

Sourdough Chronicle



Volume 46 - Issue 2

Yukon Seniors' Newsletter

Summer 2023

A quarterly publication of the Yukon Council on Aging



"Warming up for the 2023 AGM" Photo by Christopher Wheeler

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What's New?



- **YCOA Staff and your New Board elected at our AGM**
- **The Amalgamation Feasibility Study is Complete**

Visit the YCOA website

<http://www.ycoayukon.com/whats-new.html>

Or Drop into our offices

4061-B 4th Avenue - 9am to 1pm - Mon to Fri. (ex. holidays)



The Seniors' Home & Yard Maintenance Program

The Seniors' Home & Yard Maintenance Program provides a pool of security-screened workers to assist seniors, elders, and persons with disabilities with normal household maintenance jobs at affordable rates.

These jobs may include:

- snow shoveling;
- lawn and yard work;
- wood splitting;
- housekeeping chores;
- minor repairs and painting;
- moving;
- organizing.



For more information, please contact:

Christopher Wheeler, Co-ordinator at (867) 667-4357 (HELP)

President's Report



An update from the Acting President

TEXT Bev Buckway

This year's Annual General Meeting took place on May 12th at the Legion, complete with a cowbell, yellow stretchy bands, and lots of laughter. We counted members as they came through the door to ensure we reached a quorum to avoid the "same time, same place next week" scenario all organizers worry about. We added a few new members to our list and three new board members - Larry Kwiat, Tracy Snell, and Elaine Kimball. Welcome!

If you look at the AGM pictures, you will see smiles on the faces of our seniors as they comply with the instructions provided by Juanita Wyatt, a recreation and fitness enthusiast. Juanita cranked up the boom box and led everyone through a series of easy-to-do but effective stretches over twenty minutes to stir things up. And everyone took the yellow bands home for further use. When Juanita is not entertaining seniors at our AGM, she is a manager at Opportunities Yukon.

Once we were all in shape, the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Honourable Tracy-Anne McPhee, updated the audience on the Aging in Place progress and distributed the Annual Report for 2021-2022. It is online at <https://yukon.ca/en/yukon-aging-place-annual-report-2021-22>.

Minister McPhee hosted a get-together for a few senior organizations earlier in the week, where the discussion centred around collaboration. She assured the audience that she was not there to announce any funding cuts and that the government wants to continue to support seniors.

The feasibility study on potential amalgamation

options for YCOA, GAS and ERA, conducted by Wendy Morrison of YZED Projects Inc. and funded by Sport & Recreation, cumulated with a presentation to interested members of all three organizations on May 19th. The report outlined No change/Status quo, Shared Services/Some restructuring, and Amalgamation possibilities while analyzing each option's pros and cons. Recommendations, best practices, and a potential implementation plan followed. The final report is available on our website, and printed copies are available at the office. It will take some time before the members vote on any recommendations, and you will be well-updated as the process continues.

I visited several communities in the spring and dropped off the latest "Information Please" booklet. Those members without an email address received a phone call/message to let them know about the booklet and the feasibility study survey to encourage participation. And phone calls were made again to inform members of the presentation in May. Unfortunately, a recent count showed that 27% of our members did not provide an email address on their membership form. Therefore, I have a request. Please let the office know if you have an email address, as it would reduce the administrative work. Remember that our membership reaches about 450 at times.

Your team is off to a strong start this term. Please keep in touch, and let us know about any concerns you would like us to tackle that pertain to Yukon seniors in your community.

Bev Buckway
Acting President

Editorial

There is Something for Everyone?

TEXT Christopher Wheeler
PHOTO Christopher Wheeler



Do you have a hobby? It might be a worthwhile question to consider. Not something you do to fill the time, but something you do because it helps give you a sense of purpose or accomplishment. We, and I mean everyone, is uniquely endowed with talents and interests that they can either develop or ignore, and hobbies are one way to approach this.

While work often requires skill and knowledge, it isn't always the result of choice as much as of need. Your mileage will vary with this, of course. Fortunately, a hobby is always born of an interest, a passion, or that creative urge. Some people will sew or quilt, others will paint or draw, still others might build models, take photos, or whittle wood. Hobbies can range from things one studies, observes, or collates, to things one sews, builds, paints or shapes. There are an almost infinite variety of options.



I have a retired neighbour who loves to work in wood. Over the years, I have witnessed some of the products of his pursuit, from the incredible cabinets in his kitchen, and the ornate fence he built around his house, to a superb gazebo and mini bridge in his back garden. I have no doubt that his hobby has brought him years of satisfaction, while the products of his hobby have inspired friends and neighbours alike. Moreover, he hasn't limited his activities to his own desires, but has regularly used his skills to help others, donating various products, such as

picnic tables, to charities like Special Olympics. Woodwork has helped to fulfill my neighbour while improving the greater neighbourhood.

Similarly, my wife loves to express herself in creative ways with colours, patterns, and designs. She has probably produced close to a hundred acrylic paintings. She has cut and soldered more than a dozen stained glass panels, and she regularly sews her own ideas together in colourful cloth which she then painstakingly quilts on a small sewing machine. Every one of her projects is a labour of love and not an insignificant investment in time. Nevertheless, when she has enough completed, she will invariably give quilts away to new mums, friends, relatives, the local women's shelter, and others. I even managed to nab one to use as a wall covering in my home office.

Speaking of my home office, it is the place where I devote many hours to processing the photos I have taken while out hiking, exploring, or just wandering. My hobbies, and I have three that I am especially passionate about, are in no particular order, hiking, writing, and photography. All three give me great satisfaction and often help me find meaning in the day-to-day; but I also enjoy many lesser interests from the history of life on Earth, to drawing and design -- there is no law that says you have to limit your interests.

