

# FAIRBRIDGE GAZETTE

## SUMMER 2017



### Fairbridge Chapel

*– before the installation of the clock.*

### FCA September 2017 Reunion

*See page 3 for details.*

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## *Glen Dobson: President's Message*

Here we are, another year gone by and the 2017 Fairbridge Farm School reunion is fast approaching. Our numbers have seriously dwindled this year compared to past years. I believe we have less than 30 confirmed. The aging demographic of the members has a lot to do with the shrinking numbers. My mandate as President of the society was to try and encourage the next generation or even the third generation of Fairbridgians to come out and help us to preserve the memory of this historic group of migrant children. We have moved to a social media platform to try and connect with the younger audience; but we have had limited response thus far. I would really like to see this continue and not be the last Fairbridge reunion and inevitably the end of the society. In order to prevent this, I would like to ask you, the members, to reach out to your children and grandchildren and ask if they have any interest in helping us preserve the history of the Fairbridge farm school. If they do, please have them reach out to any of us or me personally to share their thoughts, concerns or suggestions on how to keep this society alive. The future of the Fairbridge Society will be a major question at this year's reunion. Please bring your ideas and thoughts to the annual general meeting September 16<sup>th</sup> at the Oceanfront suits.

Thank you all

*Glen Dobson*

## **Let us know right away if you plan to attend the 2017 FCA Reunion**

Please let Ron Smith know, send an email: [rgwsmiths@hotmail.com](mailto:rgwsmiths@hotmail.com)

Send your reunion registration form as soon as possible: Ron Smith, 4718 Fairbridge Drive, Duncan, BC V9L 6N8

Webster says the future is "of, or relating to, time to come." Take for instance the Old Fairbridgians' Association. If we quibble, lack co-operation, fail to pay our fees or show too little interest in it, then in time to come it will no longer be an association, but just an idea, something that had come and gone and was no longer to be. Yet if we do otherwise, play our role, take an active interest and pay our dues promptly and willingly, then in time to come our association will become a recognized society, our hostel will be a reality not just a hope. Funds will build up and there should be absolutely no limit to our program and activities.

Of course let's be sensible about the thing, we can't change overnight and 'waken in Shangrila, but, now that all O.F.s are back from overseas (the day we said we were always waiting for) and things are back to normal, I fail to see any reason whatsoever why we should not have something to show at the end of the year.

I found it interesting that from the beginning, the future of the Old Fairbridgians' Association, (the name changed to the Fairbridge Canada Association during the General Meeting at the 1995 Reunion) was questioned - and who could imagine then, that 70 years later it would still be an active association. Now where will it go after 2017?

*Editor, Pat Skidmore*

From the 1947 Old Fairbridgians Issue, Page 8.  
Ken Braunton was Gazette Editor

### **Fairbridge Canada Association Board 2017**

**President:** Glen Dobson: [kingdobber@me.com](mailto:kingdobber@me.com)

**Vice President:** John Hardy: [jkhardy@shaw.ca](mailto:jkhardy@shaw.ca)

**Past President:** Roddy Mackay: [roddymc@comcast.net](mailto:roddymc@comcast.net)

**Treasurer:** Ron Smith: [rgwsmiths@hotmail.com](mailto:rgwsmiths@hotmail.com)

**Secretary:** Christina Dobson: [cbrazzoni@telus.net](mailto:cbrazzoni@telus.net)

**Gazette Editor:** Pat Skidmore: [patskidmore@shaw.ca](mailto:patskidmore@shaw.ca)

**International Liaison Officer:** Christine McIver:

[kitt1062@googlemail.com](mailto:kitt1062@googlemail.com)

**Director:** Roy Myhill: [royhill2016@outlook.com](mailto:royhill2016@outlook.com)

**FCA Fees of \$30.00 per year**  
**REMINDER: memberships are due in**  
**January of each year.**

Membership forms can be found on the FCA website at:  
<http://fairbridgecanada.com/>

*Or you can contact Ron Smith*  
*FCA Treasurer, 4718 Fairbridge Drive,*  
*Duncan, BC V9L 6N8*

