



**THE PROBUS CLUB  
OF PERTH**

P. O. Box 20131,  
Perth, Ontario  
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[www.probusperth.ca](http://www.probusperth.ca)

Probus meets the first  
Wednesday of each month,  
Sept. to June.

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## Apropos ....

Another election is behind us and another Thanksgiving has come and gone. The summer is a fading memory and the looming winter just around the corner. Still, though we have so much for which to be grateful it seems that Thanksgiving has become just a feast day rather than a time to reflect and be thankful for this privileged life we are so fortunate to share in this special community. How frequently do we pause to be truly grateful? When do we take the time to seek something beautiful in everyone and everything around us? There is a Navajo prayer that reminds us that beauty is all around us, even as we carry on with our everyday lives. Here is one version of that prayer. "With beauty before me I walk. With beauty behind me I walk. With beauty below me I walk. With beauty above me I walk. With beauty all around me I walk." If we can remember that, perhaps our steps will become a bit lighter.

*(Apropos reflects the views of the Editors but not necessarily those of the Club.)*

## Helga and David Zimmerly on Risk Taking by Sail



It is no secret that life is a risky business. Almost everything we do has some element of danger. Nonetheless, most of us do not deliberately forego the security of an income and a home in a safe neighborhood for a precarious, unfunded and unescorted voyage on a small sailing vessel halfway around the world via a route that most veteran sailors would shun as too risky.

Nonetheless, that is precisely the risk that Helga and David Zimmerly undertook in 1985 on their little boat christened the Erasmus. While most sailors head south for the Caribbean and duck through the Panama Canal, the Zimmerlys headed north for the Canadian arctic and sailed straight into icy seas where pan ice and icebergs of all sizes loomed. They were alone and virtually without communication because satellite telephone was not yet available.

It is impossible to recount their tale here. That would take a book, which happens to be available on CD from David and Helga ([click here for their eBook version](#)). Nonetheless, it is possible to recount a couple of the harrowing times they survived during their unusual voyage.

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## Risk Taking .....continued

Their sail up the coast of Labrador was relatively uneventful and even provided an opportunity for them to stock up on provisions when David was fortunate enough to bag a caribou, which Helga processed into bottled meat. However, their planned route took them across the Hudson straight to Baffin Island. The Hudson Straight is notoriously bad water for sailing because of its vicious tides and unpredictable winds, which can overpower both sail and the meagre engines with which most sailboats are equipped. The crossing was brutal and they ran out of fuel for their diesel heater, but they managed it in 36 hours and ducked into Shaftsbury Inlet, a fiord on Baffin Island where they anchored for some much needed rest. Only problem was their unfamiliarity with the incredible tides in this area, and they were jolted awake by the sickening thud of their keel on the rocky bottom as the tide rushed out. Narrowly managing to pull the boat into deeper water they motored around the fiord looking for better moorage. They could not go back into the straight. A storm was raging and that was too risky, but the cliffs of the fiord plunged directly into the sea and there was no place shallow enough to moor without being grounded. So David decided the only way to minimize their risk was to moor where a little creek had deposited some sand on the rocky bottom and deliberately allow the boat to ground until the tide lifted them again and, hopefully, the raging wind outside would permit them to leave. Fortunately, the Erasmus was a sturdy monocoque aluminum boat so this was a practical and relatively risk-free option.

Their next big endurance test was leaving Greenland on their way to the British Isles via the North Atlantic route in August when that route is normally relatively safe. Besides it was not until August 1 that the ice left Cape Dorset bay where they had spent the winter, so even if they had wanted they could not have attempted the crossing any earlier. They left Nuuk, Greenland, with a very positive weather forecast and were just a day out when their radio startled them with a terrifying report that a "Force 10" wind storm was imminent in the Davis Straight. When things got bad, and they did get very bad, they simply had to lash the wheel, go below, seal everything up and ride out the storm for 72 hours. To top it off, they had a passenger, Sharon Arnold, a teacher from Baffin Island who had begged them to tag along to England. If you have ever been below deck in a small sailboat you can perhaps imagine what it must be like to be cooped up with 3 people and tossed about without a break for 72 hours. Then again, I think that can only be lived because it is beyond imagination. Their crossing of the North Atlantic was supposed to take 14 days. Due to continuing bad weather they spent 30 days to approach the coast of Scotland, only to learn that a force 11 storm was headed their way! They tried riding it out again, but Erasmus was knocked down which happens when the waves get too steep and thin to support the boat. A knockdown is potentially disastrous and can sink a boat, even one built as well as the Erasmus, so something had to be done. They had only one option, a storm anchor that they had brought along in the event of a situation like this. They deployed it with good rope off the

stern so it trailed two waves behind them and it successfully held them from falling off of the huge waves. When the storm abated a bit they headed for the St. Kilda Islands at the suggestion of the Scottish Coast Guard. They were at the mouth of a safe harbor when the storm returned and they were caught between islands without enough power to fight the wind. An Irish fishing boat sheltered in the harbor came out to tow them into the harbor, but the wind was so strong they could not get a line secured to Erasmus. So the captain of the fishing boat ordered them below and he stood watch over them throughout the night. Next morning the storm had abated enough that they could get a line on Erasmus and the fishing boat towed them 40 miles to Scotland. As fortune would have it, on learning the Zimmerlys were not insured, the owners of the fishing boat waived the fee for towage.