All that said, some focus is probably helpful and of the three special pursuits I mentioned, hiking

is an activity that allows me to let my mind wander while my body unwinds and writing helps me collect my thoughts and put things in order. Photography connects me with the people, animals and landscapes that surround me. All three are activities that I love, and while hiking is very much a selfish pursuit done simply for the joy of it, I routinely share my writing and photography in publications like the Sourdough Chronicle. I like to think that this work benefits others as much as myself.

If you're newly retired, approaching retirement, or just looking for something to help keep you fit, thinking, and engaged, developing a hobby might be the way to go. It's probably OK to give yourself permission to do something you enjoy. It doesn't have to be collecting stamps, although it could be. Heck, you could go back to school! Many colleges and universities offer discounted or even free tuition for seniors.

If you need ideas, keep an eye on our "Hobby Highway" feature. Last month it was amateur radio. This month it's playing the ukelele. If you already have a hobby that you're passionate about, why not contribute? In the meantime, here are a few more ideas . . .

Genealogy and Family; Fostering or Adopting Animals; Fundraising or Volunteering; Horseback Riding; Reading and Book Clubs; Arts & Crafts; Drawing or Painting; Board & Card Games; Target shooting, Atlatl or Archery; Darts or Horsehoes; Car or Truck Restoration; Collecting; Woodworking, Metalworking; Clay and Pottery; Dancing; Camping, Road Trips or Travelling; Bird watching; Plant and Animal identification; Photography or Videography; Painting or Drawing; Croquet, Bowling, or Golf; Pickleball, Racketball or Squash; Pool or Snooker; Swimming or Snorkeling; Fishing or Boating; Tai Chi or Yoga; Gardening or House Plants; Hiking or Geocaching; Solving Puzzles or Designing Puzzles; Writing or Composing; Crocheting or knitting; Cooking or baking; Playing an Instrument; Mentoring Youth; Public Speaking and Debating; Snow carving and Ice carving; Acting or Singing, and much more . . .



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Sherry Goodman, Treasurer
Penny Rawlings, Secretary

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Michelle Christensen-Toews
Elaine Kimball
Larry Kwiat
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Sourdough Chronicle

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quarterly for
Yukon Seniors

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FY Information

What's Happening This Summer

Yukon Riverside Arts Festival

June 1 - June 4
Dawson City

Ride for Dad Yukon

Saturday, June 10
Whitehorse

Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival

June 9 - June 11
Haines Junction

Kluane Chilkat International Bike Relay

June 17, 2023
Haines Junction

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Wednesday, June 21
Venues around the Yukon

Solstice Saint-Jean

Wednesday, June 21 5PM-11PM
Whitehorse

Adäka Cultural Festival

June 29 - July 5
Whitehorse

Canada Day

July 1
Venues around the Yukon

Yukon River Quest

July 4 - July 7
Whitehorse to Dawson City

Yukon Gold Panning Championships

July 8, 2023
Dawson City

Dawson City Music Festival

July 21 - July 23
Dawson City

Yukon Pride Month

August 1 - August 31
Venues around the Yukon

Yukon River Trail Marathon

August 6
Whitehorse

Discovery Day Celebrations

August 10 - August 14
Dawson City

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Guest writers and contributors are welcome.
All submissions must be in by the 10th of May,
August, November and February.

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Yukon Seniors

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Senior Sentiment

Norman Lawrence Kwiat (Larry)

TEXT & PHOTO Christopher Wheeler

Norman Lawrence Kwiat (Larry) was born and raised in the Calgary area. As an adult, he worked for a time in Pickering, Ontario where he did math modeling for folks at the nuclear plant. Sometime in 1972, Larry decided to take a short holiday to the Yukon, but like so many before and since, it didn't quite work out that way. His short visit was turned on its head by a young woman and Larry decided to stay.

Although he had a university degree in Comparative Religions, Larry also had skills in maths and computer science. Soon he was teaching both of those at Yukon College, where he continued for some time before becoming a systems integration specialist at the Government of Yukon. Larry worked in that capacity for about 16 years. Eventually, though, he decided that people were more interesting than numbers and code. Drawing on his university education, Larry spent a couple years as the chaplain at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre (WCC).

Now firmly retired, he can generally be found playing pool with the gang at the Golden Age



Larry Kwiat

Society or acting as one of the brand new directors on the board of the Yukon Council on Aging. We also have it on good authority that Larry is a talented singer.

For this edition of Senior Sentiments, we asked Larry two related questions. The opener was this: can you recall a summer activity that you enjoyed in your youth? The second and related question was: can you recall something that you would rather not have done?

Thinking back to his younger days in Alberta, Larry recalled spending his summers on a farm near Okotoks. He said that he enjoyed milking cows and driving the tractor but was not quite as fond of washing dishes.

Well, we think that those warm summer days on the farm must have been something! And what boy wouldn't enjoy driving the tractor? As for washing dishes, well, your mileage may vary. It can be a great way to slow down and think, but for a young fellow full of life and spunk, dish washing has never been much of a draw.

Each month for Senior Sentiment, we will select a random senior and ask them two questions. The questions will be designed to complement each other by addressing an idea or issue from opposing angles. Defining the narrative, or leading the conversation isn't our objective. We are looking for honest and free opinions about topics of interest to our readers.

Learning 4 Life

It's a Wrap

TEXT Bev Buckway

The seeds planted turned into sprouts this year, and the crop will no doubt grow with great abundance next year. What are you on about, you ask? Let me explain.

