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December  
2012

# i love creston

## Seeking purpose after visit to the other side

Back from the dead,  
a paradoxical tale of  
the supernatural

### Volunteers

Hospice group marks  
25 years of empathy

### Sports

T-Cats scoring points on  
and off the ice

### Entertainment

Best Singer format  
expands to four shows

Inside...

## *Holiday Greetings*

Pull-out Section

*Greetings, December events calendar, characters, lore, trivia,  
puzzles, recipes, crafts and more!*

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**Letters to the Editor**

Letters to I Love Creston Magazine may be emailed to office@ilovecreston.com or mailed to Box 143, Creston, BC, V0B 1G0. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

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## Guest From the editor

Death isn't your typical Christmas theme but it figures in this December issue of I Love Creston nonetheless, albeit with a positive slant, if you can fathom the unlikely possibility.

The cover story is about a relatively new resident of the Creston Valley, Jeanne Marie Plante, who died in 1999 – and lived to tell about it. Confused? That's partly why she's told precious few people about her after-life experience, until now.

The Manitoba-born school teacher was deathly ill from unexplained blood clots in her lungs when she travelled to San Diego for potentially life-saving surgery nearly 14 years ago. While still under the effects of sedation in the intensive care unit, Plante says, her soul rose from her body and left the building, travelling past rows of angelic faces – some of them from her past, and one she's convinced was from her future – toward an enchanting light source that penetrated with an unearthly sense of peace.

"Even now, when I tell, I won't say that much," Plante says during an interview in which she bared her soul for the first time. "I'll just say a bit because people jump in and try to tell you their little story. Well, it's not anything (like what) I did.

"I was strapped in my bed and I took off. I was floating around watching myself on that bed – my body, because my soul was wandering up there."

Much to her dismay, Plante's soul returned against her will and to this day she wonders why she was denied the opportunity to begin an eternity in paradise.

"It was incredible peace, beyond description," Plante says, sometimes pausing to suppress tears.

"I don't remember if I told hardly anybody there. For one thing, they wouldn't really believe me. But now it's time."

Plante is talking through these pages because she feels compelled to encourage people, even though she herself is often discouraged by the struggles of mortal life. She says she may use this story as a springboard to create some of her own.

"I've known for awhile that I need to write," she says, "just so I can help other people to hold on to their faith and have hope even through lots of trials."

Messages of faith and hope are more what we're used to at this time of year, and they are something of what volunteers with the Creston Valley Hospice Society try to reinforce with the seriously sick people they spend time with. Not that they preach, or are affiliated with any particular church, but they are trained to "listen without judging" and "respect religious beliefs without imposing their own values," as the CVHS says in its volunteer job description.

Theirs is a mandate "to provide free compassionate and emotional support to terminally ill patients, to their families and friends . . . during and after the end of the loved one's life."

"A volunteer doesn't solve the problem but they help the patient or the relative talk around it so they solve the problem . . . and encourage the person to open up, to validate their feelings," says Dr. Neil Barber, spokesman for the group which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary and is currently headed by Avril Oliver.

Contrary to common perception, spending time with a person who knows they are near the end of life doesn't have to be either stressful or awkward.

"People say, 'Don't you find it depressing and somehow a downer, dealing with dying people?'" Barber says. "No, it's not. It's very rewarding. You really feel that you've helped somebody."

In the last 10 years alone, CVHS records

show that 61 different people have accounted for 21,175 hours of work with untold numbers of clients.

"Creston is very lucky to have this number of people who are willing to act as volunteers," Barber says.

"Sometimes symptoms are very severe. Palliative care started to try and make sure that all the necessary mechanisms to relieve symptoms would be on hand, and the hospice volunteer is part of that mechanism."

Though government health care now provides medication for the dying, it remains a pet peeve of Barber's that palliative care patients are charged for hospital beds, unlike acute-care patients whose costs are publicly insured.

"I don't think that's right," he says. "If someone is designated palliative care then they should be looked after. Palliative care is an essential part of medical care."

