

Fall 2020 Newsletter

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Fall 2020 Newsletter

LIST OF OFFICERS

Pamela Wing, **President** (264)
email: ps_wing7@hotmail.com
416-985-1727

Dr. Adrian Crowe, **Vice President** (Middle Is.)
accrowe@hotmail.com
Toronto: 416 587-5000

Donna Tucker, **Membership Committee** (263)
tucker6493@gmail.com
(416) 239-6493

Murray Hogeboom, **Treasurer** (120)
mhogeboom@sympatico.ca
Home: 905 889-3645
Cell: 416-316-0613

Nanci Wakeman, **Newsletter** (255)
nanci.wakeman@gmail.com
Cell: 905 399-6706
Toronto: 905 823-2564

Secretary TBD

LIST OF DIRECTORS

Sheila Tierney (099)
tierneyes@gmail.com
Cottage: 705 342-1653
Home: 905 468-2200
Cell: 905 351-7134

Christina Caap (365)
sofiefred@gmail.com
705 346-4047

John Rohr (367)
jandprohr@yahoo.ca
Cottage: 705 342-7781

Carol Hodson (95)
hqbd42@gmail.com
(416) 214-1608

Don Clement (Sand Bay)
don.clement1947@gmail.com
Cottage: 705 342-9383
Cell: 905 978-1389

Bill Bialkowski (261)
bialkowski@rogers.com
Cottage: 705 342-7354
Home: 905 833-7508

Bruce Davidson (I-257)
dbdavidson@rogers.com
Cottage: 705 342-1034
Toronto: 416 932-0030

Allison Needham
allison.needham@rogers.com
(647) 824-2922

Bruce Kelly
brucekelly@rogers.com
Cottage: (705) 342-5775
Cell: (519) 830-7949

Peter Pook
peterpook@bell.net
(905) 334-4884

Fond Memories of the Paradise that is Georgian Bay

By Don Clement

An article titled 'Two Stubborn Men' taken from an old 'Globe and Mail' Weekend Magazine article (Vol. 22, No. 6 – Feb. 5, 1972) is available on the WCA website with the permission of its author, Peter Martyn.

I'm not sure how widely this old story has been circulated... maybe, several WCA members have already had access to it but for those who haven't, the article is an interesting read, and it profiles a couple of old time residents that I was fortunate enough to have known personally as a cottage kid spending all his summers up here on our beloved 'Georgian Bay'.

The story is related to two 'salt of the earth' commercial fishermen, Alan Milligan and Lid Haggart. Lid Haggart and his family ended up becoming permanent year-round residents once the Sand Bay Road was extended out to 'Bedrock' at Haggart Bay. Marg Lloyd (Lid's daughter) still lives where the original fishing camp was first purchased from the Crown in 1952. I often spotted Lid piloting his old grey fishing metal scow, and on a few occasions I travelled with him down to Dillon or out to check his nets in his boat. I even experienced watching Lid with his son Jack cutting ice in the winter. They used a large gas-engine powered circular saw and cut a grid of ice blocks, and then pulled the blocks up into their icehouse to be buried in sawdust. They used the ice to pack 'the catch' in wooden boxes for shipment. The Haggarts used to make their own wooden boxes, caught the fish, cleaned the fish and earned a living.

