

Muskoka Mosaic: Introducing George Anderson

By Paula Boon

George Anderson loves his job. Each year, the outdoor educator spends time with all the Grade 6 students in the Trillium Lakelands District School Board – about 2,000 in all – at the Yearley Outdoor Education Centre.

“Eleven-year-olds are still huge sponges,” he says. “There’s a joy in them and they share that joy. I don’t get tired of that age.”

Anderson and his colleagues teach a curriculum-based, two-day program that reinforces students’ classroom learning. For example, they might do math activities like surveying an area and creating a map to scale, or a focus on biology with a pond study.

The absence of discipline issues at the centre, Anderson says, reflects the nature of outdoor education. “It’s not us, it’s the program,” he says. “The kids are interactive with each other and the environment. We’re playing and there’s this massive amount of learning going on.”

The youngest of three sons, Anderson was born and raised in Willowdale. However, he spent his childhood summers at a family cottage on Blue Chalk Lake near Dorset, and his grandparents owned a girls’ camp nearby from 1933 to 1963.

Anderson attended several summer camps, but his heart and imagination were captured by Kandalore, where his son Bill is now director of outdoor education. “That’s where all my canoe tripping and certification developed,” he says. “We did big rivers, month-long trips. That was my passion: the hard skills.”

When high school ended,

Anderson spent an off-season working at Kandalore to give himself time to reflect on his future. “I looked around and thought, ‘I like this lifestyle,’” he says. “You’re never away from it. You live and breathe it, and I love that.”

That spring, he did day programs at the Forest Valley Outdoor Education Centre in North York, then went to Seneca College to study outdoor education. Next, Anderson taught canoe courses for Seneca. He was also involved in the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association and the new Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association (ORCA).

In July of 1980, area teacher Jim Wood, who knew Anderson through ORCA, called to let him know about a job in Muskoka. Anderson moved to the Baysville area with then-wife Suzanne and stepdaughter Lisa and began working at Yearley and teaching canoeing skills to Muskoka students that September.

His twin sons Bill and Chris were born a couple of years later. “My greatest joy has been watching my kids grow,” Anderson says. “The best thing I did in my life was to raise them.”

After becoming single again 23 years ago, Anderson moved to the 25-acre farm where he lives now on Brunel Road. He had always loved animals, and in fact was a collector of huskies and dogsledder from the late 1970s until the early 1990s. Another reason for buying a farm was that Anderson wanted his sons to know where their food came from and to develop a sense of responsibility. Over the years, the farm has had laying hens, occasional meat birds and sheep as well as several



BUDDIES: George Anderson takes a moment with his young Clydesdale Tyler. The outdoor educator says his horses and his garden are his therapy.

horses. At the moment, Anderson’s focus is on his three Clydesdales, which he loves to work, whether it’s moving logs or pulling a sleigh. “My garden and my horses are my therapy,” he says.

Both of Anderson’s brothers, David and John, live close by. “I like that,” he says. “We all have our own space, but we’re all there for each other.” Anderson also enjoys spending time with his parents, who live in Gravenhurst, and his

87-year-old Aunt Shirley, who lives in her own cabin near Dorset on the land originally owned by his grandparents.

While Anderson acknowledges that retirement isn’t too far off, he says he will always be there to support the Yearley Outdoor Education Centre, whatever it needs. When asked how he might spend his senior years, he says, “I might do some travel, but I’m a homebody. I’m peaceful here.”

In any case, he’s not thinking too much about the future. “I like to live now, jump right in and do things to the fullest,” he says. “And I’m happy with my lifestyle choices. I’m so lucky to find joy in what I do.”

Thanks to Christine Riviere-Anderson for suggesting that George Anderson be profiled. To explore the complete collection of Muskoka Mosaic profiles, go to www.thelifecollector.com.

Local candidates ready for looming election

By Matt Driscoll

Here we go again. With Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff’s announcement last week that the Liberals will no longer support Stephen Harper’s minority government, the country is once again on the brink of a federal election.

