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# The View from Belfountain

Fall 2005

## The View from Here

There came a moment early Oct. 1 when Madelon Stevenson almost panicked. She glanced up and down Belfountain's deserted street and it looked like she might have to feed the pancakes to the alpacas.

"The panic," she recalled later. "Oh, God! Will the people come?"

But then they came, the hungry breakfasters, the cheek-daubed kiddiewinkles, the ragged Morris cavorters, the be-ribboned dogs, the many smiling faces of the 9th annual party for a lizard.

It was, as legendary Olympian Juan Samarach was wont to pronounce, the best Salamander Festival yet.

It started at 9:30 with the Pet Parade, where *The View* witnessed a shocking failure to recognize cultural diversity. Nine coifed dogs strutted and shuffled across the lawn in a figure eight and one koi fish swam. Each participant, including the fish, received a lip-smackin' bag of Multi-Menu dog treats from Tony Brennan and Sonya Gould, The Pet Food Guys.

Tony Brennan defended the cruel dénouement to the koi's dreams, pointing out that the dog treats are "human grade food" and that the owner of the fish had gleefully accepted the prize. "Belfountainians are fishists, not fascists," said Brennan.

Just up Old Main St. from the church Ms. Margaret Whitely and Ms. Myfanwy Douglas, were touting beautiful molasses cookies for two bucks a bag.

Pinned to the left breast of each of the bakers was a ten-inch lizard. Indeed, BCPO executive David Jobe noted a covey of the beanbag lizards beside the baked goods, on offer at four dollars apiece—less than half the price of the punier leather ones the BCPO had on offer.

"The competition," Mr. Jobe muttered darkly.

"They're sleeping. Don't wake them," said Ms. Whiteley.

Across the road, the real thing was on exhibit in Tupperware containers manned by the knowledgeable Alaina, 10, and her youthful crew.

"Are they poisonous?" asked a middle-aged spectator. "Do they bite?"

"They're like cool," said Alaina as an eastern newt scampered across her bare hands.

Some fifty paces north, more of the real thing was mewing in mild protest as the occasional unmuffled motorbike revved past. A four-month-old white alpaca named Obie nudged his brown-coated mother Gidget, who was munching hay from a manger attached to their corral.

"They don't like loud noises," said Katie, 14, of Erin. Her family owns a herd of 14, which are sheared every spring and milled into lanolin-free wool of such delicacy as to put pashmina to shame. She was selling alpaca socks at \$27 a pair—pricey, but you're worth it, as the saying goes. "I don't have a pair yet," said Katie. "I'm hoping this Christmas."



Photos by: Charles Payton

Salamander coordinator, Madelon Stevenson

Around midday, another species of the real thing arrived on scene—Glenn Blakely, the Town of Caledon's manager of bylaw enforcement, caused a stir as he laid tickets on vehicles ignoring the no-parking signs. The signs were to have been removed for the big day, but apparently someone forgot. Thanks to Councillors Richard Paterak and Jim Wallace the tickets were later annulled.

Along Bush St. on the Moorecroft lawn, more wildlife was in evidence. Sundry pooches with nutritional names like Milkshake, Porkchop, and Potroast tore over jumps and through plastic culverts, practicing time trials for the Royal Winter Fair. Folks sitting on straw bales heard that when meeting a dog you should move slowly and stare at their tails or their paws rather than their eyes.

Across the street at Caroline's Creative Arts studio, 23-month-old Jack Butson splashed a comely streak of blue paint atop his first swipe in red. Lo and behold, a new color appeared on the white Bristol board. "He made it purple, Mom," exclaimed his astonished brother Sam, 5. "He made it purple!"



Ishra's scintillating dance

And he was right. The whole day was a miracle, thanks to all the volunteers, our local performers Peter and Jordan Probst, Toby Cadham, Caroline Buston, dancers and others...

David Kendall

"I broke down in tears," said Ms. Collins, who had searched for the gambolling Gazoo for six hours. "That wasn't the neighbourly thing to do."

But Vicki Ellison, an investigator with the UCHS said it wasn't Garth Turner or any of his employees who snatched the dog. A regular customer watched the dog wandering Bush St. for half an hour, took Gazoo into the store where no one recognized him, and then drove Gazoo to the dog pound, said Ms. Ellison. "The dog-owner should be grateful to us for getting the stray dog and keeping it safe until its return," she said.