I did not meet Alan Milligan until I turned 14-years old. That's when I started a summer job working at the old Dillon General Store (now abandoned, and in complete disrepair) located at the bridge over the Shebeshekong River. The Milligan's, Christenson's and the Ramsey families were all year-round residents. I came to know the older generation of those Dillon pioneer families. I worked at the store each summer when I was 14, 15 & 16 years old. Individuals like Walter Christenson, Ron Ramsey and Alan Milligan certainly impressed a kid from Oakville. The old store was originally known as Ramsey's Store and they sold 'White Rose' gasoline, kerosene, camp fuel, worms, and delivered propane cylinders by boat to the islands. At the time I worked there, the store had been purchased by George & Dorothy Sleeth. If you needed a 'box' of beer or a 'bottle' of spirits... it could be obtained. I came to know Alan Milligan quite well as he would come in to get gas for his half-ton truck, and would often sit down and solve a few of the world's problems with a discussion in the workshop with my boss. I was paid \$0.50/hr. and it was the best time of my life as I could travel to work in a 12-foot cedar strip boat powered by a 7-1/2 hp Johnson. I had many cottage friends out on the islands that I still see each summer. On a couple of occasions I went out on Alan Milligan's fishing tug named the 'Albert M.' Once we went all the way out to the Limestones in that tug... as Alan navigated out between Adanac Island and Oak Island... I remembered which side of Elm tree Island Alan chose to continue out to the Limestones for our picnic.

Anyway, I remember that Alan Milligan died young... at age 54. (1919 – 1974) It would only be a couple of years after he was featured in the Newspaper article. He's buried in the Carling Cemetery. Lid Haggart lived a longer life (1910 – 1990) After losing his wife Isabella, Lid bought a CB radio, and it was a tradition to listen to him 'sign off' every night on channel 13 at 08:00 o'clock. He lived until he was 80... often cussing and cursing anytime something didn't quite match his opinion. He appeared to be 'rough and tough'... but, once you got to know him he was often kind and considerate. Lid is also buried in the Carling Cemetery.

Incidentally, earlier today I was on the phone with Marg Lloyd (Lid's daughter) and verified that she has an original copy of that old Weekend Magazine article. I've known Marg for years and consider her to be a valued friend... she's a real character like her father.

It happens that my birthday falls at the end of July... if COVID-19 doesn't catch up to me... I will celebrate my 73rd birthday here. I consider myself blessed and very fortunate to say I've never missed a single birthday up here in the paradise of 'the Bay' I call home.

Just thought I would share the old [PDF digital file and story](#) for anyone that might not have seen it.

The initial article written by Peter Martyn is used with his permission.

Two Stubborn Men and their Stubborn Children

By Nanci Wakeman

In 1971 Peter Martyn went fishing in November with Al Milligan and Lid Haggart. He wrote about the experience and published the article in The Globe and Mail's Weekend Magazine. He entitled it ['Two Stubborn Men' – Fishing the Great Lakes a dying business – 1972-02-06 \(1\)](#)

Roy Milligan and Lid Haggart were commercial fishermen on Georgian Bay near Pte Au Baril, mostly catching Whitefish. This required battling snow, ice, and winter storms in late November. In 1955 their labour netted them 11 ton of Whitefish; on this trip in 1971, they netted 100 lbs. of marketable fish. Stubborn men indeed, as even when their exacting labour hardly put food on the table for their families, the men were happy fishing and wouldn't consider quitting until they became too old to continue.

Is there a fishing gene? Lid Haggart started fishing in WW1. He ran away from home at 14 and got a job on a steamboat. He got his mate's license at 20 and became a Captain at 23. Lid Haggart's business L.M. Haggart and Fisheries was started in 1910 on Mattanac Island. Marg Lloyd, the daughter of Lid remembers fishing with her father near Pointe au Baril, during the last year he was able to go out onto the bay. Marg wanted to take over the business but her dad said no. It was too hard to make a living by the time he died at 90.

According to Roy Milligan one of Al Milligan's sons, fishing for Whitefish meant taking nets out to the shallow shoals at 4 am in late November when the Whitefish would come in to spawn. The fishermen would dig a hole in the ice to send the net out under the ice. They would then go back to the fishing camp for a hearty meal before going out again at 3:00 pm to dig another hole to pull in the nets. Often the nets would be full of seaweed that had to be picked out by hand.

Once the catch was brought back to the fishing camp it had to be gutted and spooned, then packed on ice which was chopped and stored in ice houses, constructed by the fishermen; packed in fish boxes that the fisherman made themselves; then taken to a truck on the highway which would transport it to the Bayfield area from where it was trucked to Hamilton, or sent by rail to Buffalo and Chicago. No conveyor belts or pre-made boxes for the fishers; the entire process was done by hard labour.