*or email Pat Skidmore for a form: [patskidmore@shaw.ca](mailto:patskidmore@shaw.ca)*  
*(Note: my telus email has been retired)*



# Fairbridge Canada Association September 2017 Reunion

**WHEN: Friday and Saturday - September 15 – 16, 2017.**

**WHERE: Oceanfront Suites at Cowichan Bay**

1681 Cowichan Bay Road, Cowichan Bay, BC

V0R 1N0, Canada

<http://www.oceanfrontcowichanbay.com/>

**CONTACT:**

**Telephone:** Toll Free, Within North America: 1-800-663-7898

Local or From Outside North America: 1-250-715-1000

**Fax:** 1-250-715-1001

**Email:** [info@oceanfrontcowichanbay.com](mailto:info@oceanfrontcowichanbay.com)



*Come and sit by the shore and watch the sun set over beautiful Cowichan Bay*

**NOTE:** When contacting the Oceanfront Suites at Cowichan Bay please identify yourselves as attending the **Fairbridge Reunion** for September 15 – 16, 2017.

*To ensure you can get a room for the weekend - you need to book ASAP.*

Send your FCA Reunion Registration Forms and cheques to:

**Ron Smith, FCA Treasurer, 4718 Fairbridge Drive, Duncan, BC V9L 6N8**

If possible, send Ron Smith an email to let him know your registration is on its way: [rgwsmiths@hotmail.com](mailto:rgwsmiths@hotmail.com)



## 2016 Reunion





## A bit of Mollie Preece's Story

As many of you know, Mollie Preece passed away in March, 2015.

My mother Marjorie and I visited Mollie a number of times when she lived independently in Vancouver, and then again after she was in assisted living also in Vancouver. Molly Harris and I also visited Mollie once there. Mollie's short-term memory wasn't what it used to be but she and Molly could chat about the Fairbridge Days as if it was yesterday.



Mollie named me as her executor. The courts needed me to gather as much information as possible on Mollie and her "English" family. It sent me digging into Mollie's past and I found that Mollie led a very interesting life.

Mollie left a sizable sum to both the Fairbridge Alumni Bursary Society and the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society. I am certain that the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society will have many important projects that they can now move forward with.

Mollie's funds for the Fairbridge Bursary were placed with the rest of the Fairbridge Bursary Funds in the Vancouver Foundation. There will be a significant increase in the amount generated each year once the added funds begin to generate interest. At this time, the funds will still go to the Cowichan High School, but one of the Bursaries will be called the "Mollie Preece Memorial Bursary" and there will be an attempt to offer it to either a nursing student to an Early Childhood Education student – as you will see below – that is what Mollie spent a lot of her life doing.

The more I learn about Mollie the more I realize what a remarkable woman she was. I felt it was important to share some of her story.

I have been reading through the back issues of the Fairbridge Gazette and in the April 1990 issue I found that then editor – Ken Bennett put out an appeal for Former Fairbridgians to send in information on what they had been doing with their lives since leaving Fairbridge. Mollie Preece sent in information on herself. I had no idea that the Mollie I knew – as she seemed so quiet and shy, had travelled so far and wide.

Mollie said that she left Fairbridge in 1946, and worked as a governess for a private family with two children. Mollie stayed with this family for 25 years. She then spent 15 years as a practical nurse at Vancouver Grace Hospital.

*Fairbridge Hospital: 1940s*



During her lifetime, Mollie travelled around the world – she has been to 5 continents, down the River Nile, seen King Tut's Tomb, travelled up the Congo and down the Amazon and has travelled through the Andes. Mollie lived in Sydney, Australia for 10 years, and has spent time in the South Seas, Hawaii, Tahiti and the Cook Islands. She has been to the Galapagos Islands and to England, Ireland Scotland and Wales.

She got her Travel Agent certificate and Hospitality Certificate.

And in the meantime she gave blood. Lots of blood!

## Champ blood donor gives 141 pints and still going strong

MOLLIE PREECE is a lifesaver.

Not only does the 52-year-old Vancouver, British Columbia, nurse keep her patients alive, but hundreds of other people she doesn't know are also alive today because her blood is coursing through their veins.

