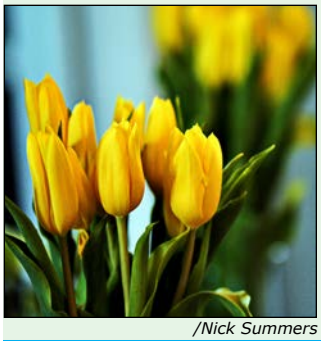


/Nick Summers

Your Voice

MUN Pensioners' Association (MUNPA) Newsletter • Vol. 19, No. 3, June 2021
Editor: Bernadette Power • Design and layout: Mark Graesser

From the Editor

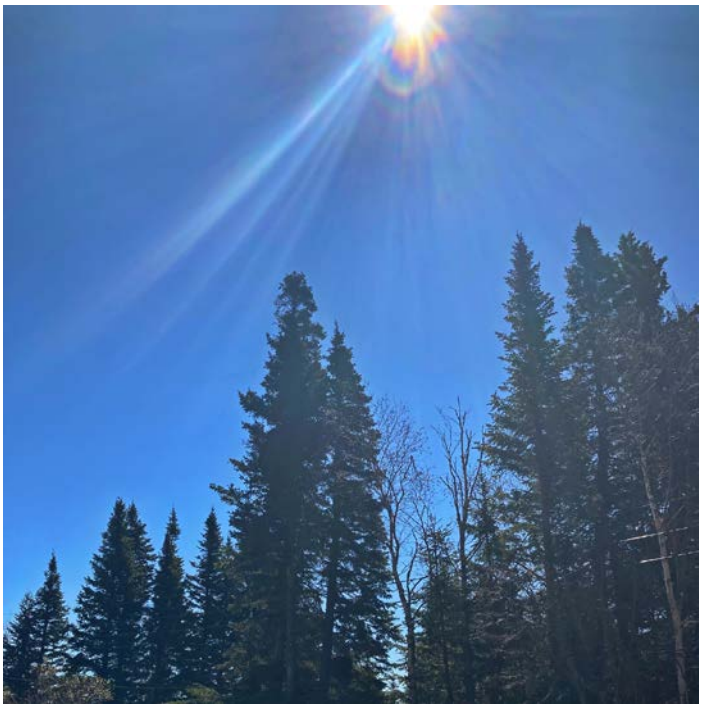
As I write this message, looking at the beautiful Labrador sky, I'm realizing that we are now at the close of another MUNPA newsletter year. It has been quite a year, in many ways!

One thing that has been a constant for me, however, is my anticipation of submissions to our newsletter. I get so much enjoyment from hearing from our members. As young children, when we meet a new friend, we are usually full of questions – do you have any siblings; what are some of your favourite things and the like. As adults, meeting people is a little different, yet I feel that I have met all of you through your stories. And I have loved every word!

I'm always amazed at the number of Memorial's employees who found their way to our Province and made it their home. Peg Cox tells her childhood story and notes the foreshadowing she experienced before she actually came to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of our writers took a leap of faith and jumped at opportunities, often without knowing what really lay ahead. Our life journeys are all unique and it is a privilege when people share some of their stories. Some are touching, others are funny, and some leave us with questions like the teaser that Mark Graesser throws out at the end of his story in this issue. And there are the poignant stories, like the one told by Sharon Buehler about her first few jobs and the lessons they taught her.

Whatever your story, I hope you'll consider sharing, if you haven't already. In the meantime, I wish you a safe and happy summer season.

Bernadette



/Bernadette Power

Nominations for MUNPA's 2021 Tribute Awards due by August 30th

Each year MUNPA awards up to three Tribute Awards to recognize the ongoing contributions that Memorial retirees make to the university or the community. Nominations for this year's Tribute Awards are due by August 30th. You can find criteria for eligibility and selection and nomination forms on the MUNPA website at www.mun.ca/munpa/about/tribute_awards/. Please consider submitting a worthy nominee for this Award. The time you will use to write up a submission is time well spent!

