

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Dave Standfield

BY PAULA BOON

Dave Standfield's high school ambition was to live in a cabin in the woods.

Growing up in Richmond Hill, he was intrigued by tales told by his father, who worked for the Department of Lands and Forests and was the head of wolf research in Algonquin Park from 1950 to 1960.

"When I was a kid, my dad was up there for weeks on end and came home with incredible stories," says Standfield. "I listened to him talking about all the characters he got to know, people who were larger than life, who lived in the bush and snowshoed. I wanted to do that, too."

Little did he know at age 17 when he applied to be a counsellor-in-training at Taylor Statten camps on Canoe Lake that he was taking his first step toward realizing that dream.

"That summer was the best thing that ever happened to me," he says.

Standfield returned for the next few summers and then was recruited to help Bill Statten in the canoe shop, which turned into a year-round job.

Now in his 30th year at the camp, Standfield is head of the canoe shop, and his summer residence is — you guessed it — a cabin in the woods with no electricity or run-

ning water. Situated across the bay from the boys' camp, his summer abode was used as a quarantine area in the 1920s.

For years he had a one-room cabin in the boys' camp, but when his wife Alison ended her 10-year run as director of the girls' camp in 2005 and gave up the cabin that came with that position, their family was offered the slightly bigger place.

Sometimes he is on his own, but he's happiest when his wife and two young daughters join him. "We enjoy hanging out as a family. I'm always sad at the end of summer," he says.

In winter, Standfield lives with his family outside of Baysville and commutes to the camp. "It's a regular house, not a cabin," he says, "but we do heat with wood. I couldn't live up here without the smell of smoke and wood."

At Taylor Statten Camps, Standfield is responsible for the fleet of about 200 canvas cedar canoes. "It's a push to keep them going," he says.

Encouraged by Jack Hurley of Dwight, he also put his own mark on the position by starting the camp's canoe-building program.

"It has taken off. The kids really enjoy it," he says. "It takes a lot to get organized and cut the pieces for the kids, but it's worth it."

Standfield, who enjoys doing things the traditional way, says it's unfortunate that people are gradually losing practical skills

and knowledge.

"One kid asked me, 'Is this how all canoes are made?'" he recalls. "I guess he thought a machine somewhere pumped them out."

During his decades at the camp, Standfield has also become knowledgeable about the history of Canoe Lake, including the Tom Thomson story. Campers often seek him out to ask questions and look at various photos and artifacts hanging in his shop.

Spring and summer are hectic, but when the weather turns colder Standfield has more time to devote to collecting and making decoys, which he has been doing since he was a teenager.

In the shop, the focus turns to building and rebuilding canoes. For example, next winter's big project is rebuilding the camp's two war canoes, originally built in 1926 by the Peterborough Canoe Company and last rebuilt in 1979.

"They're actually in the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest cedar canvas canoes," he says. "It's neat to be in charge of looking after something like that."

Standfield refers often to mentors like Bill Statten and his uncle "Dr. Tay," (Taylor Statten II) as well as oldtimers from around the lake.

And he himself is continuing that mentoring tradition: Bill Statten's son David (also Standfield's godson) is now his apprentice in the canoe shop.

A group of boys paddles by, the fall colours reflecting in the water around them. Standfield smiles.

"I've been so lucky," he says. "The camp's been good to me."



DAVE STANDFIELD

LETTERS

Growth of sport should mean better facilities

My husband and I moved to Huntsville 13 years ago with dreams of raising our children here and excited by the opportunity to utilize everything this town has to offer.

We hike, bike and camp, all of which is right at our doorstep, but we are also very active in organized sport, mainly soccer. For our family and many others the lack of facilities, fields and just plain support from the town of Huntsville for this particular sport is appalling, especially when its registration numbers are the highest, by far, in minor sports. In fact, they have been so since 1996.

I'm also very puzzled, frustrated and concerned with the many conversations I've had with my teammates/ players in the adult league while getting suited up to play on the one full-size, grassy, safe field that is available for all 900 registrants. I have heard comments in regard to lack of fields, injuries due to unsafe playing conditions, kids not being able to play on full-size fields or just not at all because there is no more field space available.

What boggled my mind the most is that in the last 25 years soccer in Huntsville has increased its numbers drastically and there are still the same number of fields to play on. Twenty-five years, population growing constantly, especially in the summer during soccer season, and the

same number of fields.

My understanding in coaching, playing and in being a volunteer with the Huntsville soccer club, is that the club has ample funds to assist the town in achieving more fields, improvement in the current field conditions and hey, even hosting some revenue-building tournaments.

Look at our neighbours in Bracebridge. They have a sportsplex and Gostick Park. Here nothing happens. Over and over, soccer gets placed on the back burner.

Huntsville's motto of Touch the Past, Embrace the Future should reflect what is actually happening. Families past and present are being created and raised here. Do we want to embrace and keep them here? With the ignorance and lack of support for soccer and other organizations like gymnastics, families and their children will leave and go elsewhere, maybe even move out all together.

I applaud the Huntsville soccer club for their constant fight for this sport and all of the volunteer hours that go into doing it. More voices need to be heard, however. Speak up, parents, for yourselves and for your kids.

Hey, maybe the town could build some fields out at the Dyer Memorial.

Melanie Fedorowich
Huntsville

ATVs on major roads are 'fatal accidents waiting to happen'

It's a warm, sunny Sunday, Sept. 30. I'm heading north to Dorset on Hwy. 35. I approach a curve near Boshkung Lake and there's a cloud of dust ahead. What's this? I slow in anticipation. As I round the curve I see, way ahead, three ATVs travelling on the road. I am doing the speed limit, so it takes a while to catch them up. They keep glancing over their shoulders to see what's behind. These machines are not equipped with rear-view mirrors, so naturally a twist of the head is necessary. Yes, even at 75 to 80 kph.

