



Rachel WRITES

by Rachel GARBER

VIRTUAL GOLD

Those who do not frequent Facebook or Twitter, it seems, are missing a generous smorgasbord of things to do, to know, and to laugh at. I'm also panning for virtual gold in online versions of the New York Times, National Geographic, and Science News. Let me share a few nuggets with you.

FROM THE ETHER

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself... and then there's 'stupid.' We should probably be really afraid of that too!"

"Single man with Purell and Lysol, seeking single woman with toilet paper for some good clean fun."

FABRIC OF HAPPINESS

My parents brought up a family during the Great Depression and the Second World War. What advice do elders who survived those periods have for us during this pandemic? "Be generous. Notice small joys. Prepare more, worry less," says Gerontologist Karl Pillemer, who interviewed many of them. "A morning cup of coffee, a warm bed on a winter night, a brightly colored bird feeding on the lawn, an unexpected letter from a friend, even a favourite song on the radio. Paying special attention to these 'microlevel' events forms a fabric of happiness that lifts them up daily." (Thanks, National Geographic.)

GARDENING IS IN!

Just by chance, this spring we decided to get serious about our gardening. Now we're not alone, as people wonder how the grocery supply chain will hold up in the long run. And there's something really satisfying about watching your seedlings grow, and showing them to your friends on Facebook, too.

Luckily, we invested early in heritage seeds from Brian Creelman at seedsforfood.net. Saw a photo of him with a wheelbarrow full of cabbages. We also just carved up and ate the last of the many Uncle David's Dakota Dessert Winter Squashes we harvested last fall, grown from his seeds. Yum.

WISDOM FOR SHUT-INS

Know this, says novelist Francesca Melandri (National Geographic Newsletter):

1. You will put on weight.
2. You'll look for online fitness training.
3. You'll flaunt a newfound gallows humour.
4. You will make appointments in supermarket queues with your friends and lovers, so as to briefly see them in person, all the while abiding by the social distancing rules.
5. You will count all the things you do not need.

A SHORT HISTORY OF PANDEMICS

Our coronavirus pandemic is neither the first nor the worst. The Plague of Justinian began in 541 AD in the Mediterranean region, killing some 25 to 100 million people over two centuries, or about half of Europe's population. It was caused by Yersinia pestis, carried by rat fleas, which travelled along with shipments of grain from Egypt.

That's the same bacterium responsible for the Bubonic Plague, called the Black Death, in the mid-1300s. At that appearance, it killed some 50 million people in Europe and Asia, again more or less half of the population.

The plague came back, and visited different parts of Europe each year until 1671. (Thanks, Wikipedia.)

In 1665, diary-writer Samuel Pepys in London reported practicing social/physical distancing: "The taverns are fair full of gadabouts making merry this eve. Though I may press my face against the window like an urchin at a confectioner's, I am tempted not by the sweetmeats within. A dram in exchange for the pox is an ill bargain indeed," he wrote.

SPANISH FLU

Fast forward to 1918. The Spanish Flu pandemic also killed some 50 million people around the world. It killed some 55,000 Canadians in just a few months, almost as many as died in four years during the First World War. The response by governments has been called chaotic, except in one corner of Quebec.

That corner was near the northern end of Route 138, not far from Natashquan. It's named Baie-Johan-Beetz, in honour of the person who saved this remote area from the Spanish Flu. Beetz was

a naturalist from Belgium who had studied medicine and biology. He immigrated to what was then Piashte Baie, married a Quebecer and was the local postmaster. When the Spanish Flu arrived in Quebec, he quarantined the village, restricting external contact and disinfecting the mail.

The rest of Quebec and Canada fared less well. But that failure led to the founding of the federal Department of Health in 1919, and public health became a responsibility shared by all levels of government (thanks, Wikipedia).

WRITING YOUR WILL

As the coronavirus knocks at our doors, notaries are receiving a flood of requests for help writing a last will and testament, said an article in the Montreal Gazette. In a 2018 poll by Angus Reid, only about 58% of Quebecers reported having a will. Those who die without a will could leave their families a terrible shock. For example, unmarried couples could find that the partner left behind inherits nothing under Quebec law. Much valuable information in English about writing or changing a will is as close as your computer screen, at <https://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/wills>. And notaries are now able to carry out much or all of the process via internet.

SELF-CARE GUIDE

A 24-page "Self-care Guide" to protecting your family's health during the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in our mail in French, from the Quebec Government. Do you want it in English? You can easily download it as a PDF file from www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus.

