannot be tolerated by a refrigerator].

Some of you have been wondering where we are going and have even searched my website trying to figure out why we headed to Maine. I will let you in suspense for another day.

### **Day -3 – June 26 – Hermon, Maine**

(Bert) Tailgunners and a few guests have arrived, so it is probably time I should announce where Shari and I are touring this summer. We had intended to spend the summer in Colorado and were only a couple of days into our trip leaving South Texas when we got a call from the office asking us to lead a caravan to Gaspé and the Canadian Atlantic Provinces, starting in Maine this Sunday. It is a “regular” caravan, i.e., not focused on nature but rather includes many sites, tours, and dining experiences. I jumped at the opportunity. Shari was reluctant because she expected I would be out birding by myself, leaving her with all the work. I said I would help; she said she would take away my binoculars to insure my help. We'll see what unfolds. As a good omen, we are walking through the RV park when overhead I notice a large heron with striped undersides winging above us. Even without my binoculars I recognized the American Bittern. We are off to a good start!

## **Day -2 – June 27 – Hermon, Maine**

(Shari) I cannot control the shopping cart at the Wal-Mart Super Center in Bangor, Maine. Tailgunner Connie and I have just arrived and this cart has a mind of its own. It wants to turn right. I struggle with it, but finally give up and let it take me to where it wants to go. It abruptly stops at the order counter of Tim Horton's. Ah shucks! Now I have to get a mocha latte and an apple fritter. Well, now the cart is happy and allows me to finish our caravan shopping in peace.

## **Day -1 – June 28 – Hermon, Maine**

(Bert) Today, enough rain pours from the skies to make me consider ark building. By South Texas standards the downpour would qualify for a three-month supply on the rain gauge.

What a day for outside errands! I get diesel at a station that still fills the tank for us and, if it had not been raining, they would have washed our windshield as well. Continuing in The Flood, I get propane, we go grocery shopping, and I do the laundry while Shari and Connie visit more couples recently arrived. By the time I finish, my clothes are soaked to the skin, even through my raincoat.

## **Day 0 – June 29 – Hermon, Maine**

(Bert) Tailgunner Bob knocks on my door while Shari is still curled up asleep. I join Bob for breakfast at the restaurant adjacent to the campground. Bob lures me along, promising free donuts if we arrive early. But the free donuts are not at the usual tray and we learn they don't make them on Saturdays.

Later I join Bob as he affixes numbered caravan decals on the RVs, a task that was stalled by yesterday's rain. We have eleven RVs in our caravan, not counting Wagonmaster and Tailgunner.

Bob served many years on naval submarines and when we meet one of the guests we find out that he was Captain of a nuclear submarine. Later we meet another Navy man on our caravan. Speaking of coincidences, I notice the RV across from me displays an "aTm" logo so I walk over and ask him, "Are you a former student?" Turns out he didn't graduate from Texas A&M University but, rather, was Dean of Students. Since we lived in Aggieland from 1972-1998, we start swapping stories. Although I don't recognize him at first, when he mentions his name Shari and my ears perk up. He was the mayor of the city we lived in during the time we lived there and Shari knew him through her Chamber of Commerce activities.

## **Day 1 – June 30 – Hermon, Maine**

(Bert) Some caravan groups gel quickly. Shari has concocted a mixer exercise of matching a photo to a name and after each person finds the person holding the matching

card, they are to learn each other's name, home city, and the reason for joining this tour. You can tell they are in conversation mode when many already divert to other subjects before reaching question three. Yet, when we do "herd the chattering chickens" into a quiet, sitting group, we hear the introductions and travel reasons. Most people chose to travel in this particular caravan because (a) they had not previously visited the Canadian Maritime Provinces, and (b) they wanted someone else to do the organizational planning for the route and attractions.

Shari and I continue with the orientation announcements regarding this tour and then we follow with a delicious meal that Shari and Connie have prepared for us. Later, some of us gather around the campfire built by Jim, so that he can use up his firewood before crossing into Canada tomorrow.

## **CHAPTER 2. QUEBEC**

### **Day 2 – July 1 – En route to Québec City**

(Bert) We travel through a mixed hardwood forest in northern Maine, following the rushing dark waters of the Kennebec River as it serpentine the gently sloping valleys banked by dense tree cover. Occasionally we see the hard rock outcroppings of ancient mountains. A woodchuck pokes its nose into a clump of weeds and later a Moose browses in tall grass at road's edge. The trees show great variety: elms, maples, birch, aspen, spruce, cedar, pine. We stop at Arnolds Way wayside where several interpretative signs are displayed. Did you know it takes 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of Sugar Maple syrup and that the practice began with the Native Americans? Prominent along the roadsides are the White Pines with boughs like outstretched arms, hands and fingers uplifted. Their silvery luster makes them easy to recognize at a distance. I learn that those with a trunk of diameter greater than two feet were called Kings Pines in 1605 because the King of England claimed those for constructing his ship fleet. Before we leave the wayside I follow an intriguing warbler call to its source, a brightly colored orange and black Blackburnian Warbler.



Blackburnian Warbler

In Harmon we were close to sea level, not far from Acadia National Park. Now we have climbed to 2000 ft. It is there, near Jackman, that we see the Moose. Roadsides are nicely sprinkled with pink and blue varieties of Lupine, patches of buttercups on spindly

stalks, and clusters of orange Hawkweed. Uneventfully, we pass through customs and enter Québec Province. The landscape transitions to boreal forest, a biculture of aspen and spruce. Sightseeing attractions are mooted as we speed northward on a major highway, straight and wide, busy with traffic, and then through a cloverleaf to our campground south of Québec City.



Québec border

### **Day 3 – July 2 – Québec City**

(Shari) I can get used to this “regular” caravan stuff, but don't tell Tina. We had a wonderful bus tour of Québec city today. This is one of my favorite cities ever. It looks and feels very European, complete with brick streets, chateaus, and murals on buildings. I can't say enough positive things about it.

(Bert) Shari dictated into her iPhone, which transferred her voice recording to text. Then she edited a few misunderstood words and e-mailed the message to me. I copied her e-mail into MS-Word and added the headings.

Rather than adding more text, I am attaching a few of my photos today.



Chateau Frontenac



Old city



Elaborate painting covering windowless wall at north side of building. This painting is flat, although it has a strong 3-dimensional quality.



Québec Parliament Building



One of four existing gates in original city wall fortifications



Montmorency Falls.



Sainte-Anne Beupre Basilica



Sainte-Anne Beupre Basilica



Sainte-Anne Beupre Basilica

### **Day 4 – July 3 – Québec City**

(Shari) Ahhhhh! A wonderful free day! After updating the budget/expense spreadsheet and making a few confirmation calls, we unplug Pup-Tent-2 and take off for the city. We are on a mission. We heard about a place to park downtown and in the busy city accidentally drive directly to it. Unbelievable! Next we want to find a campground for our nature tour next year, and luck is with us as we find out we can stay the night right at one of the sites we will visit. No facilities, but location, location, location is the key here.

I also want to check out Chez Marie, a quaint old restored place I heard served breakfast and lunch and baked bread in a stone oven. I get that out of my system as they seem uninterested, don't have any bread, don't serve meals, and don't use the old oven. Instead, they suggest a restaurant farther down the village road. It is a wonderful old cottage turned into a restaurant and for an hour we pretend we are in France as we eat our three-course meal of the day accompanied with all the homemade bread we want. Next stop is the farmers market, a wonderful place in Québec City where I will spend more time next year.

We have three stops left: groceries, fuel, and bank. As we circle the same Ultramar fuel station for the fourth time, I have to giggle. We are in the Québec maze where oodles of cloverleaves and intersecting interchanges, some stacked three levels high, combined with road construction, and blocked exits. We can't get off where we want. Gees! Our poor GPS (May) tries to help but does not know about construction and does her "recalculating" skit repeatedly. I sense even May is frustrated. Finally we get home, just in time for a nice unplanned social where we all tell each other what we did for the day.



Chez Marie



L'Auberge Baker

## Day 5 – July 4 – Métis-Sur-Mer

(Bert) Even though this is not a nature-focused caravan, I cannot resist telling the group about the bird sighting we passed a few miles before we reached our campsite for the evening. Our day's travel was along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, with small villages, neatly kept homes, and broad strips of farmland laid perpendicular to the shoreline. Views of the river—sometimes punctuated with islands—broaden as we move eastward, until toward the end of today we can no longer see the opposite shore. On the rocks exposed by the low tide are 100+ Common Eiders, a species usually only seen in the north. These oversized ducks with angular heads and bills are all brown, except for a few sporting small patches of white. All are females or near-full-size juveniles. Presumably, the males are in molt and hiding somewhere else, as none are among this large flock.

Surprisingly, the group asks more about ducks and extends my explanation to include the behavior of females tending the young, the males separating during their flightless stage, and then the conversation shifts to why some Canada Geese do not migrate. After I answer that question, Shari calls a halt to birding so that she can conduct her travel meeting. Later, we follow with a Fourth of July celebration complete with red-white-and-blue popcorn and an American flag Shari designed with edible red pepper strips, white cauliflower, and blueberries pinned with tiny flags on toothpicks.

(Shari) I have to remember to complement those responsible for sunshine. They have worked overtime today and our drive day is sparkling fresh. I have to giggle when I find

out four rigs beat us in. We took the scenic route and logged it for future caravans and then got involved in a huge detour. I guess we will have to depart even earlier. Ugh!



St. Lawrence River at Berthier-Sur-Mer



St. Lawrence River at Berthier-Sur-Mer



Common Eiders at Ste-Flavie



Shari's Fourth of July American Flag made with red peppers, cauliflower, and blueberries

### **Day 6 – July 5 – Grand Métis**

(Bert) It has been surprisingly warm, reaching into the 80s, so it is good we have an early start to the Jardins de Métis (Reford Gardens), begun in 1926 by a wealthy lady, Elsie Reford, after her doctor advised her to relax and start a garden. The ambitious woman

produced a fabulous floral garden over the last 30 years of her life. Now we enjoy walking through the wooded gardens displaying over 3000 varieties of flowers arranged in natural settings. On the estate we also investigate the historical exhibits of Estavan Lodge, built in 1887 for Sir George Stephen, the financial genius behind the Canadian Pacific Railway which stretched the breadth of Canada. The exhibits offer a peak into the lives of the ultra-rich who once owned most of the country.

Just when we think we are finished with our walking tour, Shari and I come upon the outdoor art exhibits for the Festival International de Jardins. The huge art displays stretch the imagination and it is difficult which to choose for the completion. In the end, I vote for *Réflexions Colorées*, a wall-sized equilateral triangle of three fused panels made of semi-reflective glass. From the outside, the partially mirrored surface reflects the forest that surrounds it. Stepping inside the triangle, I see the forest dimmed and strangely transparent. The effect is an eye's bewilderment and a photographer's delight.

(Shari) You can tell what I enjoy by the number of pictures I take. Today is a day of pictures at Reford Gardens. I usually do not like these types of places but this one is done with exquisite taste. I can only imagine the millions of man hours involved in planting and pruning. Every flower imaginable is represented. The peonies and azaleas are to die for. The fragrance of lilacs permeates the air. On and on for about 2 mi., I walk and admire. Ending in a sculpture garden, I get to vote for my favorite, Dead Garden, a bunch of logs suspended with wires, swinging in the breeze.

All we had to do was get the caravan to the gardens. The rest of our day is free. I know, tough job. On our way to a neat restaurant by the sea, Bert gets a little birding in, snapping pictures of female Common Eiders. I let him have the binoculars since we have five other birders on the caravan. He even gave a talk about the eiders last night and I was surprised at the number of questions asked and the level of interest. Oh my, we may be creating a monster birding caravan here.



Jardins de Métis



Réflexions Colorées, Festival International de Jardins (from the outside)



Réflexions Colorées, Festival International de Jardins (from the inside)



Dead Garden, Festival International de Jardins

## Day 7 – July 6 – Gaspé Peninsula

(Bert) The bulbous Gaspé Peninsula bulges northeasterly out of the North American landmass into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Gaspé is a huge impermeable forest-covered mountain range with a ribbon of highway trimming its edge to the sea. We spend the

whole day's drive arcing that perimeter on a two-lane road, most often just a dozen feet above the waterline, but later climbing engine-chugging steep cliffs and descending at dramatic declines prefaced with signs warning of 10-15% grades. We share the road with a surprising number of convertibles, the Québécois taking full advantage of one of the few weeks they enjoy superb warm sunshine. The road passes dramatic seascapes interposed with small villages, each with a Catholic church sporting a tall spire or two.

We stop at a wind farm, the gates closed at the early hour Shari and I arrive, but later hear that others in our caravan are treated to a tour. Our stops include several at waysides where I can scan for seabirds. I see my first Northern Gannets, Black Guillemots, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and White-winged Scoters near the village of Gros-Morne.

For the first time we arrive at our campsite before others in the group and, in fact, Shari conducts her travel meeting twice, once for those present at the scheduled 5 PM time and, later, for the half that arrive late after a wonderful day of sightseeing.

(Shari) Had our first fresh lobster tonight. Yum, yum!



Gaspé Peninsula



Gros-Morne, Gaspé Peninsula



Black-legged Kittiwake, Gros-Morne, Gaspé Peninsula



Black Guillemot, Gros-Morne, Gaspé Peninsula



Grand Vallée, Gaspé Peninsula



Cloridorme, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Gaspé Peninsula



Steep highway, Gaspé Peninsula

## Day 8 – July 7 – Forillon National Park

(Bert) My efforts at proselytizing the caravan people is starting to see success as this morning at 7:30 AM I have a group of 17 binocular-packing birders joining me for birding the best spots I know in the national park. Almost all of them have never gone on a birding walk. I lured them last night at the travel meeting when I passed around a list of animals we identified at this park on our last visit. It included 13 mammal species and 75 bird species. What I did not mention is that it took us two days to get that list and this morning we will only be out for a few hours. I hope I didn't set their expectations too high.

Fortunately, we are only about two miles into our route when two foxes show themselves on the road, one on the yellow median strip and the other on the shoulder. I stop, shut off the engine, and advise the others to exit their vehicles and watch one of the Red Foxes as it trots right up to the bumper of my RV before seeing its audience.

Our string of vehicles climbs the cliffs overlooking Gaspé Bay, stopping frequently to scan across the tranquil waters for seabirds. I tell brief stories and identification tips about Common Loon, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoters, guillemots, murrelets, and various gulls.

