



Blue Jeans and Rubber Boots

By *Susan Schaefer*

Our Epic East Coast Adventure

For the past couple of years I have had a map of the east coast, complete with push pins on my 'vision' board as a place we'd like to travel. We were delayed by the lingering CoVid viruses. This past September, 2022, it was time. As I like to say "If not now, when?"

The reason for this trip was two-fold. It was a cousin's tour for my husband, as some he hadn't seen in over 30 years. And for myself, I was on a mission to find inspiration for my upcoming exhibition, "Canadiana". We made our plan, packed lightly, got a dog sitter and off we went.

We left on Sept. 6th out of Nanaimo BC, on what should have been a quick and easy flight to Vancouver. Well... that didn't happen, as our plane coming in was delayed,

so our plane going out was equally delayed. As a result we missed out connecting flight in Vancouver. Not a good start to our vacation.



We eventually made it to Toronto, where we headed for VIA Rail, en route to Kingston. A couple days rest and we were back on the train to Toronto having lunch with my husband's cousins. Keep in mind that if Jeff hadn't seen his cousins in 30 years, and we had only been together 21, these were people whom I have never met.

The lunch in Toronto was short and sweet and within a few hours we were back on the train headed once more to Kingston.



The following day we enjoyed a fabulous boat tour of the Thousand Islands.

The day was perfect with blue skies, lots of sunshine...and did I mention they sold cold beer on the boat?

Chapter 2: we travelled by VIA rail from Kingston to Montreal, heading to Bathurst Nova Scotia. The thought of spending 13+ hours on a train in a slightly reclining chair was not very exciting. With a little charm and the right attendant in Montreal, we were able to upgrade to a sleeper car. Thank you!

That meant that we would have our own little room, own head, two little bunk beds, access to the dining car, and once we were in our car, we could take off our masks. One doesn't really sleep on a train, but it was nice to stretch out in our jammies as the train clickity clacked along.

Arriving in Bathurst Nova Scotia, Jeff's cousins were there to greet us. After a tour of the town, we headed off to their lovely ocean front summer home. I quickly realized what east coast hospitality meant. There is no need to knock on the door before entering, you help yourself and the storytelling is endless.

Next morning, the 4 of us headed off to PEI. I was so excited and couldn't wait to get there.

I am not a fan of going over bridges. The Confederation Bridge is the longest bridge in the world, spanning 12.9 km and links the province of PEI to New Brunswick. But once we started the crossing, I had no anxiety. I think the hype was more than the actual ride over,

I found the scenery in PEI were absolutely stunning with the terra-cotta sand covered beaches, sand dunes and charming country side.

Little did we know that right after Labour Day the whole island shuts down and most of the touristy-things are closed. This is due to the fact that the students have returned to classes. Many sights and restaurants were closed. One restaurant said that there would be a 3 hours wait! 3 hours! I'd be dead by then.



Eventually we did find a charming restaurant called Yvonne's Bistro, which had a wee bit of a wait. The food was great and we had a fabulous waitress named Shirley – whom we will never forget. Now that's another story for another time.

I would have loved to interview a couple of artists for this edition, but most studios were shut down for the season. I did manage to pick up a gorgeous piece of pottery from the Tourist Gift Shop. On my return to BC I contacted the artist, Robert McMillan and wrote a profile about him, which you can see on page 8.



Back in New Brunswick, we got to experience a full on nor-easter wind storm. With gusts of wind up to 100 km and salt spray, our hosts brushed it off at first as being a 'wee bit windy out there.' What!! One thing³⁵ about these storms, is they sure make for a magnificent sunset.

Chapter 3. The next morning we took the bus from Bathurst NB to Halifax NS arriving at the Halifax Airport. There we picked up a car rental and headed down the coast to visit our friends in Shelburne. We arrived with many hugs, stories, refreshments and a lovely suite to rest our tired traveling bodies.

After a couple of days touring around Nova Scotia, and spending quality time with our dear friends, it was again time for us to move on.

We headed to the Halifax airport to return our rented car, first stopping to experience Peggy's



Cove. Photos do not do it justice, and it would have been nice to spend more time there, but we had a driver picking us up.

Chapter 4: The MUIR. Hotel. We spent two wonderful days exploring Halifax and the Queen's Marque. The MUIR Experience was beyond words. That is a story by itself, which can be read on pages 25 - 26.

We said goodbye to Halifax and flew to Montreal. The next day we made our connection back to the Vancouver Island BC.

As I watched our island come into sight I thought about what a great country we call home. From coast to coast, each province unique on its own, but tied together with a sense of quiet dignity and kindness which is truly Canadian.

We travelled 14,000 km, visited 7 provinces in 2.5 weeks. We travelled by plane, train, automobile, bus and boat. We visited Jeff's family whom he hasn't seen in many years, and I have never met. We shared meals, laughs and swapped stories. And now my family has grown even more. We spent time with dear friends and made new ones along the way.

Now my vision board is bare. For now, it feels great to be home and to snuggle up with my Chace. I look forward to spending time this winter re-living our epic adventure on canvas. ~