

# The Klondike Sun

August 1, 2007 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon



## Music Festival

### **Dawson City Music Festival 2007 one to remember**

By Brendan Reese, Summer Student Intern

Each year in July Dawson comes to life for one of the most exciting and unique events held anywhere in the world. Performers and music fans from around the country, across the globe, and Whitehorse were in town from July 20th - 22nd for the 29th annual Dawson City Music Festival. With sunny skies and temperatures nearing 30 degrees the organizers could not have chosen a better weekend.

Although the main stage under the big red tent in Minto Park definitely drew the largest crowds, music could be heard all over town. Venues this year included: the Palace Grand Theatre, St. Paul's Church, Odd Fellows Hall, and the Gazebo on the banks of the mighty Yukon River. Events

starting early in the day and continuing till the late night made it near impossible to catch it all. Those who did put in the effort and saw all they could were constantly rewarded with world class performances and musical variety that would be difficult to find anywhere.

Workshops held this year brought artists together to create unique improvised music that was as much a pleasure to watch as it was to play. Musicians from the Yukon played side by side with those from Nova Scotia, BC, Ontario, and even Russia. Working together these artists were given a musical theme, put on stage with artists they had never

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before played with, and told to work together to use their combined experience to make something beautiful. The results were entertaining, wonderful and surely a learning experience for those involved.

Hosting a festival of this size and caliber in a remote location requires a lot of work and a supportive community. This year the people of Dawson once again made it happen with over 300 people from the community coming out to volunteer. These hard working people who gave their time worked tirelessly from well before the festival began and well after it had finished.

Festival sponsors also play an important role in making the music festival happen. Once again local businesses, large businesses as well as the civic, federal and territorial governments helped give the festival the financial boost needed to make the weekend a success. With the large influx of people in town for this world class festival it was money well spent. As well as the immediate benefits to the local economy, having an event like this shows the whole country what Dawson has to offer well after the party stops.

The tent is down, the music has stopped, and most of the performers and spectators that brought the town to life have now returned home. However Music Fest 2007 won't be soon forgotten. With crowds that rivaled the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, and shows so good people are still dancing in the streets no one can deny the success of this year's festival. Next year will be the 30th annual Dawson City Music Festival and organizers certainly have their work cut out for them if they plan on topping this one.

### **Three Chords and the Truth show their stuff at DCMF**

Story & Photos by Brendan Reese, Summer Student Intern

Three Chords and the Truth didn't have to think long when they were asked to play this year's Dawson City Music Festival. The Musical duo made up of Jonathan Ostrander and Aaron Burnie began playing together in Dawson City last summer and have never looked back. They have been playing shows every week this summer and Music Fest seemed like a great way to share their unique sound with the masses.

They describe their sound as "A mud bog of musical furry, a real hobo sound that makes you want to hop a train." Seeing these two play together dressed in red plaid, with a banjo, guitar, harmonica, or even an old hand saw, it all starts to make sense.

When asked where their sound comes from, the two young performers can list a wide range of influences. "The music of Townes Van Zandt, Wil Oldham, Neil Young, Gordon Downie, the Silver Jews, Bob Dylan and Ian Tyson certainly come to mind," says Ostrander. However when listening to their music you can hear a sound that is unique, intriguing, and all their own. The kind of sound that only happens when two individuals come together from very different life experiences to make something new.

During September of last year, Burnie and Ostrander parted ways but never stopped playing music. Burnie spent



the winter in an old abandoned prospector's cabin with only a banjo, violin and a wood stove to warm him. He used this opportunity to hone his skills and the results can be seen each time he plays.

When asked about his time in Dawson, Burnie said "I've spent a lot of time in Dawson City and the music I create is heavily influenced by my time spent here. Dawson is an incredibly good place to nurture a talent. I've been playing music for a long time, all I ever wanted to do was play music and Dawson is the best place I have found to do this."

Ostrander spent his winter living a hobo life of a different sort traveling through the southern US and Mexico. Although no trains were hopped on his journey, Ostrander lived the life of a transient, never staying in one place very long.

"I was ramblin' around looking for a place where I could feel free to create new and exciting sounds. I guess it makes sense that I wound up back in Dawson," says Ostrander. "Being in Dawson now and playing Music Fest was the best thing I have ever done, a once in a lifetime experience I hope to experience again."

Three Chords and the Truth took full advantage of their time at Music Fest. They played in the Blue Grass workshop, a hootenanny, and their own show at St. Paul's Church. "We learned a lot from the visiting artists, meeting and playing with musicians we've heard and enjoyed like John Rae and the River, Ladyhawk, Old Man Luedecke, Amy Milan and all the others was a really unique experience."

Throughout the winter Three Chords and the truth plan on



taking to the road once again to share their music with the rest of the country. They plan on making their way across the prairies, through Ontario and Quebec ending their journey on the east coast. Before they do this they have Mary McLeod Options Still Under Discussion plans to put an album together, recorded in Dawson, the town they love that so heavily influenced them.

