

Fran and Bill's 2021 Reflections: "Ring the bells that still can ring" ("Anthem" by L. Cohen)

2021 has left us feeling broken. We mourn the abuse of our natural world, the mistreatment of our fellow humans, and the ravages of COVID variations. However, like Leonard Cohen, we remain surprised and thankful for the flashes of light revealed through the cracks. We are comforted by green initiatives, acts of kindness, reconciliations, and scientific collaborations that have increased our safety and understanding. We look forward to 2022 in the hope that the light will grow.

Fran's Retirement projects

We were also reminded of the limitations of aging last February when Fran's blood test for antiglutamase came back with a value of 250 for a range that should be less than 12. Follow-up tests confirmed that she had celiac disease so it looked like her days of croissants, fresh homemade bread, and kouign-amann were over.

What could have been a depressing result turned out to have its own glow, however. The news started Fran on a journey of exploration and experimentation with gluten-free flours that has blossomed into a repertoire of recipes and baked goods that continue the tradition of mouth-watering products from her kitchen. With the help of Google, Daegan, and new-found celiac friends, Fran has become an expert on the subject.

She has also maintained an unbroken record of Sunday suppers. Along with brother John, Samantha, Lisa, Aaron, and kids we have enjoyed the weekly rejuvenation of good food and friends. Sarah and Andrew recently joined our "table"—and thrilled us with the announcement of their engagement.

My spirits are also lifted each time I hear the sounds of Zumba music and bouncing feet from our bedroom. It means that Fran is once again following one of her online routines—sometimes joined by Samantha. It is great to see the two of them: Grandmother and Granddaughter puffing their way through exercises and moves that I can only dream about.

Bill's retirement projects

My primary retirement project (staying alive) seems to be on track since I passed the 5th year anniversary of my myeloma treatment. I have largely accommodated myself to the fatigue, neuropathy, and aches associated with the process—and even Fran seems to have accepted my restricted capacity.

A chunk of that capacity is devoted to the curating associated with the Archives of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (<http://crrf.ca/crrfin-the-archives-series/>). Since the colleagues, students, practitioners, and citizens involved have been my preoccupation for more than 30 years it is a joy to be reminded of the many wonderful people and activities of the Foundation.

Diversions

In the midst of our projects, we enjoyed a number of wonderful diversions over the year. Foremost among them is the joy of visits and accomplishments of our family and friends.

Grandchildren (both ours and others') are the most obvious source of this joy. We were pleased to benefit when Fran's sister Wilma and her partner Gary come to town to visit their grandchildren.

In August we took a camping trip with Evelien—retracing an earlier trip on Vancouver Island and down the Sunshine Coast. It gave us an opportunity to enjoy the curiosity, energy, and enthusiasm of a precocious six-year-old for as long as our capacity allows. A highlight of the trip was a sailboat cruise and lunch with our colleague Bob Annis and his wife Mary.



Evelien at the helm 2021/08/09



In September we hosted our good friend Linda from Ile Bigras. It gave us a perfect opportunity to explore areas around Vancouver and Victoria then take a road trip to Penticton to visit Fran’s brother Jim and his partner Annette.

Over the last year we had an abundance of education accomplishments to celebrate. Samantha’s friend Alex, completed her BA in

Psychology with a Certificate of Bilingualism at Laurentian University; Samantha graduated with a Bachelor in Recreation Management from Langara College; and Lies successfully completed her MBA from Athabasca University. Since COVID has cancelled so many convocations, we decided to hold our own. It was a lovely event with all the regalia, speeches, and good food—plus a select and enthusiastic audience to congratulate the grads.



Bill, Samantha, Lies, Alex, and Fran at Convocation 2021/11/27

Whenever possible I would visit JP’s Claterpult workshop to make use of the tools and enjoy watching my son at work transforming wood into elegant and useful artifacts (<http://claterpult.ca>).

In November I was thrilled to participate in the celebration of a 7-year partnership project (The Rural Policy Learning Commons: <https://rplcarchive.ca/>) that was coming to an end. It is wonderful to see how the vision we had formulated in 2013 evolved in ways we never imagined.

We were saddened in November to hear that our good friend Georgi deVries died. Georgi and her husband Pieter were among our earliest and longest friends when we moved to Quebec. Her death has reinforced our thankfulness for the many friends and wonderful people who have been so important to us over the years.



We doubled our Christmas pleasure this year. The 25th was spent with Steve, Daegan, and their family in Victoria—then we took a cue from the Orthodox Christians to celebrate again on Epiphany (Jan 6-7) with Lies, JP, their family, and Fran’s brother John. Samantha got to join in at both events.



We hope that 2021 has provided you with your own flashes of light in the face of its challenges and renewed your capacity to protect our planet, care for others, search for the truth, and seek justice in 2022.

James and Bill

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