

A house is not a home without a cat.



Todd Young photo

That's what several friends told me when I bought my first house 15 years ago, so I went to the SPCA and came home with Max. That's not to say I picked him out. Oh no, that persistent little tabby with oversized ears and paws definitely picked me. He was all over me like white fur on black slacks the moment I entered the cat room.

It took a while, but Max eventually trained me. I learned not to display anything breakable, not to get attached to my houseplants, and not to leave anything leather within talons' reach. It took some time to figure out what all his crazy behaviours were about (like when he flattens his ears, widens his eyes and races around the house, it means there's a storm coming). With a lot of patience and persistence – on both our parts – Max and I eventually learned to live together quite happily.

While he's gotten older, Max hasn't aged much. He still goes after the houseplants and knocks over any standing vessel (glass, vase, pot, boot etc.). He still only accepts human affection in small doses. But when he does decide I'm good enough to sit with, smoothing his fur and listening to his purr can be the best part of my day.

Like Marlene Butler says in her touching story on page 33, if you're ever offered the chance to rescue an animal, take it. Your life will be richer for it.

And, in the words of Bob Barker, have your pet spayed or neutered.

Thanks for reading,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice".

Janice Stuckless, Editor-in-chief
Janice@downhomelife.com

“It’s Rainbow Point! Skipper lives there!”



Bernadette Stoyles photo

That’s my earliest memory of being star struck at seeing something from TV in front of me in real life. And it’s the first time I recall being atop Signal Hill looking across the Narrows at Fort Amherst.

I identified Fort Amherst as the lighthouse shown in the opening scenes of CBC-NL children’s program “Skipper & Company” some decades ago (for more on that, check out Blast from the Past on page 38). Old episodes on Youtube show Cape Spear as Rainbow Point, but I, and at least one other colleague, remember Fort Amherst being Rainbow Point. That debate aside, many others know Fort Amherst as it really is: a historic landmark in a beloved micro-community of St. John’s.

Recently I was out to Fort Amherst and looking up at Signal Hill, admiring the view of Cabot Tower high above the fishing boats moored on the Southside. The view behind me, though, was anything but admirable. The parking lot used by folks going to work or taking a walk out to the point had also obviously been used (and abused) by everyone from coffee drinkers and cigarette smokers to publicly amorous couples and drug users. Close to 20 of us showed up – from *Downhome*, Waterford Valley Rotary Club and friends and relatives – armed with gloves, garbage bags and a resolve to leave this place in better shape than how we found it. It only took an hour to return the lot to its naturally beautiful state. The trash that had been strangling the trees and smothering the bushes was bagged and ready for the dump – where it belonged. It felt great to see what progress we could make in such little time.

We chose not to trample our triumph by worrying whether people would keep it clean after we were gone. That could keep for another day because there will always be another day, another cleanup. Bill Stoyles, a lifelong Waterford Valley resident who organized this cleanup, knows that litter is an ongoing battle. He and his family have been doing these annual events for 30 years.

I remember what Newfoundland and Labrador was like 30 and 40 years ago. Many rural folks had a “bank” over which they threw their garbage. It was nothing to



Bernadette Stoyles photo



Bernadette Stoyles photo

Top: The cleanup crew with the trash we bagged in an hour.

Middle: Fast food containers littered the ground.

Bottom: *Downhome*’s Ashley Miller wasn’t long filling this bag with garbage.

see a spillage of garbage bags and household refuse from a cliff top right down to a beach in certain parts of Twillingate. Thankfully, with better provincial waste management and changing attitudes toward our environment, those scenes are scarce nowadays. But, incredibly, it’s still near impossible to walk even deep in the woods and not find some trashy evidence that a human had been there before. Pristine wilderness, my foot.

A few years ago, I took a garbage bag with me on a trout trip to a popular pond near Twillingate. At dusk I came out with no trout, but a full bag of garbage! Look, if you can gleefully carry bags of chips, bottles of pop and tins of sausages into the woods when they’re full, you can just as easily lug them out when they’re empty. Littering is not just disgusting, it’s lazy and disrespectful to other people, to the environment and to yourself. If you wouldn’t do it in your own backyard, don’t do it in anyone else’s.

Thanks for reading,

Janice Stuckless, Editor-in-chief
Janice@downhomelife.com

i dare say

I can smell it like it was yesterday.



Todd Young photo

Growing up, summer breezes in Twillingate were a pungent mix of saltwater, seaweed, freshly mowed grass... and the fishplant. When the wind suddenly turned and the strong smell of fish processing drifted across the garden, women ran around the house closing up windows and raced outside to get the clothes in off the line. Teenage girls shrieked, grabbed the blanket they were suntanning on and hightailed it for indoors. I don't know what the boys and men did. Maybe they didn't mind the smell.

Then in 1998, six years after the moratorium, the plant was shuttered when the owner went bankrupt. The air was fresher, sure, but the fishery crises took the wind out of the town itself. In about a decade, Twillingate's population was pretty well cut in half as harvesters, processors and young graduates moved away to find gainful employment. By then, people were wistful for the smell of the fishplant in operation – the “smell of money,” we'd say. What we wouldn't give for a whiff of that.

Fortunately, the plant reopened in 2002, processing shrimp. In the years since, the population stabilized, the fishery found a new footing, there's been a lot of positive growth in the tourism sector and more young people are raising families there.

But now, here we are again. This year, Twillingate residents got a double-punch to the gut – months of pack ice kept fishing boats home and the processing plant is closed for the foreseeable future. There is insecurity and fear in the air again.

I worry for my small town, where my relatives live and work. But I take comfort in knowing the type of people they are – they're strong, generous, resilient, and faced with an obstacle, they find another way around. Hang in there, find strength in each other and punch back with whatever you've got.

Thanks for reading,

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