

# Our Story

Brian and I call July 2010 our manic-depressive month because it was a month of emotional extremes.

We had decided we wanted to retire to country living so during our vacation in late June we explored north of Hwy 7, mainly in Center Hastings. When we got back, I fired up the PC and checked out listings. At our first viewing, we fell in love with this cozy cottage, perched on a Precambrian ridge overlooking the beautiful Black River Valley.

In the first week of July our offer was accepted, and all the paperwork arranged. The balloon was soon punctured, however. July 9, we found out Brian had a large growth on his colon.

Surgery was scheduled for July 28, with closing on our dream cottage scheduled for the 29th. We drove ourselves crazy with worry about Brian, anticipation for the closing, and concerns with whether we should even proceed with the purchase.

Final papers were signed the day before Surgery, which went really well, and the purchase closed, as scheduled, the next day. I was immediately sent by Brian to take a gazillion pictures, which I printed and put into an album for him to look at while he lay in the hospital recovering.

As soon as he was out, we tried our best to wait a few days, but the next day we were on the road to Tweed; we just couldn't wait. I had to be back at work in 11 days, so we wanted to make the most of it. It was the best vacation of our lives

and a perfect spot for Brian's recovery. His checkup a month later showed him to be in full remission.

There was no drinking water ... only stored rainwater for showering and cleaning, but there was a natural spring not far away. Since Brian was recovering it fell to me to fetch 15 x 10-gallon jugs of water every week.

That fall we had a 208 foot well drilled, which was hooked up to the house with a heated line the following spring. We made do with a portapotty, nicknamed "Mr. Stinky" until 2015, when a septic tank and field were installed.

2011 to 2014 were spent adding on ... a little piece at a time ... building a gazebo out over the cliff ... making the kitchen a little bigger ... a deck on the front ... a sun room on the east side ... a deck on the north side, which we decided to make a screened porch, then because we liked it so much, decided to close in for a second sunroom ... which, of course, had to have its own deck ... we loved doing it, and we love the result. Both sunrooms are panelled with hemlock harvested on the property.

We also had to think of our grown kids visiting, so a bunkie was started ... an insulated 8 x 12 space with a bed. The next year, an 8 x 12 porch, then the year following another 8 x 12 bedroom (not insulated) on the other side of the porch, which became a screened breezeway.

Burning 5 to 6 bush cords every winter meant a woodshed, which became two ... and adding a room on the house to store yet more wood so we wouldn't have to go outside on bad weather days. A drive shed was added for our ATV for plowing the driveway.

Our own Neverending Story, but truly an adventure for our 2nd childhood ... until an old enemy came back to haunt us. June 2023 found spots in Brian's colon, liver and lungs and we started our journey on the chemo trail. Now it's necessary to stop further renovations to our dream and move back to the city for better access to an oncology department and family support. We must bid a fond farewell to our little piece of heaven.

We'll miss it all, even the chores like filling the woodstove at 3 a.m. then sitting to watch the flames, cat in lap.

Our country home gave new life to our old souls and fulfilled our dreams in ways we never expected. The first Trillium of spring developing into white carpets of them wherever we look. The years we were blessed with a few red Trilliums. A groundhog perched on the edge of the cliff looking out over the valley ... a position I often take, especially in fall. When our own leaves have turned and fallen, the valley is still awash in colour. A flock of turkeys in the back yard showing off their spring plumage, strutting like the proudest peacocks. A fox with her kits. Deer on the road or in the glade. Bald eagles riding the thermals high above. A Pileated woodpecker pounding out love songs to his lady love on the old (now gone tv tower.)

Our wish for you is to find the same peace we did in the small revelations of Nature, the satisfaction of carving out years of contentment, and memories which will never fade.