

Monday April 23rd 2018

David got some really bad news. The hosting last week had put back on three pounds of weight.

We were out the door by 06:40 because the sun was up and we had clear skies. We named the red orb Roy as is Ray Orbison – weak, but hey! it was early.

Weather: Toronto 39F to 55F sun Louisville 54F to 60F rain
NYTX: David two minutes and 9 seconds.

The UPS tracking e-mail indicated that the vacuum would be delivered today. That really messed up our schedule.

We tried to book a window cleaner, recommended by a neighbour, but could not get a date on the website. It turned out our account had not been approved.

Louise got on the phone to Road Scholar to book a 17 day trip “Heel to Toe” in Southern Italy for March/April 2019. This was the add-on trip that got cancelled when we went to Sicily. Our Road Scholar connection was Andrew. Louise has dealt with him several times before, but he was super-slow today. The phone call took about thirty minutes.

Louise's neighbour, Danny, has interceded for her with the troublesome Lyndon Post Office in Louisville to try to get her mail held as she requested before leaving. There seems to be a snafu. Her hold card seems to have got 'lost'. Perhaps the very fact of a man's appearance on her behalf will work the necessary magic to get this simple task accomplished.

We drove off to Costco in Ajax leaving a note on the door for the UPS delivery person to simply leave the vacuum on the front porch.

We did some major damage at Costco and when we got home the Husky vacuum, all 46 pounds of it, was sitting on the front porch.

We had egg rolls for lunch, followed by an orange.

After lunch we drove over to Best Buy to buy a 500 GB Solid State Drive (SSD) that was on sale. En route we passed La Z Boy and David remembered they were having a sale. David spotted an end table that matched the coffee table in our living room. We got two small discounts that covered the Harmonized Sales Tax.

Moving on to Best Buy Louise was finally able to snag a sales person who knew where they were hiding the Solid State Drives – other end of store. Having got that done, David bought a metal caddy to give the SSD a house withing the desktop. We got defeated looking for cables to hook things up. However, we had purchased the SSD at the sale price just before the sale expiry date.

We drove over to The Bay so that Louise could buy some Clinique makeup. They were sold out but the saleslady was able to suggest an alternative product. It's one of those 'We'll see . . .'

Back home at a sunny 52F we took Maisie for stroll. It was beautiful, breezy, and oh! the glorious sun.

Louise finally managed to connect with a window cleaning service. She got a booking based on a referral from a neighbour.

CBC: Nine people have been killed and 16 injured after a man drove a van into pedestrians at Yonge Street and Finch Avenue at 13:30 local time in Toronto. The driver fled the scene of the incident, but was arrested several blocks away and taken into custody.

Supper was a small steak with fried mushrooms and green beans in a special sauce.

We hit one marker in the “Gilmore Girls” when Rory was offered The BIG THREE - Harvard, Princeton and Yale.

Tuesday April 24th 2018

Tuesday is Garbage/Recycling/Compost day.

Weather: Toronto 45F to 58F cloud Louisville 54F to 59F showers
NYTX: David one minute 58 seconds Louise one minute 30 seconds.

We walked Maisie and were home by 07:40 hrs under warm sunny skies. But, we could see a cloud deck encroaching.

CBC: The death toll in the Toronto van attack mounted to ten. A 25 year old has been charged. During the arrest he appeared to be trying to provoke the officer into shooting him. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said the van attack in Toronto that killed 10 people and put another 15 in hospital is not part of a plot that poses a threat to national security.

For breakfast, in order to reverse the calorie damage, we just had one boiled egg and a single piece of dry toast cut up into “soldiers”.

Overnight, David's Halifax area computer guru friend offered e-mail advice from Switzerland on how to install the new SSD without any additional SATA cables. The simple solution was not mentioned in the non-existent Samsung instructions.

The day started well when David unpacked the new central vacuum in the garage. He took out the new hose extension and took it into the house and plugged it into an existing hose inlet. The garage vacuum started up. Success. For once David read the installation manual BEFORE proceeding. It will take some time, but it all seemed pretty straightforward.