The Government of Yukon kindly funds the Learning for Life program, enabling YCOA to provide a cast of speakers to talk about various subjects of interest to Yukon seniors. Overall, three hundred and thirty-nine (339) people participated in the offerings -- an incredible turnout. This year we contacted Yukon Learn Society to provide technical assistance that allows people to join via ZOOM. The organization holds a weekly session on digital learning for seniors with an attentive audience, so it seemed a logical partnership for some of our sessions. We welcomed new faces and "repeat offenders" to various presentations. The topics included planning for the paperwork necessities in our older years combined with ideas on how to make the last decades of our lives worthwhile, hopeful, and informative.

In-person: International Day of Older Persons at the Canada Games Centre; Medical Assistance in Dying with Dr. Alex Kmet; Building a Better Community, One Connection at a Time with Ben Johnson-Urey and Elisabeth Lexow; Dead but (the Money's not Gone) with Lenore Morris; Advance Care Planning (& Advance Directives) with Rowena Beckett and the team; and Making Things Happen... Through Observation with Ernest Fechner.

Via ZOOM: sessions included Driving Safely for Seniors with Samantha Rodeck; Community Policing with RCMP Constable Carlie McCann; HOPE4U -The Reconciliation of Challenges in Everyday Living with Brenda Fediuk; and The

Second Half of Life with Bonnie MacDonald.

But what about the seeds and sprouting? We were delighted to have the St. Elias Seniors and Elders Society as the first group to join in on a ZOOM session. And thanks to YCOA Director



Judy Ratcliffe, the Senior's Complex in Teslin hosted an enthusiastic group [pictured]. Hopefully, L4L can reach more rural seniors in the future.

The feedback forms circulated reaped some inspiring comments. For example, Barbara Gower noted: "I have an advance directive. I will add more details now about what brings me joy." And Irene and Dave Brekke wrote: "Very well put together. Good work on encouraging participants, ideas, and experiences." Also included on the feedback forms were ideas for other topics for consideration next year, such as addiction issues and preparing for emergencies. But for this year, it's a wrap. Stay tuned.

Elder Active's Snowshoeing Program

TEXT Barb Gauthier



Last fall, as a relative new-comer to Whitehorse from the flatlands of Ontario, I came across the ElderActive Recreation Association, a non-profit organization that offers people of age 55+ “opportunities to be active in recreational activities that lead to an enhanced quality of life”. Their Nordic Walking Program caught my eye as a way to meet new people and to gain some badly-needed hill-climbing muscles and lung capacity.

During these Nordic Walking outings, I had the opportunity to chat with David Jennings, the program coordinator at ElderActive, and learned that David was looking for someone to lead the weekly Intermediate Snowshoeing outings for the winter. I then met Bev Buckway, the president of the Yukon Council on Aging, at the Christmas gathering at the Yukon Learn Society where I have been volunteering as a tutor since arriving in Whitehorse. Bev had been on several of the Nordic Walking outings and she encouraged me to join up with ElderActive. With much-valued help from friends, books, websites, and trail apps, I led snowshoe outings from January to April. Not only did I meet many interesting and friendly people on these outings, but I also learned the locations of many stunningly beautiful local trails.

Our initial snowshoeing outings were on well-known trails like Long Lake and Hidden Lakes but the lack of

snow in February sent us looking for snowshoeing opportunities south of the city to the Pine Ridge, Spruce Hill, Mary Lake, and Wolf Creek areas. I am very fortunate to have a friend who has biked most of the trails in these areas and after each outing with the group, she would introduce me to a new trail to see if I thought it might be suitable for the next week's group outing. A few times we found trails with snow too deep to navigate –

one 900 m trail took us over an hour to complete through thigh-deep snow! An essential responsibility of my guiding job with ElderActive is to be able to take the group on trails without getting us lost! Some of the trails were complicated to follow so I would hike them three or four times before taking the group out. I was overjoyed to be able to spend so much time in such beautiful surroundings every week!

Our snowshoeing group has climbed hills and seen sights that take your breath away. We have had sunshine for almost all our outings and only had to cancel once due to a snowstorm. We have walked trails and ridges that afforded views of the city of Whitehorse, Mount Lorne, Grey Mountain, Mount McIntyre, and Golden Horn. We have seen hoodoos and witnessed the ice break-up as spring arrived on the Yukon River. We have made new friends, we are fitter than we were in December, and we have explored areas previously unexperienced.

Whitehorse offers so many amazing opportunities for people 55+ to get out and learn new skills, keep fit, and socialize. Personally, being a tutor at Yukon Learn Society and guiding for ElderActive's Intermediate Snowshoeing Program have enriched my life beyond anything I could have imagined when I hit the road heading west out of Ottawa with a truck full of my life's belongings into the unknown of the Yukon!

YCOA AGM



Judy Ratcliffe at the YCOA AGM *Photo by C. Wheeler*



Warming Up at the AGM *Photo by C. Wheeler*



Frank Bachmier at the YCOA AGM *Photo by C. Wheeler*



Joe Mewett Speaking to the Crowd *Photo by C. Wheeler*



Minister McPhee at the AGM *Photo by C. Wheeler*



Enthusiastic Crowd at the AGM *Photo by C. Wheeler*

To Stick or Not to Stick

TEXT Bev Buckway
PHOTOS Submitted

Did you ever reach a point where you decided you couldn't do it anymore? Maybe due to an injury, or nobody else to accompany you, or it was too much trouble? Did you look for an alternative, or did you give up? I hope not.

In April, I had the distinct pleasure of travelling to Saint John, NB, to be with about 250 seniors aged 60 to 80+ to compete in the Canadian Masters Curling Championships. On my team were Ellen Johnson, Joan Hyrve, and Ev Pasichnyk. The Yukon men's team included Terry Miller, Don Duncan, Gord Zealand, and Don McPhee. The Thistle-St. Andrews Curling Club hosted, with 120 of their members acting as gracious volunteers to ensure we had transportation and a well-planned event.