President's Message

It's the end of May and the end of my tenure as MUNPA president. We've just been through a May 24th weekend, as weird in its own way as the year and more that we've been living with COVID. Not only did Victoria Day fall on the 24th, but the weather ranged from summer on Saturday to snow flurries and cold wind on Monday – par for the course on a weekend that is the unofficial start of summer and, for some, a time to fish and camp. I've never done it, but I can't help wonder what that means for a summer, in which most of us – one dose in our arms and another to come – hope things open up, but are warily watching developments in Central Newfoundland, locking down in the hopes that community spread can be averted. All in all, we've been lucky. Janice Fitzgerald, the province's Medical Officer of Health, and John Haggie, our minister of Health, have taken necessary steps and, for the most part, kept COVID at bay. But, so did Nova Scotia, forced to lockdown despite doing what it had to do.

Navigating COVID and trying to keep things going, my two years as president have been different from my predecessors'. I've ended up as a "master of Zoom," nudging others to try it and see what could be done and, writing these messages, an informal cheerleader, encouraging people to keep safe and look out for others. If I look back at what I did as a professor and occasional participant in university governance, I've tried (but not necessarily succeeded) in leaving things, if not better, no worse than I found them. That found me pushing for changes, not so much by going to the barricades, but rather looking for ways in which I could nudge them in directions I thought they should move. I've done the same as a chair or member of the St. John's Programme Committee, editor of ***Your Voice***, and Vice President and President of MUNPA. That's something of which I can be proud. We're doing more and providing people with opportunities to do things and meet with others that they would not otherwise have had. I'm particularly proud of our response to COVID. Armed with the gift of Zoom, we not only managed to operate, but also provided windows for members – who might otherwise have been isolated – to keep in contact with friends, old and new. Our Memoir Group is a shining example: Since the pandemic began, it's been meeting twice a week instead of once a month, not only having fun, but also generating copy, some which has been filling the pages of ***Your Voice***. It works because most of us knew each other, however slightly. It also allows us to do something for which there was rarely sufficient time in our working lives – talking and getting to know each other better. And, sitting in front of our computers, everyone can hear.

It would be an act of arrogance – pure *hutzpah* – to claim I've done any of this alone. I haven't. One of the good things about MUNPA is that those who get involved are typically ones who made the university work. I've had strong support from fellow board members, who have had my back. There isn't room to mention everyone, but our programme committees have done a fantastic job, conjuring programming that reached out across the island and in several instances, the continent. Teaching, I always watched faces – it's useful to know when you are putting people to sleep. Looking at faces on a grid isn't the same, but it told me that people were engaged and were having fun. Kudos to Bob Helleur, Donna Jackman, and Anne Sinnott, as well as my fellow board members, and those who've kept our committees running. And to Bernadette Power, for her work editing ***YV***, now more a mini-magazine than a newsletter and fun to read. But it takes more than the board to keep MUNPA operating: Committee members

Continued on next page.

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Schooling . . . and Learning

Margaret (Peg) Cox

"A Child's Eye – youth is best written about in old age . its materials firmly clarified at life's other terminus." — Diane Atill

My formal schooling began when I was five, but my learning began at birth. My first memories are of my parents and grandparents, who fed and sheltered me, demonstrating love and engendering trust. My maternal Welsh grandmother played with me and talked to me in her language. My paternal grandparents influenced me too; my Canadian grandfather wheeling me in the pram and swaddling me firmly when it was time to sleep. Grandma took me walking, and my parents read me stories. When I could read myself, there was an abundance of books and everyone in the family read a lot. My mother, a professional musician, sang lullabies and other songs when we were in the car, accompanying my father, who was a traveling salesman. He read me bedtime stories and showed me how to plant potatoes.

Countryside near Swansea

photo/littleplaces.co.uk

Language and music, delivered with love, can be so much of a child's early learning. I remember those words and tunes even though other recalls of those years have faded.

When I was five, I began formal schooling at a Froebel Kindergarten with about 15 other children. The Principal held the school in her roomy house, with a large garden where each of us had a plot on which to grow anything we fancied. Mother's sister was in London, and she sent me books, including "Winnie the Pooh" and "The Wind in the Willows". The BBC Radio Children's Hour introduced dramas with such sound effects, you could visualize the scene without the benefit of television.

In 1938 our family moved to Cardiff, and I attended the local elementary school. In 1939, when World War II broke out, we carried gas masks and identity cards, and knitted scarves and mitts for the navy. Air raid shelters provided protection when the sirens sounded. As Cardiff was a bombing target, my mother and I went to stay with her older sister in a village about 15 miles inland from Swansea. My father was in the army and served at anti-aircraft stations around the shores of Britain.

Continued on next page.

