



THE NEWSLETTER

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



MEETING NOTICE

Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023

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

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



Guest Speaker

Norfolk County Mayor Amy Martin.
Spouses and guests are invited to attend
for this speaker of interest to everyone.

Valentine's lunch

Spouses and guests are invited to join us for lunch.
Noon: Blue Elephant Restaurant.

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Review of Jan. 10, 2023, meeting

President **Murray Uren** called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. He welcomed 21 members and wished them and their families a Happy New Year. **Cal McDougall** led us in singing our national anthem.

PROBUS business

President **Murray** suggested inviting spouses and guests to attend our next two meetings featuring speakers of interest to everyone. **Mayor Amy Martin** will speak in February and **Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Bobbi Ann Brady** in March. **President Murray** said our Christmas lunch had a good turnout of 29 members and guests.

Special events: **President Murray** is arranging a tour of a vegetable farm this summer.

Treasurer: **Dave Montross** reported our club is in good financial shape. Twenty-six members have paid dues for 2022-23.

Guest speaker: Bob Proracki, travels in New Zealand:



Bob Proracki took us on a tour of New Zealand, illustrating it with 300 photographs. **Bob** and his wife, **Juli**, have visited New Zealand several times, including late last year, to be with their school teacher son **Taryn** and family.

New Zealand consists of 700 islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. South Island is the largest, followed by North Island which has most of the country's 5.2 million population.

Its closest large neighbour is Australia, 2,000 kilometres northwest across the Tasman Sea.

Bob's travelogue focused on a dozen locations across New Zealand showcasing the country's unique plants, wildlife, tourist spots and breathtaking scenery.



Road across Southern Alps on South Island.



ABOVE: The Canterbury Hills in the central eastern region of South Island.

LEFT: Bob and Juli sit atop thrones at the Giants' House and Garden on South Island. The garden features sculptures covered with ceramics.

Who Am I: Bob Proracki

Bob Proracki was born in 1946 and grew up on his family's tobacco farm at Round Plains on Highway 24, west of Waterford. He is well known as an outstanding athlete and member of Norfolk County's Sports Hall of Recognition. He and his wife Juli recently retired from their successful sweet potato business.

Bob's grandparents, Tony and Tekla Proracki, came to Manitoba from Ukraine in 1908. For five years, Tony worked for Canadian Pacific Railway. He, his wife and three children lived in a box car, which they insulated with newspapers.

They moved to Round Plains to live with Tekla's brother. In 1923, Tony bought his own tobacco farm where Bob and Juli live now.

Bob's parents, Jake and Olga, had four daughters and Bob. Bob went to elementary school in Round Plains and high school in Waterford. He played basketball, volleyball and as a teenager pitched his fastball team to a provincial championship.

In 1968 Bob graduated from Western with a degree in Latin and a minor in psychology. He met Juli in Simcoe and they married in 1968, the same year Bob was part of the London Major League provincial AA champion fastball team.

In 1969 he obtained his high school teacher's certificate from Althouse College. From 1970 to 1977, Bob taught physical education in Kapuskasing. Bob caught pneumonia and returned to the family home in Round Plains to recover.

He and Juli ended up taking over his parents' tobacco farm. Along the way, they had four sons: Jamie, a manager at Toyota in Cambridge; Rob, operations manager at Island Mediquip in Vancouver; Michael, executive director of the Age of Union Earth Centre in Montreal; and Taryn, who is a high school teacher at Roloston College, Roloston, South Island, New Zealand.

"We had four sons but Juli raised five boys," Bob said. He and Juli have six grandchildren.

In 2001, it was time for Bob and Juli to get out of tobacco farming. Their farm was suitable to grow sweet potatoes so they gave it a try. Their Round Plains Plantation was very successful, selling sweet potatoes and baked goods at farmers' markets in a number of cities across Ontario.

Last year, Bob and Juli stopped growing sweet potatoes and shut down the bakery to enjoy retirement.

A few of Bob's volunteer initiatives have included: President of OSSTF in Kapuskasing, Ontario Tobacco Board Committeeman, Catholic Representative to the Norfolk County Board of Education, French Language Advisory Board, Norfolk County Agricultural Advisory Board and Chair of St. Bernard's Parish Council.

In 2019, Bob was named to the Norfolk County Sports Hall of Recognition for being an outstanding athlete and official in a variety of sports. Most notable was his success as a fastball pitcher for 44 years. Bob was inducted in a ceremony in 2021.

Thank you, Bob, for telling us your story.



Bob at Wychwood Market in Toronto.