## Mary McLeod Options Still Under Discussion

Story and Photo by Dan Davidson

The idea of closing Mary McLeod Road to traffic was just one of the options brought to council by Dr. Suzanne Crocker back in May, when she appeared before council to advocate for safety issues on the road.

The problem seems to be a competition between two types of traffic. There are vehicles, which was frequently going far faster than the road safely permits. There are also evening walkers, often parents with strollers, who frequently sprawl across the road with little regard for safe pedestrian behavior.

A suggestion that the road be closed for July and August on a trial basis met with a protest from some people who live in the Dome subdivisions above the McLeod Road.

Kevin Hastings, who rides a four wheeler to work a lot of days, had serious objections to closing the road, objections fueled by a letter to Dome residents from the town's development officer, Mark Wickham, in which road closure was mentioned as one of several alternatives to dealing with safety issues on that road.

The letter said that council was "considering" an experimental closing of the road to nonresident traffic during the months of July and August, but went on to describe the plan in such detail that it did sound like it was a definite thing, though it was not, and has not been enacted.

The road is part of Dawson's residential expansion on to the Dome, which began in the 1980s. There are currently 8 to 10 country residential lots occupied along that road itself and several of the families have small children.

Since the issue was first raised the RCMP have been monitoring traffic along the road more closely, but the issue has continued to be a topic of discussion at council meetings. At the June 26 meeting Hastings presented council with a petition against a road closure.

Crocker was also at that meeting and indicated that RCMP attention has slowed the traffic somewhat.

At the July 24 meeting council received a report from Public Works Superintendent Norm Carlson put forward a case for better signage, as opposed to the idea of speed bumps or speed troughs which council had been discussing.

Speed bumps, he wrote, would be hard to maintain on a gravel road subject to erosion from rain and use, and likely to be destroyed every time the road was ploughed.

Troughs would probably be worse, given the known negative reaction of citizens to the spring ditching that has to be done annually to aid drainage during the melt.

"We could look at increasing signage in the subdivision

area, highlighting pedestrian activity," Carlson recommended.

Council took his advice for the time being, and resolved



not to install any speed control devices other than signs for the immediate future.

## Volunteers needed for World Goldpanning in August

By Dan Davidson

As the date approaches for the Klondike '07 edition of the World Goldpanning Championships, Leah Adam, event coordinator for the Klondike Goldpanning Association, is looking for volunteers to assist with the many tasks that will crowd the 11 days around the event.

The competition, which is expected to bring in 400-450 contestants, not to mention their families and other visitors, will actually take place from August 20 to 26, right on the heels of the Discovery Day weekend, but helpers will be needed to set up and take down the gold panning venue on both ends of that week.

So far there are 100 confirmed registrations for the event which is coming to Dawson for the fourth time since 1984. Attendance has grown with each return of the competition.

While gold panning seems a natural event for the Yukon, the annual championships held in Dawson on Canada Day have only a moderate attendance, and the sport has a much higher profile internationally that one might guess from local support. Europeans are fascinated by the sport, and Tankavaara, Finland, seems to have built a tourism industry around it.

Currently there are 20 member states that form an international body, the World Goldpanning Association. Their website reports that the number of members in national associations counts in the tens of thousands of gold enthusiasts, both hobbyists and professionals. Last year's competition was held in Tankavaara and drew over 700 participants. Next year's will be held in Spain.

The major change in the Dawson event this year is that competition will not take place at the North End venue that has been used in the past. Instead new panning troughs have

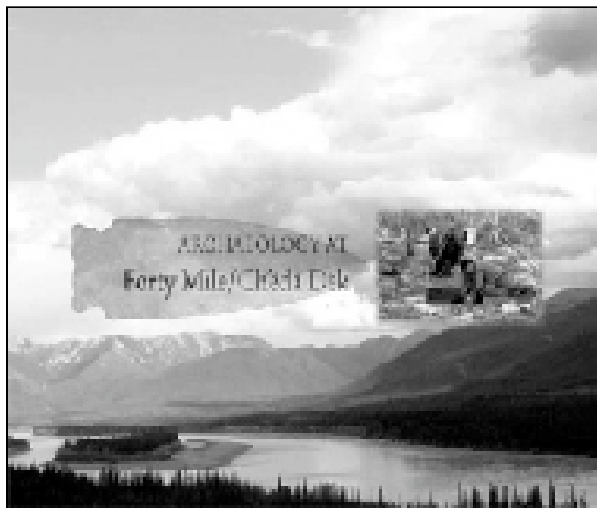
been purchased and that competition will take place in the parking lot across 4th Avenue from the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre.

Adam says this was done to bring the event into town, give it maximum exposure in town and, reciprocally, to give Dawson businesses more exposure to the visitors. In addition, the rec. centre has washrooms and canteen facilities, eliminating the need to provide for these.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Adam at the Klondike Visitors Association, 993-5575 or [kva@dawson.net](mailto:kva@dawson.net).

## Forty Mile / Ch'édä Dëk honoured at Archaeology Conference

WHITEHORSE (July 4, 2007) - Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine Taylor and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Darren Taylor jointly announced that the publication "Archaeology at Forty Mile/Ch'édä Dëk" received a Publication Communications Award from the Canadian Archaeological



Association at their 40th Annual General Meeting held in Newfoundland.