President's Message, continued

and those who convene our focus and special interest groups help as well. Nor could we operate as smoothly as we do without our office manager, Jackie Collins, keeping us on track.

Departing presidents do spend the next year or two as past president, serving both as memory and mentor one-person nominating committee, repopulating successive boards. I'm happy to be moving on. Being president of MUNPA has been the easiest gig that I've had, but there are other things I want to do. I'm sure the same is true for each of you, but – without sounding like a recruiting poster – MUNPA needs you. We can't do anything without willing volunteers. That's the bad news. The good news is that it can be fun. Try it. Adieu.

Steve Wolinetz

I attended the village school, housed in the same stone building which my mother, her sisters, and my Welsh grandmother had attended. The schoolmaster had a house adjoining, facing the parish church across the street. The school subjects were in both English and Welsh, with emphasis on oral learning, so we memorized and recited poems, parts of the bible and catechism, as well as the multiplication tables. Sports Day in the summer was celebrated in a field up the hill, among horses and cows. The "Eleven Plus" examination in English and arithmetic decided which pupils would proceed to Grammar School, or to Modern School, which was less academic and more vocational. My friend Ethel and I both passed, and she went on to the nearest high school, while I moved yet again with my mother to Devonshire to be near my paternal grandparents.

The Torquay Girls Grammar School was a modern building with large grounds for 300 students, plus another girls' school evacuated from near London. Our Principal, Miss Wilkinson, in her academic gown led morning prayers to start each day, with prefects from the sixth form reading the scripture lessons. One of my classmates, Claudine, was an evacuee with her mother, from France.

In 1943 mother and I moved to the Manchester area as my father was located there and could live at home. I transferred at age 13 to Stand Grammar School for Girls, travelling either by bus or on my bicycle with my best friend Ena. Our Principal was Miss Lobjoit, a Cambridge science graduate, who rode her bike to school, followed by her bounding dog who spent the day in her office. We had two periods weekly for gymnastics and two for outdoor games like grass hockey. Our studies were English Language and Literature, French, German or Latin, biology, chemistry and physics. Speech Day happened at the close of the school year when certificates and book prizes embossed with the school crest were presented to an assembly, including families, and the school and choir sang.

On the last day of each term the Principal would read the whole school assembly a story, such as Paul Gallico's tale "The Snow Goose", vividly adding to the tragedy at Dunkirk, when allied

Stand Grammar School, Manchester

photo/buryarchivesonline.co.uk

troops were picked up off the French beaches by a fleet of navy and private boats. As we lived near the seacoast, we suffered surprise air raids from enemy aircraft flying low over the Channel to evade warnings. One of the school students was among children killed by a bomb on a church one Sunday. When the war ended on VE Day (Victory in Europe), two of my friends and I cycled into Manchester where British soldiers and American GI'S were dancing on the roofs of air raid shelters between the public library and the city hall. Flags and bunting were everywhere, and we wore red, white and blue ribbons. VJ Day came later in August, after the nuclear bomb attacks on Japan.

Forty students and seven teachers had an April week in Paris in l947, the first year school trips abroad were permitted. Released from British austerity, but packing our own jam and sugar, we took expeditions to the Opera and Versailles, and to magnificent museums and galleries. The parks in the city were green and flowering. We learned to ride the "metro" underground railway and practiced our French. On the last day we shopped for perfume and postcards to take back to England.

In July 1947 my family immigrated to Canada. Ships had a long waiting list, so we flew from London to Shannon to Gander in Newfoundland, where we stopped for refueling en route to Vancouver. The trip across the Atlantic took 12 hours! We did not foresee on this arrival that I would return 22 years later with my husband and children to live in St John's and work at the MUN medical school from 1969 to 1991.

Wise River Cowboy

Mark Graesser

During my Wise River years I identified as a cowboy, more or less.

My father was a district ranger for the U.S. Forest Service. When I was seven years old he was assigned to take charge of the public lands surrounding Wise River, Montana. This made him a V.I.P. among the ranchers and loggers who depended on the national forest resources. But district rangers tended to be transferred regularly, so as kids we lacked the multi-generational roots of our peers. Nonetheless, those were formative years, and I remember them fondly as halcyon days.

