

Fran and Bill's 2019 Reflections

(<http://billreimer.ca> and <http://francesmshaver.ca>)

Fresh from a wonderful family Christmas on Ile Bigras, we are pumped for reflections. Both our children and their families joined us this year since it was an opportunity to say goodbye and thank-you to our island home. We are planning to move to Vancouver around June 2020.

This has meant that much of our 2019 time has been spent on the planning, curating, organizing, and jettisoning our 45 years of accumulated paraphernalia. It has also included many hours of reminiscing, recalling (or trying to recall) and sharing of delightful stories. We are very pleased to be doing it together.

The other background feature of 2019 has been the continuing accommodation of old age. Bill's myeloma has been a focus for much of this, but we notice a slightly lower level of energy, changes in our bodies, and shifting preoccupations that remind us the arrow of time drives everything.

Fortunately, Bill's myeloma is in remission with a legacy of manageable side effects and monthly checkups only. There is much that we have learned from the experience (see: <http://www.billreimer.net/what-myeloma-teaches-me>).

Fran's Zumba classes and 10,000 steps per day makes her the one to keep up with in our journey together. I am happy they include regular walks to our local café for postcard, letter, and worksheet writing – mostly to the Reimer grandkids in Fort Langley.

Against this background, we have enjoyed many events that make the year special. This includes rather dramatic spring of flooding here on the island, a trip to Puerto Vallarta in March, our annual week in Stowe, VT, an invigorating visit to BC in July, and the continuation of our research-related activities.

In April, 2019, the conjuncture of high water levels, new bridge construction, and underestimated planning meant that we were cut off from the "mainland" of Laval for a couple of weeks. Part of this time meant we had to park our cars off the island since the bridge was inadequate. It even included a week or so where pedestrian traffic was shut down.

Fortunately, the city provided very good services. They had brought piles of sand and bags on to the island as the water rose and the army helped those in danger to do as much as possible to protect their property. Our house is located in a high spot so is out of danger. The city parked an ambulance and fire truck on the island and arranged a shuttle service between the off-island parking and the bridge as well as between the bridge and our homes before shutting the bridge. They even assigned a team of social service agents to support those who were alone or anxious throughout the period.

One of the more delightful features of the ordeal was the large number of neighbours we met on a regular basis as we trudged our way over the bridge or shared the shuttle train service that had been organized to help us with island access.



In July, we headed to BC for visits and a memory-filled Westfalia camping trip with Pieter. It was his turn for our annual grandchild excursion so we decided to visit a couple of our favorite BC spots with him before he took off with his family for a week in Idaho.

Our trip included a visit to the Kettle Valley Tunnels, a few days at Bromley Rock campsite (see photo), and some at Manning Park to visit Wilma, Gary, Lisa, Aaron, and Cedar before the rest of Piet's family arrived to pick him up on their way to the USA. True to our past experience, the opportunity to spend time with one of our grandchildren revealed a side of them (and us) that is invisible when they are with their siblings and parents.



I have also enjoyed my regular interactions with Charlie since JP and Lies are trying a year of homeschooling for him. I volunteered to help out and so have been back on the teaching track as I explore topics like ancient civilizations, astronomy, governance, critical thinking, and climate with an 11-year old in mind. Our weekly Skype meetings have provided a delightful way to keep in touch with him in spite of our 5,000 km separation.

Fran and I are also enjoying the privilege of our professional positions. We both remain in touch with our colleagues and participate in research activities at a pace more in line with our energy levels. In September, Fran was chosen as a Lifetime Member by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) in recognition of her work on behalf of rural women and the Foundation (see <http://crrf.ca/lifetime-members/> and <http://billreimer.ca/personal/videos/FranCRRFLifetime20191004.mp4>). I continue my work as member of the evaluation team for the Rural Policy Learning Commons (<http://rplc-capr.ca/>) and have been appointed as Archivist for CRRF. In September I was on a keynote panel at their annual meeting in St John's (<http://ruralroutespodcasts.com/?p=2216>) and continue to publish occasional materials. I love the continued contact with my colleagues and have enjoyed learning about the challenges of archiving—an appropriate adjunct for our personal sorting and packing activities.

Throughout all these activities, we have been thrilled by the occasional visits of family and friends (Samantha in April, Bernard Drapeau and Sacra in June, Ray and Dianne in November) and the events initiated by our Ile Bigras friends—such as special dinners and of course, the annual August Croquet Party. As our time here diminishes, these events have become even more meaningful.

The meaningful events have also included those which are sadder. In May, our friend from Cap-St-Ignace, Richard Drapeau died. We appreciated having an opportunity to visit him and Céline just before and to connect once again with their son Bernard. We continue these contacts with regular phone calls from Bernard who brings us up-to-date with family matters.

As we look forward to 2020 we are preparing for an exciting change in our lives with our move to Vancouver. We are looking forward to being closer to family, but are sure to miss our Québec friends and colleagues. We are thankful for the communication infrastructure that will allow us to keep in touch and anticipate that regular visits to Québec will be the order of the day as we settle into our new location.

We wish you all the very best for 2020 and hope that good times continue throughout the decade.

Jan and Bill



Zachary, Thomas, Samantha, Daegan, Steve



Charlie, Chloe, Lies, Pieter, Evelien, JP