

2017 Christmas Greetings & Best Wishes for 2018 **from Nan & Allan Hazelton**

Here we are once again near the end of one year, remembering how great it has been to be healthy, enjoying life, and looking forward to more great times in 2018.

2017 began with both Nan & me spending more time with our fathers. Nan left New Year's Day to spend a week in North Port Florida with her dad. He had experienced some heart related issues and Nan was able to use some of her Christmas time off to spend with her dad. She reported afterwards that this was one of the best visits she had with her dad. Meanwhile back in Canada, my dad (Douglas) was getting very close to his 96th birthday while struggling to find ways of enjoying life. We were able to help my dad cross that age milestone with family visits. My sister Ruth and her daughter Laura came east from Alberta to help celebrate dad's #96 with a family dinner at our house. The ability to enjoy life was not on my dad's side as he wound up his 95th year and moved into his 96th. For those music lovers out there, you may find the irony in the timing of Leonard Cohen's last album, "You Want It Darker". For some reason I got wind of this album and listened to it many times before he passed away on February 23rd. Fortunately, Ruth had come down a couple of days before dad's passing and was able to stay while we buried ourselves over the next few days in cleaning up his things. Nan left 4 days later to be with her dad and sister in Florida. Her dad (George) passed away 2 days later, just one week after my dad. Nan was able to stay in Florida for a few more weeks to help to wrap up things down there. So, the first few months of 2017 were somewhat challenging and emotional for both of our families.

OK . . . the sad part is done . . . 😊

When Nan came back at the end of March we felt we needed a mini get-away so we headed down to Niagara-on-the-Lake for 3 nights. This was a great get-away for us to wind down and begin to look forward to the rest of our lives. We had decided to cross into the US on the Friday to visit the cemetery where Nan's family have been buried. We learned much about the Haeberle family history that we did not know and also connected with another branch of the family who are very interested in family trees and history and we have been enjoying learning and sharing since then. We also re-discovered that there is a huge church in Niagara Falls, NY where a few generations of Haeberles were very active. About half of the stained glass windows in that church have dedications to many of the Haeberles. It was very inspiring to find this family history, but also so discouraging that Niagara Falls, NY is so depressed and vacant. It would have been great to have seen the church and that area of Niagara Falls when it was flourishing.

Cottaging began early for us in 2017 with the warm spring weather melting the thin ice from a short winter. I was up during the second week of April, before Easter and that began a great long spring/summer season at the cottage. We had and still have many projects that need finishing and chose to focus on a few key ones that had bubbled to the top of our list. I spent some weekday time at the cottage during May and June pattering away on things and when Nan finished school at the end of June she came up and the projects got going in earnest. We finished/stained our front porch, rebuilt the front wall of our kitchen removing a door and install large panoramic windows and built a new set of stairs and a deck on the back cabin, that was long overdue. For those of you who have no idea what I am referring to, you should plan a visit. We like visitors . . . just let us know well in advance so we can plan.

As some of you will know, we had two grandchildren as of the beginning of June. Amanda & Matt have Brooklyn who was born in October 2013 and Bryan & Denise have Carter who was born in October of 2014. Here are some pics of Brooklyn and Carter below.



In June this year, Denise & Bryan brought Nathan into our family. As some will know, siblings can be very different and so it is with Nathan and Carter. Nathan has been a calm, laid back, snuggler from day one. Although we love the energy of the older kids, it was wonderful to have Nathan join us at the cottage when only a few weeks old so Nan & I could do our grandparent thing.



We learned early in 2017 that Eric & Robyn would also be having a new bundle of joy and that set some new ideas and plans into play. Haley was born on October 5th and we were encouraged to head down to Atlanta for November to help out. This meant that Nan would have to retire and she set that date at Nov 10th. We left on the following Monday and drove down to Atlanta to stay for about a month. Once again this gave us the opportunity for lots of grandparent time.

Here is a pic of some proud grandparents holding our new grandchildren. Nan has Haley Robyn Hazelton and I have Nathan Sparrow Hazelton.



I had told Eric that if we were to come down to Atlanta that he needed to have a list of projects for me to work on or I might just sleep for the 4 weeks. Eric did not need to be told twice, he had a long list ready and we were able to knock off a good number of them.

The 4th Thursday in November is usually the celebration of the US Thanksgiving. Eric & Robyn offered to Host a family celebration at their new home in Atlanta. Bryan & Denise decided to risk the drive down with Carter (3) and Nathan (5 mths). To their delight, the kids travelled well and once there we all had a great time, ate too much, and got to enjoy some warmer Atlanta weather. We have resolved to make this an annual tradition, and everyone is trying to bake this into their travel calendars in the future.

Western Motorcycle Trip:

This year Nan & I celebrated our 40th year of marriage. Our way of celebrating may have been a bit unusual. We left on a Monday Aug 21st after Eric & Robyn's RibFest weekend at the cottage and headed west on my motorcycle. Our destination was the KDiamondK Ranch in Republic, WA which is 2350 miles from our home in Newmarket. I had offered to drive out to Spokane, WA and fly Nan out there so it would have been only a 3 hour ride to the ranch, but she, being the most committed wife ever, said she wanted to ride with me. How sweet! Perhaps the 12 – 13 hr travel days that were needed to cover the distance were something that she did not know was on her "bucket list", but I can assure you that they are no longer on her "bucket list".



Here is Nan, as we were about to leave . . . looking a bit apprehensive about what she had signed up for.

