

## BULLETIN FROM BROCKVILLE

by Pamela Fry

After a lifetime of complicated moves, I realize it's taken me five months to recover from my tiny trek from Portland to Brockville. After all, my decision to move south had been made calmly and rationally--an attractive little city, plenty of transportation, hospitals and specialists lined up, several good friends waiting to welcome me. But I guess I had put down more roots than I realized during my six years in Portland. And the move did present me with certain unexpected problems.

It began last March. I gave Ennis notice. My friend Eleanor Smith put my name down at three or four apartment buildings. I wouldn't hear if anything was available until the beginning of April, which made me a bit twitchy. But the die was cast, so I began the boring preliminaries of lists and forms. Plus collecting boxes. Ah, those boxes! Generously donated by Doris at Portland LCBO and Eldy at Portland Hardware.

Slowly my little apartment flooded with cardboard. I remember sitting down in my big armchair (having first removed two boxes) and just staring at it all. Where to begin? How to pack when there was no place for packed boxes?

Gail Davis came to the rescue. "Let's start with the books in the hall," said she. "Then we'll take down those shelves and pile the packed boxes there. After that, we can fold your kitchen table up against the wall." I truly don't know what I would have done without Gail. Not only was she tirelessly efficient, she also made me laugh. In fact, once we got into the swing of things, we thought of hiring ourselves out as the Merry Movers (no GST on jokes).

With April came news from Brockville. There was an apartment available, but only a bachelor. I had wanted a one-bedroom. Well, I went to see it. A sunny, L-shaped room, lots of cupboard space, laundry room next door, busstop at the front door. How could I not take it with Moving Day now less than a month away? And any surplus stuff could be stored in my locker downstairs.

Two days before my actual move came a blow. There WASN'T any locker downstairs. Nobody knew why. Disaster-but too late to panic. Thursday--Moving Day-like Fate was upon me. My son Kevin and his wife Jennifer arrived. So did Gail, with my last load of laundry. Then came two very pleasant young men from Alf's Cartage (Brockville). All of us loaded up the truck and Kevin's car.

In a rather sad little procession we drove out of Portland.

Well, we reached my new apartment in Brockville--spotlessly clean, newly decorated. The boxes at least took to it immediately. Within an hour, in fact, they, plus my furniture, had filled it FROM WALL TO WALL.

The moving men departed looking sorry for me. Kev, Jen, myself and our friend Peter began wading through the cardboard forest barking our shins, but managing to unpack such essentials as bed linen, food for breakfast, and even a few books. The no-locker problem was more or less resolved by some of my extra things going into the super's locker. Much of the rest went up Schofield's Hill to Peter's.

Friday was a blank. Ken and Jen had to leave because Kev was working on Saturday. I was too tired to do much of anything.

Saturday brought the happy arrival of the Sleds from Ottawa. Joanne set about organizing the kitchen and china cabinet while Tom and Peter put up shelves, hung pictures and mirrors, and helped me unpack YET MORE books. All things considered, it was a good start-but by then our all-summer heat wave had begun. The next several weeks were spent in emotional and physical chaos. Nothing was where I thought it was. THINGS--endless things big and small--lay about looking reproachful, or fell out of cupboards when I opened doors.

I had this weird feeling I should call Anna May Kerr at Parke-Davis for "my usual ride home". I missed friendly faces and chats, my very special bridge group, "my" library (where Lois Braidwood had spoiled me completely), the lovely new Health Centre and exercise classes at Mill Bay Court.

I was further beset by the non-arrival of my Government cheques, though I had applied for that foolproof (hah) direct deposit system the previous March! Two cheques finally appeared--but in my Portland account.

Slowly everything sorted itself out. I had not--thank God--sold my airconditioner, and now found a very efficient young man to install it. The rest of my shelves went up. The apartment began to look and feel livable. Friends like Anna May and Diane Haskins, when they dropped by for visits, were pleasantly surprised.

So, how do I feel about Brockville now?

Well, despite the heat I had an interesting summer exploring the town, enjoying friends here, and visitors from Ottawa and Toronto. And of course joining the library, which is very good--but I still miss Lois's personal touch.

There are several clubs for newcomers, but they were all closed during the summer, so I have only now begun to investigate them. (Tried one bridge group, but it wasn't up to Portland standards')

However, the Brockville buses are a true blessing. They confused me greatly at first, because they all go in one direction only--round and round. You see, you take one bus to get downtown, but a different bus to get home again. (Confused? So was I.) There are red and blue buses; and now a new line, green, has been added. All three in this rainbow circle about the city in all directions. I had several unintended scenic drives before I figured out when and where to get off. Or on.

But the drivers are incredibly friendly and helpful. For example, one day I was waiting at the bus stop in front of my building when a bus pulled up half a block away, at the corner of my street and Stewart Boulevard. The distant door opened. Who on earth was the driver waving at? In a moment a young man jumped out and came running toward me. My bus had been re-routed because of road-work, he explained. Stopped just to pick me up. How's that for service?

So, all in all, I think I shall settle down quite comfortably in Brockville. But it will be a long, long time before I stop missing my old home. As Brys Scovil said to me recently, "Portland does enfold you."




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