What struck me was the friendliness of everyone I encountered. Having been part of numerous national events here in Whitehorse, I know the senior population often has the time to volunteer and make the event memorable, and that they did. We exchanged small gifts over the customary after-game chat and learned about other participants' home communities and lives. Of course,



we invited everyone to come and visit the Yukon. Perhaps we can host the championship once again and return the hospitality.

So back to the starting point. I was pleased to see that aside from our team with three stick curlers, there were a few others who transitioned to a stick delivery. However, in discussions with various curlers, I heard that some people just gave up when their knees and hips did not allow them to do a sliding delivery and get off the ice in one piece in a reasonable time. And others refuse to use a stick, feeling it is somehow beneath them to give it a try. That is sad news, given the possible alternatives.

I learned that numerous curling clubs across Canada have specific leagues for stick curlers; six-enders with two players and no sweeping between the hog lines. And there is a national association (without a Yukon representative) and the ultimate championship games. So, maybe it is time for lapsed (former) seniors to stick up, get back on the ice, and keep enjoying the challenging yet social game. There is no shame in using a stick for delivery; keep playing. Speaking from this recent experience, you never know where the game might take you.



Melody

An excerpt from Diane Homan's new book

TEXT Diane Homan

This story, I'm thinking, is like the gray spider dangling an arm's length from where I sit. I admire the resourcefulness of spiders. They're so self-sufficient – a good quality in this day and age. One single thread supports the spider and its eight-legged dance, so the material must be strong even though it looks like almost nothing. I wonder – about the spider and the story. Will they land? Will they be blown off-course? Will they survive?

I can't say this is my story. My life has been mundane, centered on routines – not good narrative material. Even so, I've decided to take breaks every now and again during the day and settle here at my little all-purpose table by the window to write things down. I'm not so much creating or composing as daydreaming, then reporting what pops into my head.

When I put it like that, it occurs to me that it's the same way I made up songs when I was a kid. Yes, that's a good place to start. My mother, Vera, told me this bit of personal history plenty of times over the years, and a good thing too, otherwise details would be ridiculously fuzzy, knowing my old brain.

She would have been driving along with me in one of those booster chairs in the backseat. I was four, five, maybe going on six, heading to pre-school or kindergarten if it was a weekday during the school year, or to some day camp or Grandma Vi's place over weekends or vacations.

Vera was always going to work. Always, always. It felt like there was a big dark hole in my chest where a lot of mommy stuff was supposed to be. People insisted I smile. Sure. Easier said than done. I didn't even call her Mom or Mommy. It

was Vera.

Anyway, from my perch in the backseat, I'd study what I could see of her – one shoulder, side of neck and head, hands on the steering wheel, a slice of cheekbone and eyes in the rearview mirror. Tight, all tight. Kinda scary. Looking at her too long gave me a stomach ache. Kids always remember what gave them stomach aches.

So I squirmed and swiveled as much as I could against the straps that held me, and I made myself look out the side window. With all my

might, I concentrated on shapes zooming by, and colors streaming, and the pulsing of light and shadow, until all of a sudden my brain switched off. Or maybe it opened up, I don't know. But in that empty zone – Vera figured it lasted ten or fifteen minutes – a complete song would come to me. I'm pretty sure that the ideas for the lyrics were prompted by things I'd seen out the window or heard from the car radio or one of Vera's business calls on her cell phone. But she swore I definitely wasn't mimicking or

repeating. In fact, more often it seemed to her that my songs were arguing back, insisting on another point of view.

When Vera combed through her memories, she could patch together the words of some of my simplest ditties – one about the earth breathing, one about animals needing more space, one about worms in the compost, one about quiet being preferable to noise. Forget about the tunes. She was pretty tone-deaf.

But she knew, and I know, there was one song that changed everything. It went: *There's no such thing as a smokestack.*



*There's no such thing as a tailpipe.
There's no such thing as a cooling tower.
Just wind and sun and water – blowing,
shining, flowing.
There's no such thing as pollution.
There's no such thing as garbage.
There's no such thing as a pipeline.
Just wind and sun and water – blowing,
shining, flowing.*

When I started singing it through a second time, my usually stony-faced and distracted mother, whose typical response to anything I said or sang was “Mmm-hmm,” instead pulled over to the shoulder of the road, shut off the engine, turned, and stared at me.

It made me nervous. “What?” I said.

Her expression kept changing, and she had to move her mouth around before any words came out. “Umm. Yeah. Did Grandma Vi teach you that song?”

“Grandma Vi? Whaddya mean?”

“Nothing. Never mind,” she said. Then she faced front and slumped. Her whole body went soft, and she sighed and sighed and sighed.

When I started to cry in confusion, she elbowed her door open, climbed in the backseat beside me, unhooked all my safety buckles, and pulled me into her lap – an unheard-of action on her part. What I clearly remember is that she whispered this into my hair – “Melody. Little Melody. You are living up to your name.”

Names are significant in this story. Of course, that realization has come with decades of hindsight. I'm sure no one in the generations of my family named a child in a fortune-telling, prophetic sort of way. That would be creepy. Maybe we've all just lived up to our names.

It starts with my great-grandmother's name, Vivian – like from Latin or French for “to live” – Vivere / Vivre. All I know of her story is that she was about eight or nine in the late 1930s when her family was attempting to escape Eastern Europe. She's the only one that made it. Vivere / Vivre, indeed. From what Grandma Vi told me, Vivian never talked much at all, much less reminiscing about her family. Well no wonder, I figure.