Having spent just over a week as the local federal Liberal candidate, Shawn Pudsey has quickly been thrown into the breach by Ignatieff’s announcement. Nonetheless, Pudsey said the party leader made the right call, and he is ready to square off against would-be incumbent Tony Clement.

“The message I’m getting from people is that they’re tired of a government that isn’t responding to the issues they’re interested in, whether that means mishandling the isotope issue, being concerned about what’s happening with the H1N1 virus or economic things like the deficit and bankruptcy,” said Pudsey.

“If the other parties feel that it’s time for the government to be brought down, then to me that’s the will of the people.”

Despite his recent arrival as the Parry Sound-Muskoka candidate, Pudsey said the local Liberal organization has been preparing since well before he arrived on the scene.

“Are we ready? The answer for that will come with the election results, but right now I feel pretty confident,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do in a short period of time, but there’s a motivated riding associating... and we have two campaign managers working on my team.”

Pudsey will have his work cut out for him facing the popular Clement, who has been pouring government money into the riding of late.

“I’ve got no complaints about being the underdog,” said Pudsey. “We’ve got a groundswell of support, we’ve got a leader we can believe in and we’re going to fight the best battle we can.”

Clement said another election battle is unnecessary

and unwanted.

“We went to the polls less than a year ago,” said Clement. “The last thing Parry Sound-Muskoka needs is a snap election, especially as we plan for next year’s G8 Summit.”

Clement said the Liberals have been “scheming and plotting” for an election while the Tories have been working to repair an ailing economy.

Clement said Stephen Harper was re-elected because Canadians wanted him to finish what he started.

“We are starting to see signs of economic recovery,” said Clement. “Plunging us into an unnecessary election now would jeopardize the progress we’ve made.”

Green Party candidate Glen Hodgson said he’s ready for an election, but extremely disappointed with the current state of national politics.

“When we’re facing these uncertain times it would behoove the people who are in government to work together and lead this country instead of playing partisan politics and taking us into election after election,” said Hodgson. “These people need to work together to do their job, the job they’ve been elected to do time after time. Four elections in five years is ridiculous.”

Hodgson said his preference would be for the minority coalition to come together to make

honest decisions in the best interest of the country. However, if an election is called, Hodgson said the voting public has the ability to change the current political situation.

“We need to send a strong message that we’re not going to take it anymore,” said Hodgson. “Unfortunately, that message is being sent by the record low voter turnout, and it’s probably going to be even worse this election. I encourage people not to turn off but to turn on to an alternative.”

If the local Liberal party will be rushed to prepare for an election, the local NDP will be positively scrambling.

The NDP has no formal candidate for the riding as of yet.

Diana Allen is the only potential candidate to be vetted by the national leadership, but she said yesterday that she’s ready for an election.

“We’ve got a solid team of members that have been through elections many times before,” said Allen. “We have all the key people we need, and... I’m ready to go at any time.”

Allen does have experience running a campaign on short notice. Allen, who lives just outside Parry Sound, was plunged into the 2008 federal election in the Nipissing-Timiskaming riding after the NDP candidate withdrew at the last minute.

She finished third, garnering

roughly 16 per cent of the vote behind eventual winner Liberal Anthony Rota.

“I know the difference between diving in unexpectedly and actually having time to prepare,” said Allen.

Allen said if an election is called, the Liberals and the Conservatives can take equal shares of the blame.

“It’s a minority government, and in a situation like this the

government should be negotiating with the other parties. It’s up to Stephen Harper and he’s a go-it-alone type of guy. That’s not the type of person we need in times like this,” said Allen. “As much as I’m not happy with the direction of the government, I think an election now is a waste of resources and time.”

Allen said the local NDP will likely choose a candidate within the month.

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 with **Bill Coon, B.C. Phm.**

It’s always nice to see a quick formula for a long and healthy life. Four things seem to always appear in this formula: no smoking, moderate alcohol consumption, moderate regular physical activity and five servings of fruit and vegetables per day. One other factor contributes: a sense of how meaningful and manageable you feel life is for you helping you want to get out of bed in each day.
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