Next we head to Le Castor (the beaver) and see its lodge and dam. I hear a warbler, not certain whether the song is Chestnut-sided Warbler or Yellow Warbler. Betty spots the bird in a spruce but no amount of directions gives any of us enough information to see the

bird. Her description matches Chestnut-sided and eventually we give up on locating it in the dense foliage. Better to stay with the birds more easily seen.

We drive to Cap-bon-Ami and here I get out my spotting scope so that we can enjoy excellent views of seabirds nesting on the tall cliffs. I focus first on Double-crested Cormorant nests with adults and nearly full-grown juveniles, the adults still displaying vivid orange pouches clearly visible in the spotting scope. Then I align on several Razorbills, bringing them into full view. I tell the group that they will be the envy of their birding friends when they tell them they have watched Razorbills full-screen through a scope.

(Shari) We can't believe it. About 18 people join Bert on the nature tour of Forillon National Park this morning. AND even more amazing, they seem to enjoy it. We may have created a birding tour here.



Red Fox, Forillon National Park



Watching cormorants and gulls on Gaspé Bay, Forillon National Park



Cap-bon-Ami, Forillon National Park



Razorbills, Forillon National Park



Double-crested Cormorants on nests, Forillon National Park

## Day 9 – July 8 – Percé

(Bert) Have you ever climbed Mt. McKinley in Denali National Park? Superseding my comments for today, I have to tell you about Tom, who has joined us on RV nature caravans to Central Mexico and Belize (2005, 2006 and again 2009), Central America (2008), and as recently as 2012 for Nome, Alaska. His e-mail address includes the words mountain goat, and it is an apt descriptor. I cannot keep up with him on the many hikes we did together. Now for the punch line: Tom just finished climbing Mt. McKinley at the age of 78, becoming the oldest person to complete the climb. Not only that, but Tom has climbed the mountain every decade since 1963 when few people had done so and float planes did not carry hikers to the basin. Instead, that time they hiked from Wonder Lake to the summit. On this summer's hike they met with inclement weather and the climb up and down again took days longer than expected. For the complete story as published in the Anchorage Daily News, see

<http://www.adn.com/2013/07/09/2969243/choate-sets-record-oldest-mckinley.html>

and in New York Daily News, see

<http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/climbing-pioneer-oldest-summit-mount-mckinley-article-1.1395981>

as well as several other newspapers and web links.

As for today, I'll keep it brief. We drive the short distance to Percé, descending the last 17% slope into the seaside town and in view of famous Percé Rock and Bonaventure Island. Our campsite has the most fantastic view and when Shari conducts her travel meeting and discusses our plans for tomorrow, it is with a backdrop of the Rock and island.



Percé



Shari conducting travel meeting in front of Percé Rock



Percé Rock (289 ft. high)

## **Day 10 – July 9 – Bonaventure Island, Percé**

(Bert) This is our third visit to Bonaventure Island and it never ceases to amaze me. While the highlight is the gannets, this time I take closer note of Great Cormorants. A few of them nest high atop 289-ft. Percé Rock. Through my binoculars I can just make out the white pouch patch on a few of them as the boat passes beneath. I photograph them, along with Double-crested, and later blow up the best shots to validate my assumption. As we circle Bonaventure Island we get remarkably close views of Gray Seals as they perform like circus actors, bending and twisting on rocks just above water's surface. After almost completing the island loop I see Great Cormorants at water level and much closer than atop Percé Rock. Later, on our return hike I see them again and get my best shots.

Now, back to the Northern Gannets. Some 50,000 pairs nest on the island, plus some immature gannets that gather on the peripheral. Most of the mated pairs either are sitting on an egg or have a single chick ranging in size from a gray fluff barely larger than the egg to a fist-sized downy white chick displaying a pitch black bill and facial skin. With chicks, juveniles, and adults we must be seeing at least 125,000 gannets. From the boat we see them spread across every crevice and shelf on the steep rock cliffs, sharing sites with Common Murres and Black-legged Kittiwakes. The Québec National Park naturalist tells us about one-third of the gannets nest on the cliff sides. When we disembark and take the 1-hr. uphill hike to the flat hilltop we encounter that bulk of the colonial-nesting gannets. Mere hills of dirt and grass serve as nests, each separated by 80 cm (31 in.). An adult gannet has a body length of 37 in. so the nest distance corresponds to about that of two outstretched necks of side-by-side nest sitters. We spend a couple of

hours entertained by the social customs of the gannets, performing acts merely feet in front of us. The most dramatic are the fights which ensue when a gannet lands at a spot not claimed by its mate. The attack is fast and furious and we watch one battle ensue for 10+ min. with at least five gannets picking on the intruder.

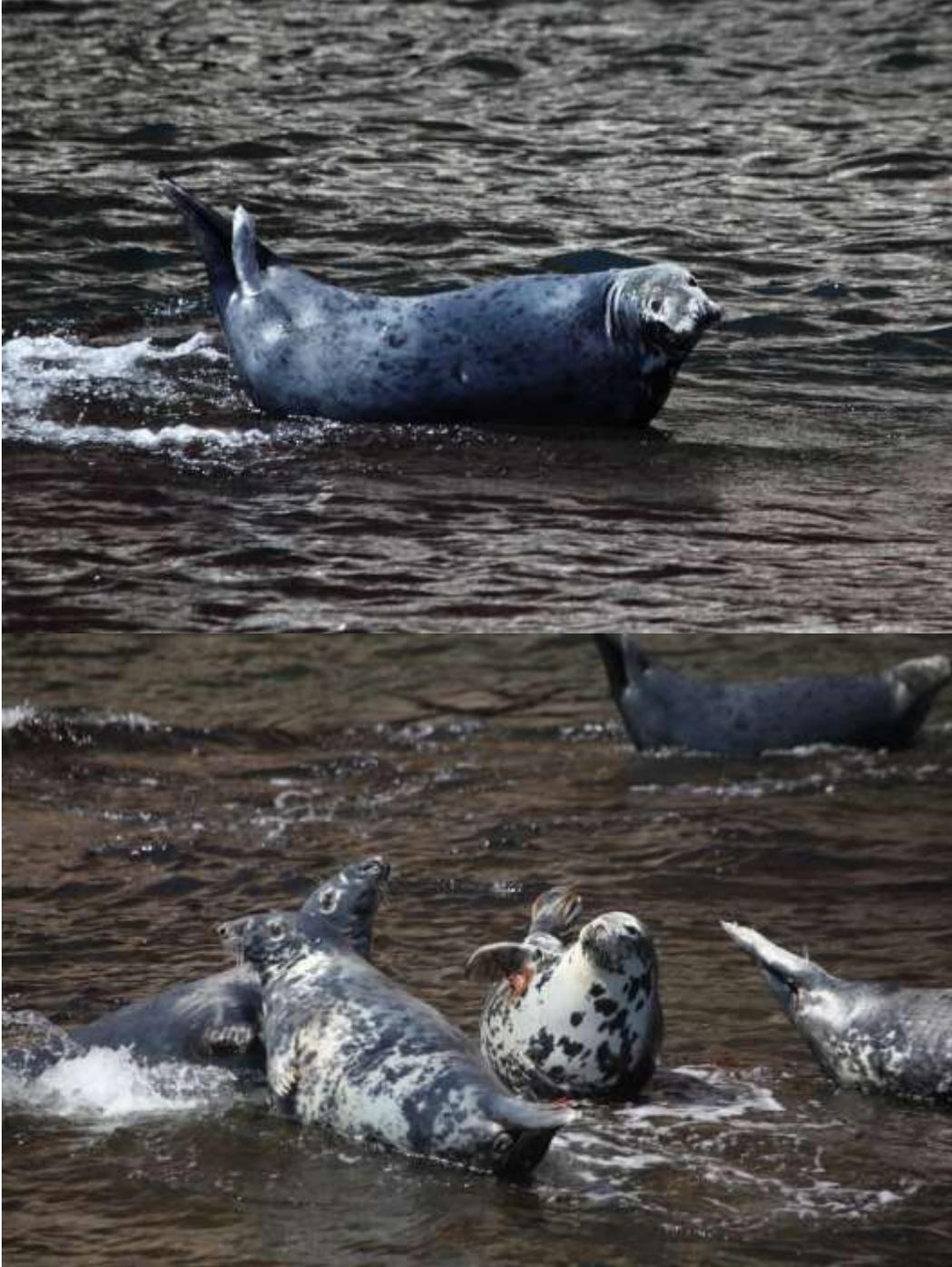
(Shari) What a fantastic day! I am so excited about the gannets on Bonaventure Island. I love this excursion. My excitement is contagious and all but two couples make the 3.4-mile round-trip hike to see the nesting birds. Since this tour is a month later than we normally make it, we see the hatched chicks in the nest, their fuzzy gray feathers just barely formed. 50-60,000 pairs plus young are nesting here and we watch their fascinating behavior. The hike is tiring and I am pooped. We still have to shower, do laundry, and pick up lobster for the group. Yum! Everyone participates in the lobster picnic and a great time is had by all.



Great Cormorant, Bonaventure Island



Great Cormorant, Bonaventure Island



Gray Seal, Bonaventure Island



Northern Gannets nesting on cliffs, Bonaventure Island



Northern Gannets nesting above cliffs, Bonaventure Island



Northern Gannet pair with chick, Bonaventure Island



Lobster tonight!

## **CHAPTER 3 – NEW BRUNSWICK**

### **Day 11 – July 10 – Caraquet**

(Bert) Uneventfully—except for a few in the group that made wrong turns—we left Quebec and entered New Brunswick.

(Shari) Lobster #3. Yum, yum!

Here are a few more photos from yesterday:



Northern Gannet – graceful flight



Fighting an intruder





## **Day 12 – July 11 – Acadian Historic Village**

(Bert) Shari and I lead the group to Acadian Historic Village this morning and Shari stays to tour the village while I stay in the RV to catch up on computer work. The recreated village, gathered from original and rebuilt buildings, shows the daily life of Acadians between 1770 and 1949. Here are some of Shari's photos:









## **CHAPTER 4 – PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

### **Day 13 – July 12 – New Brunswick to Prince Edward Island**

(Bert) Our drive day today includes several good birding sites we have visited other years, so Shari and I leave at 6:15 AM hoping to make a few stops and beat the caravan to the campground. Our first stop is Kouchibouguac National Park and we head toward the sandbar and marsh about 15 km from the entrance. En route through the park we see a family of Ruffed Grouse fly across the road with one straggling chick that had the frightened expression of “Wait for me, Mommy!” A mile later I pass an adult at the side of the road and slowly back up to the spot where it waits long enough for four quick photo shots.

The marsh is vibrantly green, decorated with fully blooming *Rugosa* Roses. Winging past the boardwalk are dozens of Common Terns. I walk to the beach, see no nesting Piping Plover exclosures, and being short of time I head back across the boardwalk. I pass four young lifeguards on their way to the swimming beach. A sign there states yesterday’s temperatures as air 82°, water 60°, making swimming a bit cold for my blood. We make another birding stop and then skip a few other places we wanted to visit. By now the caravan has caught up with us and we need to head for the lead. We probably would have come in first at the campground if we didn’t stop to buy a case of oysters.

(Shari) So many good comments! On our first trip to PEI, I heard about grilled oysters. Since that time, I have always treated the caravans to them. This caravan is no exception

and Bert and I stop off at the oyster farm before our arrival at camp. I have arranged to have all the grills available under the pavilion. After our travel meeting, we stoke up six grills and lay on the oysters. Soon the shells pop open and they are ready to eat. So many people have not had oysters like this before. Some needed encouragement to even try them. But after tasting them, they could have eaten more than their allotted share. Good thing we are using the grills for a grill meat potluck and birthday cake (named ‘better than sex’) later on.



Ruffed Grouse, Kouchibouguac National Park



Rugosa Rose, Kouchibouguac National Park



Common Tern, Kouchibouguac National Park



Shari's "Better than sex" cake

**Day 14 – July 13 – Prince Edward Island: Queen County**

(Bert) Local resident Bob is our guide on the bus tour around Queen County, the central one of Prince Edward Island's three counties. First stop is the harbor in North Rustico where lobstermen have stored their traps for the season now ended. Bob explains how a lobster trap captures lobsters. First, the lobster is tempted by a chunk of herring or mackerel securely mounted inside the trap. Claws forward, the lobster easily enters the first part—called the kitchen—of the trap, munches on the bait, and then attempts an exit, but finds it cannot pass through the funnel-shaped netting, nor can it back out as this arthropod has no reverse gear. Finding an easier exit, it enters the second chamber—called the parlor—only to find it is another dead end. On a good day, three or four lobsters end up in the parlor by the time the lobstermen haul up the traps from depths of 30-60 ft. In recent years Atlantic Province lobsters are cheap, so it is hard for lobstermen to make a good living during the limited season allowed by law. Lately, the government has been buying up licenses with boats and traps, thus reducing the competition. Years ago, such a license-boat-trap operation would sell for up to a million dollars, but nowadays they are hardly ever sold—except to the government—and instead are handed down from generation to generation.

After the lobster trap explanation we look up at a tall pole and platform and see an Osprey nest with three nearly full-grown juveniles peering over the edge as intent at watching us as we they. Two adult Ospreys are flying over the harbor where kayakers are gliding smoothly.

(Shari) Another hard day on the job! This morning we meet our guide and bus for a tour of Prince Edward Island. Even though I have been to the places on this caravan on past visits, it is nice to learn more about the area. I never had a lobster trapping demonstration and it is fascinating. Also, I will now know when I am eating a male or a female lobster.

I never knew that Anne of Green Gables must have been at least partially autobiographical as the book's author, Lucy Maude Montgomery was sent to her grandparents to live when her mother died and her father left town. I had never visited the tourist town of Summerside where I wish I could get off the bus to shop. I had never eaten at the PEI Preserve Company; it is yummy and of course I have to buy some of their products.

(Bert) At the tour of Green Gables I most enjoy the walk along Lover's Lane, a wooded path along a thinly-winding gurgling creek. Lucy Montgomery found it a source of inspiration, as you can read in her lines shown below. The shadowed forest delighted me with Clintonia berries ripening from pale green to deep blue, lush spreads of Marsh Marigolds on beds of vibrant green, delicately patterned fronds of Wood Fern, and the musical serenades of parulas, redstarts, and Black-throated Green Warblers.

(Shari) I buy some mussels on the tour when we visit a fish market and later make them as directed by one of our guests. They are simply scrumptious. She had given me some wine to use as the steaming sauce but since I am crabby I drink some of it instead. Maybe that is why the mussels taste so good.

