

## IN OTHER WORDS

Columns and Letters to the Editor

# Surviving lives in the forest

**T**HERE WAS no finer sight for a New Year's morning. At the edge of a freshly snow-covered clearing behind my place stood a whitetail doe and her fawn.

The white camouflage spots Nature gave to the fawn for protection at its June birth had faded. Its protection now was mom and it stood close beside her, ears twitching nervously as it awaited her signal on how to react to my intrusion.

Then they bolted and disappeared into an evergreen thicket.

Our meeting was very brief, only a few seconds, but long enough for me to recall lessons for living written by Felix Salten in his classic *Bambi: A Life in the Woods*.



**JIM POLING SR.**  
From *Shaman's Rock*

Everyone knows the heartwarming children's story of *Bambi*, mainly from the Disney film. Disney's *Bambi*, although it has some sad and dark spots, is a lightened, whimsical adaptation of Salten's original book.

Salten wrote the book 100 years ago as an adult story about life. It is packed with scenes of danger and death. Animals, notably *Bambi's* mother, are killed by hunters. The leaves on the forest oaks ponder their inevitable deaths as autumn approaches.

Salten knew something about living in times of danger and death. He was an Austrian-Hungarian Jew born at a time when Jews were not allowed to have citizenship. Nazis burned copies of *Bambi* in the 1930s and Hitler banned all of Salten's books in 1936.

*Bambi's* life in the woods was filled with threats. To survive he had to learn to recognize and navigate them. He too was shot by a hunter but survived and grew into an adult stag, a strong example of how to overcome life's difficulties and dangers.

We humans live in times of unprecedented difficulties and dangers, which have left us confused, unhappy, and angry. The result has been deteriorating mental health, increased domestic violence, abuse of medical workers, fist fights on airplanes and plenty of general unpleasantness.

Overall, our world has become less tolerant and more critical of everything. We are less friendly with each other - and less compassionate - than we used to be.

So, we stagger into a new year with one leg stretched forward in hope of better times, the other leg dragging the weight of the troubles and worries of the year just passed.

There is much to hope for in this new year, but plenty to worry about. COVID is not going away, creating uncertainty compounded by the lingering issues of racism, social inequity, and political and ideological conflicts.

Leadership, political and social, is floundering. And, without strong leadership many of us have been overcome by fear, negative thoughts, contempt and irrational anger.

Thankfully, there are signs of social leadership, some of it coming from unexpected sources.

Lady Gaga, the flamboyant singer-actress, has become a strong promoter of the belief that kindness is a powerful medicine that can lift burdens and heal mental wounds.

"I've been searching for ways to heal myself," she has said. "And, I've found that kindness is the best way."

Simple acts of kindness can ease the anxieties of our times and show us that perhaps things are not as bad as they seem. Slowing down in traffic so someone can merge in front of you, giving an unexpected compliment or paying for the coffee of the person in line behind you, are simple kindnesses that create smiles that soften distress.

From my point of view the best thing any of us can do is to stand at the edge of the woods, take some deep breaths and think about the lessons of *Bambi: A Life in the Woods*.

*Bambi* learned not to allow fear and anger to control his life. He listened to his elders and friends and learned that in times of danger, cautious actions are better than rushed conclusions.

Being cautious and thinking things through can help us get through our current difficulties. Simple acts of kindness can draw us closer together to engage our difficulties as a united force.

*Bambi's* lesson is that all beautiful forests contain inherent dangers. Our lives are forests filled with dark spots. How we accept them and deal with them decides what kind of society we are.



Drag River on the winter solstice /Photo submitted by Guenter Horst

### letters to the editor

## A true community effort

On behalf of the Haliburton Highlands Sports Hall of Fame, I would like to express our heartfelt appreciation for the incredible community support we have received during the process of the creation of the Hall of Fame. The Hall is proud to be part of the Haliburton County Community Co-Operative and we very much appreciate the support of Jim Blake, who chairs the co-operative.