For more about Plante, hospice and much, much more, settle in with a mug of hot chocolate for the rest of this early-winter issue. And have a Merry Christmas. ■

## Mailbag

*(Letters and emails to the editor are printed as written with the exception of profanity, slander or defamation)*

I wanted to thank you for the wonderful article in this month's magazine. You both did a fantastic job and I know everyone at the college & greenhouse were quite impressed.

I've also had people in the community approach me to say they didn't have a clue about everything that was offered at the "Know and Grow Farm" so it was great exposure for the organization.

*Thanks again  
Anita*

# A matter of life and death

*West Creston woman bares her wandering soul*

**A** life-or-death turning point is not unheard of, but rarely can such a moment be considered life and death. For Jeanne Marie Plante it was both and, paradoxically, not with the desired outcome – even though she survived.

An out-of-body encounter more than 13 years ago still leaves the West Creston resident longing to depart this Earth for good, and pondering what higher purpose might yet be served in her continued mortal existence.

Hers is a message of hope tinged with sorrow bordering on despair. Ironically, those conflicting emotions are all too

common during the approaching Christmas season. Ostensibly about love, joy, peace and giving, Christmas can also be a mournful period for those suffering from personal loss or hardship. Plante has experienced it all.

Having harboured her story for close to a decade-and-a-half, she decided this fall to bare her soul, so to speak, about the day she's convinced her soul left her body in pursuit of a great light and unspeakable peace.

Plante's journey took a turn for the supernatural in January 1999, when a 30-month battle with mysterious blood clotting in her lungs led the native of tiny St. Lazare, Man., to a hospital in San Diego.

"They couldn't help me in Canada," says Plante, who was living in Miniota, Man., at the time.

By then a divorced mother of four grown children, Plante had recently graduated from Brandon University with an education degree, inspired to return to school in her 40s by a daughter whom she was helping with her own post-secondary classes.

Plante had only to complete a final practicum when illness shut her down.

She'd initially been treated for laboured breathing in 1996, the first of four hospitalizations that left her no better off, including one while researching her roots in France in 1997.

"I was in major trouble," she says. "I was literally dying, walking dying."

Her lungs were operating at one-quarter of capacity at the time of the last-gasp surgery. In an interview with a Manitoba



newspaper before she left, Plante stated: "I am ready one way or the other. If I live it is OK. If I die it is OK."

Instead, she did both.

"I was sure that I wouldn't wake up so I had made my peace with God," says Plante, who prayed in her hotel room on the Sunday night before being admitted for a full day of prep for the 13-hour operation.

"After the surgery I was in intensive care. Machines were keeping me alive. I wasn't conscious."

It was the day after, she believes, when her soul "took off" while her body remained strapped to her bed to prevent the blood clots from moving, which would have jeopardized her already slim chances for recovery.

"The doctor herself had said when I went into surgery, 'You're dead but we're going to try to help you,'" Plante says.

"I didn't panic. I was ready one way or the other. I have a lot of faith in God. I know heaven is for real."

Plante considers herself to have been "totally dead" when she "took off and was floating around watching myself on that bed. My spirit rose from my body and I was watching the nurses looking after me.

"I floated quite awhile before I took off. I don't know how. I couldn't see my soul but I seemed to have little wings.

"I remember taking off. It seemed to be through the wall. I was totally drawn to this tunnel. It was kind of a haze but then the light was drawing me. I started going toward the light."

The light was emanating from the far end of a tunnel lined with faces, only some of them familiar: two brothers

who died at a young age; Plante's deceased parents; a crying baby whom she would conclude years later was a grandchild who hadn't yet been born.

"I saw lots, other relatives, and they were welcoming me," she says. "I remember more faces, not so much bodies. Faces, like angels. I said, 'I'm coming home.'"

Plante wasn't afraid, nor did she react as much to the reunion with loved ones as to the illumination beyond them.

"It was the light that I seemed to want to focus on," she says. "It was like these rays pulling me, and it was the peace. There were no worries, no struggles, no pain. There was a bit of a cloud but it was soft and warm, this light. It just seemed to come right in you.

"And the peace was indescribable. It's like, 'Wow.' The peace was like, 'All this (on Earth) is for naught compared to what the rewards are.'"