Day 1 of the trip was plain and just long. Day 2 started with 3 hrs of rain, then some cloud, then another hour of hard rain and finally our destination. We were exhausted. Day 3 got us onto the prairies and endless flat country. Day 4 was mostly the same as day 3 but our last couple of hours were into the foothills of the rockies and much more interesting scenery. I should mention that although I had thought I was planning for roads with speed limits of about 50 mph, the USA is so huge that the upper

states have speed limits generally of 60mph and 70mph. Definitely, not Nan's favourite speed, but again no whining, just sitting in her "queen bee" seat waiting to arrive.

So what could possibly have been worth the long drive? In 2011 Eric and I did a motorcycle trip from Seattle to Calgary to attend my cousin's daughter's wedding. I like to refer to Rhonda as my niece, but I have since learned that is not technically correct. I digress . . . while Eric & I were on our trip we stumbled upon this KDiamondK ranch for an overnight accommodation. As we were heading there from the last hotel with no-vacancy, we found our minds wandering since we had seen too many tv shows where travelling down some dark remote roads, in the night, often lead to dangerous destinations. Not so for us. This ranch is a huge log lodge and a well known (in the area) Guest Ranch that draws ranchers/workers from all over the world. It was a GREAT experience for Nan and me and we joined into the many activities of: horseback riding, letting the horses out at night, bringing them in, in the morning, milking the cow, feeding the farm animals, chasing away the Long Horn herd, camp fires in the evening and wonderful farm meals each day. Nan has now declared that we will be taking the grandchildren there when they are in the 8-12 age range because from seeing the kids that were that age, they were having the best time ever.

When we left the KDiamondK ranch our next stop was in Radium Hot Springs, British Columbia. After a relaxing dip in the natural Hot pool we continued on our way to Lake Louise for lunch at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, then on to a quick drive through Banff and then to Canmore for a 2 night stay with my sister Ruth. The next 3 days were spent visiting with family in Calgary and staying at my niece's (Rhonda) house in south Calgary.

Nan had to fly back to Newmarket on the Sunday to go to work and I found myself free and looking forward to heading out on my bike . . . anywhere. Monday morning my cousin Laurel and her husband (my highschool friend) on his bike and I on mine, headed south from Calgary to enjoy a ride together. After a lunch at Ken's restaurant, chosen because Laurel's father's name was Ken, I found myself heading almost aimlessly, southish listening to the Beach Boys on my bike's sound system and just loving life! It was so surreal and I felt for at least a few hours that I had no responsibilities in life and could just keep driving forever. I have lived a structured life too long. I soon felt the need for a destination and picked Sturges for the first one. Sturges has a huge reputation for motorcycles and parties and although I knew it was not the right timing I felt I had to go, just to say I had been there. Although most of the bars and party areas were closed for off-season, it was easy to see how this could be the destination for thousands of bikers. I quickly learned that Mount Rushmore was nearby and had to put that on my destination list as well. These were both too short to be good overall plans so I msg'd Eric to see if he was going to be around on the weekend. He was, so I set my target to get to Atlanta by mid day Friday. Overall the trip from Calgary to Atlanta is 2375 miles so this meant a few more very long days to put me in Atlanta on target. I was so lucky in my travels. All of the travel from day 3, to the the Ranch, through to Calgary and then on to Atlanta . . . no more rain. I arrived at Eric & Robyn's in perfect timing to help Eric with a key project at his new house. There was more that I could have done, but Hurricane Irma had reared her head and knocked down trees and cut the power in their neighbourhood on the Monday. We woke up Tuesday with the power still out and estimates for a few more days without power so I packed up and headed home. This ride was a bit more challenging. I left Atlanta at 9:40am in the rain. It cleared up to overcast about 2 hours later, rained again around 5:00pm and then cleared up for the rest of the trip. When I crossed the border back into Canada, I called Nan to discuss next steps. It was already 10:30pm and I was only about 5 hours away from home. I chose to keep going. Due to the magic of Google Location Sharing, Nan could see exactly where I was all along the way. She was again such a wonderful wife, waiting in the front window with the garage door open at 3:20am when I finally made it home. Overall that trip was 5750 miles in 3 weeks . . . Not bad for an old guy.

I mentioned earlier the trip to Atlanta. Nan & I figured we should give Eric & Robyn a bit of a break after the family US Thanksgiving celebration so we planned 2 side trips, one to Nashville and another to Virginia Beach. We left after the US Thanksgiving weekend headed to Nashville and did the visit to the Grande Ole Opry, the walks along Broadway and the tourist bus tour with the narrated history. We thoroughly enjoyed this visit and the drive through the foothills on the way there and back. When we left Atlanta for home we travelled via Virginia Beach. Although this was off season and the weather was cool, we thoroughly enjoyed our stay, the driving around the seaside beach areas and the 22 mile long Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel. A must if you are ever in the area.

We arrived home on December 8th realizing that we had lots of prep to do for Christmas. No rest for us.

Back to the cottage topic for a moment . . . we have been working for years on plans for a rebuild/expansion of a portion of our cottage. The obstacles in our way have been many, but we feel we have made significant progress this week with the approval from the Township to proceed. We do need to wait until early January for the formal process to complete, but when final approval does come through we will be able to begin. I won't share any pictures of the dream yet, but you can be sure that this will consume much of our time over the next year or so. When done, we will have more comfortable accommodation for our growing family and for guests. You will know where to find us in the meantime. Here is a view from the lake after fall close up.



So now, if you are still reading, I will wrap this up by telling you that Nan and I have found, like we have heard so often from others, that once you retire, you don't know how you had time for a day job before. We have not yet begun to volunteer in our home community or at the cottage, but we find that we still get up earlyish and have busy days and evenings. And . . . we are looking forward to many more years of this new, freedom, lifestyle.

We wish you and your family a most heart felt Merry Christmas. May you look forward with excitement and anticipation to all that the 2018 New Year can be.

Cheers,
Allan & Nan