To our media partners, the *Haliburton County Echo* and the *Minden Times*, the *Highlander*, Canoe FM and Moose FM, we want to express a very special thank you. Your coverage has really helped put the Hall of Fame into the minds of our community. From the very beginning you have been so helpful and encouraging. We would not have been as successful at this point, without you.

To our founding sponsors Curry Chevrolet and Minden Subaru, we add a special thanks. It has made our initial plans easier knowing we had funding to move forward and to accomplish our goals.

To our donors, we want all of you to know how much we appreciate the help you have provided. All of us on the Hall of Fame Committee have been thrilled to see the outpouring of financial support along with important donations of labour from local contractors. Thank you all so very much.

We also want to recognize the support of the Municipality of Dysart et al. Dysart's council has been very supportive of our proposed Hall of Fame project. Not only have they agreed to allow us to redecorate the stage as a display area in the auditorium of the A.J. LaRue Community Centre but also provided important funding and labour to help us make this space appropriate for the Hall of Fame. We have also been very fortunate to have Deputy Mayor Pat Kennedy appointed as the council's representative to our committee. Pat has been very supportive and the committee appreciates his outstanding advice and guidance along the way.

We are very excited to welcome our initial class of inductees, including athletes, builders and teams to the newly created Haliburton Highlands Sports Hall of Fame as soon as the COVID issues will allow. We have June 18 on hold and sincerely hope we will be able to have our first Induction Ceremony at that time.

We have no doubt that our fantastic Highlands community support will help us welcome these amazing athletes, builders and teams as they join the Haliburton Highlands Sports Hall Of Fame. Thank you everyone.

**Roger Trull**  
Chair HSSHOF Committee

### HCPL's Book of the Month - January



Another overfilled, ill-equipped, dilapidated ship has sunk under the weight of its too many passengers: Syrians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Lebanese, Palestinians, all of them desperate to escape untenable lives in their homelands. But this time, someone has survived. Nine-year-old Amir, a Syrian boy, is rescued by Vanna, a teenage girl native to the island who is experiencing her own sense of homelessness in a place and among people she has come to disdain. And though Vanna and Amir are complete strangers, though they don't speak a common language, Vanna is determined to do whatever it takes to save the boy.

What *Strange Paradise* is the story of two children finding their way through a hostile world. But it is also a story of empathy and indifference, of hope and despair - and about the way each of those things can blind us to reality. Check out Omar El Akkad's Giller prize winning novel from Haliburton County Public Library today.

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Columns and Letters to the Editor

# Following a convoy of courage

I AM PROUD to report that I was one of the journalists covering that heroic highway convoy. It was a courageous event that demonstrated the strength of human spirit.

It happened without me being verbally abused, or spat upon. Reporters were treated with respect.

As it crossed the country, gaining cheering supporters along the roadsides, I realized this was a powerful story that could change Canada and Canadians. It changed me.

I'm not talking about the truck convoy that travelled to Ottawa to protest health restrictions to control the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed six million people worldwide.



**JIM POLING SR.**

From Shaman's Rock

The convoy I covered was 42 years ago when a 22-year-old curly-haired kid with an artificial leg decided to run coast to coast to raise awareness and money for cancer research.

In 1977, Terry Fox, a Port Coquitlam, B.C. university student, was diagnosed with cancer. His right leg was amputated. Doctors told him that medical advances gave him a 50 per cent chance of survival, up from 15 per cent because of research.

Fox endured 16 months of chemotherapy and practised running on the artificial leg. He ran with difficulty but determined he would run a Marathon of Hope to collect money for more cancer research.

On April 12, 1980 he dipped a leg into the Atlantic Ocean near St. John's, Newfoundland, then began running west toward the Pacific.

The pain never slowed the odd hip-hop gait that carried him roughly 42 kilometres (26 miles) a day. Until it did, on the eastern outskirts of Thunder Bay. An ambulance carried him to hospital where he learned the cancer had spread to his lungs.