Her father, to whom she was closer than her mother, was the most prominent figure.

"He was welcoming me. 'Come home,'" Plante says. "But he ended up chasing me back, which I wasn't pleased about."

Alas, Plante never reached the light source and became the object of a spiritual tug-of-war.

"I'd go a little ways and then I'd be pulled back and I'd want to go more," she says. "I was begging to go and they said, 'No, you can't.' I didn't want to hear that."

Plante says the power of prayer won the day. Although she was alone, many friends and relatives back in Manitoba were interceding on her behalf.

"I had lots of people praying for me during the surgery and after," she says.

"I know that's what was pulling me back. They prayed me back. Sometimes I get so annoyed.

"Eventually I was almost pushed back. 'You have to go back,' my dad said. I was sobbing because it was so beautiful and so peaceful. The light is like . . . there again, I can't really describe it. Not so much blinding as totally welcoming.

"When I started having to go back I was sobbing and saying, 'No, no. I can't. I can't.'"

Suddenly it was over.

"Everything disappeared," she says. "I just floated a little bit and jumped back in my body."

Plante recalls blowing a kiss to a nurse because she was too weak and entangled by tubes and cords to speak.

"She was quite surprised," Plante says. "She didn't expect me to wake up."

Plante's recovery was quick. Released by the middle of the next week, she was taken in by a sister in Cranbrook. Plante didn't talk about her after-life experience "because I wasn't ready to share it and I thought people would think I was crazy."

"What was tough on me was wanting to live again," says Plante, who relied on prayer and meditation for strength. "I found it really, really hard to want to live again because nothing was going to really change for me, and it didn't. There were still so many struggles."

Among them: poverty; aloneness; continued health concerns; unemployment; and, a life-long battle with bullying, everyone from siblings, peers and spouse to employers, landlords and even her own children.

"Trouble just seems to follow me," Plante says. "I often wonder, 'Why am I given this many trials?' I have lots of qualities. I'm a good teacher. I was an excellent mom. But I'm hopeless at standing up for myself against bullies.

*"I'm interested in inspiring hope.  
You need something to look forward to"*

*"West Creston is beautiful. The trees are incredible there, and the leaves, and I feel totally at peace there"*

"To me it was a real bummer to have to come back because, apart from my lungs, nothing improved."

As for why her life was spared when she'd lost her will to live, "I have no answers," despite going so far as returning to France in 2000 in search of a purpose. "I didn't stay long. Nothing was working out."

Plante lived in Swan River, Man., before moving to Creston in 2010. She taught at Mormon Hills school for a year and would like to work in

a day care or as a babysitter. She sings in the choir at Holy Cross Catholic Church, helps her ailing sister (who now lives in Yahk) and would like to write memoirs in the form of Chicken Soup-type stories, and maybe volunteer as a hospice worker.

That and her relationship with God will tide her over till she can punch a one-way ticket back to that tunnel.

"It's certainly not much fun here compared to what's over there waiting for me," she says.

"People need to know there is a heaven and it's worth it, the rewards and the peace, but you have to have faith. You're not going to get there just thinking about it. That's one of the things that I'm probably supposed to do, is tell people that are really scared to die.

"I'm interested in inspiring hope. You need something to look forward to. Otherwise it's all for naught if you don't have a reward at the end of all this mess. Is there something better? Yeah, there is." She tries again to define it.

"It's really beautiful and yet it's not earthly," she says. "It's out of this world, really. It's like, way out there.

"West Creston is beautiful. The trees are incredible there, and the leaves, and I feel totally at peace there. But it's still not close to what happened." ■



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## From the Mayor's desk

Story by: Ron Toyota, Mayor of the Town of Creston

### A community of volunteers

I attended two different events at our Rotacrest Hall adjacent to the Creston and District Community Complex on Nov. 3.

In the morning, the Creston Valley Thunder Cats treated the parents and families of their out-of-town players to a breakfast and

welcome weekend. Two dozen parents who came from Calgary, Spokane, Williams Lake, Prince Rupert, Whitehorse and other locations around the province were entertained.

All the players, coaches, trainers, assistants, billet families and volunteers were treated to an excellent meal prepared and served by the executive. In total about 100 people attended the event.

