

Make a plan to relax

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO

57, 58, 59... Woo hoo! I received nearly 60 direct messages from you after the last issue—through our new Blippar app (see p.122). What a pleasure to hear about what you're looking forward to this season.

"That first swim after working around the property."

"Tiring out the new puppy."

"Quality time with family and friends."

"Shopping for my first cottage."

"Finishing the construction we started three years ago!"

What have we got for you this issue? Put yourself on the cover of *Cottage Life*. Blipp the cover and follow the easy instructions, then share your cover with your friends on Instagram and Facebook. You'll be Canada's Hottest Cottager!

DANIEL EHRENWORTH

Is it okay to buy shredded cheese? Such an innocent question, and yet the time we spent debating it in the office recently makes me laugh. Reasons for purchasing shredded cheese resonate with cottage cooks everywhere: convenience, convenience, and convenience. Reasons for not purchasing shredded cheese include all the "overs": overpackaged, overpriced, and overindulgent. Not to mention the shame: *Darling*, you buy your cheese at the grocery store? In a bag? Is that still called "cheese"?

Foodie one-upmanship can be exhausting, so it was with some relief that I read Ann Vanderhoof's story about über "food entrepreneur" Trish Magwood (p. 44). When it comes to the cottage, the accomplished cook, cookbook author, and food show host embraces shortcuts. Do Trish and Lee, her mom and Georgian Bay cottage mentor, use shredded cheese? I don't know, but they'll happily serve up burgers and salad and call it a day.

The Magwood women make spontaneity look easy. (Marinated roast on the grill? No problem.) But Ann discovered the secret to their success: good planning. And that's the super tip that comes out of this story: the best time savers involve thinking ahead. (The roast was frozen with the marinade.)

At our cottage, DH likes to plan projects. He also likes to do things the long way, because at the cottage projects are fun and he has the time to putter. And sometimes, spending time early on saves time later. Say, for example, that DH is taking down a tree. He and any other males on hand debate the physics of the tree's descent. Once it's down and cut, he (and I and any game guests) separates all the branches and the split pieces into nice, orderly piles in the shed. Later, when he goes to build a fire in the cookstove or the fireplace, the wood is seasoned and ready to go. He (or the guests and I) won't need to stumble around in the



woods looking for a miracle of dry kindling and logs. Voila! Shortcut.

I can think of dozens of projects that would make cottage life easier in the long run. For example, if you tie up your boat in the same place on the dock every time, you could take an afternoon to make dedicated mooring lines of the correct length. When you come alongside the dock, you simply slip the lines over the cleats. (Shortcut!) You could install a roller on the dock so that it's easier to haul out the canoe. After a card game, you could count the cards to be sure there are 52 for next time. You could throw out the puzzles with pieces missing. (Wait, we love those puzzles!) Or organize all the random nuts and bolts in that old jar...On second thought, super tip #2: Every cottage needs some under-planning time too. Remember the dock? The sunshine? That book?

Meanwhile, Trish had me at burgers. *Mmmmm*, burgers. With fresh-picked corn and ripe field tomatoes. Those tastes of summer will be with us soon. By the way, is it okay to buy frozen burgers?

Penny



Blipp Penny's photo to see a fun video of her explaining Blippar to Colin and Justin

Who let the kids out?

MY FAVOURITE QUOTES IN THIS ISSUE

1. "These skills will be incredibly handy when your GPS fails."
—Jackie Davis on why kids should learn to read maps ("A Place to Learn the Basics," p. 90)

2. "Bats fall into flight—which is way more efficient when you are hanging upside down."
—Christine Sismondo ("A Place to Wonder at Nature," p. 93)

3. "Try as he might to impress upon us the historic significance of his military career, we as children were more struck by his physical resemblance to Humpty Dumpty."
—Naomi Buck ("Front Lines, Home Fires," p. 98)

4. "The best memory he had of his Dippy was the day he bought a bulldozer and ran over it."
—Jay Teitel ("Disappearing? Not Yet," p. 50)

Children should be heard but not seen. I know this is not the conventional Victorian notion. Victorians, however, likely didn't think children had much to say. Or perhaps they had so many children that setting silence as the golden standard of behaviour was merely a path to sanity.

Regardless, times have changed. Thank goodness. Who doesn't love the sound of children laughing? (A giggling baby puts a smile on my face every time.) When you know your kids are off enjoying themselves, you can relax too. That's the "not seen" part. Seasoned parents understand that as long as you can hear your offspring, things are usually okay. It's when the kids go quiet that you'd better hurry along and see what they're up to.

If there were ever a place for kids to have fun, it's the cottage. Isn't that where we all try to unwind? Children migrate from cottage to cottage along the shore in gangs of siblings, cousins, and friends. In our case, the girls learned to drive the tin boat, taking it to visit their pals at neighbouring cottages. I didn't always watch them go, but I could usually hear them arrive at the other end. As they got close, the one driving would start yelling at her sister to grab the bow line and fend off and "get out of the way, I can't seeeee..." until there was a small thud and then quiet when they cut the engine. Finally, I could hear happy voices as they reconnected with their long-time cottage friends. Little did they know how sound carries across the water.