One of our guests passes around a flyer and asks the group if anyone wants to go to a céilidh tonight. About 18 people raise their hands so I decide to call ahead for tickets. At 6:30 we car pool down the road for 20 min. and arrive at the Skye Family compound. We are treated to a gospel-oriented Celtic céilidh. It has a bit too much proselytizing at the end for my taste, but the music and entertainment is good.



Stacked lobster traps at North Rustico, Prince Edward Island



Osprey on nest built on wooden platform, North Rustico, P.E.I.



Kayaks in bay at North Rustico, P.E.I.



Green Gables, the house that inspired the setting for *Ann of Green Gables*

*“Once and again, I stray down  
and listen to the duet of the  
brook and wind, and watch  
the sunbeams creeping through  
the dark boughs, the gossamers  
glimmering here and there,  
and the ferns growing up in  
the shadowy nooks.”*

The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery, entry of  
July 24, 1899



Ferns surrounding brook running beside Lover's Lane, Green Gables, P.E.I.



American Goldfinch (sometimes called Thistlebird) feeding on Canada Thistle

### **Day 15 – July 14 – Prince Edward Island: North Rustico**

(Bert) It's Lobster Night Out! A lengthy 60-ft. buffet line, all the mussels you can eat, your choice of entre: lobster, steak, scallops, snow crab, etc., and a large selection of desserts. Of course, Shari and I choose lobster. That's Lobster Number Four.



60-ft. buffet line



P.E.I. mussels – all you can eat!



Lobster #4

## Day 16 – July 15 – Prince Edward Island birding

(Bert) Randi, a keen birder, drives her truck as the two of us head out to a few of my favorite birding spots on the island. The first is a hard-to-find coastal site on the north side of the island. I am not positive which narrow gravel road takes us to the spot, but we

take the first one that looks promising. At the lighthouse at the end of the road we find Bonaparte's Gulls feeding in the bay, though none of the other birds are new to the tour. In the distance I see the red cliffs I seek, so we double back to find access and hike about 1 km.

Hopping in front of us on the red dirt road is a sparrow that puzzles us. We conclude it is a Savannah Sparrow, but its bold black-and-white back striping is different from anything I've seen before. Check out the photos below. Next I see one of my favorite birds, recognizing it in flight by the banana yellow nape patch. Three male Bobolinks alight on a densely foliated shrub with a powder blue sky backdrop. We only hear a few cadences of their flight song so perhaps the nesting season is complete.

We reach the end of the road and stand atop the cliffs, scanning on each side for nesting cormorants. Hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants are still on nests and after much searching I find one Great Cormorant on a nest 75 ft. below an attentive Bald Eagle. We leave the cliffs, head to Prince Edward Island National Park, and walk slowly along a wooded trail where vireos and warblers are in full song, most so high up in the tall trees that they escape visual detection. However, a Black-throated Green Warbler descends to our level and offers a good photographic opportunity.

Shari gets the second half of my day and we go shopping in Summerside. She is disappointed with the shops and buys nothing. I notice one interesting feature, though. The 14% sales tax does not apply to locally created crafts, giving vendors a price advantage against foreign imports.



Unusual Savannah Sparrow with strong black-and-white back stripes



Unusual Savannah Sparrow



Typical Savannah Sparrow



Typical Savannah Sparrow



Bobolink in flight – a poor photo, but still easy to see the identifying yellowish nape



Bobolink, Prince Edward Island



Red iron seaside cliffs with white patches showing cormorant excrement



Great Cormorant nest near center of photo with Bald Eagle at top right.



Great Cormorant nest at center, surrounded by Double-crested Cormorant nests



Close-up of Great Cormorant on nest



Black-throated Green Warbler, Prince Edward Island National Park

## **CHAPTER 5 – NOVA SCOTIA**

**Day 17 – July 16 – Truro**

(Bert) We leave Prince Edward Island in early morning and cross Confederation Bridge, completed in 1997 and with a length of eight miles. We traverse a corner of New Brunswick and then enter Nova Scotia. Dinner tonight is at a local volunteer fire department, a delicious barbequed pork chop meal served only to visiting RV caravans a few times each summer and a fund raiser for the department. Later we ask a fireman to tell us about his brigade and he gives us a tour of their equipment.



8-mile Confederation Bridge viewed from New Brunswick side



Black-capped Chickadee, Cape Jourimain, New Brunswick



Tour of fire trucks after dinner prepared by volunteer firemen

## **Day 18 – July 17 – Tidal Bore at mouth of Shubenacadie River**

(Bert) Perhaps the most unusual tidal bore in the world, at least from an adventure point of view, occurs daily on the Bay of Fundy. We get a close-up view, very close up, of high tide this afternoon when we don bright yellow raingear and lumber over the bulging sides of a Zodiac river raft, sit on the edge, grabbing tightly on a thick rope attached to the sides.

Connor pilots us a short distance into a narrow bay as we await the arrival of the bore tide. “Giggle waves” is what Connor names our first experience over the tide, a mere few inches high. As the bore tide rushes into the narrowing Shubenacadie River the water piles upon itself and the waves become higher.

He drops us off at a sandbar in the middle of the river. It looks wide enough for a hundred standing people but, amazingly, it soon shrinks and seawater begins to swirl over our feet. We climb quickly into the Zodiac before the sandbar island disappears beneath Hot Chocolate water, frothy and richly reddish brown. “Hot” might also apply, or more aptly, “warm” as the water is probably in the mid-70s.

We move in the direction of the tide, frequently doubling back to ride the waves. At submerged sandbars the water piles up to several feet and we plunge through the waves that engulf the rubber boat and spray showers over our heads, down our backs, and into our boots. Good thing the water is warm. The bore tide moves at a speed of ~10mph and as we propel the six miles into the ever narrowing channel the waves get higher and higher.

Just after the last sandbar-induced rapids we reach the old dilapidated railroad bridge and the newer auto bridge. Here, at the high perch marking the edge of the railroad bridge is the rest of our caravan group, watching us with cameras in hand. About half took the wild ride and the other half watched, probably both happy with their choice.

On the way back we pass our second Bald Eagle nest and more Bald Eagles perched atop riverside trees. Connor tells us the eagles are waiting for low tide to scoop up any stranded fish on the vacated mudflats. Dark as these waters are, it is surprising to learn that fish adopt the muddy river. Back at the origin of our bore tide ride, the hot showers are welcomed, as is the real Hot Chocolate and maple-flavored cookies.

Shari's photos are shown below, all taken in calm water as the turbulent sections of the river are not accessible from a land-based viewpoint.







## Day 19 – July 18 – Grand Pré

(Bert) While most of us remember fragments of Longfellow’s *Evangeline* story, few of us recall the real story behind the Acadians expulsion from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia 1755-63. We learn much of that history today through exhibits and an excellent professionally-produced dramatic film at Grand Pré National Historic Site. French-speaking, yet attempting a neutralist position between the French and British armies, the Acadians were caught in an impossible position. Both armies demanded loyalty to them only. Ultimately, the British distrusted the Acadians to the point that they forcefully removed them from the lands and homes the settlers had worked so hard to create and build. The British army confiscated the Acadian’s possessions and farmlands, burning their homes, and shipping them to New England, the English colonies, New Orleans, France, and even South America. Over 10,000 Acadians were deported, many of them dying in transport or becoming refugees without a country.

After arriving at our campground, Shari and Connie head off to pick up our “surprise” dinner for the caravan, while I conduct the travel meeting, tell the group about tomorrow’s plans, and give a short talk about the thousands of Semipalmated Sandpipers using the Bay of Fundy as the chief fueling stop during their migration to South America. The picnic tables are gathered in the cool shade of spruce trees, Shari brings out the side dishes and dessert, and then Connie hands out the main course. Check the photos below and I bet you can guess what was served.

LIEU HISTORIQUE NATIONAL  
DU CANADA DE  
**GRAND-PRÉ**

**GRAND-PRÉ**  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
OF CANADA

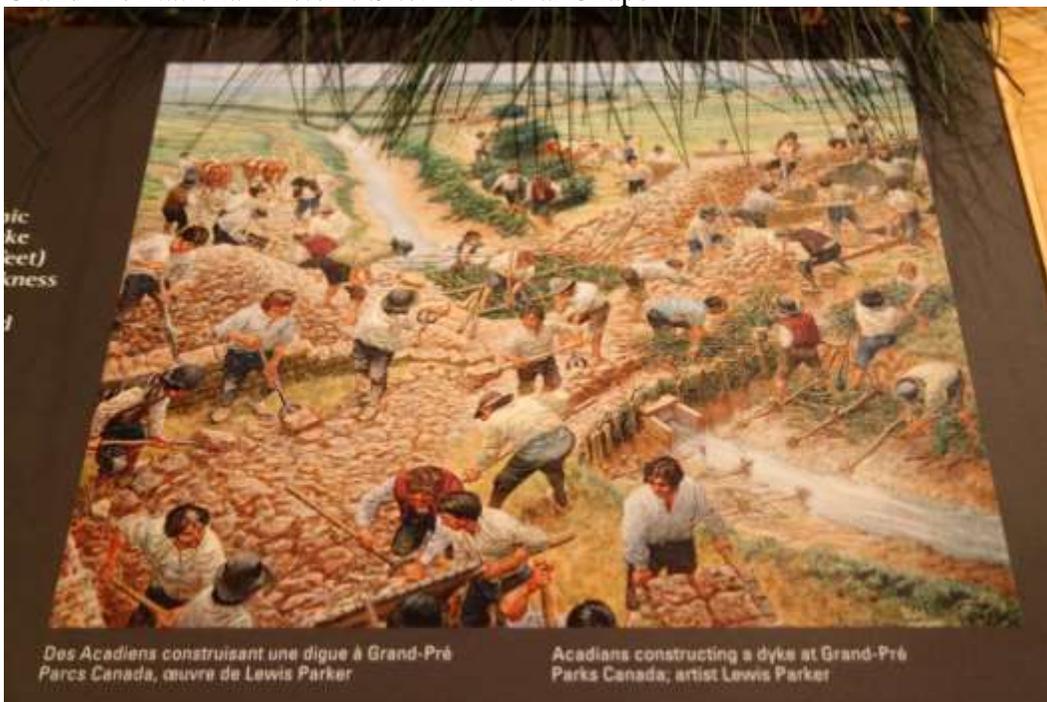
*Bienvenue*      *Welcome*



Grand Pré National Historic Site, Nova Scotia



Grand Pré National Historic Site: Memorial Chapel



Poster illustrating Acadians reclaiming land through dykes

Between 1755 and 1763, more than 10,000 Acadians were removed from their homes in present-day Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

Some evaded deportation, of whom a small number carried on a guerrilla resistance against British forces. Not all who were uprooted were prepared to say goodbye to the region they cherished. Footsore and half-clad, the dispossessed wandered in search of family and friends. They endured hunger, illness, desperate living conditions, anguish at the death of loved ones, and sadness at seeing children forced to work.

Most exiled Acadians never returned to their homeland. Nonetheless, the strategy of assimilation largely failed. The refugees retained their sense of identity. The officials responsible for the deportations never guessed the Acadians would show such determination. They underestimated their will to survive. That inner strength carried thousands of refugees through the years of the *Grand Dérangement*.

Acadiens et Acadiennes  
se faisant déporter de  
Grand-Père en 1756  
Jules-Pierre Comair,  
œuvre de Claude Poirier

Deportation of Acadians 1755-1763



Surprise dinner for the caravan

## **Day 20 – July 19 – Annapolis Royal**

(Shari) It is amazing how much we missed in our first two trips to the Maritimes. Today we are in Annapolis Royal, a whole town we missed. Here we visit Port Royal, Fort Anne, and Annapolis Royal Historic Garden. We endure our first rain of our trip, but it is not bad enough to stop us. It rains while we have a guide talk to us, indoors, about the fort at Port Royal and stops while we visit the grounds. It does rain at the gardens which bring out the mosquitoes, though it stops in time for us to walk to the bakery where we have lunch. We are served homemade bread, homemade vegetable soup, tasty sandwiches, and homemade blueberry tart. Last night lobster and today blueberry tart! I have said it before: this is a tough job but someone has to do it.

(Bert) Four fascinating sites we visit today. Port-Royal Habitation is a meticulously accurate replica, built 1939-41, of the original fort built in 1605. Port-Royal served as the capital of Acadia. A guide dressed in period clothes, including wooden shoes, gives us a vivid description of life during the French settlement, up until the British destroyed the fort in 1613.

The Annapolis Royal Historic Garden might have been better viewed under clear skies, though the rain drops add a lustrous appeal to the flower petals. A proper German lunch is well received at German Bakery, Sachsen Cafe & Restaurant and I am especially interested in the story these East Germany emigrants tell about how they came upon owning and operating the restaurant in Nova Scotia. Most intriguing to me is a framed certificate on the wall of the owner's grandfather, certifying him as a baker in Germany. Having recently completed editing my mother's book (published in February), I had learned that my Great-great-great Grandfather (1771-1841) was a Bäckermeister in Regenwalde, Pomerania. Having researched what it requires to become a Master Baker, I knew he had to have studied and trained to receive his certificate from the Baker's Guild, as well as getting advanced experience as a journeyman and training to become a Master. At the restaurant, I photographed the baker's Lehrbrief (Certificate of Apprenticeship) on the wall, the first step in the process.

Fort Anne has the distinction of being the most fought after property in North America. Originally it was built by the Scots in 1629 when they colonized New Scotland (Nova Scotia). Later it switched between French and British in succeeding battles. We view an incredibly detailed needlepoint tapestry completed by local residents age 6-99. It illustrates the history of Port Royal. Surprisingly, a few stitches were added by Queen Elizabeth, who had to be shown how to needlepoint. Outside, the most unusual artifact is the Powder Magazine, built in 1708 and still standing. Also interesting is the exact piece of land from which the Acadians were forced to board British ships at the time of their banishment.