Terry Fox ran 5,373 kilometres (3,339 miles) in 143 days. He didn't whine. He didn't curse and shake his fist at government action or inaction on health matters. He just ran his heart out in a fight against a deadly disease he believed could be defeated.

Ten months later I was at a Port Coquitlam hospital when Leslie Shepherd, a talented young reporter stationed outside Terry's room, sent me a pre-arranged signal. I fashioned her signal into a wire news service bulletin and sent it out to the world: Terry Fox was dead.

The story did not end there. Terry Fox's fight against cancer has raised nearly \$1 billion for cancer research in the past 40 years. That's money that has saved or prolonged many thousands of lives.

That's why it is heartbreaking to see the protesters mock the Terry Fox memorial near Parliament Hill, draping it with anti-vaccine signs and upside-down Maple Leaf flags.

Some were reported to have danced on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Most heartbreaking is that protests against COVID-19 precautions are prolonging the pandemic, overburdening hospitals and delaying cancer treatments Terry Fox ran so hard to have improved.

Some have called the convoy truckers and their supporters heroes. They are in fact anti-heroes who lack the courage, fierce determination and hope that shone from Terry Fox's eyes every step along his Marathon of Hope. They are the worst of the self-centred in an increasingly self-centred society.

"It took cancer to realize that being self-centered is not the way to live," Terry Fox once said. "The answer is to try and help others."

We are all tired of the pandemic and the restrictions it has placed on our lives.

Terry Fox was tired of being without a leg. Tired of months of cancer treatments. Tired of thoughts of dying.

But he refused to succumb to bellyaching and a "woe is me" attitude. He stood straight on his artificial leg and ran. Ran in a battle against a terrible disease. Ran to improve life for us all.

"I just wish people would realize that anything's possible if you try," he said. "Dreams are made possible if you try."

The truckers' convoy didn't bring dreams to Ottawa. They brought Nazi banners, Confederate flags, anger, hatred and other relics of American Trumpism.

This is a country that neither needs, nor wants Trumpism. It's a country that needs respectful protests, positive actions, much better leadership and appreciation of its heroes.

Terry Fox, the young man who refused to let disease consume his spirit, is a true Canadian hero whose memory deserves our utmost respect



### Feathered friends

Ducks make use of the river on a sunny Wednesday morning. /Photo by Guenter Horst

### letters to the editor

## Road repair and resurfacing

#### To the Editor,

The following is an open letter to the councillors who decide on road repairs:

1: Please don't overfill potholes during repairs.

Unfortunately, road staff consistently overfill potholes with the result that dips become bumps. Bumps are unpleasant and hard on vehicles. From a safety viewpoint, bumps slow down fire and ambulance emergency vehicles. As well, avoidance of bumps on curves can cause accidents. Overfilling also wastes materials and tax dollars.

Whether through instruction/supervision and followup, or new methods/machinery, please ensure road staff fill potholes to leave behind a level surface.

2: Improve life expectancy of road resurfacing.

Our road, Soyers Lake Road, was regraded and resurfaced not long ago with such poor workmanship/materials/standards that it needs to be redone. The engineering report presented to council [Jan. 27] agreed that deterioration was severe enough to need resurfacing.

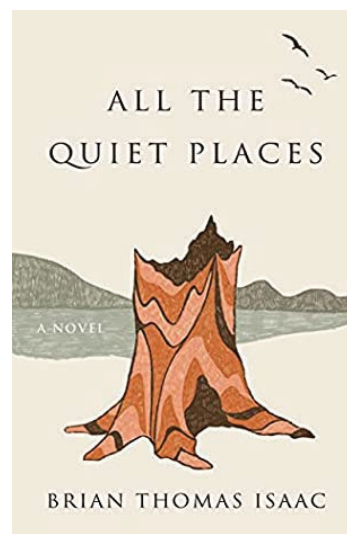
In my experience the lowest quality, least expensive solution is often the most expensive.