What a great success. Congratulations to the organizers of the Thunder Cats.

That same evening, the Creston Valley Hospice Society celebrated 25 years of serving the community with a wine and cheese event and entertainment. About 100 people attended, including some of the founders and many current volunteers.

For those of you who don't know, the hospice movement was started in England where the first designated hospice building opened in 1967. Our Creston Valley embraced the program in 1987.

The founder's words were: "... dying people have physical, spiritual, psychological and social pain that must be treated." Thank you to the many caring individuals who answer this call. You are an inspiration.

While both of these events were distinctly unique they shared a common theme – the profound ability of committed volunteers to make our community a better place to live.

My sincere admiration, appreciation and thanks go out to all of our community's volunteers who give so unselfishly of their time and energy. ■

Ron Toyota can be reached by phone at 428-2214, e-mail at [Ron.Toyota@creston.ca](mailto:Ron.Toyota@creston.ca) or on the Web at [www.creston.ca](http://www.creston.ca).

## Creston Valley Business Buzz



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# Message from the chief

Story by: Jason Louie, Chief, Lower Kootenay Band

## Making a difference, one can of food at a time

**W**ith the holiday season fast approaching I have initiated a challenge to our community partners in the Creston Valley to collect non-perishable food items to donate to the local food bank.

As a child growing up in the Lower Kootenay Band community I recall that there were some holiday seasons when we struggled. I am aware that there may be families in the Creston Valley who may be less fortunate and this food drive challenge is intended to reduce some stress in these individuals' lives.

The LKB and those participating in this food bank drive wish to underscore that we are a compassionate community.

Some of my duties as LKB chief require that I attend various meetings in larger cities such as Vancouver. While in Vancouver I see the lifestyle difference between a small town and the city.

In our town it is common for strangers to say hello in passing while at the bank, grocery store or on the street. In the city, smiles and hellos are few and far between, and this is just the reality of city life.

I wish to share a story that some who are involved in politics would probably frown upon. Having said that, I am not your average politician.

One of my philosophies is there are days when it's a good day for politics and there are days when it's a good day for an elk hunt. After a day of meeting in the city I purchased some pizza and walked the streets of Vancouver, handing out pieces

to some of the homeless men and women.

I took a few minutes to speak with them and some shared their life stories. Many of these men and women had lives as professionals and for various reasons their lives took a dramatic turn.

I have never shared this story and wish not to give the impression that I am seeking attention. It is simply an act of kindness that is in my character. None of these people planned to be homeless and "to provide food is to provide life" is a teaching of the Ktunaxa people.

In our Creston Valley, like the city, we have issues of homelessness and some children do not have the luxury of three meals a day. If each citizen could provide even one canned food item to this drive it would make a difference in the lives of a struggling family.

The holiday season has many interpretations in today's society. My understanding of this time of year is in the spirit of giving. I do not have much to give but at the very least I can surely donate some canned food items.

I have seen the goodwill that the Creston Valley is capable of in my years in this community. If I were to fall on Canyon Street, the hand of a stranger would be extended to me. This is just who we are as Crestonites.

Our cultures, ethnic backgrounds and even political views may differ, but we are Crestonites. We are a tightly-knit community.

The T-Cats game, Sev and Broaster are terms known only by a Creston resident. We are unique.

I hereby challenge those who are in a position to give, to participate in the food bank challenge. There won't be any winners or losers in this challenge. However, the LKB wishes to come out ahead of the other participating organizations.

At a date to be determined this month, all those involved in this challenge will meet at the food bank to make the final presentation. Good luck to all in the challenge and Happy Holidays to each and every one. ■

Jason Louie can be reached by phone at 428-4428, ext. 235, e-mail at [mjasonlouie@gmail.com](mailto:mjasonlouie@gmail.com) or on the Web at [www.lowerkootenay.com](http://www.lowerkootenay.com).

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## Area B News

Story by: John R. Kettle  
RDCK Area B director and board chairman

### Time for reflection

It never ceases to amaze me how lucky we are to live in the Creston Valley.