Port Royal Habitation



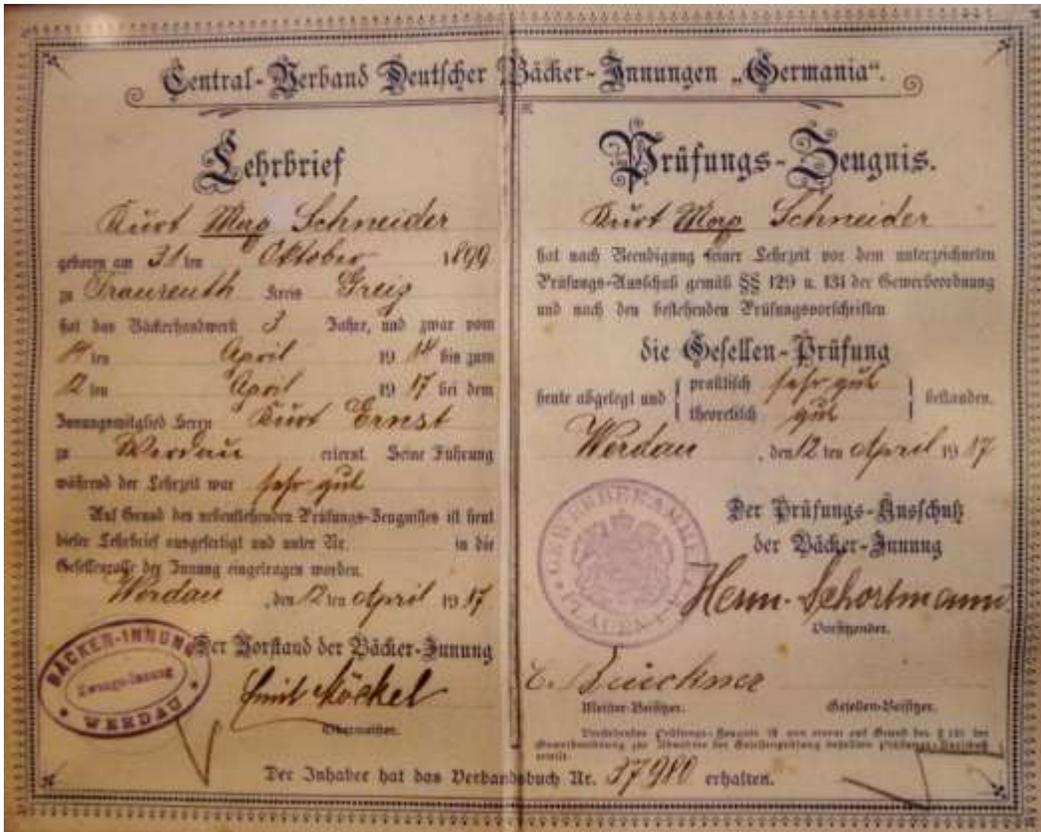
Annapolis Royal Historic Garden



Annapolis Royal Historic Garden



Acadian house at Annapolis Royal Historic Garden



Baker's Lehrbrief issued 1917 in Germany



A small portion of the needlepoint tapestry depicting history of Port Royal



Detail of Queen Anne, namesake for Annapolis Royal, and the section where Queen Elizabeth added a few stitches



Original Powder Magazine built in 1708 at Fort Anne

## Day 21 – July 20 – Lunenburg

(Shari) After a tasty breakfast at the campground café, I drag Bert to the local farmer’s market. It is the best market so far this summer, complete with arts and crafts and much locally grown produce. I have to weigh the issue, “Do I eat out or do I buy the tasty fresh produce?” Tough choice, so I try to compromise. Tasty produce for lunch and eat out for dinner. LOL! Now, in Lunenburg, we are enjoying homemade lobster rolls from lobster #6 as we wait for our caravan to arrive in camp. Lunch is topped off with a rhubarb tart that Bert and I share. I have to make some concessions to the diet. LOL again!

(Bert) Contrary to Shari’s statement, she didn’t “drag” me to the farmer’s market in Annapolis Royal. I always like markets where they sell used books and I have lots to choose from. I buy a great hardback book entitled “The Life and Times of Chaucer” by John Gardner.

We arrive in Lunenburg in plenty of time for me to study the campground layout. Yet, utter confusion confounds us when we try to park caravan vehicles. Sites are too short, too uneven, or too inaccessible. Utilities are randomly left or right and spaces are poorly defined. It’s a mess!

Fortunately, our L.E.O. (Let’s Eat Out) goes without a hitch and everyone decides to join us at a fine restaurant overlooking the harbor in Lunenburg.



Farmer’s Market, Annapolis Royal



Harborside at Lunenburg

## Day 22 – July 21 – Lunenburg

(Bert) During the guided tour of the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic I learn about the sex life of the lobster. Who would think it could be so romantic! The lobster sheds its entire exoskeleton, much like a snake, replacing everything—even the eye coverings—with a new body. If a lobster loses a claw, it grows another. No wonder a lobster is thought by biologists to live forever. Seventy years has been documented and maybe if we didn't eat them or there were no diseases, they could really surpass that amazing age.

Back to their sex life, the female sheds her exoskeleton, leaving her very vulnerable as the new shell is soft and flexible. Given the cannibalistic nature of lobsters she might make a tasty meal, but instead, she gives off her “perfume”, or at least that is what the guide calls it. I'd call it a pheromone. Anyway, the scent attracts mates and they zero in on her location. From the male's perspective, sex is better than food. A contest ensues on whose is biggest and the female selects the one with the biggest claw—did you know lobsters are left and right-handed, with the biggest claw denoting their handedness?—by placing her claw on its head. The two lovers now perform a courtship dance with closed claws. Gently—and I repeat gently—the male lobster turns over the female with the fragile and soft new exoskeleton on her back, ascends her, and they mate. Actually, he spreads his sperm over a sack where the female stores them until she is ready to get pregnant. Eventually, and it may be as long as 15 months, she releases the sack and her eggs and they fertilize and she catches them on her body where they develop before being released with a sudden flutter of her swimmerets. After about three years they are about the length of a man's fingernail and have equal length claws. As the young lobster reaches for food, in time, the most active claw strengthens and becomes larger.



3-dimensional map of Maritimes, with Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, near bottom center



Cod fishing boat at Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic



Fresh scallops for dinner, here shown under water

### **Day 23 – July 22 – Lighthouse Route to Halifax**

(Bert) We take the scenic Lighthouse Route along picturesque Mahone Bay and then turn inland along a hilly highway surrounded by spruce-aspen forests, mostly absent of development. Our campsite is on the outskirts of Halifax, the largest city in Nova Scotia.



Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia



## **Day 24 – July 23 – Peggy’s Cove and Halifax**

(Bert) Peggy’s Cove is the most visited tourist site in Nova Scotia, so today we are among many walking the single street winding around the harbor and up the hill to its endpoint at what may be North America’s most depicted lighthouse by artists and amateur photographers. The village could be called an artist’s colony or a fishing village,

as people of both professions are in residence, but with a population of only 60, it is mostly a tourist destination with lots of shops selling local wares.

Although Shari and I have visited Peggy's Cove three previous times, today we see it from a new perspective, from a boat as it semi-circles the lighthouse and follows the coastline past cormorant-laden rock islands to another sheltered bay. Another new experience is to eat at the popular Sou'Wester restaurant, adjacent to the lighthouse, where we have a hearty meal of clam chowder, fish & chips, and ice cream topped apple tort. After a quick view of the memorial site for Swiss Air 111, a visit shortened by the onset of rain, we board the bus again and head to Halifax, a ride just long enough to take in a short nap.

The drizzle has continued. Nonetheless, we walk in and out of the historical exhibits at The Citadel, a remarkably well-fortified star-shaped fortress atop a drumlin—a huge rock formation left by glacial till—overlooking the harbor. Most enjoyable is listening to a kilt-clothed soldier playing the bagpipes with remarkable skill and lung power. The fort's defensive strength has never been tested, as Halifax has never been attacked.

I have two stories I'll save for tomorrow's report: (1) the Halifax blast that is second in force only to Hiroshima and (2) the sinking of the Titanic.



Peggy's Cove harbor



Lighthouse at Peggy's Cove as viewed from sea



Peggy's Cove



Memorial site for Swiss Air 111, with Peggy's Cove in the distance



Uniformed piper at The Citadel, Halifax



Fogged in at the central courtyard of The Citadel, Halifax



Guard at entrance to The Citadel, Halifax

## **Day 25 – July 24 – Halifax**

(Bert) While the Citadel of Halifax was never attacked, destruction did not escape Halifax. Much of the city was destroyed in an instant with a blast that was second in powerful force only to Hiroshima. Our guide Carolyn, a former Social Studies teacher, is filled with stories. Without notes, she spins one story after another, sometimes even two stories simultaneously as she interrupts one to interject another about a scene we pass on the bus.

Regarding the blast, during World War I a ship, the French SS Mont-Blanc loaded with explosive materials, collided with another, detonating a blast so powerful it leveled Halifax buildings within a half-mile radius, instantly killing 2000 people and injuring another 9000. Reconstruction was aided by Massachusetts and we view rows of block houses built at that time.

Interwoven with these stories, Carolyn tells us about the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, the retrieval of bodies by a Halifax crew that had been laying transatlantic cable, and the burial of many victims in Halifax cemeteries. She particularly dwells on the unknown deceased and especially on one young boy, first buried as “unknown,” then conclusively identified by mitochondrial DNA in 2002 as a Swedish boy, only to be recently (2007) determined to be another, namely 19-month-old Sidney Goodwin. At Fairview Lawn Cemetery we view the boy’s gravesite as well as many others with names that evoke more stories from Carolyn. One is the grave of J. Dawson, a coal-shoveling worker—called a trimmer—on the Titanic, whose name was chosen as the main character in the movie, although the character’s role is completely different. By 6:30 PM we are back at our campsite, done with the tour, but I am sure not finished with stories from Carolyn.



Raindrops on windows dimmed our view of Halifax block houses built by volunteers from Massachusetts after the 1917 Halifax blast



Close-up of Halifax block house



Burial site for Titanic victims at Fairfield Lawn Cemetery, Halifax



Burial site for J. Dawson, a trimmer on the Titanic



Unknown child, 1912 Titanic victim, originally thought to be Gösta Pålsson or Eugene Rice, then as Eino Viljami Panula after 2002 DNA testing, but determined in 2007 after more extensive DNA testing to be Sidney Goodwin.

### **Day 26 – July 25 – Baddeck**

(Bert) We have had two weeks of glorious sunshine, so I guess we are due some rain. Since much of the day is spent driving northeast across Nova Scotia from Halifax to Cape Breton Island, the near constant rain has no effect on our plans. I carry an umbrella when we enter the Alexander Graham Bell Museum in Baddeck, then set it aside as I study the excellent exhibits. Of course, everyone remembers Bell for his 1876 invention of the telephone—“Mr. Watson come here, I want to see you.”

At the museum I learn much more about his life and inventions. His early life’s studies focused on hearing, as his mother was becoming deaf and his wife Mabel was already deaf. Bell taught deaf children, including Helen Keller. It was his study of the waves produced by sound that led to the telephone invention, the audio meter for detecting

hearing loss, the photophone for transmitting sound on a beam of light, and also a precursor of the phonograph. In 1895 he experimented with kites, in 1902 it is tetrahedral construction, and in 1905 he combined the two to build a tetrahedral kite big enough to carry a man. He worked with Casey Baldwin to build a plane that carried the first Canadian into flight. During World War I he and Baldwin invented a hydrofoil and the HD-4 reached the incredible speed of 70 mph over water, far exceeding the typical ship speed of 15 knots.



Advancement of telephone design, Alexander Graham Bell Museum



Powered flight on the Silver Dart



Hydrofoil set world record speed over water

## **Day 27 – July 26 – Cabot Trail, Cape Breton**

(Shari) I am thinking to myself, “This is going to be a disaster.” All I see out the window are clouds and it is raining cats and dogs. I decide to stay in the rig and ask Bert to call me on the radio at the exact minute the bus comes to pick us up. He does and then I get all my rain equipment in my bag, lock up the RV, and scurry to the bus. We are to drive the Cabot Trail today and see all the beautiful scenery. Yeah right!

Our first stop in the rain is where the hookers hang out. The driver says the men want to stop here. It turns out to be a big gift store with hooked rugs and other craft items and tourist stuff. It is a good place for a bathroom break. The rain has turned into a downpour.

Next, we are treated to a museum that contains lots of antiques but most importantly hooked artwork. The colors and designs of the yarns are simply exquisite and I snap lots of pictures. Some of the rugs must have taken years to hook. We have rugs of flowers, rugs of coastal scenery, and rugs of famous people. Even Jackie Kennedy’s portrait is hung on the wall.

The rain has slowed to a drizzle. Our next stop is an old church with fantastic acoustics. Another guide with a busload of people is also here and sings two songs for us that are simply stunning. The rain has slowed to a droplet here and there.

We enter Cape Breton National Park and see a movie about the park itself. The clouds are breaking up. By the time we reach our first lookout point, the sun has started to peak through the clouds and the road behind can be seen with all its twists and turns, hugging the coast of St. Lawrence Bay. We continue on to our lunch stop, a cute place by the sea. After lunch the birders (there are at least 10 now that consistently listen to Bert) watch the gannets dive bomb for food.

The sun is out. We continue to the fish factory and retrieve our orders of cooked snow crab. We stop for ice cream at the Keltic Lodge and we get home at 5:30. Our next door neighbor invites us over for social and soon she invites more and we have a nice group relaxing and enjoying our weather and the scenery from this neat campground. Tonight we have snow crab for dinner and it is almost better than lobster. Yum Yum!

(Bert) I'll add a few technical details to Shari's story and save the rest of the tour for tomorrow's blog. I am quite fascinated with the hooked rugs we view in Les Trois Pignons. It looks too tedious for me to try: 144 holes per square inch, hooking 8-10 hours per day, a rug that took 322 days to finish and used 8 miles of yarn, the phenomenal Elizabeth LaFort who produced hooked rug art all her life and could hook at 55 loops per minute. Here are photos, many taken by Shari, from the first part of today's tour. I will include more tomorrow.



Hooked rug technique on small coaster, Flora's, Chéticamp



St. Peter's Church, Chéticamp



Pipe organ in St. Peter's Church, Chéticamp



Braided rug similar to the one Bert's Great-grandmother made for him



Hooked rug, Les Trois Pignons, Chéticamp



Hooked rug as art, made by Elizabeth LeFort



Detail of eye in portrait of Jacqueline Kennedy



Hooked rug of The Crucifixion by Elizabeth LeFort utilizes hundreds of wool colors

### **Day 28 – July 27 – Cabot Trail, Cape Breton**

(Bert) Here are more photos from the continuation of our Cabot Trail tour yesterday. Fortunately, the rain stopped shortly after leaving Chéticamp, about the same time that the scenery became spectacular. Cabot Trail circumscribes an uninhabited, mostly inaccessible mountainous and densely wooded area that rises in elevation to treeless barrens. What little population is present is in small coastal villages. A substantial portion of the land is protected by Cape Breton National Park, where building is prohibited. Although we are only on a day trip, in previous years we had time to hike

some of the many trails. One I did not hike, but would like to, is Skyline. You can see the trail on photo 2 and, in fact, a few hikers are on the trail and can be seen, barely, if you expand the photo and look at the crest near the center of the photo.