“Kelley's Tree Care” showed up to remove debris from a tree that had fallen between the two houses directly across the street. Seems that this is a dangerous neighbourhood. We conjecture that the two trees within a hundred yards of each other were taken out by a micro-burst.

By coffee break David had the old central vacuum dismantled and the new one installed – he left just one coupling undone just to make sure everything was correct. He even added rubber grommets

between the metal unit and the mounting board to minimize vibration.

Then came the real test once the central vacuum was completely installed. Would the electric beater brush work inside the house when plugged into to the hose inlet – yes! Note: David is not going into the central vacuum installation business.

We had a simple lunch before driving off to the Toronto Public Library to pick up a requested book. Then we went on to 'No Frills' for various groceries. We noted for the first time that there was a whole rack of beer for sale this is the new Liberal government initiative. We did not see any bargains. We picked up a PC Optimum card. Getting it registered was harder than building a website.

When we took Maisie for the afternoon walk the tree removal company had moved away. We could see a broken tree in the backyard between the two houses opposite. It had snapped about twelve feet up and left one half of the tree trunk totally exposed. When it fell it took out the gutters on the side of one house.

Louise got on the phone to Road Scholar and changed our air arrangements for the trip to Southern Africa in January, 2019. We paid more money for more comfort.

Before dinner we had a very frank discussion about where we would like to live. We came to a mutual decision and started thinking about a two to four year time line.

Louise came up with a spicy butter chicken dinner. We had just finished dinner when a very handsome fox strode across the back lawn.

“Gilmore Girls” got more interesting. The boys in Rory's teenage life seem to have exited stage left. disappeared.

Wednesday April 25th 2018

It rained most of the night and when we woke up it was grey, foggy and drippy. Maisie knew there would be no morning walk.

Weather: Toronto 47F to 49F rain Louisville 55F to 67F cloud
NYTX: David two minutes 30 seconds

In an Op-Ed in the NYT, Randy Boyagoda, a novelist and a professor at the University of Toronto, commented on the Toronto van attack. “Indeed, in a profoundly felt if rarely discussed way (we retain at least this part of our British heritage), that’s the point of Toronto itself: Whether it’s the Great Irish Famine in the 19th century or Syria’s civil war in the 21st, *tragic events and traumatic histories happen elsewhere*, and that’s why you come here, to make a life for yourself and your family in peace.

David had to re-register the PC Optimum card, which is similar to the Kroger card Louise has in Louisville. We will get a free bottle of Coke if we earn 1 billion points.

We spent a lot of time reviewing our trip options for early January-February 2019. We decided to scrap the Southern Africa trip when we saw the two expensive visa hassles. We looked at a month-long trip to New Zealand, David's personal favourite foreign country (out of 146 visited). It is a Road Scholar.

We had sweet potato soup for lunch. We continued to mull over our plans for winter 2019 in Louisville. Finally, having considered several options, including a similar Southern Africa trip that did not require a visa for Mozambique, we decided to seriously consider a trip we have considered before: Louise phoned Road Scholar to enrol us in the New Zealand trip for January 2019.

David embarked on a very critical next step with the Samsung 500 GB Solid State Drive. He used the included kit screws to mount the 2.5 inch SSD into the 3.5 inch caddy. He then took the SATA and power supply cables off one of the mirrored 2 Terabyte Hard Disk Drives. Those cables he plugged into the new Samsung SSD.

Then installation software was downloaded from the Samsung website. Using it the Windows 10 Operating System and installed programs were migrated from the old Intel 120 GB SSD serving as the “C” Drive onto the new Samsung SSD. The migration took about 30 minutes and was a bit of a nail biter in that if it had stalled recovery would have been very difficult.

The system was shut down and the cables from the old “C” drive were connected to one of the mirrored data drives. When the system rebooted, everything was perfect. We had a new “C” drive in the new Samsung SSD and the one terabyte data disk showed up as the “D” drive.

