

# Relatives Gone Rogue

Autumn is the time for deaths in nature, when plants are finished or if not actually dead, look like they are. I'm more aware of death, or what resembles it, these days.

I got a phone call recently from someone who after a while, said "Your magazine is amazing, by the way. Whenever I see copies I grab them. Your father would be so proud."

"Did you know my father?" I asked.

"No, but I read your column. Do you still own those 14 acres?"

"Oh yes I do."

She then told me that she is part of a large family that had a farm they loved. When her father died, her oldest brother inherited it, but then sold it and it was lost to the family. No one in the family could afford to buy him out.

As wealth is transferring from the older generation to baby boomers, there are increasing stories of inheritances causing rifts and splits and divisions and hatreds. It's easy for relatives to "go rogue."

Siblings are taking each other to court. Trusts are being challenged for mismanagement and depreciation. Understandings evaporate, promises are broken. It's particularly heartbreaking when it's about property. Money is portable, simply a tool. Property can hold memories and history and the essence of its owners. Some relatives see no value in parents' legacy, only seeing dollar signs for what they can get by cashing out.

It's sadly ironic that money, supposed to make things easier for people, can actually be the cause of pain. It may be easier to be on good terms with relatives when you all are poor! Parents are surely rolling in their graves at the

reality that while they wanted to provide some financial security, perhaps shelter for a child's remaining life, they have produced rancour and discord to the point of hatred and permanent separation between siblings.

## True Character Revealed

Even when there's every legal right for people to do what they want, there are moral considerations, there may be familial ties to consider. What causes the most permanent break between siblings may be that people's actions reveals their true character.

If someone sells a unique family property with decades of family history, it may show that this person does not hold the same values as other family members. They may not care enough about their own children to want to pass on a family estate to them. They may no longer be the type of people you want close to you.

Maya Angelou famously wrote "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time."

Deaths of relationships can be sad, just as it's sad to see the garden fade in autumn, the gorgeous leaves fall to the ground and turn brown.

Perhaps there's hope for renewal in a complete break with a family member. Not for the restoration of the relationship, but for the beauty of clarity and the ability to live a life purely and honestly, without pretending to like each other. Like spectacular flowers that appear to die before coming into glorious bloom in spring, you just might come through strengthened and more capable of discovering who you really are, without dissembling.

Surely that's what parents would want for all their children.



Gloria looking forward to the new growth possible after change.

## Autumn Changes

This issue looks at some positive changes. There's a new art gallery on Manitoulin that's worth a visit, a boutique gallery in a new location in Georgetown, and new works to touch your hearts in a gallery studio that's celebrating its 20th anniversary, as well as in a set of old industrial buildings transformed into the centre of a historic village. Changes brought by old and new are the theme of this year's special focus on artists.

Peter Kelly, who co-wrote the influential book *The Last Stand: a Journey Through the Ancient Cliff-Face Forest of the Niagara Escarpment*, has written about the ways

in which the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System at the west end of Lake Ontario, is unique in North America and worth celebrating.

Sandra J. Howe reports from the tip of the Bruce Peninsula about autumn bird migration and the important research done by the bird observatory there.

To get us in the mood for Halloween, Andrew Hind shares his spooky tales of ghosts said to haunt some buildings in Orangeville and Alton. Publishing ghost stories is not without risk; in the past when we did this about an advertiser's accommodation, we received a complaint, the fear that some people may find spectres to be a turnoff. Later, however, this advertiser reported how many people had gotten in touch in order to have the chance of experiencing a ghost! We hope the same thing happens to Alton and Orangeville. Don't let a little shiver down your back keep you from visiting these fine old Escarpment communities.

*Gloria*

**Gloria Hildebrandt**

*P.S. Wild animals need wild spaces.*

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