Sometimes what you do is less neighbourly than how you do it. If ever there was a man whose most benign actions have been overshadowed by a stern delivery, that man is Mr. Turner.

As Belfountain's third biggest employer after the ski club and the school, his decisions on the village store and its operation have affected every villager's life to some degree, and few seem very happy with the results—not even Mr. Turner.

"It's working out alright. We're paying our bills," he told *The View* somewhat ruefully, sitting behind his desk on the second floor facing a colour photo of the building in 1888. "It has been a very unlevel playing field."



Mr. Turner has spent some \$220,000 on the shop he bought three years ago, restoring it with exquisite detail from a dilapidated state.

"I love old buildings," he says. "And I think we're losing our heritage at an unbelievable clip. This could have become a video store, a 7-Eleven."

He employs seven local staff in the store. But the investment is such that a store with a few fresh veggies and convenience dairy products won't carry itself. So he has converted it into a deli and ice cream parlour, catering more to yuppie bikers than to locals.

Seems as if everyone in Belfountain has an attitude toward GT, and that attitude has been communicated to the local councillors, who include James Wallace, proprietor of the Belfountain Inn, which is in direct, slug-festing competition with Mr. Turner's sandwich-serving store as well as his nearby Cataract Inn.

He competes equally bitterly with Norm Wrycraft's take-out across the street. "They buy Norm's hotdogs and come and eat them on our patio," says Mr. Turner.

The Town of Caledon "killed" his planned rock concert, says Mr. Turner. It made him install a \$30,000 water purification unit "to wash lettuce leaves". It forced him to fence off the trickling stream. It has fought him for three years over plans ranging from washrooms to picnic tables.

The store came with 14 picnic tables when he bought it, he says. Caledon ruled he could have only six. He paid \$1,800 to It's A Hobby to make six octagonal tables, only to be told they weren't the prescribed shape. "Now we have six Canadian Tire picnic tables," says Mr. Turner. "A lot of needless acrimony," he describes the constant skirmishing and expense.

Now Mr. Turner is moving away—to Campbellville in Halton Riding where he plans to run for election as the federal PC candidate. He expects to continue owning the store and says he has in the last few months rejected two purchase offers from people wanting to turn it into a convenience store.

## Belfountain Lives!

### Postal Code change:

Despite all the bureaucratic double-speak and obfuscation from Canada Post it has now emerged that we can, after all, use **BELFOUNTAIN, ON** in our home addresses along with the new postal code. It won't foul up their computers.

"The use of 'Belfountain, Inglewood, Alton, Caledon Village and Caledon' are all acceptable names under the new Canada Post system," writes Area Councillor Jim Wallace in his Ward One Update.

## Citizen Turner

Early last month Gazoo, a dog owned by Cheryl and Jeff Collins of River Rd., strayed 100 metres or so into Mike McKeever's back yard at 779 Forks Rd. Mr. McKeever patted Gazoo, examined his nametags and called the Caledon Mountain Veterinary Hospital. The person on duty told him the owners' name and Mr. McKeever returned Gazoo to his grateful family.

Two weeks later the exuberant Gazoo again escaped Ms. Collins. Gazoo wound up on Mr. Garth Turner's property at the village store.

"He goes there because people feed him," said Ms. Collins.

Later that day, Ms. Collins retrieved Gazoo from the Upper Credit Humane Society pound in Erin after paying a storage fee of \$15 and a fine of \$30.



## Meet Mr. Jefferson



The Jefferson Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*) is a species largely concentrated, in Ontario, in parts of the Niagara Escarpment including Belfountain. These relatively elusive creatures live most of their lives underground (their family name *Ambystomatidae* refers to "mole" salamanders) except during breeding season, which for Jeffersons is the early spring. That's when they seek out woodland ponds to lay their eggs. Jefferson salamanders are on both the Federal and Provincial lists of threatened species. Except for three isolated areas in Southern Ontario, Jefferson salamanders are not found anywhere in Canada, and even in the U.S. (where their range extends from New England to northern Kentucky), they are faced with mounting pressures from habitat loss.

Jefferson salamanders can grow to over eight inches long. Named, indirectly, for a certain U.S. President who also happened to be a naturalist, they vary in colour from dark-brown to dark-gray. Adult Jeffersons often have bluish flecks along the sides of their bodies and tails, making them hard to distinguish from the more common Blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*). The two species often interbreed, producing two hybrid species that, for interesting reasons having to do with their three sets of chromosomes (!), only inherit traits from the female parent (pay attention there, guys).