Things were relatively uneventful through the inland waterways of Europe and they spent a winter working in Turkey to replenish their funds. On their way to the Indian Ocean they had to sail through the Red Sea, also notorious for greedy officials, hidden reefs, strong winds and the occasional sand storm. It was on the Red Sea that they were shot at, the only time they were shot at on their voyage, as they tried to enter the port of Suakin, Sudan. Shortly thereafter, they laid to anchor behind a Sudanese Island for 3 weeks while a headwind raged that prevented them from continuing on to the Gulf of Aden. When the wind abated they left the Red Sea through the "Gate of Tears" at night without lights showing to avoid the local pirates who would board and loot their boat given an opportunity.

Once out of the Red Sea, they sailed to Kenya where they hoped to work but ended up in Khartoum, Sudan where David worked for the UN World Food Program and Helga found a teaching job. They spent a year in Sudan and another in Mozambique doing the same kind of work before they headed into the Indian Ocean and sailed to Thailand where they moored Erasmus and flew home to visit the family and get to know the grandchildren when they discovered David had a genetic mutation that required brain surgery. Three operations later he was fine but his reaction time had slowed, and they knew that completing their voyage around the world was just too risky.

The risk they took and the patience and perseverance they displayed are beyond admirable. Only their book can do it justice.

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### Lunch After November Meeting

To be held at Michael's Restaurant 110 Gore Street East, Perth



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### Quote for the Month

**"The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you; laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly kind companion; and so let all young persons take their choice."**

— William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*

## Personal Profile ~ Gary Dickson



Born in Edmonton in 1948, Gary grew up in Drumheller, a town in the badlands of east-central Alberta that characterizes itself as “the dinosaur capital of the world”. Gary attended the University of Alberta where he obtained an undergrad degree in history and political science as well as a degree in law. In 1977 Gary married to Arlene, now a retired chartered psychologist, and they have so far enjoyed 38 years of marriage.

Diligent, energetic, philanthropic and a pursuer of opportunity, Gary has enjoyed 4 different careers and is yet to be fully retired.

Gary practiced law in Calgary for 24 years, becoming a partner in a 5 lawyer firm. His primary focus in his law practice was on family law and litigation. During this time he pursued his interest in making law and legal services more accessible to the general public by working with several others to create Calgary Legal Guidance, which recently celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Calgary Legal Guidance is a free legal advice clinic staffed in the evenings by volunteer lawyers who provide legal advice to those who do not qualify for the provincial legal aid program and cannot afford to hire a lawyer. Gary also authored the Divorce Guide for Alberta (11 editions) to help couples going through a divorce to understand the process, and in the event of a simple, uncontested divorce to enable them to obtain the divorce without a lawyer. In 1977 Gary was the founding president of the Calgary Civil Liberties Association, which provided legal advice to vulnerable groups and individuals whose civil liberties were violated or threatened. As if he did not have enough to do, between 1977 and 1987 Gary served as President of the Calgary John Howard Society (1979-1981), the President of the Alberta John Howard Society (1984-1986), and the Issues Chairman for the John Howard Society of Canada (1985-1987). The John Howard Society is focused on crime prevention through successful reintegration of convicted offenders into the community after they have served their sentence.

Gary served as President of the Alberta Liberal Party (1989-1991) when it started growing from a very small entity to become the clear alternative to the Alberta Conservative Government and their 30 year tenure. This launched his second career in 1992 when he won a by-election as the Liberal member of provincial parliament for Calgary Buffalo, a downtown constituency. He was re-

elected in two successive general elections due, he acknowledges, to the amazing organizational skills of his wife, Arlene, who served as a key organizer in each of the campaigns. For about half of his 10 years in the Provincial Assembly he was the only Opposition MLA from the city of Calgary. Gary served as the House Leader for the Official Opposition, negotiating the business of the house with the Government House Leader and was heavily involved in the creation and enactment of the 3 major access-to-information and privacy laws of Alberta.

Gary’s third career was launched in 2001 when he chose not to run in that year’s provincial election and do something “related but different”. He returned to law practice as a sole practitioner restricted to access-to-information, privacy and health information law work. He was retained as a consultant on electronic health records by the federal Minister of Health and the Office of Health and the Information Highway. He also provided advice to national and international organizations and corporations. During that time he served as the Human rights Columnist for the publication LawNow; a columnist for the Calgary Herald; a sessional instructor at the University of Calgary Political Science Department teaching a graduate level course in selected studies in human rights; and, was appointed by the Federal Government as an Adjudicator under the Canada Labour Code, dealing with wrongful dismissal claims by employees in federally regulated businesses such as airlines, interprovincial trucking, etc.