I would ask that council ask the engineers who presented the report to offer cost effective suggestions re: materials/quality control (in construction and maintenance), and expectations for longevity so that we could get long term guarantees from contractors that will do the work.

Your job is a difficult one. I thank you for your consideration.

**Paul Zalan, MD**  
Minden

### HCPL's Book of the Month - February



Brian Isaac's powerful debut novel *All the Quiet Places* is the coming-of-age story of Eddie Toma, an Indigenous (Syilx) boy, told through the young narrator's wide-eyed observations of the world around him.

It's 1956, and six-year-old Eddie Toma lives with his mother, Grace, and his little brother, Lewis, near the Salmon River on the far edge of the Okanagan Indian Reserve in the British Columbia Southern Interior. As Eddie grows and changes, so too do his life experiences, and the joys and hardships he navigates during each stage prove that Eddie's life is governed not by himself, but by the decisions of others around him.

*All the Quiet Places* is the story of what can happen when every adult in a person's life has been affected by colonialism. The acute separation from culture that can occur even at home in a loved, familiar landscape. It's a powerful narrative relying on the unguarded, un-sentimental witness provided by a poignant and relatable main character. Check it out from HCPL today.

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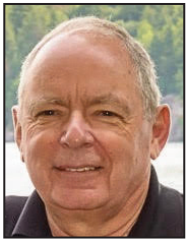
# Observe and report

**T**HIS WEEK marks a special anniversary. It's of little interest to anyone but me, but I'm writing about it anyway. Sixty years ago this week I walked into the second-floor newsroom of *The Sault Ste. Marie Daily Star* and was assigned a desk as its newest journalist.

I got there through a skillful piece of deception.

I was passing through Sault Ste. Marie, where my mother lived, enroute to visit an uncle, who was a reporter at *The Sudbury Star*. The hope was that he would get me a reporting job in Sudbury.

"Why drive to Sudbury?" my mother asked. "The Sault Star is looking for a young reporter. It was in yesterday's paper."



**JIM POLING SR.**

*From Shaman's Rock*

Off to the newspaper I went and was greeted in the newsroom by a woman who turned out to be the Women's Editor and a member of the Curran family who owned the paper.

"Someone gave you bad information," she said. "We specifically advertised for a young woman to work in our women's section."

I was mortified. I flushed red and stammered. She turned away me from but instead of returning to her desk, she went to talk to a stern-looking gentleman at the main news desk.

"I don't need anyone who looks like a scared little rabbit," he replied when, pointing at me, she asked if he needed a new reporter.

She said she had a good feeling about me, and so it was that a couple days later I took my place in that newsroom.

No sooner did I get seated than everyone in the newsroom got up and left. Did I smell? Or, was this to protest my hiring? I learned later that the first edition deadline had just passed and everyone went to the coffee room for morning break.

I was left alone in the newsroom except for a sleepy looking guy bent over the wire desk, where national and international news chattered incessantly on *The Canadian Press* (CP) and *United Press International* (UPI) teletype printers.

I walked over, introduced myself and asked how he liked working there.

"Beh, beh, beh ter ter tha. . . an . . .," he stuttered. I can't tell you the rest because it was pornographic, obscene and simply not very nice.

He was drinking from a coffee cup, which I noticed was half filled with a clear white liquid, which was not water.

There have been many changes in the news industry in the 60 years since. Some good. Some bad.

Hundreds of newspapers have closed in the past 10 years and thousands of journalists have lost their jobs. Many news operations now are controlled by companies more interested in revenue and balance sheets than good journalism.

More people now get their news and information from non-reliable sources such as social media platforms. We live in a broken media environment polluted by toxic talk, rumours, misinformation and disinformation.

Hopefully, this is just a phase and changes are coming that will fix the fractured media environment. There are signs already that news consumers are becoming more aware of, and concerned about, the dangers presented by the decline in fact-based news and information.