Jefferson salamanders are principally threatened by urban development. They need deciduous forest with an intact forest floor, as well as unpolluted ponds in which to breed. In addition, many salamanders are killed each spring crossing the roads that increasingly fragment their habitat. The NEC is monitoring the health of the few remaining Jefferson populations in the area.

Kate Sandilands

## Cleaning Up

The Peel Region has no way of monitoring the pickup of litter along the roads private citizens adopt, say officials.

"As far as if they did a 'good enough' job or not, I don't get into that," says Sally Rook, technical analyst roads for Peel Region, in an email to Councillor Richard Paterak.

"You can't micro-manage," she later told *The View*. "You have to go on good faith."

Installation of a sign with an adopter's personal ad at each end of an adopted section of road costs \$300 per kilometre, says Ms. Rook, but the taxpayers foot the fee on the adopter's behalf if the adopter covenants to keep the roadside clean of litter. The rule of thumb is two cleanups a season "from the outside of the road shoulder to the fence line," she added.

So has local Re/Max Realtor Ian Amos honoured his commitments in adopting for the last two summers the Mississauga Road south from Belfountain and—under his Aspera Terrent horse farm's name—the Forks of Credit Road heading east from Belfountain? That's altogether 13.5 kilometres—an annual value of \$4,050.

"Actually, you've kind of caught me at a busy time," said Mr. Amos when *The View* reached him by phone on Sept. 19 and requested action photos of his adoption duties.

## BCPO Update

The first is the Salamander Festival, which was recently held with soaring success. Organizer Madelon Stevenson last Thursday delivered a cheque for \$1,000 for the Belfountain Public School playground. The support from the local business community was inspiring and a big thanks goes to all the performers, critters and volunteers.

With the crowds attending the Town of Caledon's Fall Colours program, parking on Bush Street and Old Main Street is restricted for the month of October to one side of the road during the afternoons. This restriction is a pilot project.

The parking feedback that I have received so far has fallen along the lines of merchants against residents. Some merchants feel that the decreased parking has driven business away from their establishments. The residents overwhelmingly support the restrictions, which let them walk without stepping out into traffic to avoid parked cars.

## SPORTS



Men and women are invited to the inaugural evening of bandy-ball (floor hockey) later this month at Belfountain Public School gym. It's a fab exercise non-contact sport for the winter, says organizer Rick J. Barber. For a precise time, email [rick@barbercolenc.com](mailto:rick@barbercolenc.com).

## MADAM GHOST

We purchased the Old MacDonald Place in 1979 and fell in love with it immediately. That's the beautiful house down in the hollow on the northeast corner of Forks Road and Mississauga Road.

It wasn't until after the deal closed that the previous owner admitted that it was haunted, but by 'friendly ghosts,' she said.

Well, for the first few years there was no sign of any occupants other than ourselves. But then one night just after I had retired, and while my wife Maureen and daughter Karen were still downstairs watching TV, it happened. The centre plan of the old Victorian house had a very long staircase because of the extremely high ceilings on the lower floor. And it was from the top of this staircase that I heard the tapping of what sounded like the toenails of a large dog going down the stairs. Immediately I jumped up and ran to the head of the stairs. Peering over the railing, I listened as the sound continued, progressing down the stairs. Meanwhile, my wife and daughter got up and hastened to the bottom of the stairs and stood there as I did at the top, staring in disbelief as the sound reached the bottom of the landing and then disappeared.

To this day we cannot offer any rational explanation, and it has not occurred again. But what did happen on a few occasions to which I was not privy was the appearance of a woman in the doorway of our dining room. She did nothing but make an appearance and then walk away. Only Maureen and Karen witnessed these sightings. Never at any time were we frightened while they happened. The previous owner was surely correct about one thing—they were friendly ghosts indeed.

Norm Wrycraft

## GARDEN

Members of the BCPO gathered on a bright and sunny Saturday morning to clean and prep the gardens in the village center. The BCPO has taken over the maintenance of the gardens from Frank Schenk who had been sole caregiver for many years. We would again like to say thank you, Frank, for the years of hard work.



## Puffballs by the Trillion

They seemed to pop up on every shaded hillside this September, glowing and vaguely alien, *calvatia gigantea*—giant puffballs.