Gary’s 4<sup>th</sup> Career started in late 2003 when he was appointed by the NDP Government for a five year term as Saskatchewan’s first fulltime Information and Privacy Commissioner. His appointment was renewed for another 5 year term by the Saskatchewan Party Government. Jennifer Stoddart, then Privacy commissioner of Canada, involved him in several international meetings of Commissioners to provide a provincial perspective. The Canadian Government sent him to South Africa and to Rwanda to provide advice on creating an access-to-information and privacy regime similar to that which operates in all Canadian provinces and territories. He also went to Mexico at the request of the Mexican Data Protection Authority when a new privacy law was about to come into force. This involved working with physician associations and health profession organizations to discuss health information issues and electronic health records. While in Regina Gary and Arlene discovered that Regina was a hotbed for Salsa dancing, so he and Arlene took Salsa lessons; Arlene learned to play the guitar; Gary learned to play the bagpipes; and, they indulged their love of adventure travel.

Gary “retired” after 10 years in Regina and in February 2014, he and Arlene moved to Big Rideau Lake. They love this part of Eastern Ontario, but the primary attraction was being closer to their daughter and son-in-law who both work in Ottawa for the Federal Government, and most importantly, to be closer to their wonderful 19 month old granddaughter. Since he and Arlene moved to Ontario, Gary continues to do some consulting work across Canada. Last year Suzanne LeGault, the Information Commissioner of Canada appointed him as Commissioner in Residence in her office where he headed up

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## Gary Dickson.....continued

a complex investigation and provided advice and counsel to her senior staff. This year he has been doing work on facial recognition technology. How that fits with his expertise in privacy law was not explained, but there must be a connection!

Welcome, Gary, it is truly wonderful to have you here among us!

## Management Team Notes

- With the steady increase in our numbers, members will be asked to amend the Club by-laws in order to remove the membership cap, as indicated at the October meeting ~ see [club bylaws](#).
- In view of the number of new members, it was decided to try having two personal members present their personal profiles when possible.
- **Unpaid fees for 2015-16 are now past due.** Please fill out [the renewal form](#) and take it to the next meeting or send it together with your cheque to Probus Box 20131, Perth, Ont., K7H 3M6.
- The poll of members at the October meeting on their interest in summer Probus meetings appeared to be evenly divided. Management Team members were split on it as well and the decision was taken not to move ahead with summer meetings at this time.



## The Commemorative Bench

**We are almost there!** Thanks to the generous donations of members present at the September and October meetings, almost 85% of the estimated \$1,600 cost of the Commemorative bench has already been raised. As you know, we are donating the bench to the Town to recognize both the 20th anniversary of the Perth Probus Club and the 200th anniversary of the Perth Military Settlement. We encourage members who have not yet had a chance to make a donation to consider doing so at the next meeting. While the amount will be left entirely up to you, if most of our members were to contribute in the \$10 to \$15 range, it should cover the costs. A great location has been secured for the bench ~ [see poster](#).



## Speakers' Corner

Our speaker on November 4<sup>th</sup> will be Barry Crampton with a presentation on his historical mapping project for the 200th anniversary of the Perth Military Settlement. Barry will demonstrate the online prototype of the historical mapping Project, showing the original lot boundaries of land grants to the early settlers, the various types of land grants (military, settler, clergy, crown, etc.), and data about the original grantee, where they were from, how many in the family, etc., as well as links to any interview clips or photos.



## Special Events

- **Nov 19** - Dinner & Theatre event - dinner at 5:30 at The Stone Cellar followed at 8:00pm by a play at the Studio Theatre. The play is "Dinner with Friends" ~ A Pulitzer prize-winning comedy drama about marriage, divorce, and the perils of middle age, directed by Jeremy Dutton. Theatre tickets are \$17 each. Dinner will be a choice of 4 entrees ~ Lamb (\$28), Steak (\$28), Chicken (\$22.75), or Fish (\$26). Please purchase your theatre tickets and indicate your meal choices at the November meeting, if possible, or contact Mary Kilgour by November 11<sup>th</sup> ~ [More details](#).
- **December 4** – Christmas Dinner/ Dance. Lion's Club Hall Perth, catered by the Lionesses. Social time starts at 6pm, followed by dinner, prizes, gifts and dancing. Music is by "[Touch of Class](#)" which is described as 'A self-contained tribute to the 50/60/70's featuring multi-instrumentalist Simon Clark, ex-"Freddie and the Dreamers"'. This is a repeat performance by popular request. Please sign up by the November 4<sup>th</sup> meeting or contact Mary by November 15<sup>th</sup> at the latest. The price is \$35/ person, with cheques payable to Probus Perth. Please let Mary know if you are able to take a "re-gift" to the party as a prize.
- **January 6** – Mary is planning another Legion Lunch after the meeting to start 2016 off right - sign up at the December meeting.
- **January 23** - Robbie Burns Dinner & Dance Perth Legion. Tickets available in January.
- **May 25** – Save the date for "[A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline](#)" at the 1000 Island Playhouse".



## Famous Last Words

- That's not smoke, that's steam.
- It's so tame you can put your head in its mouth.
- These are the safe kind of mushrooms.