Photo 5 shows Aspy fault, which is a continuation of the Great Glen fault of Scotland, separated by continental drift when the Atlantic Ocean was formed. The photo of Middle Head Peninsula includes Double-crested and Great Cormorants, but I wasn't carrying my long lens (100-400mm) so I don't have a close-up of the cormorants. The last photo, taken from Cape Smoky, shows the dramatic elevation change on the Cabot Trail. Owing to these steep inclines and declines, we have never taken a large RV on this trail, only a car, and now a bus.



Cabot Trail, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia



Skyline Trail with visible hikers, Cape Breton National Park



Overlook of Pleasant Bay, Cabot Trail, Cape Breton



Cabot Trail, Cape Breton



Aspy fault, Cabot Trail, Cape Breton



Middle Head Peninsula, Cabot Trail, Cape Breton



Cape Smoky, Cabot Trail, Cape Breton

### **Day 29 – July 28 – North Sydney**

(Shari) Our group of five couples increases the number of attendees at the reformed fellowship Presbyterian Church. The first part of the service is led by a team of eight college age people, mostly visiting from the United States, who sing and play instruments

to modern Christian music. The music is not my cup of tea, as phrases are repeated over and over and I am tired of standing. The skit that they put together about the Fall and Redemption of Man is wonderful and emotional without a word said. After the service we go out to eat and then have the rest of the afternoon free. At dinnertime we head to the barn and are amazed at its transformation. Tables with linen cloths and candles invite us in and the Christmas lights make the room sparkle. We are here for our choice of lobster or prime rib. It is Lobster number 7 for me. I am sure Bert will mention the three musicians that entertain us after dessert. They are a hoot and I notice our entire group is enjoying them too.

(Bert) Last night at an impromptu meeting with Hal, I had arranged for tonight's entertainment. I was uncertain what we were getting ourselves into as I had not heard the group perform previously and my uncertainty is only increased when I watch Rhonda adjusting the sound system to terminate the loud ear-shattering electronic screech and see disheveled Eddie fooling with his ever-tilting microphone and struggling to keep the strap of his accordion positioned on his shoulder. But when the first song bursts forth from the three singers, accompanied by their guitar, accordion, and drum, I know we have a hit.

Hal tells us that in the past ten years the group has performed for 69 U.S. military bases and all thirteen Canadian bases. They play Newfoundland music, most songs composed by lead singer Eddie Coffey, all of the type that gets your foot tapping to the beat, your body bouncing to the rhythm, and brings a broad smile to your face. The lyrics are storytelling and the words distinct, unlike when Eddie tells a Newfie joke in between songs. You must listen carefully to catch (and translate) all the words, even when he obligingly speaks slowly. Two Newfoundlanders speaking quickly to each other is only a blur of gibberish to us outsiders. By far the best song from Eddie is perhaps the most famous one he has written, Grey Foggy Day, and I am glad it is included on the CD I buy during intermission.



Table settings for catered dinner in the barn



Lobster #7



Rhonda and Eddie singing Grey Foggy Day



Eddie adjusted the microphone between EVERY song



Hal leading the group in the Ugly Stick Dance



Eddie Coffey

### **Day 30 – July 29 – North Sydney to Argentia ferry**

(Bert) Getting on a ferry is an exercise in Hurry-up-and-wait. We leave the campground at 2:15 for the short drive to the dock, slowly advance past the ticket booth, and line up our vehicles in Lane 17 until it is full, and then in Lane 18. We idle away the time, talking to one another outside our rigs, until loading starts a bit before 5 PM. Securely parked inside the hull of the Atlantic Vision, dumping our bags in our spacious cabins, and gathering again on an outside deck, we then watch as the large ferry backs out of the harbor at 5:40 PM.

Although it will soon be too dark and overcast to see much wildlife, I do tabulate Common Tern, Northern Gannet, Common Loon, Black Guillemot, and a Gray Seal. We

are out of sight of land at 8:45 PM when I see a lone Great Cormorant winging haphazardly and low over the sea, my last sighting of the day.

Perhaps the highlight of the evening is the wonderful variety of food arranged at the buffet. I fill my plate too many times as I attempt to taste a bit of everything, but only get through a third of the dishes upon being satiated.



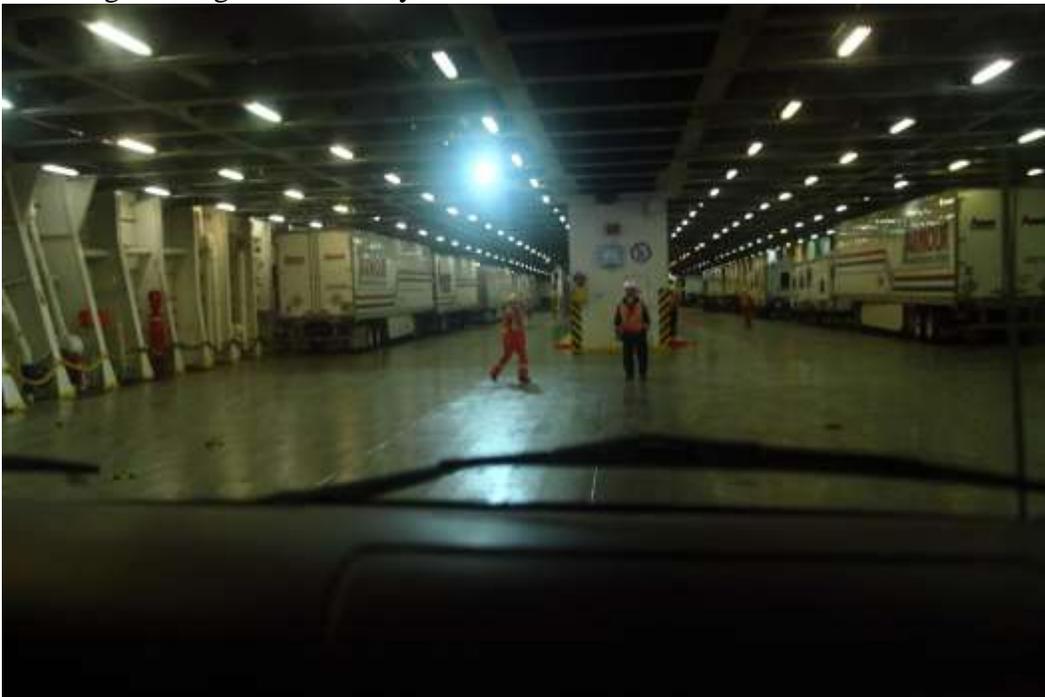
Lining up at North Sydney ferry dock



Ferry to Newfoundland



Boarding the cargo hold of ferry



Boarding the cargo hold of ferry



2-bed berth with bath on Newfoundland ferry



2-bed berth with bath on Newfoundland ferry



View of North Sydney from berth

## **CHAPTER 6 – NEWFOUNDLAND**

### **Day 31 – July 30 – Argentia ferry and St. John's**

(Bert) Although the cabin is wonderful, my bed is too hard. I am up and out on deck by 5:30 AM (Nova Scotia time), 6 AM (Newfoundland time). A peach-colored horizon knifes the firmament, separating a smoothly corrugated gray sea from troubled dark clouds catching spangles of sunrays from a globe that hasn't yet crossed the threshold of daybreak.

I see my first seabird at 6:07 and it looks like a Sooty Shearwater, but I am uncertain as I see more birds in the early morning, most of which are dark phase Northern Fulmars. At 6:30 I ask the purser where we are and he says we will soon enter Placentia Bay. At 7:15 I photograph the peninsula jutting from the east end of the bay and through binoculars I can just make out the lighthouse at the point. As I have done on previous ferry trips, I record the time of sightings and again notice that I see something noteworthy about once every 3-6 minutes. Today's catch is dozens of Northern Fulmars, about 20 Northern Gannets and as many Black-legged Kittiwakes, seven Common Murres in three groupings, a Razorbill, and much to the delight of Randi, four Atlantic Puffins floating not far from the ship.

Of greater interest to non-birders are the whales and dolphins. At first I'm not sure whether the distant whales are Humpbacks or Fin-backed, but closer views and long lens photos make them out to be Fin Whales. They glide seamlessly through the water like

65-ft. submarines, exposing only a portion of their backs with the up-periscope of a small, hooked dorsal fin. We spot successive whales, sometimes in small pods, at 7:02, 7:35, 7:50, 7:52, and 7:58 AM. As we enter the narrower passage of Placentia Bay, now seeing land on both sides, the whale sightings stop and are replaced by multiple sightings of pods of dolphins. Identifying the dolphins is a bit tricky as they are swimming a quarter to a half-mile from the ship. Through binoculars and camera we can just barely make out the white sides on the black-backed dolphins. Zooming in on photos, I can discern a white chin and on one photo, a yellow flank patch. So that identifies these as Atlantic White-sided Dolphins. We watch the dolphins from 8:10 to 8:50, and must have seen at least 50 in pods of 4-20.

We disembark at 10 AM and uneventfully drive to St. John's, across forested lands of stunted trees. After everyone is parked in the campsite, I walk to the registration area to pay for the group and am interrupted by a National Geographic moment. I hear a robin excitedly and repeatedly screaming an alarm call. I investigate the spruce tree and ten feet below the robin is a raven. Suddenly, the robin dive bombs the raven, frightening it from its perch. Just then a Newfoundlander lady—in a floppy hat, tightly-buttoned maroon coat, sloppy pants, oversized backpack, carrying a sheaf of papers in one hand and a dog leash in the other, and accompanied by a overfed beagle—walks up to me. In lilting Newfoundlandish and a childlike voice she tells me she heard the chick squeaking from the clenched bill of the raven.



First light on Atlantic Ocean in Newfoundland waters



Northern Fulmar (dark phase Atlantic form)



Fin Whale showing blow hole and plume (about 1/3-mi. from ship)



Atlantic White-sided Dolphins



Atlantic White-sided Dolphin



Newfoundland at Placentia Bay near Argentina



Welcome to Newfoundland

## Day 32 – July 31 – St. John's

(Shari) “Foggiest and windiest city in Canada,” that is what our guide tells us about St. John's this morning as we watch the fog and rain. He also tells us the city experiences 10 ft. of snow annually. The weather does not deter us from our bus trip and we get to see

the Cabot Tower (although the famous Tattoo is cancelled which makes two out of three years for us). We see the most easterly part of land in North America at Cape Spear, although by now it is quite fogged in. We desperately want to see a moose and hopefully look out the windows of the bus. We learn Newfoundland has ½ million people total and moose number a quarter as many. But no luck again! I think the highlight of our guided trip today is the Veiled Virgin, a statue of the Virgin Mary carved out of a single piece of marble. She appears as if she is looking through a veil no matter in which direction I view her from. The other highlight is lunch where I have soup followed by Cajun salmon and a decadent brownie bombshell. We are returned to our camp by 5 PM and again this social group gathers for more conversation under the shelter.

(Bert) I read Shari's journal before writing mine and I have to concur, the highlight of the day was viewing The Veiled Virgin by Giovanni Strazza. Brought to St. John's in 1862 by the Bishop of the Basilica of St. John the Baptist, the statue later was given to Presentation Convent where the Bishop's sister was Sister Mary Magdalen. The sculpture is an amazing illusion and I view it from various angles, trying to discover how the sculptor created the deception that part of the stone is transparent, through which I can see covered parts of the nose, lips and eyes.

Of course, our tour takes us to the famous parts of St. John's and the surrounding area. The island has many picturesque harbors and, perhaps, Quidi Vidi is among the most famous. The bus completely spans the narrow street and as the driver winds and twists through the compact village; I am amazed at both the driver's skill and the bus's maneuverability. We also visit Signal Hill, although the rain has canceled the Tattoo performance. Lunch is at Rumpelstiltskein's, where I have a chicken and rib combo and Shari has salmon. The chocolate fudge cake with vanilla ice cream clearly deserves its title as Decadent. After lunch we drive through St. John's, including Water Street the oldest street in North America, and then beyond the city to Cape Spear, the easternmost point in North America. By the now the rain is nearly a downpour, yet some in the group hike up the hill to the lighthouse. We continue on our tour to a small fishing village and by now the rain has stopped, so strolling along the harbor is pleasant. We talk to a cod fisherman about to try his luck at a spot just beyond the harbor. He says he caught a 25-lb. cod a few days ago.



Quidi Vidi, St. John's, Newfoundland



Bus view of street through Quidi Vidi



The Veiled Virgin by Giovanni Strazza



Close-up of The Veiled Virgin



Side view of The Veiled Virgin



Signal Hill (in the rain), St. John's



Cape Spear, a walk to the point in heavy rain



Petty Harbour

### **Day 33 – August 1 – St. John's**

(Bert) It is a free day for everyone else, though Shari and I use the time to catch up on caravan business. I had hoped to visit Kenny's Pond for a rare duck and Shari hoped to search for geocaches within Pippy's Park, but the day slips away without sightseeing.

Later, Marilyn tells me she found the Tufted Duck with the help of a St. John's resident lady who told her she remembered me and my name from my visit four years ago.

## **Day 34 – August 2 – Bonavista Peninsula**

(Bert) Shari and I leave the campground early so that I can check Kenny's Pond for the Tufted Duck. I walk around the pond, seeing hundreds of ducks but all are American Black Ducks, many in good photographic view. So are there a lot of Rock Pigeons and this is the first time I can recall photographing a duck and a pigeon in the same frame. I am almost around the pond when I spot the Tufted Duck diving far from shore. I've seen this Eurasian species in France, the U.K., and Ireland, and as a stray in Alaska. This is my first for Canada.

We travel northeast along the Bonavista Peninsula to our next campsite and after a difficult time of arranging our RVs on a grassy knoll overlooking a picturesque pond, we are settled in for three nights. The highlight of the day is a Newfoundland Screech-in. I've heard of this ceremony, but I've not experienced one. The celebration procedure varies. Ours is led by camp host Chris, dressed in costume, as are four "volunteers" from our group who march down the gravel path from Chris's house to our RVs. Chris begins the ceremony with a series of questions, mostly based on the Newfoundlander words we do not recognize. He asks Ben what is an "arse." When he doesn't know, Chris asks the group. I say it is my rear end. Chris disagrees and says we should remember that Newfoundlanders don't pronounce the letter H, so if you don't come from Newfoundland, then "arse" is pronounced "horse." After the questions end everyone is given a morsel of tack, a thimble full of Screech, and a peppermint. We crunch the tack (hard bread) and down the bitter tasting Screech (bottom of the barrel rum), but hold off tasting the peppermint. Next Chris opens the ice chest that two of our volunteers had carried from his house. Out of the chest Chris pulls a frozen cod with its head strangely pointing skyward. To complete the screech-in initiation each of us must kiss the cod, an action that produces screams, distorted faces, and feigned shock especially among the ladies in the group. The peppermint is the chaser. We are officially screeched-in and Chris gives each of us a document certifying that we are now true Newfoundlanders.



