



# THE NEWSLETTER

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



## MEETING NOTICE

**Tuesday, May 9, 2017**

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

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

### Guest Speaker

**Billy Walters,**  
Falconry.

### Who Am I?

Don Lounsbury

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### Review of April 11, 2017, meeting:

President **Murray Uren** called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. **Keith Rumble** led us in our national anthem. **President Murray** welcomed **Bruce Bowyer's** guest, **Dennis Wright**.

### PROBUS business

- Treasurer:** **Dave Montross** announced the sad news of **Don Sewell's** death. Our club has sent a donation in **Don's** memory. See more about **Don** on Page 2.
- Special events:** **Dick Pearson** noted the success of our visit to **Craig and Connie Cook's** earthship house. See more on Page 4.
- House:** **Rick Middaugh** reported all is well.
- Newsletter:** **David Judd** invited members to see photos of the earthship tour on our website at [simcoeprobustclub.weebly.com](http://simcoeprobustclub.weebly.com). At **President Murray's** request, **David** is updating our PROBUS Club brochure for new members.
- Program:** **Dan Pearson** promised a surprise as May's speaker.
- Who-Am-I:** **Gus Takacs** is arranging a Who-Am-I speaker for May.

## **Guest Speaker: James Christison**

**James Christison** knows his way around a garage sale. **James**, who is the curator of the Waterford Heritage and Agricultural Museum, collects all kinds of old things, including stuff to do with the military and the royal family. And he knows what's valuable and what's not. He talked to us about treasures in the trash and junk you shouldn't throw in the garbage. So what's valuable and what's worth keeping?

- **Toys** — Baby Boomers will pay for reminders of their youth like Dinky toys, WWF figures and Fisher Price pull toys. Dinky toys from the 1930s and '40s are worth \$100. Toys are worth more if they have their boxes.

- **First editions** — Books don't have to be old to be valuable. Canadian first editions of the Harry Potter series are worth \$100 to \$150. A book signed by **J.K. Rowling** sold for \$500,000.

- **Vintage clothes** — Clothes from before 1980 are valuable if they're in good shape. Hawaiian shirts from the 1950s and '60s are hot items.

- **Ephemera** — These are things like postcards, store receipts and advertising that weren't meant to last long. Postcards with pictures of trains or train stations are particularly popular. Don't cut stamps off post cards.

- **Kitchenware** — Jadite mugs, Frigidaire stackable containers and other kitchen items in good shape are collectable.

Don't throw out things simply because they've been repaired. **James** collects teapots, mugs and platters that have been repaired with metal handles or spouts or have been stapled together. Want an expert to look at something you have? The Waterford museum will hold an Antiques Roadshow day in late September.

**Stuart Rusk** showed James a metal lamp similar to the ones used on the Titanic. He also showed us two whale teeth with scrimshaw drawings on them.

**Dan Pearson** brought along a horse speculum, a metal appliance to keep a horse's mouth open. **Bruce Bowyer** showed a silk tape measure from an old sewing kit.

**Dan** introduced **James** and **David Judd** thanked him.



**James Christison with a \$300 piece of Staffordshire pottery with a repaired handle.**

**Farewell, Don Sewell:** Our condolences to the family of PROBUS member Don Sewell, who died on April 4, at age 81. He was the father-in-law of member Keith Rainey. Don was in the real estate business in Ontario. In 1980 he moved to Florida to appraise real estate. In 2014, he and wife Bette retired to Waterford.



## **Who-Am-I: Murray Uren**

*(Updated from September 2015)*

**Murray Uren's** first priority has always been his family and friends. He was born in 1950 in Scotland, Ont., and grew up in Brantford. Murray and his wife **Helen** married 44 years ago. They raised three sons — **Bryan, Scot** and **Richard** — in Oakville and they have four grandchildren. **Murray** and **Helen** have a beach home in Kincardine.

Following graduation in industrial engineering at Mohawk College in 1970, Murray first worked at Canadian Timken in St. Thomas. He joined the federal government's customs service in 1972 and was a management consultant about office layouts and staffing in London and Ottawa for three years.

**Murray** then became manager of area operations for the Toronto region. He was chief of operations at Pearson airport from 1977 to 1985. During this period, customs at the airport cut its release time for items from 24 hours to two hours. Murray also cracked down on customs officials getting liquid Christmas gifts from customers.

In 1985, he became manager of intelligence and interdiction. His drug team seized millions of dollars of contraband and had great success stopping smuggling by air passengers who had swallowed packages of cocaine. Customs with a manufacturer developed a specialized toilet for drug swallows.

**Murray** ordered an Air Canada DC8 seized after 40 pounds of hashish were found in a control panel. After that, the airline became more co-operative.

From 1986 to 1988 as project manager of customs' commercial system, **Murray** introduced computerized systems, which was a huge change for 1,200 employees.

From 1988 to 1994 **Murray** was manager of operations services in the Toronto region overseeing collections, info technology, operations and procedures.

During his last job as regional co-ordinator, Customs and Taxation Revenue Agency from 1994 to 1996, customs closed 17 southwestern Ontario ports, giving better service.

**Murray** moved to Federal Express in 1996. He was Ontario manager until 2011 when he became managing director responsible for clearance of FedEx shipments across Canada.

**Murray** retired and moved to Simcoe in September 2014.

He concluded his talk with this advice: "Life is short, live it. Love is rare, grab it. Anger is bad, dump it. Memories are sweet, cherish them."

Thank you, **Murray**, for sharing your story.



**Murray Uren**

## **PROBUS trip to the earthship**

On April 8, 25 PROBUS members and their guests toured the earthship house built by **Craig and Connie Cook** near Cultus. The 3,000-square-foot house is completely off the grid. The **Cooks'** only bills are for telephone and Internet service.

It was marvellous to see all the thought and hard work that went into building the house — exterior walls made of used tires filled with dirt, interior walls built of empty bottles and pop cans. Solar power provides heat and electricity. Water comes from rain collected in a 2,000-gallon tank and filtered three times to drink.

Passion flowers, a banana tree and other tropical plants hang from the ceiling and walls or grow in

a huge planter beneath south-facing windows. The stamped concrete floor is easy to clean and helps warm the house. The tall composting toilet is literally a throne.

**The Cooks** started building their home in 2009 and began living there in 2012. They have paid \$70,000 for materials and some skilled help.

Thank you, **Dan and Dick Pearson**, for arranging our visit.

If you missed the photos posted on our website, go to [simcoeprobusclub.weebly.com](http://simcoeprobusclub.weebly.com), click on "Newsletters," then click on "Earthship tour." *With files from Beatrice Bowyer.*



**Craig Cook stands at the entrance to his earthship home near Cultus.**



**Craig shows a banana plant to Dan Pearson (left) and Tom Campbell. Bruce Bowyer looks on.**