"The award from the Canadian Archaeological Association recognizes not only a wonderful publication that is well done, but also honours the team, and the work they have done in the preservation and conservation of Forty Mile, a unique Yukon treasure," Minister Taylor said. "Congratulations to all involved."

The Forty Mile site is co-owned and co-managed by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Yukon government, working in partnership to assist in the management, planning and interpretation of the Forty Mile historic site. Forty Mile archaeology crews have worked at the site each summer since 1998.

"Forty Mile's history is a unique blend of a First Nation camp and gold-rush-era town site," Chief Taylor said. "This publication helps increase understanding of this valuable heritage site. On behalf of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in council, congratulations to everyone involved in getting this story out."

The Hän name for the location of Forty Mile is Ch'édä Dëk. The narrative of the archaeological investigations at the site highlights the history of Forty Mile that began long before the Klondike Gold Rush. The excavations uncovered at Forty Mile give evidence of an early gold rush but also reveal more than 2,000 years of Hän First Nation history buried in the layers of river silt.

The publication, written by Thomas J. Hammer and Christian D. Thomas, was printed in 2006. Copies are available from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Office at (867) 993-5385, by e-mail [admin@gov.trondek.com](mailto:admin@gov.trondek.com), through the Department of Tourism and Culture at (867) 667-5386 or online at [www.yukonheritage.com/publications-fortymile.pdf](http://www.yukonheritage.com/publications-fortymile.pdf).

The Canadian Archaeological Association recognizes the importance of public journalism in disseminating and promoting Canadian archaeology. The Public Communications Award recognized outstanding efforts in magazine/journal, newspaper, radio, television and professional/institutional categories.

## Uffish Thoughts: And Along Came a Moose

By Dan Davidson

(Toronto) I'm not sure what the road around Dawson Creek has against us, but this is the second year in a row we've been hit there.

Last July we took a rock on the passenger side of the front window which hit so hard that most of the glass on either side of the laminate material vanished in a small hail of shards that got all over the baby blanket my wife was making for a friend. It was a Saturday afternoon and we were just between there and Fort St. John heading south. There was no hope for repair so we patched both sides of the loonie sized dimple and the radiating cracks with transparent masking tape and continued on to Red Deer, where we got it replaced a few days later.

This year, we arrived at Dawson Creek without incident, but had the driver's side rear window taken out by a flying rock about 30 km south of town the day we moved on. By the time we'd driven back to town to see what could be done, there was nothing left but the shards in the gutters and whatever had fallen down inside the door to jam the lock.

Kudos to Alpha Glass, where they vacuumed out all the glass shards and patched us up with layers of plastic and cardboard so we could continue the trip and catch our flight to the east.

Of course, the moose didn't care about our travel plans.

If you read this column two weeks ago you'll know we visited Barkerville in B.C.'s Cariboo country, and that the temperature there plummeted to +5 and dropped a huge hail storm on the town while we were there. The 80 kilometre road is rated as safe at 90 kph for most of its length, but given the hail and the ground fog coming off the road as the area warmed up again later in the day, I took it at around 70, choosing to be cautious in our SUV and travel trailer.

The moose came out of the ditch about 200 metres ahead

of us and there was no way I could stop. He seemed to be undecided about his own travel plans and lingered in our lane so, as the opposing lane was clear, I decided to try going around him.

No luck there. He moved left, then right, but edged into that lane as well. Then, he seemed to think better of it all and turned back slightly.

I'm thinking there's still a chance when it becomes clear that the best I can do is avoid a head-on, centre of the vehicle, impact.

I manage to angle the SUV so that we give the moose a sort of judo toss off the passenger side front fender. The impact bends the hood slightly, leaves the fender dented, shatters the window (which holds), in front of my wife, shears off the side mirror and radio antenna and leaves moose hair all down the side of the Explorer and the trailer.

The moose apparently flips upside down at the impact and sails over alongside the vehicle, one flailing hoof hitting the trailer just above the "C" in Coachman well over two and a half metres off the ground. There's a very small cut in the outer shell, which must have flexed with the impact. The front wall paneling, storage shelf and light mount over the table inside didn't flex as well.

I figured all this out later. At the time I was busy not losing control of the Explorer, bringing it to a stop at the side of the highway and checking to see if my wife was okay. Once again there was a baby blanket full of glass.

The drivers in the cars behind us had to deal with the flying moose, and told us it was the scariest thing they'd ever seen. They thought we'd be off the road, flipped ourselves, and seriously injured.

The moose apparently survived the encounter, got to its feet and stood staring rather dumbly into the forest for a long time before it moved off into the woods. I got this from the other drivers. I didn't pay much attention to it as I was trying to figure out how badly we'd been hit. It was gone before I really had time to look.

Surprisingly enough, we were mobile. No flats, no steering damage. One headlight out, but that turned out to be simply unplugged the next day. I drove slowly into Quesnel while my wife used our cell phone to report the accident to the folks at 911, who advised us to visit the local RCMP that night and report the accident so they could contact wildlife personnel to go check on the moose.