Wise River (the village) was located at the confluence of Wise River (never called *the* Wise River) with the larger Big Hole River. It was 40 miles downstream from Wisdom, which made perfect sense, and about 50 miles from anywhere else. We thus lived in "the Big Hole," and never considered that a bit odd. The region is world famous, in Montana at least, for its fishing and mountain scenery. It's about as "western" as you can get.

The town had a nominal population of 50 people, but was the hub for double that number living on ranches up and down the valley. This meant it had a general store, a bar, and a one-room school.

Wise River is surrounded by a half-million acres of peaks, lakes and headwaters in the Pioneer Mountains and offers some of Montana's most breathtaking scenery.

Montana Official Tourism Website

The store was operated by an affable man named Walter Gnose. He also served as the postmaster and managed the primitive telephone exchange. This was an open or "party line" arrangement with several patrons sharing the same connection. If anything was going on in town, my father liked to quip, "Gnose knows." The phone was a wooden box on the wall. To ring someone, you lifted the ear piece and turned a crank to generate the appropriate code; ours was "two longs and a short."

The school was about half a mile cross country from our house. Since my mother did not drive, we always walked, fair weather or foul. Foul

"All hat and no cattle."

could mean snow drifts above our heads and temperatures as low as minus 50 degrees in the high mountains. Water was supplied from a well with a hand pump, and toilet facilities were two well separated outhouses for boys and girls.

At the eight-grade school, I was always the only kid in my class, which suited me fine. I could quickly do my own assignments, then participate in the business of the older scholars, sometimes to the annoyance of the teacher. My first teacher was over 60 years old. The next was 18, with one year of college under her belt. More importantly for us, she was keen on sports. That was the year we had 18 kids of all sizes, perfect for two baseball teams and an umpire.

Each morning we all trooped out to raise the Stars and Stripes and, hands on hearts, pledge allegiance to "one nation..." Indoors, with the teacher banging out the tunes on the piano, we lustily sang patriotic Montana anthems such as "My home's in Montana, I wear a bandana. My spurs are of silver, my pony is gray."

Speaking of which, unlike the ranch kids, I didn't actually own a pony. (Some of them even rode to school.) There's a deprecating Western expression "All hat and no cattle." I guess that was me.

Continued next page

The ragtag students of Wise River School, 1952, enjoying an outdoor Easter party at the ranger station — springtime in the Rockies. The author is fourth from the left, missing his Stetson.

However, the ranger station did have a few horses, pack mules and the necessary accoutrements for back country work. So I learned the rudiments of how to "catch up," saddle and ride a horse. As a Forest Ranger, my father not only required a professional degree, but a full complement of outdoor skills. So I learned how to chop down and limb a tree, shoot a .22 rifle safely and accurately, and navigate in the wilderness. Good enough for a faux cowboy, and the foundation for a lifelong yen to get out in the hills.

Contemplating the joys of backpacking.

During the summer, the legendary Big Hole River attracted numerous fishermen every weekend from the city of Butte. My brother and I got the idea that we could augment our paltry weekly allowance by selling earthworms to these anglers. We laboured mightily all week digging worms and packing them into empty Prince Albert tobacco tins, to be peddled for a penny a worm or 25c per tin. We set up our stall and a tent on the nearby highway, with signs up the road advertising our wares. Since the fishermen arrived early, we spent the night in the tent, ready to be up at dawn ready for business. As they say, the early bird sells the worm. The enterprise was quite successful, providing us with a windfall of cash for comic books and .22 ammunition.

When I was twelve we moved to a larger town (population 1,000) with a high school. No more cowboy hat and horses. As a "city kid," I moved on to become a teenage drug dealer and sports reporter, but that's another story.

School Day Jobs

Sharon Buehler

For Christmas my son, Michael, subscribed to *StoryWorth* for me. It is a program where you ask a family member to write a short story in response to selected questions like "What was your favorite childhood book?" And why, of course! At the end of the year, the stories are made into a book for the subscriber: in this case, Michael. Very like a memoir. The requested topic in the latest question was about my first job.

I have been pondering this because I'm having a hard time remembering what that was. My very first job was in sixth grade picking asparagus. We biked to the farm early in the morning, picked among the nesting killdeers and biked home in time to change clothes and get to school. I think we were paid something like $4 a week.

In Illinois you could get a proper work permit at age 16 and most of my friends found some kind of after school or weekend work and, of course, summer jobs. And although I think I have touched on a number of these in previous memoirs I tried to put them in a different framework...so here goes.