Marg Lloyd remembers a day when she, her father and one of their neighbours were coming back in from a fishing expedition trailing a mile of net behind the boat. She was sitting on the spinning stool, aft, when her father who liked a tippie once in a while, opened up full throttle and yelled to her to hold onto the nets. Finally, the neighbour got Lid to cut the throttle and Marg screamed at her father, "If you do that again, I will cut the nets!" "Good decision," countered her father. It was a test that Marg is able to laugh about now.

Roy Milligan started fishing with his dad at 15. He quit school and headed out to the fishing camp on Frederick Island where they would spend 2 to 3 weeks. After 63 years of this life, the Ministry of Natural Resources burned down the fishing camp. It was illegal. Roy and his dad had camouflaged it so they could keep fishing but the MNR wanted the commercial fishing industry on Georgian Bay to be replaced by the tourist industry. It kept lowering the quotas for the commercial fishers until they were gradually forced out of business. The government ended up buying out the last commercial fishing operations on the Mink Islands.

According to Albert, Al Milligan's other son, the lure of fishing is the water itself. And for many of us who are devoted to this freshwater ocean named Georgian Bay, that is something with which we can identify, even if we aren't stubborn men and their stubborn children.

The initial article 'Two Stubborn Men' written by Peter Martyn is used with his permission.

Two Strikes and You're Out

By Bruce Davidson

My brother's cottage is a fair distance from mine. And there's a reasonable amount of wildlife habitat between us. Even so, when it comes to animals, what one of us does can affect the other. So we agree on how we handle wildlife, which is invariably to respect it. Rattlers are tolerated, fox snakes are celebrated, and bears are avoided, for example.

But every once in a while there's one particular critter that comes around that has certain tendencies that really tick both of us off. And that critter is none other than *porcupinus horribilus*. In Alex's case, Alfie the Porcupine has developed a taste for the delicious plywood painstakingly brought over by boat, carried up the path and stored in the crawl space under his cottage. Must be something in the glue. In my case, surprisingly enough, its dahlias and, perhaps not so surprisingly, dogs that are the problem.

Earlier this summer, Alfie distinguished himself by ruining several pieces of plywood in the same night and was apparently looking for a nice salty dessert when my brother confronted him with a loaded .22 rifle. Shining a flashlight straight into his beady black eyes, Alex declared in a voice that was meant to be menacing and stern but came out more like a squeak:

Alfie, if I spare your life, will you get the hell out of here?

Alfie nodded.

And do you promise never to come back?

Alfie nodded twice.

Fast forward a few weeks. A particularly dark night finds me trundling off my back deck wearing shorts and sandals holding a flashlight shining straight ahead. Suddenly I hear a rustling noise way too close for comfort. Not a sound one really wants to hear in an otherwise still night. With hair standing on end I swiftly swing my flashlight over to my left to reveal right beside me none other than good old Alfie, now waddling rather quickly in an attempt to gain refuge under my tool shed. OK, so he kept his promise and left my brother's place. Great. Except he's now come to my place and I don't know how to tell our lab Lola not to be a dog.

Predictably, the very next night my precious yellow mums and lilies are chomped right down to the nub. Beast has declared war on man by this heinous and unprovoked attack struck right to his gardening heart. Man has no



choice but to react with overwhelming vigour. Reaching deep into my prefrontal cortex, I cleverly deduce that my quilly tormentor is a sucker for flowers. Diabolically I bait a trap with a nice fresh dahlia (no way I would sacrifice a rose) and leave a trail of mums leading right to it. Bingo, that very night at 3 am in a thunderstorm no less, the trap shuts closed with a loud clang. Amusingly, although Alfie is trapped and supposed to be scared and angry, he still has the gall to eat the dahlia bait in the trap while he awaits his fate in the morning.