The folks at Cariboo Ford in Quesnel were just excellent on Monday morning. They set us up with a body shop to check out frame damage (none), and a glass shop to replace the windshield. They freighted in a replacement mirror within a day and made it possible for us to make a very long drive to Vancouver on the Tuesday in order to catch our plane on Wednesday morning.

Most of the moose stories I've heard don't end this well after the point of impact. We are extremely grateful for travelling mercies.

## **RCMP is seeking witnesses who saw campfire explosion**

By Trevor Wales, Whitehorse Star

An explosion in the Steam Boat Graveyard across the Yukon River from Dawson City injured three people early Saturday morning.

Dawson RCMP received a complaint of a loud explosion at approximately 1:30 a.m.

When they attended the scene with emergency medical services personnel, they found three individuals injured.

All three received serious but non-life-threatening injuries from the explosion.

Two of them were medevaced outside the territory to receive treatment. Both are still at a facility in Alberta.

The third person was treated in Dawson and released.

The incident is still under investigation by the RCMP. Few details can be released, although it has been determined that a large group of youth were having an outdoor party involving an open fire when the explosion occurred.

An item containing what is believed to be gunpowder was thrown into the fire, triggering the explosion.

Two individuals were arrested and later released from custody. The police investigation is ongoing and criminal charges are pending.

Sgt. Dan Gaudet, commander of the RCMP Dawson detachment, said the Steam Boat Graveyard is an area that is known to be frequented by youth.

A number of people camping nearby at the Yukon River campground heard and saw the explosion and were the first to arrive on the scene.

Despite the resignation of a dozen volunteer ambulance attendants last Thursday, Gaudet said, the on-call attendants responded to the incident without any problems or delays.

Police are asking anyone who may have witnessed this incident to contact them in Dawson at 867-993-2677.

## **Charges laid after explosion**

By Trevor Wales, Whitehorse Star, July 19, 2007

Charges have been laid against two men after an explosion in Dawson City early last Saturday morning injured three people.

A group of people were partying in the Steam Boat Graveyard across the Yukon River from the Dawson townsite when an item containing what's believed to be gunpowder was placed in an open fire.

The resulting explosion injured three individuals. They suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries, and two of the victims were medevaced to a facility in Alberta for further treatment.

The third person was treated in Dawson and released.

Andie Levesque, 22, was charged with one count of failing to exercise reasonable care with an explosive device, one charge of causing an explosion likely to cause serious bodily harm, and two charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm, all under the Criminal Code.

James Daniel Gattie, 22, was charged with one count of causing an explosion likely to cause serious bodily harm and one charge of criminal negligence causing bodily harm.

Both are scheduled to appear in court in Dawson, where

they live, in August.

Sgt. Dan Gaudet, commander of the Dawson RCMP detachment, said today the investigation continues.

## **CITY OF DAWSON LAUNCHES 'THE SEVEN WONDERS OF DAWSON'**

The City of Dawson recently launched its search for the 'Seven Wonders of Dawson', and is seeking nominations to help identify the community's most treasured or unique icons.

There are no limits to what people can vote for. It may be natural, man-made, a person or people, an event past or present, a community trait or even a philosophy. Nominations should be located in or around the community, have a strong connection to Dawson, and preferably be unique or iconic.

"We wanted to build on the success of CBC's recent campaign," explained City CAO Paul Moore. "It's a great opportunity for people to think about what makes this community so special and to raise awareness of how much the community has to offer. Sometimes we can take these things for granted."

The Yukon River, Chief Isaac, the Dawson City Music Festival, gold, Dredge #4 and the town's community spirit have already been mentioned as possible contenders.

Mayor John Steins is equally enthusiastic. "This is a truly unique community and the Seven Wonders campaign will help highlight the extraordinary range of attractions and talent to be found here."

A shortlist will be drawn up and presented at a City open house on Thursday August 9th. Further details will be announced shortly.

For further information contact Mark Wickham at 867 993 7414 or Jim Taggart at 867 993 7440. Or e-mail [mark.wickham@cityofdawson.ca](mailto:mark.wickham@cityofdawson.ca) or [jtaggart@cityofdawson.ca](mailto:jtaggart@cityofdawson.ca).

## **The unfailing bear defense**

By Sylvia Sands Johnson

I thought the bears were bad enough in Dawson City and Granville, YT, but they are a joke compared to the village of Rosswood this year, 2007. I can't walk 12 steps away from the door without tripping over a huge mound of 'bear splatch'.

Worse still, we just had to put our poor, sick Springer Spaniel down – the bravest of dogs when it came to bears. If she saw a bear she wouldn't back down, even if she had to stand on her two back legs, pawing the air. Ditto to any moose that crossed her path. She was the most fearless dog I've ever had out of five family dogs.

So I was alone, and just returning from stacking some cut wood toward the rear of the spare access road – when a black bear walked out of my neighbour Bill's road – heading right for me. So what I did – please do not laugh – is to pretend to bark like a dog. The bear jumped like it had been hit by an arrow, retreating back into the bush. I had no idea that our

brave Springer had left me with such a rare gift, the gift of barking.