American Black Duck



Tufted Duck



Screech-in performers



Chris, our camp host performs the Screech-in ceremony





Shari kissing the cod



Newfoundland Screech Rum

### **Day 35 – August 3 – Bonavista Peninsula**

(Bert) Our morning is filled with tours of historical sites in Bonavista. It is fortunate that they all are indoors as we start the morning with a downpour that dissipates by the end of lunch. Most interesting to me is to climb aboard a full-size replica of The Matthew, the

ship John Cabot sailed to Newfoundland in 1497. It is surprisingly small and held a crew of twenty in tight quarters.

The afternoon takes us to the famous Bonavista Lighthouse. Since a previous year I'd already climbed the three stories to the top, I first pay for the group and then go to the end of the peninsula to view the Atlantic Puffins on an island separated from the mainland by the distance an outfielder could throw toward home plate. After I've taken several dozen photos the rest of the group joins me and we continue to watch the puffins fly from their nest sites to the sea and back again. They descend in a smooth arc directly in front of me and I try to catch the action in my camera, a tricky operation with a fast moving object and a long camera lens. After dozens of attempts I eventually get a few in focus.

I am told it is time to leave the puffins, so we head next to The Dungeon, a strange hole inside a cliff, connected to the sea through two tunnels created through wave action. While studying the natural curiosity our attention is drawn to the sea when spouts of mist belie the presence of whales. We watch the whales for a half-hour. I'm sure the first ones we see are Fin Whales, but when we see a Humpback Whale leaping out of the air I know we have another species. The action is nearly non-stop. Repeatedly, the Humpback waves a white flipper toward us and when it leaps into the air, breaching on its side and throwing up a huge splash, I run back to the RV to get my long lens. Fortunately it breaches again and I am able to catch the action in the camera even though the whale is half way to the horizon.



A full-size replica of The Matthew sailed by John Cabot in 1497



Cape Bonavista Lighthouse



Atlantic Puffins at top of rock island



Atlantic Puffins in flight and at nest sites



An unusual photo where I froze the action of five flying puffins, while the background is in blurred motion



Finally, I get one flying puffin in focus



Another flying puffin in focus after many tries



A few Atlantic Puffins at their nest sites (holes in the ground)



The Dungeon



Breaching Humpback Whale

### **Day 36 – August 4 – Bonavista Peninsula**

(Bert) Although we have interesting tours of Elliston and Port Union, including a thorough explanation and history of root cellars, a union factory with antique printing press, and the ornately adorned home of Sir William Coaker called The Bungalow, all of these sites pale in comparison to my experience sitting among the Atlantic Puffins. Most of the puffins are on a nearby island and a much larger and distant island. If we sit quietly on the peninsular mainland a few puffins will come to rest at the cliff edge only 20 ft. from us. We watch them in the morning in light rain and many of us come back again in the afternoon when the skies have cleared. I take hundreds of photos and offer a sampling here.





Atlantic Puffin



I call this pose "Preaching to the Choir"



Notice the nest burrow



Coming in for a landing



This one is carrying a capelin



### **Day 37 – August 5 – Gander and Twillingate**

(Bert) On the move again, we make an interim stop at the North Atlantic Aviation Museum in Gander. Although a small museum, it has a few interesting exhibits. Because Gander is the most easterly airport in North America it has an unusual history especially during World War II when it served as a refueling stop and also the take-off airport for nearly 10,000 aircraft transported from Newfoundland to Great Britain. In more recent times it not only served as a waypoint for Free World Trans-Atlantic flights, but it also was used by Russian aircraft traveling to Cuba. One curious photo shows Fidel Castro's first experience with snow as he rides downhill on a toboggan on Christmas Eve 1972.

Quite moving is documentation and archival films of Gander's role in aiding stranded air travelers downed during the 9/11 terrorism disaster. Within hours, 42 Trans-Atlantic aircraft with 6700 passengers descended to the airport and into a town with a population of only 10,000. Testimonials to the excellent care they were given in the homes and schools of the community and the amazing efficiency of the entire operation can bring tears to one's eyes. An Internet search will give you many links. Another fascinating story is the book "The Day the World Came to Town: 9/11 in Gander, Newfoundland," which several of our caravaners have read and recommended.

Our campsite is in Twillingate, in sight of the Atlantic Ocean. Tonight's entertainment is at the dinner theater "All Around the Circle." Shari and I are seeing this for the third time, yet it is hilarious again nonetheless. Same performers since our first visit in 2000, same homespun humor, same local talent. My favorite skits are the retelling of the

Twillingate couple's visit to the big city of Toronto, little Edith Anne telling the story of twisted Cinderella, and the visit to the nearly blind ophthalmologist.



Cockpit of DC-3, North Atlantic Aviation Museum, Gander



Fidel Castro on a toboggan, North Atlantic Aviation Museum, Gander



“All Around the Circle” dinner theater, Twillingate



A visit to Toronto



Edith Anne recites twisted Cinderella

### **Day 38 – August 6 – Twillingate**

(Bert) I'd mark our visit to Prime Berth as one of the most interesting of our guided tours mostly because the attraction's owner makes the story so personal. Dave starts off by explaining the origin of the unusual name he chose for his assemblage of cod fishing industry artifacts. A "berth" is a safe spot in the sea to lay cod nets, away from entangling rocks, but with the right habitat to attract cod. To avoid conflicts between cod fishermen, a yearly lottery was established to decide who gets the best berths and the very best was called the prime berth. Dave's father was a cod fisherman, as were his preceding ancestors, but his childhood coincided with a mass relocation of 200 small communities from coastal areas to converge on inland sites for easier establishment of postal services, schools, and other government run services. While good for the government, it took cod fishermen away from their easiest access to the sea. Concerned that much of the cod fishing heritage would disappear as the old buildings and equipment were left behind, he started collecting them. A fascinating video shows how Dave towed his father's fish cleaning shack intact for five miles across the sea.

Although I thought cod fishing had nearly evaporated after the 1991 moratorium, apparently there are still plenty of inland cod along the northeast shores of Newfoundland. Sport fishing is only open for three weeks per year and it is not unusual to get the limit of 15 cod per boat—five cod per person—within about 15 min. In fact, Ross and Elden go out later this afternoon with Dave and catch their limit in only a bit more time.

The highlight of our afternoon is seeing a large iceberg and three smaller ones at the horizon. We could not see the icebergs when standing on shore, but we could when we were on the cliff where the Durrell Museum is located. Using Google Earth to get the height of my position (~60 ft. above sea level) and a formula I found on the Internet, I calculate that the horizon is about 10 miles from us. Of course, since the icebergs have height, the distance to them could be farther than 10 miles. Icebergs are not expected this late in the season, so we are very fortunate to see any.

In the evening we are wonderfully entertained by The Split Peas, a local musical group of seven ladies, mostly retired, who are celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> season this year. Singing Newfoundland songs, many written by fellow member Ada, they clearly demonstrate their love for their island home. Shari's journal, below, is a comment on the dance of the Mummers, a term referring to a Christmas custom of dressing in costume and visiting neighboring homes.

(Shari) She looks up lovingly at Bill as they dance a waltz in front of the crowd. Her blond hair flows with the music as her head nods to the beat. Her cheeks are as rosy as her lips and I see Bill talking in her ear. When the song finishes she repeats her loving gaze, this time directed to Ted.



Prime Berth, Twillingate. Sei Whale skeleton on left of building.



Durrell harbor with Shari's camera set at 22mm with iceberg at horizon (center).



Similar view taken with Bert's camera and 400mm lens



Same 400mm photo, but cropped and expanded



Durrell harbor and village





Mummers costume



Dancing with a mummer

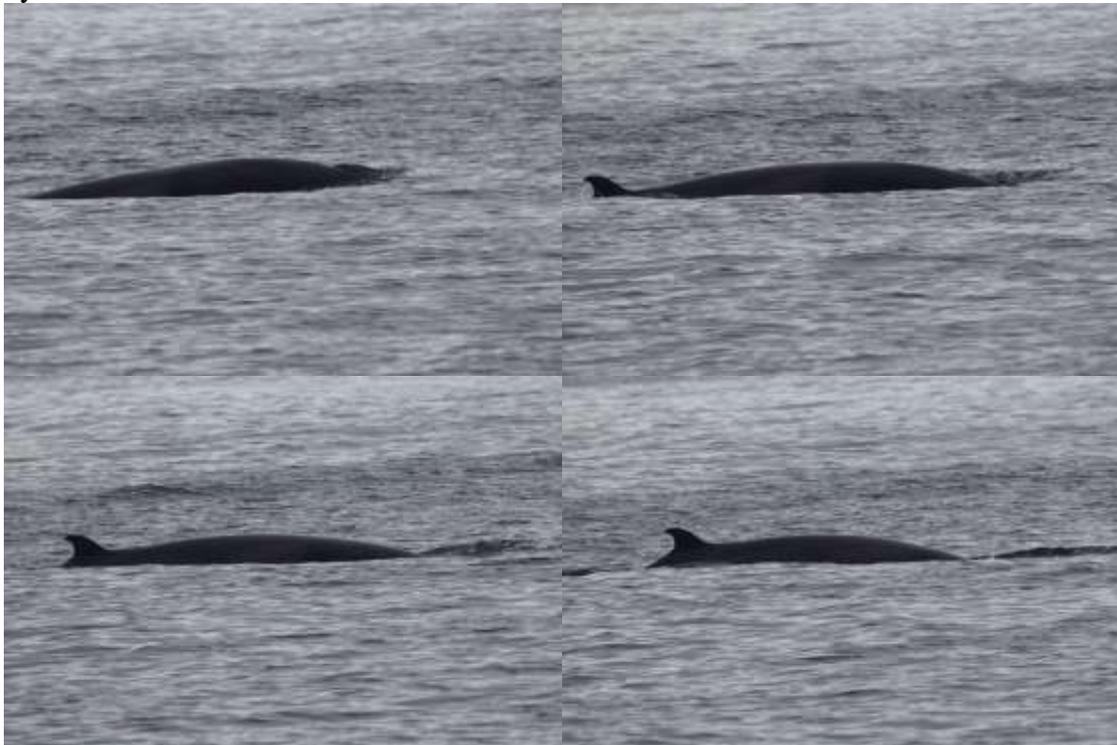
### **Day 39 – August 7 – Twillingate**

(Bert) We are on a whale sightseeing boat this morning. Finding whales is always a hit and miss proposition and even though we have a chance of seeing three whale species, we have no guarantees. Fortunately, we get excellent and repeated views of a pair of

Minke Whales, one of the harder ones to track. These whales have a negligible spout, are one of the smallest whales, and have no inclination to stick around once spotted. I take dozens of photos and here show one sequence of passage.

In the afternoon, a few of us hike one of the trails at the Twillingate lighthouse. The weather is incredibly pleasant and the scenery intensely bright and colorful. We identify many flowers and trees and have a neat sighting of a small flock of Milbert's Tortoiseshell butterflies feeding on Canadian Thistle. We hike to Nanny's Hole, a turquoise pool beside the surging Atlantic.

This evening we enjoy fresh cod, compliments of Ross, Elden, Ben, Lorraine, and Janet, all of whom caught cod here yesterday and today, a total of 30 good-sized cod. Needless to say, we only eat a fraction of their catch tonight, combined with side dishes prepared by others in the caravan.





Minke Whale, Twillingate



Milbert's Tortoiseshell on Canada Thistle, Twillingate



Nanny's Hole, Atlantic coast at Twillingate Lighthouse

### **Day 40 – August 8 – Gros Morne National Park**

(Bert) En route today we pass the Wagonmaster team for the caravan one week ahead of our schedule, so we stop to get news of any problems we may face down the road. The best news is about the caravan that is one week behind us (there are four caravans taking the same route through the Maritimes). On August 1 the ferry between Port aux Basque, Newfoundland, and North Sydney, Nova Scotia, ran aground at Port aux Basque, causing damage to the ferry. As a result, the ferry ship we took July 30-31 to Argentia was rerouted to Port aux Basque. That could have been a major problem for the caravan following us, as our campgrounds, buses, tour guides, restaurants, etc. are all scheduled ahead of time and the two ports are separated by about 500 miles by highway. So, now we hear the latest news about that caravan. Yesterday they arrived at Port aux Basque and continued by road to Grand Falls–Windsor and spent the night there. Today they will make the rest of the trip to St. John's, skip the free day there, and then be on schedule. Looks like it will all work out okay.

We continue on to Gros Morne National Park, a World Heritage Site.



Gros Morne National Park

### **Day 41 – August 9 – Gros Morne National Park**

(Bert) I had planned a 7:45 AM departure for a hike on one of the many trails in the national park and had about a half dozen caravaners that wanted to join me. At 7:30 rain pitter patters on the RV roof and 15 min. later the skies look dark and foreboding. Since this is a free day and there are plenty of other sites for visiting by car, we decide to cancel the hike. I set about processing photos and responding to e-mails, so when it clears an hour later I am deep in work and continue throughout the day. No photos, nothing else to report, hoping tomorrow's hike stays on schedule.

### **Day 42 – August 10 – Gros Morne National Park**

(Bert) This morning we are ready to face the weather even if it threatens to rain. Almost the whole group joins in the walk to Western Brook Pond and most of them intend to take the boat tour through the fjord. The geology of Gros Morne is awesome. The Long Range Mountains string along the western coast of Newfoundland and are the northern extension of the Appalachian Mountains. In the Ice Age, glaciers cut through the mountains and as they receded they left steep rock walls and a narrow river to the sea, forming a fjord. Subsequent rising of the land at the seaside edge created a land-locked lake and a flat bog. In light rain and high winds we slowly make our way along a boardwalk through the bog. I stop repeatedly and point out the multitude of flower species we pass. Some in the group lose interest and hike faster toward Western Brook Pond, while others stay with me as we discover more species, especially when we find the insectivorous Pitcher Plants and sundews.

