

Dear family and friends:

I have many things to be thankful for as the Christmas season and New Year approach, with good health, and the affection of family and friends ranking high among my blessings. Mercifully there have been no losses among my family and close group of friends, although medical complaints are almost unavoidable in my age group. I was particularly concerned when I learned of old friend Laurie Vaux's stroke but was encouraged to hear that his recovery is well underway. The number of former colleagues diminishes steadily, and only moments before preparing this message, I returned from a funeral for a colleague and friend I have known and respected for almost 60 years. A eulogy delivered by a close friend of the deceased included the terms, ethical person, and a good man, a fitting epitaph for anyone with a successful professional career and a happy family life.

My life seems full with the usual care and feeding of my two homes with perhaps less attention to volunteer activities than they deserve. More than a little reluctantly I accepted the chairmanship of the Montreal MG car club (MMGCC) early in the year more out of guilt than zeal, as I had been a member for ten years and never had any organizational responsibilities, although I have hosted a "picnic" at my Magog home for several years. Even there my efforts are minor as the members bring food and drink in excess and I simply provide accommodation and a crock pot style hot course. For the past three years I have invited my close group of friends on the same weekend to help with the inevitable tasty leftovers and as usual corral them into useful activities around the property. Those of you familiar with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain will understand why my nickname could easily be Tom, who in the narrative, managed to convince his gullible friends that painting a picket fence was a privilege. I do not have a white picket fence in Magog, but I have other endless maintenance and repair tasks.



In June our MG club hosted a lively and adventurous group of Australians touring North and South America in their vintage MGs, just arriving from Vancouver. From Montreal they continued to the easternmost point of Newfoundland province to conclude a tour that began at the southernmost part of South America.



My 1964 MGB, still sitting partially restored in my Magog garage, must surely move up on the priority list, although the 1919 Gray Dort, crippled by the failure of the near hundred year old leather on the cone clutch, should not be far behind. Neither task is particularly challenging but they do take time, a limited resource.

The rewards of gardening easily justify the effort involved, and both are often shared by my country neighbor and fellow gardener Julie. She also supports a food bank in Magog so there is little excuse for wasting produce although my Montreal neighbours probably noticed fewer distributions than usual. My garden produced a second consecutive great harvest of Italian blue plums, along with two types of raspberry, and both red and black currant, perhaps due to judicious pruning. It will take more experience to get the jam consistency right as these fruits have widely varying pectin content, and recipes cannot always be trusted to produce a nice gel.

I maintain contact with an ever diminishing group of university classmates, the meetings this year consisting of an annual gathering at a fine old conservative club in Toronto that I refer to as the Brass and Mahogany club, and an October gathering at Queen's called an interim reunion as it falls roughly midway between the regular five year interval affairs. Both events are an opportunity for me to visit my family in Kingston and Wolfe Island.

The following picture shows that the quality of attractive student cheerleaders at Queen's has only improved with time, as these young ladies cheerfully posed when they saw me pointing my camera in their direction.



I maintain my regular attendance at Montreal symphony concerts, although in foul weather there is a temptation to abandon the practice. Once in the concert hall however, these concerns vanish in the beauty of the performance by first class artists. After three years of anticipation I finally heard the new concert organ in performance. The program was a little unusual in that it consisted of works for trumpet and organ although both soloists had plenty of opportunity to show their instruments and performing skills to good advantage.

I made an exception last year to avoiding political comment by noting the election of Justin Trudeau as Canadian prime minister. This year could hardly pass without noting the astonishing selection of Donald Trump as US president elect. We can only trust that the flawed but functional US democratic process will limit his impact as he follows a steep learning curve in an unfamiliar role. The concept of a dynasty, or worse a dictatorship, is something that was rejected by the founding fathers over two

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hundred years ago and is deeply embedded in the constitution and political culture of the country with its many checks and balances.

As I do each year, I will join my family at Wolfe Island for Christmas celebrations and return to Magog to welcome my friends for the New Year, when we will raise a glass to absent friends. My sincerest wish to you is for health and contentment in this festive season, and for the coming year.

Fondly
Lorne