I just can't believe that all my bears are black, as this part of the country has at least two, rare, white Kermode bears at last sighting. I mean there's money in taking a really good shot of a Kermode with a camera, but the best I can do is the photo I took off the flowers on Quincey's grave, the dog who taught me how to bark. I've never even put that many flowers on my mother's grave. (Anyway, Mom stressed that she didn't want any excessive signs of grief).

I've tried blowing on a trumpet I bought at a garage sale, and when a mother bear and her 2 cubs heard it, they thought a herd of elephants was after them. The cubs climbed a tree as Mother Bear headed East. Then the cubs changed their minds, and followed Mama Bear. They weren't fans of my trumpet blowing, a clever strategy that has somehow failed to become popular with the general public – although it does alert the neighbours to a problem. Perhaps I should have left the bears to finish their red ant banquet, since those ants and their ancestors have invaded the INSIDE of the house at least twice. We even had to put small containers of coal oil under each bed leg, an old Yukoner's answer to a medley of devilish insects that liked to share their beds at night, even a fancy pickpocket or two.

Even my daughter gave me a genuine brass "Bobby whistle," the exact kind the English Police use to direct traffic in England. If you blow on it, it numbs your hearing (along with the bear's) for a week. One of my favourite Xmas gifts. Then I read somewhere that if you partly fill an empty pop or beer can with small stones, shaking the can will scare even the bravest bear. I take that can with me every time I ride the bike. (No doubt the neighbours have once again taken note).

I didn't happen to have the trumpet, the whistle, or the beer can, when that black bear surprised me today, so I barked. Instinct is amazing – finding out that I have this new talent – even though I'm not bad at imitating a Screech Owl.

Now that I've learned to bark, my life has changed forever. There's just one problem. What will I do if the bear is a rare, white Kermode – feed it a seal?

One guy in this part of the country actually shot "gimpy," a Kermode bear that was really popular with photographers. Some trucker, in mourning, buried Gimpy along the side of the road, with a big load of gravel on top, as well as a white cross. It is strictly illegal to shoot white Kermode's as you would imagine, so whoever was so stupid as to shoot dear Gimpy is in big trouble. That could trigger a mob hanging. (A Kermode bear, by the way, carries the same genes as a black bear, except it is white. I'm a little confused by this, but I HAVE SEEN a white Kermode bear with 2 black cubs, across from my Mother's grave, at the new Terrace Cemetery. The white coloration is some sort of weird, glitchy mutation). You have to believe what you see with your own eyes, even if it looks like a ghost.

Some people might think I'm a bit touched in the head, taking up barking like a dog – but I'm really just an old lady

who wants her old Springer Spaniel back, the last of her dogs.

## **Uffish Thoughts: Don't Muddy the Waters on EMS Services**

by Dan Davidson

As if flooding south of Whitehorse wasn't enough of a problem, the government is now trying to muddy the waters on the whole issue of volunteer ambulance services.

When the premier states, as he did to the Star and to CBC, that the issue at stake is the principle of volunteerism in the communities, he is simply showing how little he actually understands the communities.

I am not well versed in the issues behind the walkout in Watson Lake, but the one in Dawson City has been brewing for some time, and it simply amazes me that anyone in the upper echelons of the health ministry should have been at all surprised when it happened.

If nothing else alerted them, the fact that it was a major item of discussion at the annual general meeting of the Association of Yukon Communities here earlier this summer should have done the trick. When representatives from every town and hamlet in the territory speak with one voice, someone should be able to hear it.

Dawson's council has learned that the letter of concern prepared by the town's ambulance crew and endorsed by council back in the spring never got as far as the Minister of Health's desk - or at least that is what Mayor John Steins has been told is the case.

That letter did not ask to make all the volunteers into paid workers. It asked that a paid EMS person or two be hired to manage the service and to carry the outmoded half metre sized radios that still plague the service in these days of cell phones and better, more compact equipment.

(One of the advantages that cell phone service was supposed to bring to Dawson was a better communications system for emergency services. I haven't seen it yet, but that's another story.)

Carrying a radio all day, waiting for something to happen, is a bit like waiting in the dentist's office after all. When will it go off? Will you be sleeping, eating, answering a call of nature, playing with your children, making love or waiting on customer? How often will your boss be prepared to lose you to answer the needs of another?

None of the ambulance volunteers that I know want to stop doing that job, though they may have second thoughts about picking it up again after they've been away from it for a while and gotten used to living without the tension.

What they want the government to realize is that the EMS need has outgrown the model it was designed to serve. Callouts are increasing, not remaining stable or declining. And in the summer, it's worse than ever.

When the Premier says that the government will spend whatever it takes to keep community ambulance services on life support, he clearly means something other than actually addressing the problem. He's talking about the Band-Aid

solution of sending full time, paid EMS workers to the communities, putting them on 24/7 alert, paying their overtime, hotel bills and meals for how ever long it takes for those naughty EMS volunteers to get back into their coveralls and start adhering to that "principle of volunteerism" which he and the spin doctors would like the public to think is the real issue in this walkout.