In the meantime, Louise started preparation for a dessert for the next day's lunch with a visitor.

Louise spotted a lull in the rain and took Maisie out for a short walk. It started pouring shortly after they returned.

David started a new book by Elspeth Huxley. [The Flame Trees of Thika](#). “In 1913 in an open cart Elspeth Huxley set off with her parents to travel to Thika in Kenya. As pioneering settlers, they built a house of grass, ate off a damask cloth spread over packing cases, and discovered—the hard way—the world of the African. With an extraordinary gift for detail and a keen sense of humour, Huxley recalls her childhood on the small farm at a time when Europeans waged their fortunes on a land that was as harsh as it was beautiful. For a young girl, it was a time of adventure and freedom, and Huxley paints an unforgettable portrait of growing up among the Masai and Kikuyu people, discovering both the beauty and the terrors of the jungle, and enduring the rugged realities of the pioneer life”.

For dinner we had the second half of the spicy butter chicken with large white potato slices pan fried in butter. That was accompanied by a mixed green salad.

Suddenly the deck security light came on and Maisie got very excited when Rocky Raccoon scampered across the back deck perhaps two feet from Maisie's nose.

The “Gilmore Girls” may have shot their bolt. We did not like even one of the three episodes we endured tonight. The series limps along without any discernible plot. Admittedly, there is no violence, except the psychological violence committed by the characters in search of a plot. We think maybe the plot is that of the ill-behaviour of young and not-so-young rich kids in New England whose overriding compulsion is to show in strident voices of the dialogue that they hate and lack all respect for their parents. It is slickly produced, pretty people, witty, topical name-dropping dialogue, and an idyllic New England town setting. Perhaps all this is meant to throw the viewer off the shallowness of the characters. We've got to find a different series today!

When we went to bed it was pouring rain, which kept David awake. After a while he got up and answered e-mails.

Thursday April 26th 2018

It rained most of the night so David did not get much sleep. We brewed coffee at 06:00, had a cup and then headed out for the dawn patrol. Showers were still forecast so David took the golf umbrella. It was very Scottish. Maisie was happy to get a good walk, after yesterday's rain.

Weather: Toronto 40F to 58F showers & sun Louisville 49F to 68F cloud
NYTX: David one minute and 56 seconds

After breakfast we started working on a fresh fig and raspberry galette. We did this last year and had been on the lookout for fresh figs. These came from Mexico to our local market. It took about two hours elapsed time to prepare this superb dessert.

Louise had to clear up a malfunction with email from Road Scholar. There was no e-mail confirmation on her laptop. A phone call took care of that quickly and easily.

The sun finally came out mid-morning. We could see tiny blue flowers on the back lawn, which the locals call squill. They are definitely harbingers of SPRING.

At 11:30 David drove to the Rouge Hill Government of Ontario (GO) station to pick up our lunch guest, for whom we had made the galette. Note: Galette is a term used in French cuisine to designate various types of flat round or free-form crusty cakes.

We had a long leisurely lunch, after which we returned our guest to the Rouge Hill GO station.

We took Maisie for an afternoon walk in bright sun. It was actually almost too warm.

We both read our books – curiously, both books are about Kenya – albeit two generations apart. The British were not there a long time. The British Empire established the East Africa Protectorate in 1895, and from 1920 it was known as the Kenya Colony. The independent Republic of Kenya was formed in 1964.

We basically skipped supper as we were quite full from the wonderful lunch.

We decided we could not take another round of “Gilmore Girls”. Louise found a new British series on Netflix called “Broadchurch”. The plot centres around the police investigation of the mysterious death of an 11 year old boy in a small town in Dorset. The photography was wonderful. The characters were well cast and took their parts well. We enjoyed being treated as if we are adults by the video screen. Serious footnote/endnote: in retrospect, the proper word for “Gilmore Girls” is Sophomoric! Yes, with a capital “S”.