Even though we have our challenges and, yes, our disagreements, what we face daily pales in light of the unrest and destruction throughout the rest of the world.

My experience as an elected official, however, recognizes we have much more good than bad and we always seem to find a way to help each other.

It is in this spirit that I want to recognize all of the volunteers throughout the valley. We could not afford to have all of the services we enjoy without those folks who go

the extra mile and give their time as volunteers to make all of our lives better.

When you visit the library, museum or airport, please take the time to say thanks to those volunteers who make those facilities work.

When you see the Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors volunteers helping our older citizens, please give them a big smile and wave.

When you meet a volunteer firefighter, shake his or her hand and give them a pat on the back for risking not only their lives for us but for providing affordable fire

protection. Without their sacrifice and efforts we would be left with no fire protection in most of our rural areas.

The fine men and women of the RCMP all deserve our thanks too in addition all of our community hall associations and the fine folks who volunteer to keep the All Saints and the Lister Community Cemetery open.

As a rule of thumb, please take the time to thank anyone you feel is making our area better. I have listed just a few groups but there are many more.

Remember how truly blessed we are to live in peace and harmony and never, ever take it for granted,

From my family to yours: Merry Christmas and happy holidays. ■

*John Kettle is the Area B director and board chairman of the Regional District of Central Kootenay.*

# Welcome Junior Curlers...

*Are you just a little interested in curling? Not sure what it takes.*

**Come on out every Tuesday evening at 7:00 pm at the Creston Curling Centre in the Rec Centre for FREE instruction/lessons on how to curl**

**Also every Saturday in January from 10:00 to 12:00 we will be giving FREE lessons to any age who wants to learn how to curl**

**Hey teachers – How about Rocks and Rings!** It is a lot like curling but you play it on the hard floor. We can come out to your school and use it in the Gym. It is lots of fun and it is a great way for entry level curlers to find out how to play the game of curling. How does it work? Well the **Capital One Rocks & Rings program** is designed to introduce the Olympic sport of curling to elementary school children by bringing customized equipment and trained instructors into schools. The high-energy, interactive and educational program focuses on the basics of the famed sport, which is known as the "Roaring Game".

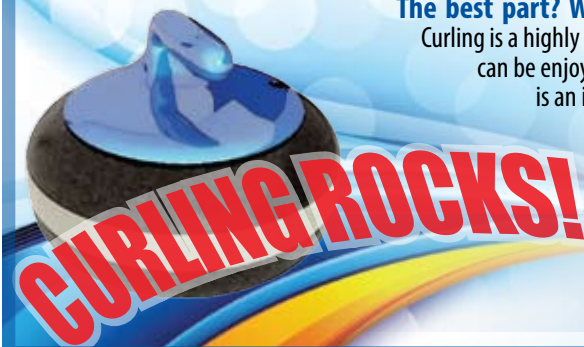
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**For more information please contact and Mark Lloyd, Junior Rep at 250-402-8467 or Doug Hannah, Vice President at 250-428-5687**

**50th Anniversary of the Ladies Valentines Bonspiel, February 8 – 10, 2013**

**Men's Butterfly Bonspiel – February 28 – March 3, 2013**



# No one need die alone thanks to hospice society

Submitted

The premise behind hospice is that no person should die alone.

It was so when Dame Cicely Saunders pioneered the modern hospice movement during the 1950s in England, and it remains the driving philosophy as the Creston Valley Hospice Society marks its 25th anniversary.

At any given time more than 40 volunteers are involved, roughly half of them spending close to 300 hours at the bedside of the terminally ill every month. The others contribute in a variety of valuable ways, such as serving on the board of directors or raising money.

Hospice fills the dual roles of meeting the emotional and social needs of the dying as well as the respite needs of their loved ones.

“They’re not nurses and they don’t do cooking or anything like that. They’re companions,” says Dr. Neil Barber, the educational co-ordinator for the CVHS. “If somebody wants to talk then they talk with them. If they just want to be quiet, they’re quiet. If they want them to write letters they’ll help them write letters, (play cards) or whatever.

“They help to spell off relatives if they’re getting a bit burned out, so they can go out and have a meal or things like that.”