This is not a strike.

This is not a labour relations problem.

None of these people have a contract or are in any way obligated by anything other than the goodness of their hearts to do what they do in the service of their communities.

Mayor John Steins has floated a simple solution to the problem in his Mayor's Blog. The EMS services need to have a paid, trained coordinator in the same way that a lot of volunteer fire departments have a full time chief. That would take the strain off the volunteer base.

I would add that since health is a territorial responsibility, YTG should foot the bill. I would also add that compensation for time on call at a level that of less than half the minimum wage is not an outrageous request.

In June it was my privilege to share the platform with three EMS volunteers here who won Commissioner's Award for Bravery. They had rescued a man from a burning building. Don't try to tell these women that they don't understand the "principle of volunteerism".

## **Bookends: Interstellar Communication and the Temptations of Youth**

By Dan Davidson

*Rollback*

by Robert J. Sawyer

TOR Books

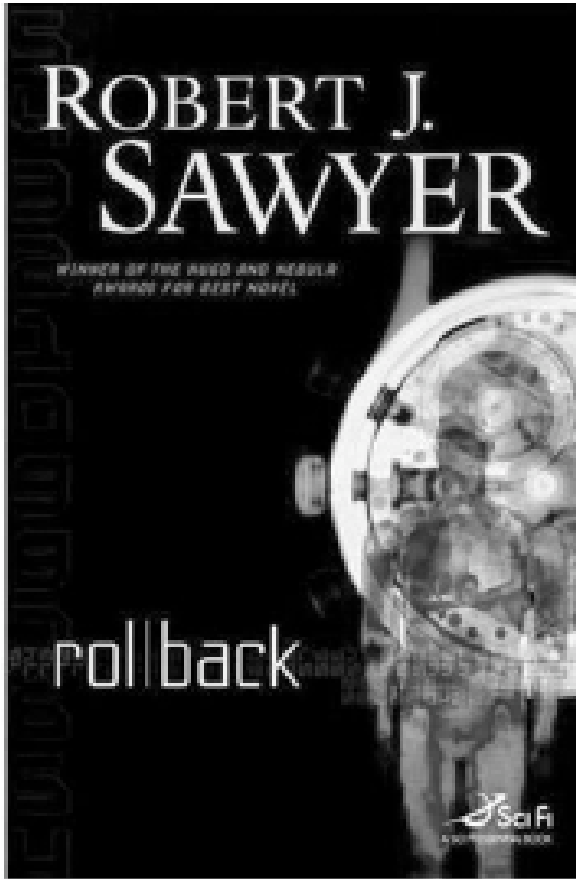
320 pages

\$29.95

First contact between human and alien species has been the theme of many a science fiction novel. In some of these encounters, such as War of the Worlds, or the Alien and Predator movies, the meeting doesn't come off very well. Others, like ET or Close Encounters, assume a more positive experience. What these have in common, however, is the assumption of a face to face meeting, which, given the distances involved, is probably not very likely.

In Rollback Robert Sawyer gives us another scenario, one in which messages are exchanged across the boundaries of space as two species attempt to understand each other. The concept makes sense. Anyone that we'd be interested in talking to would probably approach the situation the way we have, sending out probes and radio messages blindly into the void to see what comes back.

Thirty-eight years ago, in the near future time frame of Rollback, we received a message. The inhabitants of a system we called Sigma Draconis, located 18.8 light years from Earth, had rung us up for a chat. Dr. Sarah Halifax was the brilliant astronomer who decoded the message and



assembled all the data needed for the reply. The Draconis got it, read it, and sent back a reply of their own. Thirty-eight years later it's time to decode their new message and respond. Who better to undertake this task than the woman who made it all possible in the first place?

The problem with that logic is that Sarah is 87 years old and not at all likely to be around for the next part of the dialogue. Enter Cody McGavin, quadzillionaire industrialist, who is committed to this project and wants to make sure that Sarah will be there to receive the next message as well. How? Well, there's a very new, very expensive process for human rejuvenation. The slang term is a rollback. It resets your DNA to a predetermined age and, along with some organ replacements and some cosmetic surgery, you end up rebooted.

Sarah holds out for both herself and Don, her husband of 60 years, and McGavin agrees to foot the bill. The problem, which is revealed early in the novel, is that the process works for Don and not for Sarah. She finds herself in a race against time to figure out what the Draconis have sent. Don finds himself coping with the reversion to age 25, with all the hormonal urges that implies, and with the pain and guilt of feeling himself become younger while Sarah approaches her final months.

Much of the story is told from Don's point of view, as he deals with his emotional turmoil, temptations of the flesh, and the need to become a productive citizen once again. Don

is essentially a very nice man who tries very hard to do the right thing, and it's really easy for us to forgive him even when he slips up.

Sarah is devoted to her husband but doesn't expect him to be perfect. Wearing herself out in an attempt to beat her body's deadline, Sarah uncovers the Draconis' surprising solution to the desire to communicate across the vastness of space.