Apparently, when I was really little, I met her a few times. But the only occasion I recall was

when Grandma Vi and Vera and I went to see her in the nursing home shortly before she died. My mother and grandmother sat at the sides of her bed, each holding one of her hands. I sat across the room, noticing the way the light slanted through the window blinds and lit her up. She was translucent. I could see the sunshine go right through her.

Way back in 1952, when Great-grandmother Vivian was a young married woman, still feeling like a stranger in this country, she named her baby daughter Violet after the precious small flower that had carpeted the ground around her Eastern European home. I feel guilty that I don't even know what country she came from. It just shows how easily history can disappear. But I love it that she transplanted those cherished blossoms here, into her child.

Of course, Grandma Vi took that name and did her own thing with it. She was a hippie in the 60s and 70s and even into the 80s. Everything she wore was tie-dyed purple and scented with essential oil – probably violet, knowing her. I don't think she was into the drug scene, but apparently she loved to demonstrate. That frightened her mother, Vivian, who'd seen the horrors of a repressive regime and had grown up trying to be invisible. Not Grandma Vi. As she put it, she was full of piss and vinegar and had a deep need to be alternative. She marched in various capital cities, wrote letters to editors and government leaders, participated in sit-ins on campuses, and helped organize massive protests against the big polluters around her hometown.

My mother, Vera, had lots of uncomfortable memories of growing up in a granola and tofu household, being taken along to demonstrations, being dressed in what she called psychedelic colors. She was mortified by the whole thing. She admitted to me that, more than once, she yelled at her mother that she just wanted to live a normal life.

Now, about her name. Grandma Vi was a big fan of Greenpeace, any country that had an official Green Party, and the French language. That's why she named my mother “Vera.” “Vera” is like “vert,” the French word for green. My grandmother was always saying “Voila” and “C'est la vie” and “Merde,” so that's about all the

An excerpt from Melody, continued...

French I know.

But Vera's response to her mother's "Ooh la la" was to take Latin in school, and she told her mother that "vera" was Latin for "the facts." She signed up for sciences and debate club. She insisted on shopping for her own clothes, all in navy, gray, black, and white. Once she started university, she worked and got her own place so she wouldn't have to go home over holidays. In grad school, she studied corporate law. That made Grandma Vi cringe, I bet. She'd spent her life fighting corrupt and irresponsible corporations, and there was her daughter, aiding and abetting.

That's something else that changed the day I sang my smokestack song. It's obvious to me now why Vera thought maybe Grandma Vi had taught it to me. Goodness knows I'd heard my grandmother rant about pipelines and cooling towers and garbage. But the day my mother climbed in the backseat of the car with me, she knew, but I'd not yet heard, that Grandma Vi had been diagnosed with a rare cancer that had a ridiculously high rate of incidence among the current and former residents of her polluted hometown.

My mother was shaken. She'd done work for some of those companies. She'd helped them fight and win cases against environmentalists. As I sat on her lap that day in the car, she told me Grandma Vi was busy and needed a break on weekends. She didn't let on that her mom was bald and puking.

It was later, when my grandmother had started to feel human again and her hair had partially grown back, that Vera said Grandma Vi had been pretty sick so I'd need to be mellow during visits. At that, I started to sing that old Donovan song – They call me Mellow Yellow, quite rightly I interrupted myself at one point to say, "Oh yeah, Grandma Vi DID teach me this song." Vera laughed so hard she got the hiccoughs, because it turns out that when Vera was a girl, she and Grandma Vi danced around their apartment to that record. When she'd calmed back down, she said in a talking-to-herself sort of way, "Those were about the only times we got along."

Grandma Vi's health continued to improve, and I was convinced it was because I continued to sing Mellow Yellow. I sang it not only in the backseat, probably driving Vera crazy, but also while sitting on what I called my special rock in the backyard of our place. I was a weird kid, I suppose – not interested in games or sports or music lessons or even in playing with other kids much. But I loved that rock. It got warm in the sun, and from there I felt like I could see the whole world – wildflowers of all colors, trees of all shapes and sizes, hills and creeks and ponds, bugs and birds and garter snakes and clouds. Vera once told me I looked like a little Buddha sitting there. When I asked, "What's that?" she bought one of those fat smiling statues that was almost as big as I was and set it up on another rock near mine. I sang. It smiled. We had a nice symbiotic relationship.

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Hobby Highway

Neil Salvin on Playing the Ukulele

Our second edition of Hobby Highway was contributed by Neil Salvin, a 34-year veteran of Canada's Yukon. Neil retired from YG in 2020 and lives in Grizzly Valley North, overlooking Flat Mountain and about 35 km from Whitehorse. He talks to us today about playing the Ukelele.

Here are his answers to our short list of questions.

1. What/who got you started on this?

Since leaving the 9 - 5 life I have pursued many interests, but playing and teaching ukulele is one of my favourites. I learned to play uke when I was a wee lad when my older brother decided he needed a guitar player for the family band, and started me on ukulele because it is an easy stringed instrument to learn. I continued to play uke (and guitar) throughout my life, but really started playing ukulele more regularly in the past ten years, and especially since retiring.

2. Would you describe yourself as a novice, intermediate, or expert practitioner?

I would rank myself as an intermediate player, which is good enough to play a limitless number of songs and have a lot of fun doing it. I love to sing and share music with others, and the Whitehorse ukulele group gives me that opportunity. It is difficult not to smile when you hear or play a ukulele, it is such a fun and easy instrument to play. Ukulele music tends to have more chord changes than guitar, which makes it sound so sweet! It has been a very popular instrument for over one hundred years, from flappers in the '20s and George Formby in the '30s to Tiny Tim in the '60s. The Beatles all played uke and wrote a lot of their songs on ukuleles. George Harrison especially liked ukulele.