Friday April 27th 2018

Weather: Toronto 39F to 53F part cloud Louisville 45F to 70F part cloud
NYTX: David could not complete the puzzle, neither could Louise! Skunked! Double skunked!!

We were up at 06:00, brewed coffee and checked our e-mail and the news.

BBC: The leaders of North and South Korea have agreed to work to rid the peninsula of nuclear weapons after holding a historic summit. The announcement was made by the North's Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in of South Korea after talks at the border. The two also agreed to push towards turning the armistice that ended the Korean War in 1953 into a peace treaty this year.

We got back from our brisk morning walk at 07:30, having heard and seen a loon flying north. At this time of year male loons fly up to cottage country north of Toronto to establish a breeding territory on the lakes.

BBC: Rick Dickinson, the designer of Sinclair computers, has died in the US while receiving treatment for cancer. The British designer, thought to be in his 60s, worked in-house for Sinclair Research and oversaw the creation of its home computers in the 1980s. He was responsible for the boxy look of the ZX80 and ZX81 and the Bauhaus-inspired appearance of the Spectrum. [David built a ZX80 over the Easter break while at tank gun camp in Bavaria in the US Army base at Grafenwoehr in 1980. He borrowed a battery-operated soldering iron from a radio tech to put together the 22 chip kit with 2K of RAM]

For breakfast we had a warmed up slice of galette slathered with Greek vanilla yogourt.

About 09:45 we drove over to La Z Boy to pick up the end table and went on to explore the Scarborough Walmart.

Back home we opened the box with the end table all disassembled IKEA style, and using our Egyptian Engineering skills quickly put it together. The living room is now complete.

To celebrate we had plum sauce with egg rolls – the plum sauce is the only reason we eat them. (Note: Speak for yourself, David.)

David settled into emails, etc, while Louise was furiously desirous of finishing her wonderful read: “Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight.” On a number of levels, this book provides an intriguing experience from cover to cover. Alexandra Fuller's storytelling skills are marvellous, her descriptive writing is alive and precise, and her telling of her family as she grew up in Africa is joyous, saddening, admirable, and captivating. Her brave, hardworking, able and resourceful parents are depicted with their foibles and strengths without rancour, regret, or apology. This candour and honesty is not usually found in memoirs of today.

We had a good hamburger dinner.

And so to an episode or two of Broadchurch. This was a very interesting change – the photography is very clever and the plot and dialogue very well-developed. Every time you think you know who “dunnit”, you get put back in the corner. Finally we have found a series that keeps our attention.

Saturday April 28th 2018

We were up at 06:00 and David brewed coffee for Louise. David was not allowed to eat or drink

anything before his 08:15 eyelid surgery.

Weather: Toronto 46F to 4F cloud Louisville 54F to 60F some sun

We got back from Maisie's morning walk at 07:05 and and put out Maisie's breakfast. She would not eat it as she knew there was something different in our routine.

David drove us to the medical centre at Leslie and Sheppard at 07:30 for the 08:15 appointment. With no traffic on the eight lane 401 on Saturday, we arrived a bit early. We knew the doors of the Medical Centre would not open until 08:00 so we drove to a small shopping centre and parked for a while. We drove into the Medical centre parking lot and were in the surgeon's office by 08:08, a couple of minutes early.

David had elected to have his surgery under the supervision of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons. Every five years surgeons operating clinics outside hospitals have to get re-certified. So, David got the Cadillac treatment with every member of the surgical team being shadowed by a checker.

After a fairly lengthy pre-op, mainly for the benefit of the checker, David was given one pill of Celebrex. This medication is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), specifically a COX-2 inhibitor, which relieves pain and swelling (inflammation). It is used to treat arthritis, acute pain and discomfort.

There was some concern that David's blood pressure was a bit high – David has suffered from “White Lab Coat Syndrome” for years. David walked into surgery about 09:00 hrs. He was arranged and strapped onto the table like somebody getting a fatal injection on Death Row.