Equally surprising was the content of the Draconis' original message, which has more to do with moral and ethical issues than with cultural artifacts or scientific theories. We learn all about this in flashbacks, which are essentially Don's memories.

Rollback has a lot of things going for it. Sawyer has come up with a new twist on the first contact story, a romance across the ages, a surprisingly lovable robot, no violence and not a single villain. While not everyone does the right thing at all times in the book, everyone who messes up has reasons for what they do.

Sawyer is Canada's most lauded SF writer, having won nearly every major genre award there is to be found in North America as well as in a number in other countries, most recently one in China. He was recently awarded an honorary doctorate at Laurentian University in Sudbury, the city in which parts of his Neanderthal Parallax trilogy were set.

Sawyer is our current Berton House writer-in-residence, along with his wife, Carolyn Clink, who is herself a published poet. They will be in residence until the end of September, except for a fortnight in China to pick up that award. Sawyer will hold a public reading at the Dawson Community Library at 7:30 on August 14.

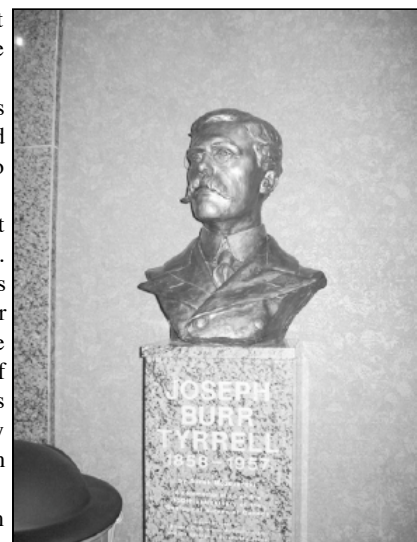
*(Ed. Note: I don't normally place Bookends in this online edition, but Sawyer is in residence now, so it seemed appropriate.)*

## Joseph Burr Tyrrell - a life full of accomplishments

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

Many of the folks who got caught up in the international adventure that was the Klondike Gold Rush went on to lead interesting lives and go great things afterwards. Such a man was Joseph Burr Tyrrell, one of the members of George Dawson's Geological Survey of Canada between 1881 and 1898.

Born in





Weston, Ontario, Tyrrell studied law and articulated as a lawyer but ended up seeking an outdoor job for his health on the advice of his doctor. He joined the Survey in 1881. It was he who made the discoveries essential to the future of



Drumheller, Alberta. The discovery connected with his job as a roving geologist was that of the coal seam that led to the establishment of one of the largest coal mines in Canada, the Atlas Coal Mine.

In passing through the valley he found something else, the bones of the dinosaur that came to be known as *Albertosaurus*. This was in 1884, and those bones were the first dinosaur remains to be found in Canada. It would be 111 years later that the museum opened to display this and tens of thousands of other finds would be called the Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology. The word "Royal" was added to the name by Queen Elizabeth 10 years later.

After having tramped many thousands of kilometres on foot and on snowshoes from Lake Athabasca to Hudson's Bay, Tyrrell apparently felt he wasn't appreciated enough by the Survey, or maybe he just got the gold bug. He quit and came to Dawson in 1898 to work for several years as a mining engineer. He was also a founding member of the local Masonic Lodge (number 6 on the register) and left behind him a log house, known as Tyrrell House, which is noted in Parks Canada's plan for the Dawson Historic Site.

Proposed plaque text for the house is as follows:

"A member of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1882-1899, and a private mining consultant thereafter, Tyrrell devoted his life to uncovering the mysteries of the vast Canadian landscape. He was a pioneer in the search for gold and other metals in the Klondike and Northern Ontario. He surveyed much of Western Canada and provided the first accurate information on the Hudson Bay region and the Barren lands of the Northwest Territories. He is widely recognized for his work on glacial geology and his recovery and publication of the journal of David Thompson. Born in

Weston, Upper Canada, Tyrrell died in Toronto."

Tyrrell went on to run the Kirkland Lake Gold Mine in northern Ontario, joining in 1924, and serving as its president from 1931 until his death. On the academic side of his life, he edited and published the journals of early Canadian explorers, including fur trader Samuel Hearne, surveyor Philip Turnor, and geographer David Thompson. Later in life he developed an apple farm on land that is now part of the Toronto Zoo. He died in 1957 at age 98.

## Twister Levels Barn in Sunnydale

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

When Clayton and Chere Wilson got married about a year ago they held their wedding reception on their property in Sunnydale, where they were building a house and barn, the latter a project that was then a year old, and complete enough that they could use it for the occasion to have a barn dance.

Any thought they might have had about using it for an anniversary party came to an end on May 21, between 2 and 3 in the afternoon, when a whirlwind huffed and puffed and blew the barn down.

The Wilsons, who don't yet live on that property, learned about the event from their doctor, Daniele Behn-



The Wilsons house and barn, showing the barn as it was before the twister demolished it.

Photo supplied by Chere Wilson

Smith, who arrived at their door on the Bonanza Creek Road with the news.

Clayton was at work up the Dempster Highway, and Chere was home alone.