Early the next morning I send a picture of our mortal enemy in the trap to my wife Joy in the City, whereupon she immediately phones and says in a very insistent voice: “Can you give him a peanut butter sandwich and some water before you release him?” *Silence.* “Oh please.”

The photo above is the last known picture of Alfie before transportation to a rarely visited area of Crown Land where plentiful food (other than peanut butter and dahlias) is readily available. Life is good: my flowers are growing back and Lola is no longer afraid to go off the deck.

A Brief History of Georgian Bay

Written & compiled by Graham Ketcheson for White Squall

Georgian Bay was known by many names before its current incarnation, assigned in tribute to King George IV by early 1800s British surveyor Lieutenant Henry Bayfield.

Today we know the Bay as a unique landscape with a rich, layered history. Weathered and glaciated billion-year-old rocks, countless shipwrecks concealed in her depths, and ghost towns with lingering spirits.

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You'll never forget the Bay's smooth clean rock, it's whispering pines, whimpering gulls, and sparkling cool crystal-clear waters.

Georgian Bay is separated from the rest of Lake Huron by the Bruce Peninsula to the west and Manitoulin Island to the north. Though it was decided in the 1800s that it should be part of Lake Huron, it is often referred to as the sixth Great Lake. It even acts like a Great Lake, creating its own weather, waves, and currents.

Read the complete story open [The PDF "Georgian Bay Geology and History"](#), which is used with permission of its author, Graham Ketcheson.

Water Levels Update – Fall 2020

By Bill Bialkowski, at Snug Harbour, October 25, 2020

In the spring newsletter, I wrote a water levels update article that I now know was quite inaccurate. My summer and fall have been filled with water level activity, and I will try to update you as succinctly as possible.

This year has again been dominated by super high-water levels, although now in October, the levels are dropping in what appears to be a normal seasonal decline. However, no one has a clear picture of what is happening and why. The government agencies have all been saying the high water is due to super high net basin supply (NBS) – climate change – nothing can be done -so get used to it.

In the spring I received a dataset of net basin supplies from Environment Canada CC. You may recall that there are two ways to compute NBS: 1) the ‘components method’ that tries to estimate precipitation on the lake, plus runoff from the basin, less evaporation (used by Environment Canada CC); and 2) the ‘residuals method’ that measures the accumulated volume of water as lake levels change month-to-month, less flows in, plus flows out (used by the US Army Corps of Engineers – USACE). Both of these methods have accuracy challenges, but the residuals NBS for Lake Michigan-Huron (M-H) has faced the problem that the flow of the St. Clair River (SCR) was historically only estimated. Recently a meter was installed, but this spring I considered the measurement to be way off. Hence, I considered the residuals NBS to be highly suspect.

So, in the spring as per my article, I compared the components to the residual NBS and found that while the residual NBS was rising from 2000 to 2020, the components NBS was falling, the very opposite of what people were saying. So, based on the components method NBS, I put together a hydraulic model of Lake M-H plus the flows in-and-out and concluded as described in my article, that it appeared that sand had accumulated in the St. Clair, and the water was being held back – this was a potential reason for the higher than normal water levels. As an engineer, I have been building hydraulic models since the sixties, and of Lake M-H and the SCR since 2003, first for GBA, then for Georgian Bay Great Lakes Foundation (GBGLF), headed by Mary Muter, and Restore Our Waters International (ROWI) headed by Roger Gauthier. Mary brought about the 2004 Baird Report that found previously unknown SCR erosion, and Roger was the chief hydrologist for USACE for forty years. GBGLF has supported McMaster U’s Prof. Pat Chow-Fraser ‘s research that has linked the water level issues to wetland and environmental health, and both Mary and Roger represent the shoreline interests around Lake M-H and Georgian Bay.