3. What is it about this hobby that makes it so appealing?

In the past ten years the ukulele has had a resurgence in popularity, and there are now ukulele clubs all over North America. Visiting players are always welcome, so it's a good way to meet people when travelling, too. Ukes are also small enough to be carry-on luggage on planes. Just try walking through an airport or boarding an airplane with a ukulele without having someone ask you to play!

4. Would you recommend this to others?

I would recommend that everyone learn to play ukulele.

5. What do you need to get started?

Free sheet music abounds, and a ukulele can be bought for under \$50 if you are on a budget. If you want to spend \$100 you can get a really good ukulele. A few folk, like myself, tend to buy more ukulele's than perhaps is necessary, but they are so cute and come in so many different

Hobby Highway continued...

sizes, shapes, and colours, it is hard to be satisfied with just one!

6. Are there any Yukon clubs or associations that someone interested in this could look up?


I have been involved with the Whitehorse-based Uke-on Ukulele Club for over ten years. For the past few years we have been meeting at the Golden Age Society every second Monday evening, September until the end of June. There is a basic and beginners ukulele group (BBUG, 6:00 - 7:15), which I have been leading for the last few years. Anyone can attend, having your own ukulele is a bonus. I always bring an extra uke in case someone doesn't have one or forgets theirs (it has happened!), or wants to try it out before buying their own. The regular group meets after the BBUG on the same night (7:30 - 9:00). We have 8 - 10 people show up most nights. There is also a performers group that performs for fun at the extended care facilities around Whitehorse, and for anyone else that asks. The Uke-On ukulele club is mostly made up of seniors, and many of them are new to ukulele. The finger exercise from playing can help keep joints limber and lessen arthritis suffering too! And of course playing music in any form is good for mental health.

If anyone is interested in joining us on Monday nights (there's no membership fee, each night there is a \$5 or \$7 donation requested) they can contact me to find out when the next session is, or email the club at ukeonukuleleclub@gmail.com. We have a website at "<https://ukeonukuleleclub.weebly.com>" , where you can find more information.

Keep calm and Uke on!

Neil

We'd like to thank Neil for sharing. Do you have a hobby that you'd like to talk about? Contact us at the Sourdough Chronicle, email: sourdoughchronicle@gmail.com, and we may feature you and your hobby in an upcoming issue.

<h1>Learning4Life</h1>
<h2>Chair Yoga</h2>

<p>June 8 and 22, 2023 (Thursday) 10:30 am - 11:30 am Normandy Place - 468 Range Road, Whitehorse Presenter: Erica Hauer (Yogo with Erica)</p>
<p><i>To register: call 668-3383 or ycoa@yknet.ca</i></p>



Featured Bio

Mary Merchant

TEXT and Photo Philip Merchant

In 1917 the Russian Revolution began, T.E Lawrence joined forces in Arabia, the US entered the First World War after several unarmed merchant ships were sunk by Germany, the Ross Sea Party of the Shackleton Expedition were rescued, Vimy Ridge was stormed by Canadian troops, women were given the vote in New York state, the Ukrainian Republic was declared, a worldwide influenza pandemic and the loss of the SS Princess Sofia were a year away and Mary Merchant was born at number 84 Cotton Street in Castle Douglas, Scotland.

She was the second of four children, three girls and a boy. Her parents Mabel and Samuel McAllister, were living in Argentina and, as was the custom, Mabel traveled back to Scotland to have the baby. The ship made it through dangerous German U-boats hunting in the English Channel. Due to the effects of WW1 it was two years before they made it back to Argentina and Samuel. When Mary and her older sister returned to Argentina it was to a large ranch, Santa Elena, which was part of the

Bovril Company. Santa Elena was like a small town divided into two communities, British and other Europeans on one side and local people who worked the cattle and in the meat packing plant on the other. (Amazingly there is a wooden case stamped "Santa Elena" once containing



Mary Merchant

canned meat in the screened storeroom at the stern of the SS Klondyke in Whitehorse.) The McAllister girls had their own ponies and learned to ride at a very early age, usually on a sheep skin with a broad leather cinch with two handles. An old blurry photo shows Mary at two and a half on her pony at full gallop.

There was little formal education available and

Mary Merchant continued...

for a while the girls were sent to live with a family high in the Andes to learn Spanish. Mary's older sister remembered it to be a difficult and sometimes lonely time but filled with wild animals, adventure, and danger. Malaria and scarlet fever were common and pumas, poisonous snakes, and spiders were always nearby.

In 1929 Mary and her older sister Barbara, went to boarding school in Scotland but returned to Argentina in 1931. In those days, long voyages by steam ship often taking almost a month were common. The Argentine peso was devalued against the British pound so schooling in Scotland became unaffordable. This was the last of Mary's formal schooling. The family moved around Argentina and lived in the provinces of Jujuy and Salta as Samuel changed jobs. Her father worked at jobs in logging with oxen, managing a plantation, and even running a brewery. Mary remembers, as a young teen, taking visitors through the brewery and explaining the finer points of making beer ("it's all about the water").

In 1935 Mary began her nursing training at the British Hospital in Buenos Aires. She excelled at nursing and it became her life-long career. In 1940 she moved on to being a nurse in private homes. Her first job was with an elderly patient who also enjoyed knitting and they spent many hours together turning out socks for the troops fighting in World War II. Mary was encouraged to become a pen pal with Walter, a young man in the family who was serving with the British Army in Burma. This was done commonly as a nice way to brighten up the lives of lonely, homesick soldiers. This turned into a 6 year correspondence with her future husband. Her photo was sent and he was smitten. When he was discharged in 1946 they met face to face for the first time and were married in 1947.