Mollie is an undisputed blood donor champion. She has the blood type O-Rh positive, which can be given to anyone without adverse reaction. And she gives it away generously.

In 34 years, Mollie has donated 141 pints.

She sees nothing heroic in what she does. She says she donates her blood simply for the satisfaction of knowing that she's helping people.

"You could be saving a life," she

By LINDA MAISLIN

said. "That's how I look at it. And they're always short of donors."

She's right. Rick O'Brien, director of public relations for the B.C.-Yukon division of the Canadian Red Cross says the organization needs to collect about 2,800 units of blood a week —

20 times Mollie's total lifetime donation — in order to meet the demands of the hospitals in British Columbia and the Yukon.

### Preoccupied

"Our supplies suffer because people are preoccupied and too busy to donate," he said.

"At the same time, there are increased demands on the blood bank because accidents increase. A lot of people don't realize we never have

more than a two- or three-day reserve of blood on hand." But Mollie does. She shows up promptly whenever there's a blood donor drive under way.

"We set our watches by Mollie," said O'Brien. "Every three months to the day, she walks through our doors."

Mollie has certainly gone beyond the call of duty. Her 141 pints exceed by five the amount allowed in Red Cross guidelines for women of her age.

"Mollie slipped in an extra five pints somewhere," laughed O'Brien.

But he's not complaining. He says there's no telling how many people are well and active because of Mollie's generosity.

Patients are rarely given whole blood nowadays. Instead, it's broken down into its components and patients are given only the particular cells they need.



• Mollie Preece demonstrates with trolley just how much blood she has donated



National Examiner, January 26, 1982

**At 161 pints, she's a busy life saver**

## Fairbridge Chapel News

Summer 2017

By Ron Smith

On May 6<sup>th</sup> the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society held their Annual General Meeting when the Board of Directors decided to undertake a number of major improvements to both the two buildings as well as the grounds of the heritage site. The following are some of them.

First, we want to refurbish and upgrade the three bathrooms of which two are working now. This will include sanding the floors putting drywall on the walls, installing nicer light fixtures and replacing the toilets and sinks.

Second, with respect to the exterior of the two buildings we will be replacing all gutter runs, removing the moss from the roof, doing some repairs to shingles and trim, paint all the off white trim on both buildings and chocolate brown on the chapel. The front and rear porch floors of the schoolhouse will also be re-painted. We also hope to repair the remaining double door at the back of the chapel and the wood chute. Also we are looking for a better rear door for the schoolhouse.

Third, all cement steps and landings will be fixed and a new patterned cement sidewalk will be put down to both buildings. Once this is done we will also improve the lawn area as it is being taken over with moss and get the full in ground irrigation up and running.

Fourth, Libra Tree Service will be coming in soon to clean the bell tower gutters and assist us in replace about five shakes. They will also be removing the large plum tree near the front entrance as well as some other small trees adjacent the east end of the chapel. The plum is loaded with black knot so we are planning to try and replace it with some bush that would flower during the summer months, if possible. Libra will also be removing the lower cedar limbs of the trees around the kiosk after which repairs will be made to the kiosk itself.

Fifth, we have contacted, a local firm, Live Edge Design regarding the large maple tree at the rear of the schoolhouse and are interested in buying

portions of the tree to make maple furniture from it. We will be working with both this firm and Libra on this project as well as with the removal of at least one and possibly two large Douglas fir trees, which will be sold to a local mill for saw logs. Other branches and sections of both trees will be sold or used by the society to heat the chapel. Once the trees are removed landscaping improvements will be made both in the front of the schoolhouse as well as the back area.

There are a number of other minor projects we will do this year, and plan out the work needs to be undertaken next year.

I would like to also mention that Pat Skidmore has joined the Board of Directors replacing John Hardy who is now living in Vancouver. As you likely know, Pat is now residing on beautiful Salt Spring Island.

Also, in mid May the heritage site was used for a made for television movie I believe called *The Runaway Bride*, a comedy, which may be aired late this fall. The chapel was nicely decorated and everyone, cast and crew, was pleased with the setting. This was the first time the heritage site has been used for a movie but it likely won't be the last.