Of particular interest was the fact that the USACE were now using an Acoustic Doppler Velocity Meter (ADVM) in the SCR to measure the SCR flow and were reporting flows well over 7,000 cubic metres per second (cms) or over 250,000 cubic feet per second. These flows exceeded the 1986 maximum flows to-date ever recorded. I had kept a velocity profile graphic of the river when this meter was first installed, and based on that, it appeared that they were using a cross-section area that was easily 40% larger. So, in June, we sent my analysis and observation about the ADVM to John Allis, the current chief hydrologist at the USACE. This resulted in a summer-long exchange of technical notes and several conversations.

In 1965, I was in the Royal Canadian Navy and was then a sonar system engineer in charge of testing the accuracy of a new sonar on one of our destroyers. So, for me, the accuracy of an acoustic doppler velocity sensor was not totally foreign.

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What I did not know, was that the meter, for which I had that velocity profile, had been moved to a new location just south of the Point Edward Casino, and here the river is much wider. In our discussions with the USACE staff, we went through the full range of computation algorithms and accuracy-related issues and concluded that the meter was in fact accurate and that indeed the flows do actually exceed 7,000 cms. The bottom line – the reason for the super high-water levels is in fact the unprecedented high net basin supply – climate change.

Given an accurate SCR flow measurement, we can now expect the residuals method NBS to be accurate as well. Armed with this, I was able to run a new model. This established a full water balance over the last 20 years, however only after allowances were made for SCR erosion. My initial model suggested erosion of as much as 75 cm in an average river depth of 10 m. The USACE have since confirmed that they have detected erosion, but their estimate was in the range of 10 to 20 cm. I have since re-run the model to better account for winter ice retardation impacts and found the erosion estimate now appeared to be less than 10 cm. Of course, these estimates need to be verified by regular bathymetric (depth) studies. The last bathymetry study released was in 2005. Apparently, the USACE did bathymetry studies in 2007, 2012, 2018, but nothing has been released. We are now promised 2019 and are waiting.

Whatever the right amount of erosion might actually be, any erosion means when we once again experience super low water levels, that the levels will now be lower by more than the 50 cm (20 inches), which the IJC has so far confirmed to be the impact of all past dredging and erosion.

To bring this into more focus, we have had Baird and Associates study past water level cycles. You probably have heard that water levels are cyclical and that M-H cycles are dominated by a very long 165-year cycle, together with a faster 35-year cycle. Baird predictions line up with actual history very well for the last 150 years. Going out into the future they predict that our next bout of low water will begin soon and then be even lower in about ten years time (2030), when the water levels will be about 15 inches lower than they were in the 2000 to 2013 period. (Baird Report III is available @ georgianbaygreatlakesfoundation.com)

In 2013, I was able to walk on the exposed dry mud right to Gilly's restaurant in Snug Harbor. Imagine a level 15 inches lower!

Let me turn briefly to the Web Symposium organised jointly by GBA and GBF, and held Saturday, October 24. While GBA's Rupert Kindersley's objectives were well intentioned, you should know that the GBGLF material that was prepared at Rupert's invitation was ultimately barred from presentation. Our Q&A slides for that are also posted at georgianbaygreatlakesfoundation.com

For those interested, here is my summary of what has ailed us during this period of super high water. We on Lake M-H almost exceeded the 1986 high water record this year. Yes, the chief cause of high water was the unprecedented high-water supply, but two additional causes have made it worse.