Walter's job as a manager of a large ranch for British owners was kept open for him over the war time and they made it their first home at the ranch Santa Enez, in the province of Entre Rios.

Their daughter Dorothy and son Philip were both born in Argentina. In 1955 Mary and the two children moved to England and were followed shortly after by Walter. Two years later it was decided to make a fresh start in Canada where opportunities for employment might be better.

The first year in Canada was very unsettled and difficult with several moves and all the family's belongings in steamer trunks and suitcases. Walter worked at several farms but the promise of a job suiting his experience as the manager of a large cattle and sheep ranch never materialized. Mary retrained to meet Canadian standards as a registered nurse at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. These were very difficult times as Mary kept the family together and Walter suffered a long decline from the anguish and horrors he experienced in Burma.

The family finally settled in Cowansville, in Quebec's Eastern Townships, where Mary spent the next 20 years nursing at the Brome-Missisquoi-Perkins Hospital. In 1974 after Walter died, Philip built her a log home near the village of West Brome. Mary loved that house with its wood stove but life out of town, on a country road, especially in winter, became too difficult. After retirement Mary lived for several years in Fredericton, New Brunswick to be near her daughter and family.

In 1995 at the age of 78, Mary began another adventure and moved to the Yukon where her son Philip and his family had settled. Mary loved the Yukon right away as it always reminded her of the wilds of her childhood in Argentina.

The Anglican Church community welcomed her and many wonderful friendships developed and remain. Mary taught many how to sew, knit, save money, eat a healthy diet, especially to avoid sugar. In Whitehorse she became legendary for her knitting: one year she produced 50 pairs of socks. Many dozens of pairs were sold, along with baby sets, to raise money for Anglican Church charities in the

Mary Merchant continued...

Yukon.

Mary was taught to knit by her blind uncle, John McAllister in Scotland, who knitted socks for the British troops in the trenches of France in WW1. Her photograph along with the knitting table was printed on the front page of the Whitehorse Star November 21, 2016. Mary's Scottish shortbread was also a staple on the Christmas bake table.

Mary lived on her own until she was over 100 but her failing eyesight forced her move into Whistle Bend Place care home.

Mary put huge importance on a healthy and simple diet: lots of vegetables, yogurt, soup, an apple a day, lots of tea and as little sugar as possible (with the exception of shortbread and Christmas pudding, of course).

When Mary's mother was about to give birth many years ago in Scotland, a family friend named Mary brought over a steak and kidney pie. Mabel declared that it was so good that if the baby was a girl she would be named Mary in her honour. Needless to say Steak and Kidney pie has always been a favorite in our family.

Mary loves to laugh and has recently shrugged off a bout of COVID. She will be turning 106 On June 18th and remains an inspiration to all who know her.



Mary Merchant

After many years, the Yukon Council on Aging recently raised the price of membership from \$10.00 to \$15.00 per year, which is still a bargain. Get your membership today!

EDITOR



Are you a Senior (55+) dedicated to helping your community and searching for a way to enhance your skills, and to share your enthusiasm and your creativity? The Yukon Council on Aging is a growing organisation that needs your help!

We are looking for an editor for this publication. The Sourdough Chronicle is published four times a year.

WANTED

For more information, please contact the YCOA office by calling (867) 668-3383

Health

STORY Don Cheeseman

Let's Talk about Brain Health – Part 2

In the March 2023 issue of the Sourdough Chronicle, an article on Brain Health appeared. This article discussed the year-long CAN-THUMBS UP dementia study of a group of seniors across Canada. The study provides unique information and training for each person in the trial in the following subject areas:

1. Brain Health Overview
2. Physical Activity
3. Cognitively Stimulating Activities
4. Diet
5. Sleep
6. Social and Psychological Health
7. Vascular Health
8. Vision and Hearing

I can report that, I am now half way through this study at week 21. I am still alive, still able to write this trial up-date, my brain has not swollen or shrunk ... noticeably.

Every Monday morning, I receive by email four new short interactive courses from Brain Health Pro that I have one week to complete. They track how well I do the work and the testing questions give them an indication of my brain health.

So far in the Brain Health Pro courses I have learned:

- my loneliness is dangerous for my general health
- my significant hearing loss makes things much worse
- that my physical social interaction needs to be improved, because I am far too reliant on the internet, emails, and Face Book for my human interaction needs.
- that I should have 150 minutes a week of anaerobic exercise that elevates my heart rate even with my known arthritis,
- from the brain health diet guide and modified my diet to eat less red meat and more green leaf vegetables; like spinach, kale, broccoli, and Swiss chard.
- a few new words like: plaques, tangles, cruciferous, Alzheimer's, frontotemporal, and Korsakoff's
- that below are signs of possible dementia of

which we all should be cognisant:

1. having difficulty speaking the correct words
2. money management issues
3. an increase in strange behaviours
4. forgetting what common objects are used for
5. consuming time-expired, old, spoiled food
6. out of place social norms
7. not understanding sarcasm
8. making and leaving notes everywhere
9. not taking care of household expenses
10. not looking after personal appearances
11. losing weight can be a concern
12. driving poorly
13. not making simple decisions quickly
14. using the wrong utensils
15. use inappropriate or foul language
16. not enjoying hobbies

I have just completed a sleep and activity remote wireless study by using an "Advanced Neonatal Epidermal (ANNE) vital sign system of (Sibel Health, Evanston, IL USA) that stuck a wireless monitor on my chest and finger for 24 hours.

Brain Health Pro is a National Study with Collaborations from Leading Canadian Researchers and Health Care Professionals across Canada.

This study is part of CAN-THUMBS UP which falls under the umbrella of CCNA, a research organization funded by the Government of Canada, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and other partners and is a not-for-profit, academic study.