Even at our slow pace we reach the boat dock well before its scheduled departure, but the sky is ominous, the lake is choppy with whitecaps, and the wind is ragingly strong. We wait inside the nicely designed cabin and I open my flower field guide to start making a list of the flowers we've seen so far this morning. Then the announcement comes: all boat trips are canceled today because of high winds.

Some of us take an alternate and longer trail back to the highway. The ground is somewhat higher and the plant life different and our flower list increases. By the time we merge with the boardwalk, the winds are furious and it is comical to look at people ahead of me and the way their bodies lean into the wind to avoid being blown off the boards.

Back in the quiet of the RV I complete my flower list (see below), ending up with 36 species, not counting horsetails, ferns, and trees.



Bog, Long Range Mountains, and fjord at Western Brook Pond, viewed from highway under overcast skies



Examining flowers along trail to Western Brook Pond



Pitcher Plant, the provincial flower of Newfoundland



English Sundew (the tiny red one), another insectivorous plant



End of the trail with the fjord in sight



View through the raindrop window, waiting to see if the boat will run



Stormy Western Brook Lake and fjord



Spotted Touch-me-not

Flowering plants identified August 10 along trail to Western Brook Pond:

Flat-leafed Bladderwort

Fragrant Waterlily

Yellow Pond Lily

Blue Flag

Canadian Burnet

Joe-Pye-Weed

Creeping Buttercup

Pitcher Plant

English Sundew

Bog Aster

Bog Goldenrod

Canada Goldenrod

Bob Laurel

Labrador Tea

Shrubby Cinquefoil

Clintonia

Fireweed

American Eyebright

Canada Thistle

Bull Thistle

Red Clover

White Clover

Ox-eye Daisy

Pearly Everlasting

Tall Meadowrue  
Crackerberry (Bunchberry)  
Bog Candle  
Common Strawberry  
Common Dandelion  
Raspberry  
Cotton Grass  
Cow Parsnip  
Yellow Rattle  
Spotted Touch-me-not  
Colt's Foot  
Bakeapple

### **Day 43 – August 11 – St. Anthony**

(Bert) High winds push us north and east along Newfoundland's coastline. In fact, the gusts are so powerful it takes two hands on the wheel to correct for wind shear and the fuel gauge still reads full after 211 mi.

We stop to walk the Thrombolites Walking Trail at Flower's Cove. I say "walk" but it is more "hold on to our hats" and "try not to be pushed off the boardwalk." I photograph windblown sea grass that looks like soft green waves of grain. We reach the amazing thrombolites, giant filled-donut-shaped mounds of calcified microbe colonies. The mounds are the collective result of millions of unicellular thrombolites deposited in the Cambrian Period when this marine area was part of the Laurentia continent near the equator that drifted northward. The mounds are nearly unique, the only other known colony being found in Western Australia.

Our evening's entertainment and dinner is the Viking Feast in St. Anthony. Our utensils are two spoons and a knife—no fork, as it was not used as a dinner table implement in millennial Norse ages. Our appetizers are cod tongues and dried capelin. Shari and I and virtually all Newfoundlanders consider cod tongues a delicacy, although some of our caravan guests don't as yet agree. The dried capelin is certainly an acquired taste as they are board-stiff, quite salty, and you can eat head, guts, skin, and tail, although so far I still hold back on eating the head. Because so few are willing to try their allotment of one capelin each, I get to eat four of them. Our feast is baked salmon, Jigger's stew, roast moose, and salads, all in generous supply.

Entertainment is at our expense. We are given the opportunity to bring a legal case against anyone in our group and present it to the Viking council, which in this case is all gathered in the Viking lodge. Several of us think it would be good to blame our Tailgunner for waking us at an early hour to thump our tires. Bill stands on the truth-stone and accuses Tailgunner Bob. Debbie comes forth, rises to the stone, and provides witness to Bill's accusation. In his defense, Bob admits to his actions but states that his Master made him do it. Ah, oh! This isn't going the way I intended. So, the Viking judge now calls me to the truth-stone and I state that Bob is his own man and I am not

responsible for his actions. The jury members—which includes a French-speaking caravan from Quebec—pound the wooden tables with their fists in disagreement with my statement. The judge is about to ask for a verdict when Shari runs up to the judge, kneels before him, and pleads for my innocence, stating that the reason for Thumper Bob to thump in the morning is to check for flat tires. It seems the Judge has already discerned this excuse, but is not buying it. Instead, he asks for a verdict, table by table. “Is Thumper Bob innocent?” he asks. Each table responds, one by one, with vigorous pounding on the table, thereby agreeing that Bob is innocent. Bob is dismissed and I attempt to follow him back to our seats, but the Judge stops me in my tracks. Now he announces, “Is the Master guilty?” Again, table by table the court agrees to my guilt. Boy, this is definitely not going the way I intended. Next comes the sentencing and I am ordered to sing a song—an utter disaster as I know the words to no songs, at least not when put on the spot—and then to dance a jig—not much to show either. Finally, the Judge dismisses me anyway.



Site of the S.S. Ethie shipwreck near Cow Head on western coast of Newfoundland



Seacoast along Strait of Belle Isle on northern coast of Newfoundland



Sea grass waving in gusts of winds at Flower's Cove



Bert standing next to thrombolite mound



Fried cod tongue and dried capelin at Viking Feast

**Day 44 – August 12 – L'Anse aux Meadows and St. Anthony**

(Bert) Even though I've been here before, including the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I would count L'Anse aux Meadows as one of the highlights of visiting Newfoundland. When I was in grade school, we learned that Columbus discovered America in 1492. As an adult, I now know that Columbus was 500 years late. L'Anse aux Meadows, the original encampment of Leif Erickson and his Vikings, is almost an unbelievable discovery. First it was the old Norse writings that told of far off voyages to Vinland. But were they myth or history? Here lies the evidence: the depressions where buildings once stood, the iron foraging pits, the carpenters wood and tools, many other implements and artifacts, but most conclusively a brass pin used to secure a robe, i.e., a find that clearly links this coastal settlement to the Vikings of 1000 A.D. We walk the ground, we gaze out to sea, we see the artifacts, we see the recreated replicates of the lodge and outhouses, and we can visualize exactly what they saw 1000 years ago.

Our tour included several other sites, but I will jump ahead to the afternoon and our visit in St. Anthony to the Grenfell Museum where we learn many details of the hardships and accomplishments of Sir Wilfred Grenfell. Curiously, I first learned of Dr. Grenfell from a Newfoundland stamp I own. Incredible as it seems, this one man, trained as a physician in England, became the first full-time doctor for northern Newfoundland and Labrador and through incredible fortitude, perseverance, and guts was able not only to personally care for the sick, but to establish 6 hospitals, 7 nursing stations, 2 hospital ships, 4 schools, 14 industrial centers, 3 agricultural stations, 12 clothing distribution centers, the King George the Fifth Institute in St. John's, the supply schooner George B. Cluett, and a haul up slip for schooner repairs, all by the year 1939. None of this came without great dedication and determination, epitomized in his quote, "When two courses are open, take the most venturesome."

One of my favorite stories is when on Easter Sunday 1908 Grenfell responded to an emergency call, using his dog sled team across frozen land to Hare Bay. Here is the rest of the story, quoted from one of the posters in the museum. "It was spring and the ice was breaking up. Heedless of the danger, Grenfell crossed the bay. The ice gave way and he was cast into the frigid water. Struggling with his dogs, he finally reached a 12 foot icepan and climbed on, freezing cold and soaking wet. The stage was set for the worst ordeal of his life. Grenfell was in fine physical condition and mentally shrewd enough to rationalize his predicament. His optimism, ingenuity, calmness and religious faith held him at arm's length from death's door through the night as the ice carried him toward open sea. At first light, five men pushed and rowed a boat through ten miles of slob ice and open water at great risk to themselves in order to save 'their beloved doctor'. The details of his survival circulated in newspapers worldwide and Grenfell wrote his own account in a booklet sold for fundraising. It was an outstanding success."



The brass pin that firmly established the L'Anse aux Meadows settlement as the Vikings in 1000 A.D.



L'Anse aux Meadows



Recreation of Viking lodge at L'Anse aux Meadows, a building of timbers surrounded by sod walls and roof



Interior of lodge showing clothing, beds, fire, tools, food preparation, etc.



Stamp issued in honor of Sir Wilfred Grenfell

### **Day 45 – August 13 early morning – St. Anthony to airport**

(Bert) I'll divide this journal entry into two sections. Our long day starts as we board the bus at 5:30 AM. While many grumbled at the early hour, I am delighted. This morning we should see the Mythical Moose. Bobbie coined that name to connote the absence of Moose sightings. Tour guides promised Moose in Quebec, Moose in New Brunswick, Moose in Nova Scotia, and Moose in Newfoundland, yet almost no one has seen a Moose. Bill and Debbie saw one long ago and Shari and I saw one crossing TCH1 south of St. John's, and most of us saw a distant Moose yesterday, but that is it. I kept telling the group they aren't getting up early enough in the morning. So today is the day!

A good omen, bus driver Danny tells us he saw five Moose from St. Anthony to the campground. Now I'll keep track of what we see. It doesn't take long and we soon see one after another along the sides of the highway. One munches vegetables while it stands in the middle of a fenced roadside garden. Another poses beneath a highway sign. Another high steps along, carefully picking its steps in a marsh that sucks in its hoofs. She continues to follow the bus, slowly merging in our direction. Then she crosses the highway in front of us just as I snap a series of photos. By 5:55 AM we have reached the airport and have seen 13 Moose. By 6:15 we have seen three more and then the sightings stop. That brings our total to 17 Moose in an hour and 15 min.



### **Day 45 – August 13 – Labrador**

(Bert) Clear skies offer us a sharp view from Newfoundland island to the coast of Labrador and we can make out the tall white lighthouse at Point Amour. Our ferry ship is on time and I stay on deck for the duration, although bird and whale sightings are less than usual. Nonetheless, I see Northern Gannets, Black-legged Kitiwakes, Atlantic Puffins, unidentified phalaropes, and a distant shearwater.

Our first stop in Labrador is the burial site at L'Anse Amour. This coastal point once served as sites for numerous small, seal-hunting camps for an extensive period from 9000 years ago to 2000 years ago. Most unusual is a circular burial mound about 25-32 ft. in diameter. Within the mound is a small burial chamber in which a well-preserved skeleton of a child was found. The body was covered in red ochre and wrapped in a shroud of birch bark and skins. Accompanying the child were offerings of a walrus tusk,

harpoon head, paint stones, and a bone whistle. The skeleton has been dated to 8100-8600 years old and is the earliest known funeral monument in the New World.

Not far from the burial site is the Point Amour Lighthouse, the tallest in Newfoundland and the second tallest in Canada. I and about 10 others climb the stairs to the top, where we stand 109 ft. from the ground. An incredible view, especially on this cloudless day, extends in every direction. Using the formula I learned the other day, I calculate that the ferry ship on the horizon is 14 miles from where I stand.

My mention and photos of thrombolites drew comments from one former biologist who reads these journals, so for him I'll mention another. From the lighthouse I can look down at the brick-like arrangement of mounds of Archaeocyathids. These mounds are the calcite skeletons of extinct sponge-like animals. Again these Archaeocyathid reefs are evidence of a warm shallow sea near the equator about 530 million years ago that drifted to the north by plate tectonics.

Just as we are about to leave the lighthouse area, a couple of dolphins perform a stunning aerial display as they continuously leap high into the air, so high their tails even clear the sea surface. I rush back to the bus to get my long lens and then photograph a dozen leaps. Although the action is clearly visible even though the dolphins must be nearly a half-mile distant, it is too far for me to identify the species even with my binoculars. So I use my computer to enhance the photos. It may not be the prettiest photo, but the enhancement provides identification as Atlantic White-sided Dolphins.

We continue to Red Bay and the museum that houses artifacts of a 16<sup>th</sup> century Basque whaling boat and a ship, but I'll save those stories for some other time. The bus heads back to the dock and soon we are on the ferry. This time Randi and I have more interesting bird sightings. I get recognizable photos of flocks of phalaropes and now I can identify them as Red-necked Phalaropes. We also see a total of 123 Atlantic Puffins in flocks of 2-50. Best of all are small flocks of Sooty Shearwaters, two Great Shearwaters, ten Razorbills, and a jaeger, probably Pomarine.



Ferry ship between St. Barbe, Newfoundland, and Sablon-Blanc, Quebec



Northern Gannets, Strait of Belle Isle



Burial site (circular rock mound at center of photo) at L'Anse Amour



Point Amour Lighthouse, tallest in Newfoundland



View from atop Point Amour Lighthouse



View (400mm + expanded) to sea of ferry ship on the horizon, 14 miles distant



Mounds of Archaeocyathid calcite deposits. Note old building foundation in foreground for a size comparison of the reef



Enhanced photo of Atlantic White-sided Dolphin, about ½-mi. from shore



Sooty Shearwater, Strait of Belle Isle

### **Day 46 – August 14 – St. Anthony**

(Bert) I am awakened by a knock on the door and at first I ignore it. On the second knock Shari opens the door to see Bill and hear that there is a Bull Moose in the campground. The time is 5:50 AM.

Bill explains that their dog Sherlock suddenly awoke them with barking directed at their bedroom window. Debbie went out to check and came face to face with a Bull Moose that had walked the narrow gap between two long Class A motorhomes, tightened even further by extended slides. It is a wonder its giant antlers didn't scrape the RV sides.

Quickly, Shari and I throw on some clothes and rush out the door, cameras in hand. The Moose is browsing on alder trees, which through constant nibbling at the buds he has trimmed to low bush size. The Moose commands the area in a slow, forceful manner: skirting parked RV's, plowing through hedges, circumventing heavy machinery, bypassing a "Slow Children" sign, gliding nonchalantly across the driveway, and occasionally lifting its mighty head to stare us down. The photos tell the rest.









### **Day 47 – August 15 – Deer Lake**

(Bert) A travel day, we reverse our direction and head west and then south, again passing through Gros Morne and continuing to Deer Lake for the night. As I disconnect the RV's electrical cord, my jacket and pants are drenched in a rain downpour. On the road, especially uphill, the RV becomes a boat forging upstream as rainwater pours down parallel groves in the highway, putting back pressure on the tires. Winds are again formidable forcing a two-handed operation of steering. By the time we reach the national park, the rain has stopped and we later hear that three in our group—Jim, Randi, and Becky—take the boat cruise in the fjord of Western Brook Pond. By 5 PM at our travel meeting the winds have picked up again and we cut the meeting short because we are afraid the tent we are under will collapse.