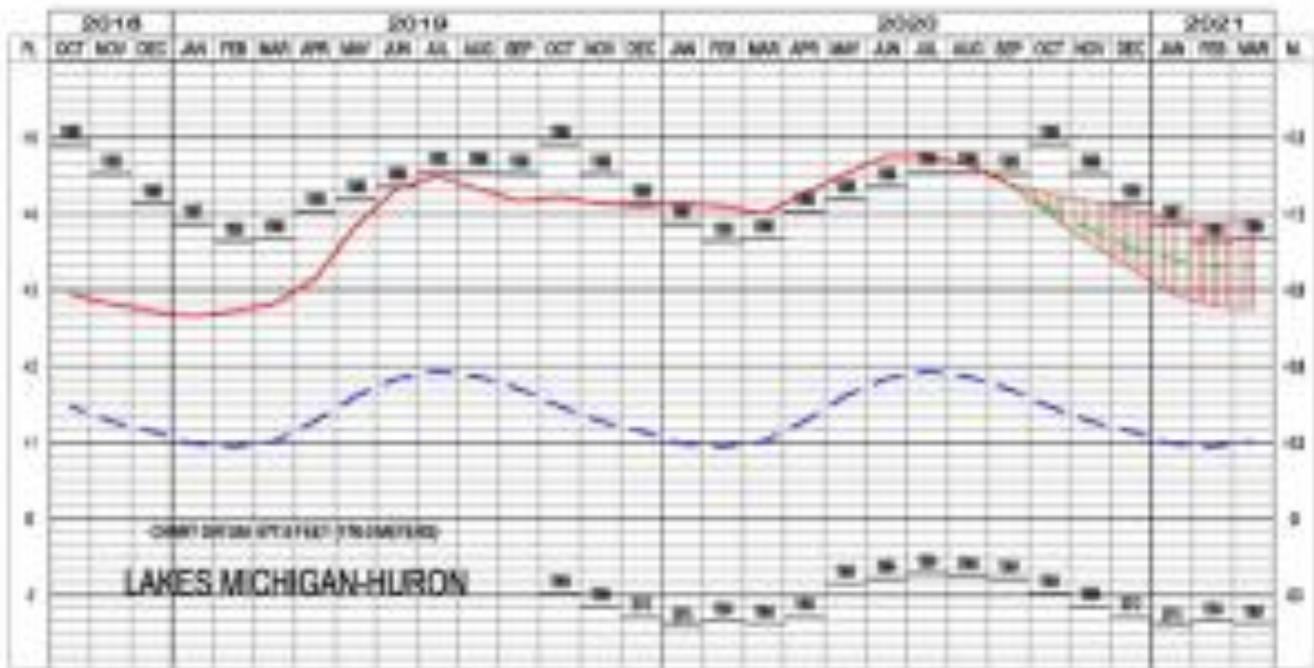
The first of these is the fact that Lake Superior water supply is artificially high because during WW II, water was diverted from the James Bay Basin into Lake Superior at Long Lac and Ogoki to generate extra hydropower for the war effort. But in spite of the fact that the war has been over for 75 years, Ontario Power Generation (OPG) has kept the extra flow and power going ever since, without any regard for water levels. This extra water also enters Lake M-H and raises our levels by an extra 10 cm (4 inches). It is both practical and easily achievable to reduce or eliminate Long Lac and Ogoki. This would reduce hydropower immediately and help alleviate high water levels after a long delay due to the huge size of the lakes. This reduction took place during previous high levels in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's. Now the IJC has not even asked OPG to reduce the inflow during high water. Why not? We don't know although many have asked.

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The second additional cause of MH high water, is the regulation of the Lake Superior outflow. This is governed by the International Lake Superior Board of Control (ILSBC) under the IJC. It is set by Plan 2012, a regulation plan that calculates the monthly outflow target. In so doing, it has a lake level balancing algorithm that attempts to fairly balance Lake Superior and Lake M-H levels around their long-term averages. Lake Superior is tightly held to a range of 4 feet while our part of the system fluctuates by about 6.5 feet. But, the ILSBC has recently regularly overridden Plan 2012 and over-discharged into M-H. There is a lack of transparency as to how much this is contributing to M-H extra high-water levels, and why these decisions were made. There is the apparent need to review the balancing algorithm and for the ILSBC to not over-discharge as it has in the past.

For what it is worth, The USACE October long term forecast is shown below, and our February 2021 level is forecasted to be some 20 cm (8”) lower than this past February. So at least we are expecting slightly lower levels next year.

LAKES MICHIGAN-HURON WATER LEVELS - OCTOBER 2020



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