"Unfortunately, when someone in an official capacity (like a doctor) shows up at your house on a stat holiday and says that they're afraid they have some bad news for you, your barn being leveled by a cyclonic wind is not the first thing that enters your mind.

"I was afraid I was a widow again. It took awhile, mentally shifting gears, before I realized that she was



Corner met the same fate some time ago. Wilsons are concentrating of finishing their house for now, but would like to rebuild the barn. "Everyone we know has been so nice about offering to help with reconstruction. The shame of it is that we're going to need another 12 to 15 grand before another barn can go up. Clayton figures we might be able to salvage about 25 to 30 percent of the building materials."

talking about the barn. Our barn. In Sunnydale."

Behn-Smith related the story of having driven out to Sunnydale with her husband, having driven past the barn, remarking on how nice it looked and then, moments later, seeing the Wilson's neighbour, Michael Steffans, jumping up and down and pointing at the barn, which, when they looked back, had collapsed.

Steffans later told the Wilsons he had seen the whole thing. First there was a small dust devil swirling some plastic shopping bags in a spiral. Then it grew and moved towards the barn and went inside it.

What followed seemed to take only a few moments. The barn promptly lifted off its wooden foundation, rotated about 90 degrees in the air, and slid off the rear of the pad, collapsing in rubble.

"I've seen dust devils before," said Chere, "and they say that they see them often at the (Top of the World) golf course, but I was always under the impression that they had no force. Apparently they don't until they're contained by a barn with a lovely big wide hip roof."

The floor of the barn was lifted along with everything else, and there is a visible groove pattern in the earth where the support pads for the wooden foundation were dragged backwards by the force of the moving building.

In the end, however, the speed of the event suggests that the barn rotated and slid off its foundation about the same way that a fried egg would slide from a non-stick frying pan and with a surprising lack of noise. A heavy metal table saw was also shifted and twisted.

There have been other reports of twisters doing limited damage in the Klondike. A greenhouse in Henderson's

*Ed Note; This story was actually written and filed back in early June, but got mislaid. It may be old news now, but it's just too good a story to forget.*

## Has Dawson Been Hogging the Summer?

by Dan Davidson

"You've stolen all the good weather in Dawson," said the lady at Nugget City, just northwest of Watson Lake.

By that time it had been raining on us pretty steadily since Fort Nelson, and I really couldn't argue the point. One of the things I had used my cell phone for each day was to run a quick web check on the weather at home, and most of those checks had shown me a temperature in the mid to high 20s, sunshine, occasional rain (good - keeps the fire hazard down) and mostly clear skies.

In Drumheller, earlier in the week, we had been treated to a torrential downpour that almost made it hard to hear the DVD movie we were watching on our iBook in the evening. A three metre limb had broken off the tree over our camp site and bounced off the corner of our trailer at the height of the storm, while water flowed freely through the campsite. Fortunately, there was no damage to the trailer.

Three nights later we camped in Dawson Creek and had a fellow camper tell us about the rain in Grand Prairie, where the RCMP had apparently picked up a man canoeing down one of the main streets in the town. It had been dry when we drive through, but the suddenness of these storms gave us no

reason to doubt the story.

Sitting in the Nugget's unheated meeting hall that night, listening to the rain pounding on the tin roof while I accessed the RV park's wifi to check my e-mail and the day's news on the online Star, I shivered and wondered where all the heat had gone. The temperature had instantly dropped 17 degrees that night in Drumheller, from 35 down to 18, and it seemed like it had hardly recovered since.

The water bottles we took out of the freezer each morning when we hit the road had melted by noon the week before and suddenly the ice was lasting all day.

At Muncho Lake the German girl at the till had told me it had been raining for two days and the forecast was for two more.

Not that it was bad driving. It would drizzle a bit, then we'd pass through a downpour and then it would dry up for a while. The Alcan was generally in good shape and we made steady time. It would have been nice to stop for a little walk at Stone Mountain Summit, but the wind was fierce and the temperature up there was a mere 5 degrees when we paused to snap some pictures so we carried on.



South of Watson Lake the buffalo have staked out a claim to the Alaska Highway, and all you can do is hope they will share it. This photo of the herd through our rain splattered window is a bit blurred, but we didn't want to get out and ask them to pose.

It was surprising that it stayed as chilly as it did. Through most of BC and Alberta during our trek home, some use of the air conditioning unit had been needed to keep the trailer from heating up too much, and shorts had been a necessity, but once we passed Fort Nelson that was all over. It was the electric heater at night if we had power and the gas furnace during the day for a few minutes when we would stop for lunch. It's a little chilly sitting down to a meal when the room is only 12 degrees.

The combination of buffalo and rain on the road is a little unnerving when you've already had a close encounter with a moose (What if they DON'T want to share the road?), but we got past the herd and made it to Watson Lake without any

additional bumps or scrapes.

Things did get better after Watson Lake, and the drive to Whitehorse on the Saturday was pleasant, but the day didn't really begin to warm up until we passed Carmacks on Sunday after the service at the Church of the Northern Apostles. By the time we got home to Dawson it was toasty warm and I was beginning to think that Sandy at Nugget had it right.

It's good to be home.