Having seen me approaching they simultaneously veer off the road onto the shoulder, without slowing down. Dust, stones and pieces of asphalt (from the crumbling road verge) spew into the air and onto the road.

Meanwhile, coming the other way, the other side of the double yellow line, is a steady stream of vehicles, motorcycles and coaches. I cannot pass. I wait for a passing zone without traffic. Eventually I make my move and get past the trio, who are still watching over their shoulders for what's behind

them, while still doing 75 to 80 kph.

Once clear, I watch vehicles behind trying to navigate past this reckless moving hazard. I hold my breath. Fortunately, there is no accident. I am relieved and relax. But the saga is not over yet. Five kilometres further on I come upon two more ATVs travelling at 75 to 80 kph, again on the road, and yes, you've guessed it, it's a repeat performance.

As I continue on my way I ask myself on what planet do provincial, district and municipal authorities live who mindlessly wrote laws permitting these thrill, off-road and unstable machines onto our highways?

These ATV-related incidents on major highways are nothing short of fatal accidents waiting to happen.

How long do we have to wait for serious injuries and deaths to occur before common sense prevails?

Hugh C. Reynolds
Dorset

Why consider buying Dyer Memorial?

Every time I pick up the local newspaper, I read about another issue involving the Huntsville council that is more bizarre than the last!

Why would Huntsville council even consider buying the Dyer Memorial? It's a cash cow, a white elephant or whatever one calls it. This supposed deal proposal, as outlined on the front page of the Sept. 26 Forester, involves a purchase price of \$97,200, plus \$100 annually to rent the memorial itself, plus \$12,000 annually to assist with the upkeep of the memorial. Supposedly there is more money required to update the facility and the road leading to it.

What is the rate of return for all this proposed throwaway of our money? This is so crazy, so nonsensical that one can only question what is going on? Are there no other priorities on the agenda?

Why would Councillor George Young have travelled to Chicago to meet with lawyers regarding this issue? Who sanctioned such a meeting? Was this on taxpayers' dollars? Does this councillor have legal background, real estate background or other credentials to represent the town regarding such an issue?

The mayor and council are dipping so wildly into the municipal coffers that one can only ask if spending has gone out of control.

Are more staff being encouraged to resign at the town hall? When will we get answers regarding all the present outstanding issues regarding the leaving of staff at the town?

In a democratic society, are not the elected officials responsible to answer to the people who elected them to office? What is going on?

Frances Botham
Huntsville

More smoke and mirrors from town hall

We have just lost the three most qualified and experienced members of the town staff: two professional engineers and a chartered accountant.

They are too professional to say so, but the reality is that people of this calibre want to and do have opportunities to work in an environment where they are respected and their input is valued, not in the kind of environment that currently exists at the town hall.

Reports indicate that we now have an environment in which there is little if any "real" input from the public, council, or qualified paid staff. The mayor exercises control over every significant decision. It seems he has cut off the flow of information so effectively that neither councillors, the media, nor the public can understand or question his actions.

Taxpayers are going to pay a heavy price for the fact that the mayor "could not connect" with the CAO. Give me a break. Apparently he could not "connect" with the director of public works or the director of finance either. The mayor should have tried a wee bit to get along, instead of squandering taxpayers' money to buy out the CAO "without cause."

Many believe as I do that this situation is not about logic or saving money. When he wants to, he spends on legal and cancellation fees for the park, auditors, and now staff changes. It is about getting even with anyone who has the courage to question such things as his methods, and his failed attempts to get the OMB to waive his development fees.

The buyout cost is no doubt significant, but that is just the start. The mayor says that in his new organization structure, he will only need the CAO and the chief financial officer for one or

two days a week. This means they will be frustrated by their inability to function as a manager. Anyone who has managed a sizable organization knows that a good portion of a manager's time is spent communicating, coaching, and counselling with staff and clients (taxpayers), particularly those assigned to new jobs, or replacing someone who is away on business, sick, or on vacation.

Managers can do other work, but they need to be accessible to their people, colleagues, and clients on a full-time basis. Why has no other mayor of Huntsville, or any other comparable town discovered this stroke of genius? It is obvious that this mayor intends to be the manager. It is a good bet that the next mayor of Huntsville will revert to the correct structure. Take note that it has never been, and never will be Claude's fault when things don't get done properly.

The mayor says that in his new structure, work on the never-ending list of small problems and projects previously done by the key staff will be outsourced to consultants. This means we will be paying \$100 an hour to gather the background information that experienced staff would already have, as well as paying a healthy profit to the consultants. Good idea?

If you are troubled by any of the above, you should call your councillor and ask them to explain the plans, how much is being spent on cancellation and legal fees for parks, auditors, staff, etc, and why. You may be shocked by how much some do not know, because they are not included. Councillors are paid to know, and as taxpayers, we all have a right to know.

Hugh Holland
Huntsville



HEALTHCARE HEROES

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Michelle & Angela of "Petticoats"

"Petticoats" is a very popular ladies' lingerie boutique in beautiful downtown Huntsville. Since October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and since "Petticoats" sort of understands these things, Michelle & Angela are having a fundraiser to help.

For the whole month, they are encouraging their customers to give a donation to help purchase a new mammography machine at Huntsville Hospital. Donors' names will be entered into a draw to win some really nice prizes.

At the end of it all, Michelle & Angela have pledged to match the donations from their customers. Now that's support!

Thanks ladies.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

- Huntsville District Memorial Hospital
- Fairvern Nursing Home
- Burk's Falls & District Health Centre
- Muskoka-East Parry Sound CCAC



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