The anaesthetist started a drip to put some 'Neurolept' “joy juice” into David. After a couple of minutes David started to gently float above the table, but was fully conscious of everything going on around him. The surgeon started the procedure telling his checker shadow everything he was doing – sometimes you really don't want to know the gory details.

David's procedure was called blepharoplasty - drooping upper lids had started to interfere with his vision.

Louise was out in the Waiting Room as David was not allowed to drive after the procedure. The team members individually gave Louise a briefing on how things progressed. And once again, Louise experienced a remarkable coincidence: Having just finished reading Alexandra Fuller's “Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight” which takes place in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, Louise has begun to reread “The Flame Trees of Thika” by Elspeth Huxley, a book that takes place in Kenya roughly 70 years earlier. These books were part of our reading as we had planned a trip to Southern Africa. Immersed as we are in these books, David was alerted to the accent of the anesthesiologist and began a conversation about our readings with him as he prepared David for his surgery. The doctor came out to speak to Louise as she waited and surprised her immediately with the revelation that was born in Zimbabwe! Small World? Interesting coincidence? Just strange?

In the main, David did not feel much more than discomfort during most of the procedure. When the suturing started he had to summon up his courage and remind himself that it would soon be over.

Procedure complete there was about an hour in the Recovery Room. Two nurses fussed over David and made him feel quite important. He was fitted for a raccoon-like cold gel pack mask to reduce swelling. One nurse, working with Louise, sent a fax to the pharmacy with a prescription for five days worth of antibiotics.

About three hours after arrival, Louise paid the parking fee and brought the van to the front area. David was put into a wheelchair and trundled down to the van – it had started raining. Louise drove directly to the 'No Frills' pharmacy and when we arrived the filled prescription was waiting for us. The Pharmacist mentioned that David had put on weight – David immediately pointed out that with Louise's excellent cooking that was almost inevitable. [Editor's Note: Why is it that there's always a 'wooman' to blame?]

When we got home David was hungry and Louise prepared our favourite Louisville Costco tomato soup and a toasted Costco bun cheese melt.

Then at 13:00 hrs it was time for the first of many ten minutes on the hour with the raccoon gel mask to prevent undue swelling. David had a short nap.

NYTX: It was the big Saturday bugger and neither of us could crack it completely. We both came close and then pooled our talent to solve it in just over eight minutes.

At 14:00 David did the raccoon gel trick again and repeated that routine on the hour the rest of the day.

We read and dozed most of the afternoon. It rained most of the afternoon, but Louise spotted a break and took Maisie for a stroll. David was still a bit woozy so walking on uneven pavement was banned.

Looking down into the ravine, David noted that our daffodil patch, in a protected micro climate, was a splash of yellow. These are the first ones in bloom in the whole neighbourhood.

There was no cocktail hour for the wounded warrior. David was not allowed any alcohol as that tends to promote bleeding. It seems to be a FAR (Flat Ass Rule). Whenever you think you really deserve a celebratory drink, it is not allowed.

David was also not allowed any spicy or heavy food. So, we had a President's Choice Pepperoni Pizza with delightful halves of avocado stuffed with tomato bruschetta and topped with sour cream. The beverage of choice was tangy "PC No Calories" ginger ale - at 97 cents for two litres, it is pretty pricey water.

We could barely wait to switch on Netflix to watch "Broadchurch". Last night the episode ended with the Detective Inspector lying on his back on the ground with no obvious signs of life. Needless to say he came back to life. This series is for adults. There is no gun play nor car chases/crashes. It is an amazingly complex plot with well-developed characters. Highly recommended.

Sunday April 29th 2018

David had to sleep in an elevated position with two fat pillows to discourage swelling. He had been warned that the first night might be difficult. David could not keep his eyelids closed – even an airline

sleeping shade did not help. So, he got up at 12:45 and started futzing about.

He finally gave up trying to find reviews on electric vehicle charging stations and went back to bed at 02:30 hrs.

We got up at 06:30 and there was a dusting of snow on the ground. This was ridiculous at the end of April.