The Yukon Council on Aging
is updating its membership
records.

If you have an e-mail address
Please let us know

Birthdays

Jean Hogg	May 1
Edie Marshall	May 4
Joan Oram	May 5
Harris Cox	May 6
Susana Edwards	May 7
Ron Ratz	May 8
Caroline Oblak	May 20
Tomas Jirousek	May 21
Simon Mason-Wood	May 23
Barbara Boleen	May 22
Janet Manser	May 26
Pat Sokalski	May 28
Maggie Hedla	May 30
Muriel Frizzell	May 31

Sharon Sterritt	June 3
Julia Farr	June 6
Brenda Caley	June 7
Christian Gill	June 9
Melvina Miller	June 10
Joe Trerice	June 16
Geraldine McGovern	June 17
Kathy De Cecco	June 18
Sharyl Satchell	June 19
Melaine Fillion	June 21
Pat Townsend	June 21
Madeline Boyd	June 21
Amelia Grandy	June 21
Keith Kirkham	June 21
Clive Osborne	June 21
Merton Friesen	June 24
Carl Wilks	June 24
Duchane Richard	June 25
Kathy Kosuta	June 27
Wanda Leaf	June 27
Don C. Marino	June 28

Sheila Allison	July 4
Ben Schonewille	July 4
Brenda Charles	July 4
Rodrium Walter Dowling	July 10
Erwin Kreft	July 11
Rowena Murray	July 17
Jon L. Magnusson	July 21
Vic Sokalski	July 22
Bernice Irving	July 26
Sylvia Neschokat	July 26

Elizabeth "Liz" Reichenbach	July 26
Edwin D. Campbell	July 28
Karen Carriere	July 31
Julie Gilbert	July 31



Pat Kohler on her 90th - HAPPY BIRTHDAY, PAT!

If you'd like your name included on our Birthdays List, please ensure that your Yukon Council on Aging membership is up-to-date. Memberships are \$15.00 / year.

Last Trails

Byrun Shandler	January 10, 2023	Dawson City, Yukon
Elaine (Doris) Icteton (née Chillman)	January 13, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Emile Denis 'Mel' Stehelin	January 14, 2023	
Jennifer Skookum	January 16, 2023	
Hans Christiaan Van de Werfhorst	January 20, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Brian Paine	January 21, 2023	Warman, Saskatchewan
Maxim Lewis Carpentier	January 26, 2023	Fort McMurray, Alberta
Doreen Audrey Duquette	January 27, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Jean Margaret Grant	January 28, 2023	Carcross, Yukon
Terri Lorraine Michael (Jackson)	January 29, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Dennis Schneider	January 31, 2023	
Jocelyne Swan	January 31, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Cary Edward Arthur Bailie	February 1, 2023	
Aaron Grey Wolf Smarch	February 2, 2023	
Morris Lamrock	February 2, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Jared Andrew Storey	February 10, 2023	
Tom Fisher	February 19, 2023	
Diarmuid 'Derm' O'Donovan	February 20, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Warren LaPlante	February 22, 2023	
Jacqueline Evon Pierce	March 1, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Pamela Adamson	2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Daniel "Dan" John William McPhail	March 6, 2023	Beaverlodge, Alberta
Libby Dulac	March 17, 2023	Haines Junction
Barbara Marie Arsenault	March 19, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Robert Dale Kinney	March 20, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
William David Alford	March 22, 2023	Edmonton, Alberta
Harvey Roske	March 23, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Joan Crowe	March 24, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Jimmy Gleason	March 25, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Theodore Lorne 'Ted' Tullis	March 28, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Diane Marie Quilty	March 29, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Walter Helm	March 31, 2023	
Judith Sarah Miller	April 1, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
William Christopher David O'Neill	April 4, 2023	
Bonnie "Mercer" Guy	April 11, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Dan Gribben	April 14, 2023	
Matthew Robert 'Matt' Lafferty	April 15, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Ronald Theodore Myles	April 16, 2023	
Frank Billy "Gooch Ooxu"	April 17, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Clara Alice Nolan	April 20, 2023	
Barbara Macrae	April 22, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Maxine Van Wyk	April 22, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
David Walsh	April 28, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Rosemary Anne Buck	April 30, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon
Johnny Roger Alfred	May 11, 2023	
Trudy Rose Tom	May 11, 2023	
James (Jim) Atwood Hirsche	May 13, 2023	Whitehorse, Yukon



Yukon Council on Aging Membership Application

Name: _____

Renewal New Application

Mailing Address

Street or P.O Box: _____ Apartment: _____

City or Town: _____

Territory or Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone (Home): _____ Telephone (Mobile): _____

Email Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____
Year / Month / Day

Please include my name in the Sourdough Chronicle Newsletter birthday announcements.
(only the month and day of birth will be shown)

General Membership entitles you to receive our newsletters, and full voting privileges at the Annual General Meeting.
(Associate Members are non-voting and generally live outside the Yukon.)

The membership fee is \$15/year per person.

(April 1st to March 31st the following year)

Please remit your payment to: **Yukon Council on Aging**
4061B 4th Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1H1

Office Hours are: Monday to Friday: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

E-Transfer now available!
Email: ycoabookkeeping@yknet.ca
Call (867) 668-3383 or toll free
1-866-582-9707 for more information

For office use only:

Receipt Number: _____ Amount Paid: _____ Membership Expires: March 31, 20 _____

Entered Date: _____ General Member Associate Member (Non-voting)

FEEDBACK



Now it's YOUR turn. Please write to us. Our e-mail address is:
sourdoughchronicle@gmail.com.

Also take a moment to check out our website at:
www.ycoayukon.com

Yukon Council on Aging
4061B - 4th Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1H1



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(YOOP)