Along with the elusive morel, the puffball is the one mushroom type that the average person walking the dog can recognize and carry home to the pan. It's by far the biggest bounty that nature yields up absolutely free to harvesters unarmed with hook or bullet.

They seem to thrive on air, though their short, root-like mycelia fibres anchor them to the earth anywhere through central and eastern U.S. and Canada. They spread with a puff of spores emitted when the wind blows or an animal kicks the desiccated grey-green carcass huddling after its brief glow of ripeness. A single, soccer-ball sized puffball can explode with as many as six trillion spores. Natives used the fibrous mass of the dried puffball as tinder for their fires and as a styptic to staunch wounds.

Most people slice the puffball, peel it, and fry it in butter, salt and pepper. But, after extensive testing in *The View's* gleaming kitchens, we are proud to introduce our sophisticated readers to:

### Puffballs Parmesan

Blend 1 cup flour with 1 cup Parmesan cheese  
Beat 1 egg lightly with 2 tablespoons water  
Slice and peel 1 lb. pound puffball 1/2" thick  
Dip slices in egg, then in Parmesan mix, and sauté in blend of oil and butter.

Be warned: puffballs go bad very quickly. They can be stored frozen, but only after being cooked. Or you can toss the odoriferous remains into a shaded area of the garden and hope one of those spores feels at home for next year.



That Dallas! He's a nice dog, a friendly tyke. But there's something about skunks that draws Dallas like a fresh road kill.

"Three times this summer," said Dallas' owner Betty Fife last month as passers-by sniffed and accelerated past her front yard on Caledon Mt. Dr.

Dallas, a youthful German Shepherd, wagged his tail still damp with 'Betty's De-Skunk Mixture', her all too often tried and true potion.

"Dallas sleeps beside the bed," said Ms. Fife meaningfully. And he fancies Mr. Fife's truck as a daytime kennel.

The first time a skunk came calling, they bought two tiny bottles of skunk mute at \$25 a bottle. That's when Ms. Fife determined to mix a home-brew using everyday kitchen products.

Here's her anti-skunk gunk:

500 mil. Peroxide, 1/2 cup baking soda,  
1/2 cup dish detergent and  
1 tablespoon vanilla

Leave on for five minutes and rinse thoroughly. Try to avoid the dog's eyes.

## Heritage

### A Job Well Done

The pioneers would be pleased. Sept. 21, just 168 years after it was built, the 17 people most responsible for the restoration of the Melville White Church on Mississauga Rd. south of Belfountain, were recognized. At the Caledon council chamber, Dawn Bennett, a director with the Ontario Heritage Trust, gave badges of appreciation to Anne Benitz, Peter Probst, Robert Clipsham, James Douglas, Karen Haist, Brian Moorcroft, Becky Pembry-Spratley, Carrie Raybold, Terry Raybold, Janice Reed, Peter Stewart, Ted Titterton, Lynn Wood, Norm Wrycraft, Roy Trimble (posthumously), Nicola Richmond (posthumously) and Alex Yankovitch (posthumously).

"Its beauty is its simplicity," said Mayor Marolyn, "It shows what the settlers thought was important."

## Did You Know That...?



Belfountain had its first post office in 1860 and was assigned the postal code LON 1B0 in 1971.

We had many colourful postmasters and mistresses on Bush St. and Main St. over those years. It seems only yesterday, while still in the former Trimble garage, that the Postal Pooh Bahs unceremoniously lowered the wicket on our charming little post office where we would meet and exchange news.

The human touch fell to so-called "super" mailboxes. Ever try to get your mail in a howling winter blizzard?

Now we are under siege again. Canada Post would like to wipe out our identity by telling us to become Caledon.

Our wise old raconteur, Johnny Trimble, upon learning of this latest assault was as dismayed as most of us. He recounted this early tale about Harry Hepworth, one of Belfountain's most eccentric characters, who for 21 years (1923-44) was the keeper of the post office in his shoe store known as Cloggers on the other side of the Conservation area bridge.

"In all my travels I never saw a man like Harry. Son of a gun! At one moment he would quote scripture at you and the next, swear and curse like a trooper. Harry would hand over your mail personally. At one time my mother went out west and sent us postcards from every place she stopped at. Harry would give me my mail and say; 'Yessir, your mom's sure having a good time out there!' Then the next person coming in would get my life history! By golly, he knew everything that was going on in Belfountain."

Quite a contrast when today we have trouble finding out what the !!\*1?# is going on in our postal bureaucracy.

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