STILL ON HOLD

Activities usually announced in this space are all on an extended pause during this period of physical isolation. Many events planned for April and May are also cancelled, including the Health Link presentations in Bury.

CHURCH SERVICES

The churches in this listing have cancelled all services and gatherings until further notice. Special notes follow:

Baptist. Contact Pastor Michel Houle at 819-239-8818.

Anglican. Bishop Bruce Myers offers Home Prayers on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. on Facebook, and at quebec.anglican.ca (see Worship Videos). Info: 819-887-6802, or quebec.anglican.ca.

United. Info: 819-889-2838 (listen to the message).

Do you have news to share? Call 819-300-2374 or email rawrites@yahoo.com by April 20 for publication **April 29**, or by May 4 for **May 13**.

Gaz toxique dans les silos

« Un colloque emballant » - Marie-Antoine Roy

par Pierre HÉBERT

Hôte d'un atelier tenu l'automne dernier, sur la dangerosité des gaz contenus à l'intérieur des silos, Marie-Antoine Roy, propriétaire de la Bergerie Malvibois, à Newport, revient emballé du récent colloque provincial tenu à Trois-Rivières. Convaincu des effets positifs, « je pense que ça va faire cheminer », précise-t-il.

L'événement, organisé par l'UPA, la CNESTT et le Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail, traitait de santé-sécurité en abordant les gaz dangereux particulièrement ceux d'ensilage, de lisier et le monoxyde de carbone. On a relevé pas moins de quatre décès au Québec



Nous apercevons une vue aérienne de la Bergerie Malvibois.

au cours de 2019 en raison d'inhalation de gaz.

« Moi, je suis vraiment emballé. J'ai été vraiment surpris de la participation à cette journée-là. Ce qui m'a impressionné, c'est de voir que tout le monde veut travailler dans le même sens. »

Comptant plusieurs années d'expérience, M. Roy ne sent aucune gêne à dire « j'ai appris beaucoup de choses. Je ne savais pas que les 2/3 des personnes mortes sont celles qui tentaient d'aller chercher la victime dans le silo. Je n'aurais jamais pensé ça. On

nous a montré comment intervenir, les cinq risques pour les gaz, comment vérifier, utiliser les instruments, la procédure à suivre pour sortir quelqu'un d'un espace clos, vérifier nos vêtements, ne pas avoir d'outils dans les poches ou de crayon dans notre chemise. » Des représentants d'équipements de sécurité, comme des détecteurs de gaz, fabricants de silos et autres participaient aussi au colloque. « Ça nous a permis d'apprendre les nouvelles technologies. »

Parmi les thèmes abordés, on retrouvait les accidents avec des gaz auxquels s'ajoutaient des études de cas, les différents gaz, risques et moyens de prévention et le côté caché des gaz en agriculture. À cela, s'ajoutaient des ateliers visant à sensibiliser les travailleurs agricoles aux risques associés au travail en espace clos, la ventilation des bâtiments, l'utilisateur des détecteurs de gaz et autres. Le colloque, d'exprimer M. Roy, se voulait pratique, le vocabulaire utilisé était simple et compréhensible. Conférenciers, témoignages et ateliers remplissaient la journée d'information et de



Marie-Antoine Roy a témoigné de son expérience.

formation. Notre producteur a même livré un témoignage relatant comment il a évité une tragédie sur sa ferme tout en insistant sur l'importance des détecteurs de gaz et d'une bonne ventilation à l'intérieur des silos.

Selon M. Roy, les intervenants travaillent à mettre en place un comité qui aura pour tâche de réaliser des études afin de comprendre les nouveaux gaz et même développer d'autres technologies comme des systèmes de ventilation en permanence pour faire circuler l'air dans les silos.

Enthousiasmé par le colloque, M. Roy se propose de faire circuler l'information. « Aussitôt que la documen-

tation nous sera transmise par papier et sous forme de vidéo, je vais la présenter à mes employés. Je pense qu'on est rendu là. C'est aux producteurs à se prendre en main. »

Rappelons que M. Roy avait tenu sur sa ferme, en septembre dernier, avec la participation de divers intervenants, un atelier de formation traitant du sujet. Plusieurs producteurs, représentants de l'UPA, de la CNESTT et fournisseurs d'équipements participaient à l'activité. Avec modestie, le producteur est d'avis que son initiative jointe aux autres du genre en Estrie a fait bouler de neige pour en devenir le thème lors du récent colloque provincial.

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