The first job that I remember applying for and going through the kind of exciting process of filling out an application, was at the state mental hospital in my hometown. Community people didn't often go on the large grounds of the "state hospital" so it was a bit daunting to be driven in to one of the large buildings on its campus and enter a totally institutional building, sit in an outer office and then be called in to be asked about your application. The job in question was some kind of clerical position where you might do a bit of typing and a lot of filing. I had taken typing on Saturdays at the local business college so I was a good touch typist and when asked about filing skills I could only say I was pretty good at the alphabet. At 16 with the alphabet being front and center in most of my school life, I couldn't imagine then that there were people who weren't.

I didn't get that job but a bit later in the summer my dad got me a job at his place of work, a private mental institution. There were four wings in the residence and I was assigned to the one with the least seriously ill patients. I did the usual "assistant" things – carried food trays, accompanied patients to one or other of their medical appointments in the building, brought the mail, played games. There were all private rooms and most of the patients were adults but there was one teenager who was later transferred to the state hospital in town with a younger population. She entertained me with stories of training to be a nurse interspersed with stories of riding wild horses in Colorado. I never knew how much was truth and how much fiction but she was fascinating to someone only a couple of years younger and so much less traveled. I have a dark memory of wheeling a patient back from shock treatment I'm sure colored by the subdued light of the basement where the treatment rooms were. There are good memories of the people and of the food: especially corn fritters, wonderfully light concoctions of corn and batter perfectly deep fried and eaten with maple syrup.

Through high school there were a variety of part time Christmas break, Easter break, summer vacation and after school jobs. I have earlier recalled the Christmas working at Kline's department store in the children's department. That was very stressful when the lineups were long, upset customers became angry about the long wait and/or the unavailable size or color. I mostly remember a flustered and embarrassing moment when I called out to my supervisor, "Mr. Pheasant?" His name was Peacock.

I worked at the "dime store" one Easter, a Kresge store, in the notions section when I desperately wanted to be one aisle down and decorating the chocolate Easter eggs. An aside: my mother was a connoisseur of dimestores. She found the most amazing things in them. We occasionally went to the more upscale stores in town but the dime store was our "go to" shop.

Continued next page

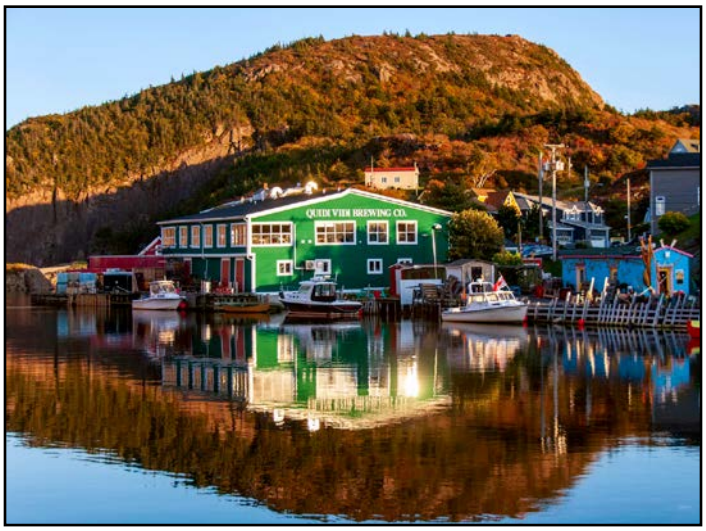
School Day Jobs, continued

My summer jobs were nearly always outdoors in high school and college: Scouts day camp at the lake or city park. A number of summers it was at the pool, lifeguarding or teaching swimming. We would bike out in the morning for the classes, stay to guard public swims, bike back home in mid afternoon, stopping at the Dairy Queen for a cone then bike over to the MacMurray College campus (we had two liberal arts colleges in town, Mac was a women's college then) to work as waitresses in the dining hall used in summers for conferences. We were assigned two tables of eight and carried food and dishes on large oval trays balanced on the shoulder. It was hard work. I remember one evening when the dessert was ice cream of some sort and by the time I got back with the first tray of eight (the kitchen was slow) the whole table had vanished. Thankfully I never dropped one of those big trays but we waitstaff, as they didn't call us then, were delighted when a fellow classmate, a cocky pre-med student dropped a full tray. The crash was MAGNIFICENT!