It's not likely that we will see the return of the days of families sitting and reading in-depth newspaper stories. But, maybe growing concern about fractured media will result in positive changes.

One thing that should never change is the lesson learned in my early Sault Star days: The role of the reporter is to observe and report. Accurately, honestly and fairly. To produce news stories that are balanced and put into context.

Good journalism is not about awards, citations or wearing an Order of Canada pin on your lapel. Good reporters leave their egos at the newsroom door.

The only thing that matters is the story and getting it right.

Helen Thomas, a UPI reporter for 57 years, said many years ago:

"We don't go into journalism to be popular. It is our job to seek the truth and put constant pressure on our leaders until we get answers."

That was a good day 60 years ago this week. The payroll clerk who came to my desk to enrol me as an employee later became my wife.



It may be September, but we still have a couple official weeks of summer left.  
/KAREN LONDON Staff

## Beach water testing program ends for the season

HKPR District Health Unit Public Health Inspectors sample 46 public beaches weekly for signs of E. coli

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPR District Health Unit) would like to inform residents that the annual Beach Testing Water Program has come to a finish for the season.

During the summer season, a total of 46 public beaches in the City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton County and Northumberland County were regularly sampled for E. coli. These test results were then updated on a weekly basis on the HKPR District Health Unit's Beach Water Testing webpage and shared through social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). Signs are also posted at local beaches, indicating if conditions are right for swimming or not.

Based on bacteria counts in the water, the HKPR District Health Unit uses a three-colour system to report beach water test results: Green (open), Yellow (swimming not recommended), and Red (closed).

"I'd like to thank all of those residents who took the time to be informed about beach

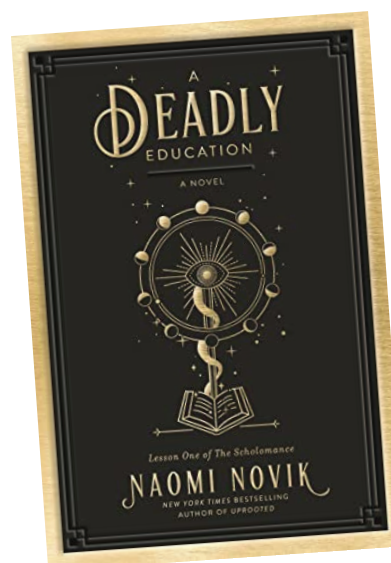
conditions and reviewed the beach water testing results before heading out," said Bernie Mayer, Manager of Environmental Health with the HKPR District Health Unit. "We certainly have many beautiful bodies of water in our region that allow for swimming but can, on occasion, experience high counts of bacteria."

There are several ways that beaches can become contaminated with bacteria. Storm water runoff, combined with sewer overflows, sewage treatment plant bypasses, agricultural runoff, faulty septic systems, and large populations of waterfowl like geese, all contribute to water pollution. This, in turn, can lead to beaches being posted as unsafe for swimming. High levels of bacteria can persist for up to 48 hours after a heavy rainfall, and bacterial counts can also be affected by high winds or wave activity.

"We look forward to resuming our Beach Water Testing Program in the summer of 2023," Mayer added.

*Submitted*

### HCPL's Jr. Book of the Month - September



Scholomance is a school for the magically gifted, where failure means death (for real) — But El refuses to let that deter her.

There are no teachers, no holidays, and no friendships, save strategic ones. Survival is more important than any letter grade. The school won't allow its students to leave until they graduate... or they die. The rules are deceptively simple: Don't walk the halls alone. Beware of the monsters and cursed artifacts lurking everywhere. Stay alive.

El doesn't need help. Especially not from flashy combat magic user Orion Lake. She's got dark power strong enough to level mountains and wipe out millions. If the rest of the world's to be believed, she's an absolute force to be reckoned with. So why does he keep showing up to save her life? Check out *A deadly Education*, the first young adult novel in The Scholomance Series by acclaimed speculative fantasy author Naomi Novik. Available soon from HCPL!