Barber, a retired internist, became a palliative care consultant in the Cariboo in the mid-’80s and hooked up with the CVHS shortly after moving here in 2008. He’s impressed by what he’s seen.

“Creston Valley, as far as the hospice volunteers are concerned, is blessed,” he says. “I come from Quesnel and we didn’t have as many volunteers as they have here and yet the drainage population is 30,000.”

New volunteers attend a day-long training session offered once a year by

Benita Josephson, one of three current members (along with Thelma Destobel and Nicole Nilsson) who were with the society when it was founded in 1987 by Dr. William Mitchell-Banks and Rev. Harry Habersstock. Barber arranges bimonthly luncheon meetings featuring guest speakers on pertinent topics, typically attended by upwards of 20 people.

Hospice volunteers tend to be older, and frequently but not necessarily retired. They’re asked to commit a minimum of four hours per month, though many exceed that figure. Typical visits are one or two hours long.

“They have to like people,” Barber says in describing the characteristics of an effective hospice worker. “They have to sympathize with people and have empathy for people. They have to be able to listen.”

Locally that process can unfold in single palliative care rooms at Creston Valley Hospital or Swan Valley Lodge, in acute-care hospital rooms if those are full or in a patient’s home if they’ve got the support to stay there even while their health deteriorates.

The CVHS is opening a second palliative care room at CVH this month, funded largely by a \$25,000 grant from the Creston and District Credit Union.

“It should be open, if not before Christmas, shortly afterward,” says Barber, who counts among other priorities simply getting the word out about hospice so people can access the service sooner than the current average of two weeks before death.

“If you can get people to know about hospice, palliative care, maybe we can ease that suffering, which is really what it’s about.” ■

## Stacking Stuffers

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# Time to party like it's the end of the world

Submitted

There's a masquerade party planned for Creston to celebrate the potential end of the world on Dec. 21.

Costumes are optional but encouraged as there will be prizes for the best get-ups for both females and males.

Open to everyone aged 19 and over, the End of the World Party

will be held in the Creston Room of the Creston and District Community Complex.

Live entertainment from two of the Kootenays' best singers, Trena Spears of Cranbrook and Matt Hansen of Creston, will be featured. They finished first and second, respectively, at the 2012 Kootenays' Best Singer contest held in Cranbrook in June and will be putting their individual styles on display for this special onetime event.

The party starts at 8 p.m. when the bar opens for a happy hour social time. At 9 p.m. local DJ Vern Gorham will get things rocking by playing some of the best dance music from present and past.

Spears will sing a half-hour country set at 9:30 that will be music you can dance to or just listen to. If you have not heard her sing, she is worth the price of admission all by herself.

After another half-hour of music from Gorham, Spears will take another turn at the microphone. A final hour of dance music will be followed by the big finale.

At midnight, assuming the world has not ended, Hansen – who is the lead singer of the local rock band Bred By Noise – will play a 90-minute set featuring some of the best classic and current rock tunes.

The End of the World Party is named in accordance with some interpretations of ancient Mayan writings. Gorham, the organizer, plans to be alive and well on Dec. 22, however.

Mark your calendars for the party of the year. Come with your dancing shoes ready to dance the night away or just to listen to the top two singers from the Kootenays' Best Singer Contest, and enjoy a great night of partying with your friends. ■

*Tickets are available at Blackbear Books and Kingfisher Quality Used Books. Seating is limited so buy your tickets early. Prices are \$25 per ticket or \$40 per couple. As this is a licensed event there will be security and designated drivers.*



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## The End of the World Party

December 21st • Creston Room  
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Kootenays Best Singers  
Trena Spears & Matt Hansen  
Local Rock Band Bred By Noise

**Masquerade party**  
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8:00 pm happy hour  
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with DJ Vern Gorham  
Party until 2:00 am

*Tickets: \$25 each, \$40 per couple  
Available at Blackbear Books  
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Designated drivers available  
Must be 19 years or older*

# Take the bird migration quiz



Story by: Carla Ahern,  
Director of Communications,  
Stewardship and Education  
Creston Valley Wildlife  
Management Area

Let's have a little fun . . . quiz time!