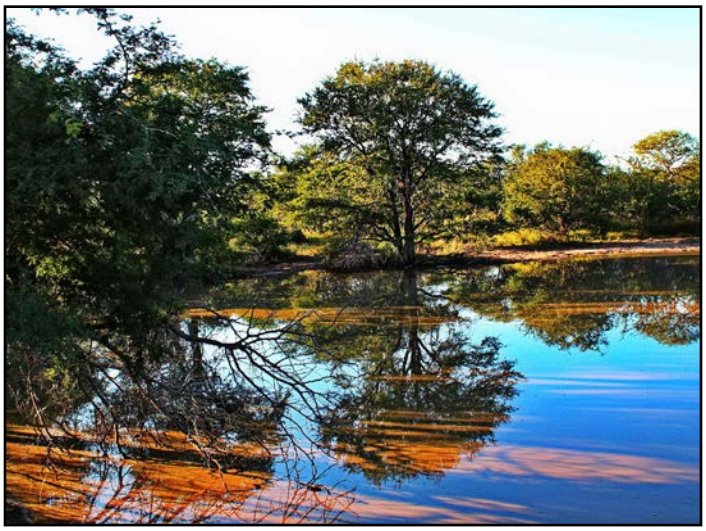
I was very lucky to have grown up in a time when these sorts of part time and seasonal summer jobs were so diverse and so easily had. I learned a lot of useful things in those jobs. I experienced a wide variety of "bosses" and work environments and worksite policies. I think those opportunities are rarer now and under-valued as entry level-base pay opportunities to learn something of the lives of the vast majority of workers, before moving out into the rarified air of academia.

Shutterbug photo group

Reflections



Brian Power



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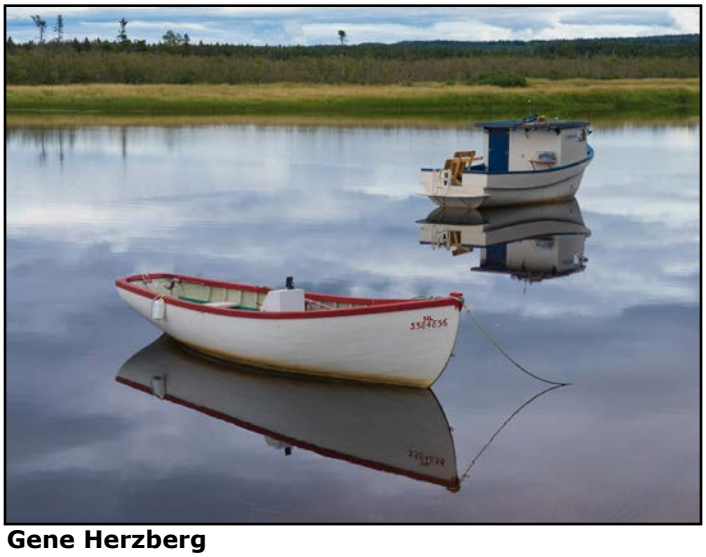
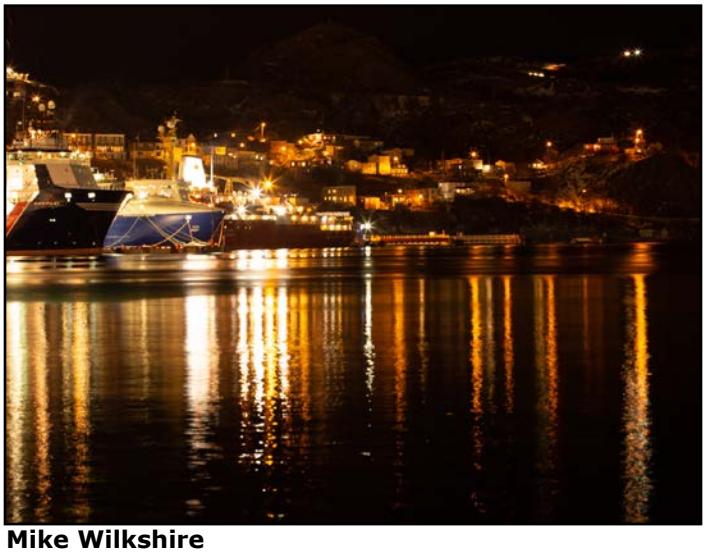


Gene Herzberg



Mike Wilkshire