At our place, we had a few exceptions to the "hear but don't see" rule. Like swimming. Before the children learned to swim, an adult had to be present whenever the kids went into the water. They had to wear their "boat coats"—a.k.a. PFDS—when they went near the lake. Then there's the no-screaming rule. Much as I'm loath to curb youthful enthusiasm, over-the-top shrieking can sound alarm bells, not to mention upset neighbours who *don't* have children.



One great thing about cottages is that, as family gathering places, they usually attract an abundance of adults ready to play lifeguard and even full-time caregiver. In fact, the National Marine Manufacturers Association reports that marinas have noticed "an increased number of grandparents taking their grandchildren out on the lakes and to the cottage for longer durations." The reason? I like to think that it's because seniors are younger at heart and more active than they've ever been. No doubt it's also because, as more moms and dads work, grandparents are the ones with the luxury of time to spend with the kids. The good news is that they embrace it.

In this issue, we've put together a package of fun for cottage families, with neat and, in some cases, hilarious activities for kids. Shaving cream hairdo, anyone? See p. 94 (and blipp for the behind-the-scenes video). Most of us who grew up at cottages remember summers as being a wonderful time of blissful freedom. This season, let's give our own kids the summer of our youth. Let's all have our best summer ever!

Penny



Blipp Penny's photo to send her an instant email. Don't know how to blipp? See p. 10

It's about the people

WHAT I'VE LEARNED AT THE COTTAGE

1. Your friends will be underwhelmed by the photos of your new, exposed septic bed, while you can hardly contain your own excitement.
2. When you hear grunts outside the cottage, and your husband says that he'd never tease you by pretending to be a bear, he's actually not kidding.
3. You'll be giddy at being able to flick a switch and turn on a light, thanks to the new solar system. And yet you'll still bring out the candles and kerosene lamps after dark.
4. Be grateful and enjoy every minute, because there will never be enough sunsets, refreshing swims, hot sunny days, cold white wine, nightly card games, or special time with family and friends.

Sixteen-year-old Abigail Sutherland loved her cottage. The moose antlers that hang over the front door, the faded red paint, and the garbage bin fashioned from a hollowed-out log are, in her words, "somewhat tacky," but that didn't seem to matter.

In August, Abi's dad, Michael, sent me an essay that his daughter completed for her grade 11 English class. The assignment was to write about some thing, place, or activity that she enjoyed. Abi chose to write about the cottage.

Parents are naturally proud of their kids' accomplishments. And we're excited to find out, sometimes inadvertently, how much our kids love the cottage. I was never quite sure how my girls felt about our off-grid island until I saw one of them excitedly showing a friend around. It means a lot to me to know that they are happy there. But it means everything to my husband. There's nowhere in the world that he would rather be. "Heaven exists," he wrote recently from the cottage in a text to the girls and me. "And it is here."

Abi's essay is not the first classroom assignment that I've received from a parent, but it has had the most impact. The writing is remarkably candid: "My parents are divorced," she says, "so I have two other rooms, both of which are nice, comfortable, but my room at the cottage will forever be the place where I feel the most at peace." It shines with insight: "The cottage means freedom...and allows you to understand who you are outside of the world that you are used to." It is now also unbearably sad to read. In June, Abi Sutherland died in a car crash.

How do we reconcile ourselves to such loss? I don't know the answer, but somehow we do. And loss reminds us to be aware of all that is precious in our lives, to be grateful every day for what's most important—the people we love.

That's the thought I want to leave with you in my final "Editor's Note." Oh, I'm not going far—just down one flight



to a new office, where I'll be taking on the role of publisher of *Cottage Life*. With this issue, I'm delighted to introduce you to the magazine's talented new editor, Michelle Kelly, formerly *Cottage Life*'s executive editor. Michelle's current claim to fame is having visited the most cottages of any of our editors this summer—10 at last count! You can say hello to Michelle in the Cottage Life booth at the Fall Cottage Life Show in Toronto, October 23–25 (visit cottagelife.com for more details). Meanwhile, blipp my photo to instantly launch a video of Michelle and me talking about *Cottage Life*—and cottage life.

For the 15 years that I've been the editor, cottage life and *Cottage Life* have been much the same thing for me. I could write a book covering all that I've learned at the helm of this magazine. But it has been a particular pleasure to hear regularly from readers. Abi Sutherland wrote, "The cottage is like a gracious old friend who welcomes you home." I hope that you feel the same way about the magazine. And I hope that you have had as much fun as I have.

Penny



Blipp Penny's photo for a video of her with the new editor. New to blipping? See p. 14