

Saying good-bye to Bancroft

By Tony Pearson

A few minutes ago, I finished my last article for *Bancroft This Week* ? appropriately enough, on a Bancroft council meeting, a group I've been covering since just before the last municipal election. Now it's time to complete packing for our impending move to a new town.

I've written dozens of stories and commentaries over the past three years, covering issues, events and people all over Bancroft. I'll take away a lot of memories from these ? from the tensions of all-candidates meetings to the excitement of kids petting a puppy in training to be a guide dog. Needless to say, I will remember how volunteers came together for so many causes, from immigrant [HIB sponsorship](#) to community gardens, as well as in so many fundraising efforts for great causes, like the Relay for Hope and the Alzheimer's walk.

Of course, I won't forget the long hours I spent at Bancroft town council. Some were banal, it's true, like the seemingly endless list of proclamations of this or that month for this or that cause. But there's been a lot of important issues covered, none bigger than the sewer financial crisis, first made public shortly after the current council took office. Eventually, this spawned red-hatted gnomes at council meetings and around the water tap. Then one potential solution to the crisis ? selling or opening up the Dungannon landfill ? galvanized a fresh group of protesters. There's certainly been no shortage of issues to write about.

Nonetheless, I sympathize with councillors. They must grapple with a wide array of issues, all the while knowing that they can't make everyone happy. Municipal politicians have a hard job ? even more stressful than their federal or provincial counterparts, since they are constantly in the midst of the issues and the people who are concerned about them. In the previous town where I lived, a former municipal councillor whose regular job was delivering the mail said he's never run again, since people had started leaving him requests, demands, and objections right in their mailboxes every day.

So thanks to the councillors and town staff who put up with all my questions and commentary ? and even thanked me at my last meeting. A very special thanks to Mayor Bernice Jenkins, who has always been helpful as I tried to sort through the various tangled webs of town issues.

Journalism aside, I will remember so many people for all they do for the community. This is a partial list, only because a complete one would require far more space than this column has; apologies in advance to all those inadvertently left out.

First of all, there are the people who help ? like Jessica and Sarah at North Hastings Children's Services; Heather and Jennifer and Sarah at Community Care; Jane and Jay at Harvest the North; Lynn and Judy and the rest at Social Justice Without Borders. There are the people who create: Diane and Arne and all the artists, Scott and all the craftspeople ? plus the people who make sure local artists have a space. There are the people who teach and lead in the schools ? Ken and Wayne and Diane and Heather and Patricia and so many others. And of course, there are my fellow freelancers, Jim Eadie and Sarah Vance.

Then, there are the wonderful people who organized the volunteer work I took part in ? especially the great group of local Lions. They put on the Christmas parade, hold vision screening clinics in the schools, raise funds for guide dogs, and collect glasses for people in developing countries ? in short, lots of work I was proud to be part of. When they purchased a recording system for Community Care, I and others could go in periodically and record the contents of *Bancroft This Week* and the *Times* for the visually impaired ? thanks again.

On the pure fun side, I'll also remember taking part in 24 hour theatre, writing one play and directing another with Bancroft's amateur theatre guild.

Any place you live becomes the site of losses as well as gains. While in Bancroft, I lost a lot of mobility, due to arthritis creeping into my knees after I passed my three-score-and-10. But my biggest loss was my beloved border collie, Bear. I will always be returning in my mind to the paths around River's Edge golf course where we walked. As I slowed, so did he. As I aged, he aged more. Thanks to Dista at Critter Comforts and the vets at Faraday animal hospital for all the kindness you extended to him as he struggled with the tribulations of old age. I'm taking his ashes with me, but his spirit will abide in Bancroft.

In conclusion (cue the drum roll), as Cathy and I shake the dust of Bancroft from our shoes, I am reminded of what the dolphins said when they left Earth (if you haven't read *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, do so ASAP), ?Good bye, and thanks for all the fish.? It's been great to observe and write about this community.

Good luck with the sewers!