Coast at Flower's Cove

### **Day 48 – August 16 – Deer Lake and Grand Codroy**

(Bert) Before leaving Deer Lake, the group tours the Newfoundland Insectarium and Butterfly Garden. We walk through an enclosed flowered garden with airspace filled of nearly colliding butterflies of every imaginable color. On other floors we examine display after display of world's insects, including some of the largest and the weirdest. Several terrariums feature tarantulas, centipedes, walking sticks, and other strange creatures.



Mounted insect collection



Mexican Red Knee Tarantula (live)







### **Day 49 – August 17 – Grand Codroy**

(Bert) The morning is so beautiful, I stop editing photos and journal writing to go for a walk at 7 AM. Birds are singing everywhere and I quickly list Golden-crowned Kinglet, Boreal Chickadee, American Black Duck, and then come to some others that I cannot identify so quickly. This is a tricky time of year when juveniles are independent, yet have not yet grown their adult feathers. To add to the difficulty, the juveniles do a good job of staying hidden in a maze of branches. So, did I see a juvenile Yellow Warbler or a Wilson's Warbler? Is the poorly plumaged juvenile sparrow a Swamp Sparrow or a White-throated Sparrow?

In the evening we enjoy a potluck dinner with a great variety of tasty dishes accompanying fried chicken that Connie and Shari pick up for the whole group. After sampling more desserts than I should, I introduce our "guest" speaker Tailgunner Bob. Dressed in a special shirt Connie made for him—emblazoned with mementos of submarines he served on—Bob gives an interesting presentation on "Submarines, Rickover, and Civilian Nuclear Power," with many stories drawn from his life's experiences.





To identify this warbler, beware of the shadow crossing its crown





### **Day 50 – August 18 – Ferry from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia**

(Bert) I have enough time before the ferry departure to bird a wooded trail in the RV park. A beaver, five Red Squirrels, a nicely posing Lincoln's Sparrow, and many warbler species head the list. Ferry loading is delayed for a half-hour while an electrician repairs the ship's entry ramp and we leave at 12:30 Newfoundland time, noon Nova Scotia time. This particular ocean passage is the leg where I usually see the fewest birds and mammals. Perhaps this Cabot Strait route bypasses the continental shelf. Most numerous is Northern Gannets which I count as 40 in groups of 1-15. These gannets sure are far flung, with single birds 2+ hours from shore (by ship). I see no whales and only one porpoise, which I suspect is a White-beaked Dolphin although I only see its dorsal fin and a portion of its dark back. The oddest sighting is single Marbled Godwit at 4:39 PM, far from sight of land. It must be in migration.



Lincoln's Sparrow, Grand Codroy, Newfoundland



M/V Atlantic Vision



Loading RV's into the ship's cargo hold



Probably White-beaked Dolphin, Cabot Strait

## CHAPTER 7 – NOVA SCOTIA & NEW BRUNSWICK – PART 2

### Day 51 – August 19 – Fortress Louisbourg, Nova Scotia

(Bert) Perhaps it is unique. Certainly it is the only one I have visited. An 18<sup>th</sup> Century village of cod fishermen, a harbor filled with European trade ships, a fortress built by Louis XV and defended by French soldiers recruited on broken promises, a settlement twice surrendered after siege by British soldiers and finally stolen of its possessions and leveled to its foundations. So far, that could describe a number of places, but what makes this unique is that it was rebuilt over many years by out-of-work coal miners, sponsored by the Canadian government, and, most importantly, using 750,000 pages of 18th-century documents gathered from the national archives of France, Britain, the United States, and Canada. It is as close to the original fortress as can be imagined. Today it is inhabited and soldiered by workers dressed in period clothes who only respond knowingly to questions from their time and express amazement that a Canon can be as small as the ones carried in our hands.



Village street at Fortress Louisbourg



Fortress Louisbourg



Barracks for French soldiers, Fortress Louisbourg



Pre-reconstruction photograph of fortress ruins, with 1930s buildings in background



Detailed scale model, circa 1930s, of Fortress Louisbourg



Artist's depiction of harbor and Fortress Louisbourg (note large number of ships)



Of all the many artifacts discovered during reconstruction, I find this the oddest. It is described as a “lady's chamber pot, called a bourdaloue in the 18th century, reputedly because they were carried to church in case of emergency during the long wait before the sermon by the popular court priest Bourdaloue”

### **Day 52 – August 20 – Debert, Nova Scotia**

(Bert) Shari put together an excellent slide show of our tour thus far and has incorporated special effects and appropriate music. After our 5 PM travel meeting she serves brownies and ice cream—life's short, eat dessert first!—and then displays the second of her two 20-min. presentations, a fit remembrance of the wonderful places we have visited. She has

included a good selection of the 2100+ “final” photos that she and I have taken during the trip.



### **Day 53 – August 21 – Hopewell Rocks, New Brunswick**

(Bert) Some of the group visited Hopewell Rocks earlier today at high tide and were not impressed by the tiny islands close to the cliffs. What a difference now when we see the same area at low tide! We follow a special guided tour arranged for our group and this gives us greater insight into the formation of the flower pot rocks, as they are often called. The technical name is a sea stack with vegetation at the crown. We are within a day of full moon, so the tide today is 44.3 ft., not far from the highest tide of 46 ft. On Day 18 we took advantage of the tide when we rode the bore, but I don't think I explained why the tide is so unusual. The Bay of Fundy is like a narrow funnel through which massive amounts of tidal water are forced from a broad entrance into an ever narrowing bay. At the narrowest sections, such as Shubenacadie River in Nova Scotia and here at Hopewell Rocks in New Brunswick, the tide reaches extreme heights.

The fascinating geology of Hopewell Rocks starts 300 million years ago when sand and gravel were laid down by fast-moving streams. Later, these loose materials were compressed into layers of conglomerate rock and sandstone. This was followed by shifts in the earth that caused the layers to tilt and created large vertical and horizontal fissures. Next, water took charge of transforming the rock. Years of freezing and melting expanded and broke apart the rock. Giant tides and surging waves eroded the weaker portions of sandstone, leaving the harder conglomerate rock. Weakened sections of rock broke free, plunged to the sea floor, and opened arches such as the one now called Lover's Arch.



Hopewell Rocks at low tide



Lover's Arch



Naturalist guide addressing us under Lover's Arch



More rocks with lower portions covered with Knotted Wrack and Bladder Wrack, two species of seaweed



A few of the thousands of Semipalmated Sandpipers that gorge on tiny shrimp-like creatures to fuel up for their long non-stop migration to South America



Semipalmated Sandpipers on mud flats



Invasive Green Crab, about 1 inch in size

### **Day 54 – August 22 – to Saint John, New Brunswick**

(Bert) Ah-oh, is it a breakdown? A few RVs left before us and about a third of the way through today's travel route we see two of them pulled into a U-shaped driveway where the drivers are talking to the property owner. Undoubtedly, when 13 vehicles are driven 4400 miles (about 57,000 miles total), it is not surprising that a few will have mechanical problems.

One of the vehicles has been having problems with bad fuel or whatever else is clogging the fuel filter. Our Tailgunner has changed the filter once already and now the RV again is getting too little fuel to keep running. After consultation with the local resident, we discuss alternatives and at the moment the plan to visit a mechanic at 3 PM this afternoon seems the best as we can do, not knowing why the problem has reoccurred after changing the filter. Shari inserts the GPS coordinates for the mechanic and I lead the way while the partially disabled vehicle follows. We drive about two miles of the required twelve and the RV again stalls as it begins to climb a hill. In this hilly country, we doubt we will reach the mechanic. The driver gets the RV running long enough to pull into a driveway. By now, Jim and Jan have caught up with us and pull to the side of the road. We decide to change the fuel filter once again. I put on some old clothes, find the odd location of the filter in the center of the underside and crawl out to get some tools. Meanwhile, Jim crawls under the RV and takes over the job of removing the clogged filter. Fine with me, as you know I am no mechanic. Without too much trouble, but a lot of time, Jim gets the filter removed, but in 20 min. more he still cannot attach the new one. Meanwhile, Shari had texted the Tailgunner and now Bob arrives. Since he eventually managed to reattach

the previous filter he takes over the task of getting this one installed. Shari and I leave the scene and head to our next campground in St. John.

Later in the afternoon, as each caravaner arrives, we get a status report on the breakdown. The filter was reinstalled, the vehicle continued, but stalled a few more times, it made it through Fundy National Park and its very steep hill, it reached TCH1, but then broke down and would not start again. Good Sam is called, requesting tow service to a mechanic, but the tow doesn't arrive. Meanwhile, the vehicle restarts once more and they drive to the mechanic. Back at camp we still have no word at 7:30 and then Shari gets a phone call saying the Tailgunners have stayed back with the disabled vehicle and will try to catch up with at Saint John tomorrow.





### **Day 55 – August 23 – Saint John, New Brunswick**

(Bert) The Tailgunners bring in the last of our caravans just in time to join us on our bus tour of Saint John. With its broad harbor, hilly residential sections, ancient parks, busy shops, pretzeled expressways, and twisting river, the city gives an appearance of being much larger than its 70,000 population or even its 125,000 count with suburbs. We are camped at a wooded hillside park of 22,000 acres—the largest city park in North America—that includes seven lakes dug by chain-gang prisoners. Our bus driver and guide, Paul, spills factoids that entertain momentarily, though unlikely to be remembered more than a few minutes. I recall one related to the Three Sisters Lamp in the heart of the old city, near the harbor. When incoming ships aligned the Three Sisters with the church steeple they knew they were coming straight into the harbor. I would count two highlights of our tour, and maybe add a third point of interest, the Martello Tower. For the women especially, the colorful City Market dating back to 1876 presents an eye-catching display of fruits and vegetables, tourist-attracting artwork, and a potpourri of curiosity items.

Of more general interest is the Reversing Falls. Some of our group visited the falls last night. Now we see it at slack tide, a term referring to the neutral position between high and low tides when the river is nearly still. It is unimpressive. We need to return at high tide.

This evening is our Farewell Dinner at a fine restaurant overlooking the largest of the prisoner-dug lakes. Just after dessert is served, Shari and Connie have a presentation award ceremony. Connie hands Shari a certificate sheet, turned face down, and Shari, posing as Karnack, discerns the identity of the award recipient. As photographer, I

capture the smiles and laughter of the audience and especially the recipient as they begin to realize Shari is describing them. An award goes to the couple that preserved through losing their propane usage, disabled by a leaking tank, and at least for a few days, their electricity, because of a broken power cord. An award to the best campfire starter, one to the best birder (not me), and another to the couple with the strangest RV water problem. An earliest-arrival-to-camp award, one for the most improved RV'er, the most active dancer, the bravest woman, and the best Internet investigator. Lastly, Shari and Connie give an award to the best Moose hunter, the dog Sherlock.

Still smiling, we return to camp and many take cars to check out the Reversing Falls again, now in high tide. I ride with Bob and Connie. The chocolate brown tide is surging upstream, creating three to four deep whirlpools over submerged rocks. Our eyes can discern 3-D depth, but my camera flattens the image to 2D, losing some of the unusual perspective. While at slack tide a swimmer could easily float on his back, this high tide would be rated a 5 on the river rafting scale only because that is the top of the scale. I wonder if an expert rafter or kayaker would even attempt these rapids at highest tide. Bob drives us to another lookout, now with the sun below the horizon. Moon and stars reflect off the smooth river until it enters the tidal turbulence. Despite the tumultuous dark waves, the night is peaceful.



Three Sisters Lamp, Saint John



City Market, Saint John



Reversing Falls at slack tide



Whirlpools at Reversing Falls at high tide



Reversing Falls at high tide



Artistic effect of setting sun illuminating observation deck railing



Reversing Falls at high tide from another location



Calm river before plunging at high tide

### **Day 56 – August 24 – Saint John, New Brunswick**

(Bert) Hitch-up continental breakfast starts at 7 AM when Bud and Randy, Gordon and Janet arrive at the picnic table spread set up by Shari and Connie. We say our last reminisces, give our last hugs, say farewell, and one by one they head out of the campground. By 8:30 Ted and Brenda are the last to leave and now it is just us Tailgunners and Wagonmasters left in camp. We spend the day filling out paperwork reports, comparing notes and evaluations, and in the evening the four of us go out to Boston Pizza, one of our favorite Canadian restaurants.



Moose hunter Sherlock waits for his masters



And perks to attention, anticipating departure

### **Epilogue – August 28 – near Mont Mégantic, Quebec**

(Bert) I've received e-mails from many of our departed travelers and it seems almost all headed to the U.S. border at Maine. We did not.

When reading novels by Dean Koontz—I've read 49 of his books—I noticed in recent years he finishes one novel with the first chapter of his next. So, here, I will give you a foretaste of adventures we have in store for 2014.

Leaving Saint John, we headed north across New Brunswick, coming in sight of the northeastern tip of Maine, but crossing into Quebec and stopping for the night at the St. Lawrence River at Rivière-du-Loup. We boondocked at the harbor with a view across the mudflats to the city. By nightfall, the tide filled the bay and twinkling city lights bounced off the still water. Early the next morning we drove our RV onto the ferry and made the 90-min. crossing to Saint Simeon. From the ferry I saw a Gray Seal and my first Beluga Whale of the year.

At Saint Simeon we were on the route we will be caravanning next spring. We drove east and at Tadoussac we took another ferry across the fjord at Saguenay. Here I saw and photographed three more Belugas and next year we will take a Zodiac excursion to see more whales. We continued eastward along the Route des Baleines, a long scenic highway following the northern coast of the St. Lawrence River and especially popular for sighting whales (baleines). We got as far as the start northward on Quebec 386 at Manic-2 dam. So far, all of this is part of our 2014 Quebec 386 and Trans-Labrador tour. At the dam campground, we headed back toward Quebec City, stopping en route at campgrounds and sites we will visit again next year and spending the night at Parc National des Grands-Jardins at a campground at the foot of a mountain named Mont du Lac à Moïse. From there we headed south and are now at a campground near Mont Mégantic, again a place we will visit in 2014.

With this preview of next year's itinerary, I am really excited to visit it again in detail and then continue on across Labrador to the Atlantic Ocean. See you next year, either in person or as a virtual traveler following these journals.



Ferry across Saguenay fjord at Tadoussac



Beluga whale at Saguenay



Start of Quebec 389 which eventually intersects with the Trans-Labrador Highway



Manic-2 dam and hydroelectric power generating plant



View from campground of Mont du Lac à Moïse at Grand Gardens National Park



Montmorency Falls and cable car to the top