Weather: Toronto 34F to 49F light snow Louisville 39F to 62F sunny

NYTX: David had a slow two minutes and 35 seconds – the American jargon again.

At 07:20 Louise went out the door with Maisie for a short excursion. David was not “allowed” to go as he was recovering from the eyelid procedure.

BBC: North Korea's nuclear test site will close in May, the South Korean president's office has said. A spokesman said the closure of the Punggye-ri site would be done in public and foreign experts from South Korea and the US would be invited to watch. Scientists have said the site may have partially collapsed in September. On April 27th, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and South Korea's President Moon Jae-in agreed to work to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons.

CBC: Within two years, streaming services like Netflix will be more popular in Canada than cable TV, a new report suggests. By the end of 2020, 10.6 million Canadian households will be signed up with streaming services, market research firm Convergence Research Group forecasts. That's four per cent higher than the projected 10.2 million who will have traditional TV subscriptions. "It's kind of the calm before the storm," said Convergence president Brahm Eiley. He says Netflix's surging subscriber numbers, coupled with new streaming service competitors, such as Amazon Prime Video, will help drive a fundamental shift in Canadian viewing habits, moving them from cable to online.

[This is exactly how it is at La Maison Blanche du Nord. We dropped our cable TV, too many ads and nothing for mature adults, and rely exclusively on Netflix Canada.]

HuffPost: The decision by Europe's largest bank, HSBC, to halt funding for new projects in the oil sands has some wondering if other financial institutions, including U.S. banks and pension funds, will eventually follow suit — and what the impact that might have on Canada's energy sector. HSBC last Friday became the latest European bank to announce that it would no longer finance new greenfield oil sands, coal power plant and arctic drilling projects. It follows BNP Paribas and ING, both of which made similar announcements in the past year.

[David sold his oil sands holdings several years ago when he learned how much pollution was created extracting the oil.]

As a delightful treat we had Belgian waffles for breakfast. They were served with Greek vanilla yogourt with strawberries and raspberries drizzled with balsamic vinegar. Maisie loves waffles.

After breakfast David made a painful decision and smashed a \$2,000 Asus laptop that could no longer be updated. It was about 9 years old – a fossil. But, the hard drive had to be smashed to protect privacy.

We downloaded a Bose application onto the iPad. Then we were able to link to the Bose radio using the iPad. How did people ever get along without these useless devices? We are now suspicious that the 'Thought Police' are listening to us through the Bose. “Only the Bose Noz”.

Next on the chopping block was a Windows 7 Acer notepad that could barely keep breathing. But, David figured it could be used as a digital photo backup on a trip, so it got a reprieve.

David sent an e-mail to the Toronto group (TPUG) that still plays with Commodore 64s. David offered his old equipment, dating from 1982-85, to anybody willing to drive over and pick it up. No cost.

Lunch was leftover pizza and slices of Moroccan orange.

Louise was having an 'off' day, doing laundry, working a big NYT crossword and trying to hold her interest in The Flame Trees of Thika. One must wonder that the English who went out to Africa were an unbelievably naive and hardy group. Elspeth Huxley wrote this memoir of her childhood. She was six years old when her parents went to Kenya. Her writing is wonderful. One wonders how she could write such a book 40 or so years later.

David's eyelids are recovering as per the schedule. He was doing the Rocky Raccoon gel mask trick about once an hour.

About 15:30 it was sunny and about 50F, albeit with a cool breeze, so we went for a walk. About half way round the full chill from the wind set in.

Then it was Hewlett-Packard printer maintenance – again. It may be time to give up on cheap HP printers from Costco. They don't seem to like being left alone for months on end, even though we leave them plugged in to go through their duty-cycle.

Supper was braised pork loin in a brown gravy with carrots, Brussels sprouts and green beans in shallots with cream sauce.

We read for a bit and then had to get back to Broadchurch. We are very hooked – a magnificent production. The photography is stunning and the cast is wonderfully well chosen.