The Society will be filing its revised bylaws and constitution later this summer. This will meet the requirements of the new provincial Societies Act. We have made some changes, including the minimum age an individual can join—18 years; the corporate membership is now set at \$250 per year while the family membership is \$20 with the individual membership remaining at \$10.

**The Fairbridge Chapel Website has been updated. Check it out: <http://fairbridgechapel.com/>**

Look for updates on membership, the minutes from the 2017 AGM and the 2017 Board of Directors.

There is also a report on what is scheduled for this year's improvements to the heritage site.



**Frank William Danks** (November 21, 1929 - July 13, 2017)

Frank was born in Birmingham, England. He passed away in Victoria, BC. Devoted husband, father, and papa. Predeceased by brother John and sister Joyce. Leaves his wife of 62 years Eleanor; sons, Anthony (Janet) and Matthew (Colleen); granddaughters, Sarah June, Amy Claire, and Grace Eleanor; and sisters Dorothy and Jean, in England. Frank and his brother John came to Canada in 1937 and were raised at Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School near Duncan, BC. No service by request. "And so, to where I wait, come gently on." W.A.



*(Editor's note: Frank and John came with the same party as Lily Clabby (Dean) and my mother Marjorie and her brother Kenny— this fourth party arrived at the farm school on September 22, 1937. Photo of Lily taken at the 2007 FCA Reunion by Pat Skidmore.)*

**Lily Dean (Clabby)** (July 2017) My Mother taught me very well on how to survive pain and heartache. She survived horrible pain as a child and was able to be happy and live a good life. I don't believe she knew what peace was, she struggled with pain all her life, but she knew without exception how to balance love and heartache and live on, striving to find happiness and enjoying who and what she loved.

She was a quiet shy person until she found her voice. It was new to her and sometimes did not know how to use it. She was very forward and did not know how to filter herself. Being Bi-Polar we have to know how to filter our voices, I never got the chance to teach her how to do that and she was impressed that I new how. That pleased me because I knew she wanted to try. My mother had many loves, she loved to read, sing and garden. Her garden would impress any landscaper it was breathtaking. She travelled greatly and loved to do that with my Father, they always had such wonderful experiences together. She loved only one man in her life and that was her husband James Dean, he was her greatest joy. They were orphans together.

Though there were great challenges in their marriage, they always found one another. She had four beautiful daughters, Linda, Jaime, Karenia and me, I was her baby and will always be. I loved my mother greatly and will miss her with everything that I have in my heart. When I think of her I will remember all that she gave me and how she taught me to be a survivalist and live to love. I believe she has finally found peace and is singing love songs to my father while he fishes. Finally Mama you found your peace, enjoy it forever. Oceans of love my dears, your baby girl Heather.

**Message from the Past President:** I for one will miss Lily. When her husband James died she sold her home and had moved into a very nice retirement condo in Victoria. As she had given up driving I picked her along with Mimi (Schofield) up in Victoria to drive them up to their last reunion two years ago. It was a real privilege sharing time with both those ladies and I enjoyed their company at our reunions. Due to her health Mimi has had to give up traveling to our reunions, however I still stay in touch with phone calls to Mimi. *I would urge all my fellow Fairbridgian to "reach out" pick up your phone and call former school mates who you know are home bound.* Take care all. Cheers Roddy

### *Who recalls bringing in the hay and hauling firewood?*



#### *FABS: Fairbridge Alumni Bursary Society and the Fairbridge Farm School Bursary*

A donation to the Fairbridge Farm School Bursary can now be made directly from the *Fairbridge Bursary Page* on the Vancouver Foundation Website: [www.vancouverfoundation.ca/fairbridge](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/fairbridge)

Or you can make a donation to the Fairbridge Farm School Bursary by contacting:

Kerri Waite, Manager, Donor Services

Suite 200 - 475 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 4M9

D. 604.638.8738, C. 604.657.2729. Website: <http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca>

For more information, contact Pat Skidmore: [patskidmore@shaw.ca](mailto:patskidmore@shaw.ca)