



THE NEWSLETTER

The PROBUS Club of Simcoe & District
Meets second Tuesday of each month at St. James United Church hall

NATIONAL
PROBUS
MONTH

MEETING NOTICE

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

10 a.m., Muriel Bridge Room, St. James United Church, Simcoe.

9:30 a.m., Book Exchange, Socializing and Coffee.

Guest Speaker

Dave Stelpstra,

History of policing in Simcoe and Norfolk.

Who Am I?

To be announced.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Review of Feb. 14, 2017, meeting

President **Murray Uren** called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. and wished everyone a happy Valentine's Day. **Keith Rumble** led us in our national anthem.

PROBUS business

- President:** President **Murray** urged members to have a look at our club's new website, simcoeprobusclub.weebly.com.
Murray noted that the national PROBUS organization insures our club and its executive. He encouraged everyone to seek new members.
- Wellness:** **Gerald Sheppard** reminded members to call him at 226-493-1274.
- Special events:** **Dick Pearson** is arranging a tour of **Craig and Connie Cook's** earthship house on a Saturday in April. Dick will have more information at our March meeting.
- House:** **Rick Middaugh** reported all is well.
- Treasurer:** **Dave Montross** reported our club is in good financial shape.
- Newsletter:** **David Judd** plans to add past newsletters to our website.

Guest Speakers:

Craig and Connie Cook

Craig and Connie Cook live in an earthship. Their 3,000-square-foot home in western Norfolk is completely off the grid. Solar power heats the home and runs lights and appliances. Rain collected from the roof supplies their drinking water. Their only monthly bill is for telephone and Internet service.

The Cooks wanted to retire early. They didn't have a lot of money so they decided to build a home that costs next to nothing to live in. Adapting ideas from California, the couple built the home themselves. So far it has cost them \$70,000 for materials and some skilled help. Their own labour they figure was worth \$930,000.

Their earthship is the first house in Norfolk County that has no furnace and no septic system. The sun warms three-foot-thick walls made of tires packed with dirt. The walls radiate heat in the winter and absorb heat in the summer. The home's interior constantly stays at a comfortable 70 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Cooks' \$1,400 compostable toilet needs no septic system. Glass windows in the south wall generate three kilowatt/hours of electricity, enough to run their direct current refrigerator, freezer and other appliances. The couple cook on propane stove.

The project began in 2010. The Cooks took three years on weekends and in their spare time to pack dirt by hand into 10 rows of tires that form the exterior walls. The Cooks got the 1,200 tires for free. Each tire took 20 minutes to fill with dirt.



Craig and Connie Cook built their own house completely off the grid.

Photo by Nestor Rosa



Connie works on an exterior wall made of old tires.



Glass on the south side heats the home.

The house is buried in earth on its east, west and north sides. Only the south side has windows, which supply solar power and natural light for the Cooks' indoor garden, which grows vegetables, even bananas and pineapples.

Inside the home, the plaster walls contain thousands of empty pop cans. The home has four rooms in an open concept.

Want to see the Cooks' earthship? Dan Pearson is organizing a tour for PROBUS members and guests on a Saturday in April. The next newsletter will have details.

Dan introduced and thanked Craig and Connie.



Tom Maxwell

Who-Am-I: Tom Maxwell

Tom Maxwell was born in 1946 at Brantford General Hospital. He is of Scottish heritage. He grew up in St. George, a small community just north of Brantford.

His wife is Carol Dunsford, who is from Simcoe. Their son, Christopher, is a pediatrician in Montreal. Their second son, Jeremy, died of colon cancer at age 23 in 2007. Tom recommends screening for colon cancer.

Tom lost interest in school after three years at North Park Collegiate in Brantford. At age 17, he enrolled in the Black Watch and trained at Gagetown, N.B.

Tom served in Germany, where he learned to drink in Dutch, Danish and German, finished high school back at Gagetown and became a winter warfare expert. He learned to freeze in both official languages during training at Churchill, Man., and at a posting in northern Norway six miles from the Russian border.

Then it was back to Gagetown before heading to the heat of Cyprus for eight months.

Back home again in Gagetown, the government announced it was reducing the strength of the Black Watch.

Tom left the armed forces. He worked for a while at Ford's Talbotville assembly plant. A strike idled the plant, so Tom moved on to a job at the Brantford jail, starting a career in corrections that lasted 28 years.

Tom served in Brantford and Toronto. He became a bailiff escorting prisoners during transfers and eventually supervised transfer staff.

Along the way he earned a business certificate from George Brown College and a diploma in management studies from Sheridan College.

He met his wife at a training course. The couple lived in Oakville for 36 years. Three years ago Tom and Carol moved to Simcoe to be closer to her father.

Tom wishes Simcoe could do something with the street people downtown. They need help. Otherwise Tom cannot think of a better place to spend his retirement.

Thank you, Tom, for telling us your story.