The quiz is from our latest Wetlander newsletter which is full of great stories, including: an update on results of the provincial mandate review; farewell to the chief executive officer; wildlife moments (interesting fall sightings); summary of the season at the Wildlife Interpretation Centre; infrastructure upgrades by Ducks Unlimited Canada; update on northern leopard frog research; and, so much more.

You can access the Wetlander online at [www.crestonwildlife.ca](http://www.crestonwildlife.ca) on our publications page or give us a call at 402-6900 and we will send you a copy.

The theme of the quiz is bird migration bests.

What percentage of bird species migrate?  
A) 20%. B) 40%. C) 60%. D) 80%.

The bar-headed goose is the highest-flying migratory bird regularly reaching altitudes of: A) 15,000 feet. B) 21,000 feet. C) 29,000 feet. D) 38,000 feet.

The arctic tern has the longest migration

of any bird in the world travelling this many kilometres in a year: A) 20,000. B) 45,000. C) 52,000. D) 71,000.

And the award for the fastest bird, reaching speeds of 320 kilometres per hour, goes to the: A) peregrine falcon. B) rufous hummingbird. C) scissor-tailed flycatcher. D) American kestrel.

The bar-tailed godwit holds the record for the longest nonstop flight, flying this many kilometres without stopping: A) 8,800. B) 11,500. C) 16,550. D) 19,800.

Now for the answers.

Of the more than 10,000 bird species in the world at least 4,000 are regular migrants. That's 40 per cent of the total number of birds in the world.

Birds can reach amazing heights when they are migrating. The bar-headed goose is the highest-flying migratory bird, reaching altitudes of 29,000 feet while flying over the Himalayas in India.

The bird with the highest recorded altitude is the Ruppel's griffon vulture that collided with a plane at 37,000 feet in 1975.

The arctic tern has the longest migration of any bird in the world and can fly more than 71,000 kilometres in a year. They make the round trip from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to the Antarctic, where they spend their winters.

Over its life span of more than 30 years, the flights add up to the equivalent of three trips to the moon and back.

And the award to the fastest bird, at 320 kilometres per hour, goes to . . . the peregrine falcon. This speed is reached when diving.

The bird with the fastest speed when flying on the level is the white-throated needletail at 170 kilometres per hour.

The bar-tailed godwit can fly for nearly 11,500 kilometres without stopping, making it the bird with the longest recorded nonstop flight. During the nine-day journey from New Zealand to the Yellow Sea in China, the bird does not stop for food or rest. ■

*Always feel free to get in touch if you have any questions via phone (402-6900), e-mail ([askus@crestonwildlife.ca](mailto:askus@crestonwildlife.ca)) or in person at our administration building located at 1874 Wildlife Road in West Creston.*

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# Get ready, get set, get training

Story: Kootenay Employment Services

**W**hen I got my first job working in an office I didn't even know how to type or answer a phone in a business-like way.

I learned on the job, and it was expected that the human resources department of the company would not only train me but provide continuous updating of my skills.

After two years with the company I had been trained in basic accounting and insurance claim reporting and was even learning how to program the latest computers. I was able to take the skills I learned on my first job to move to another company and a better salary.

But that was quite awhile ago and in a large

urban metropolis, not the Creston Valley.

When I moved here and applied for a job in office administration after taking time off to raise a family, I learned that I wasn't even eligible to apply because I did not have a business administration diploma. Trust me when I say I was pretty choked to be told that my previous years of office experience did not qualify me for the job.

It was tough to hear, but I realized I had to do some retraining if I wanted to get back into the workplace.

When I look at the local situation for recent high school graduates who are job hunting, the need for training prior to being hired can make it more difficult to land their

first job. For older workers re-entering the workplace it can be difficult to find out they don't have the skills to apply for a job when they may already have lots of related work experience behind them.

The reality is that most people currently employed or searching for work will go through, on average, five major job changes. That is five possible opportunities for retraining and learning new skills.

Whereas before, many employers expected to train staff or to help contribute toward the costs of their employees taking courses, today more and more employers are looking for trained staff. Folks wanting to work in hospitals, day cares, schools, nursing homes, construction sites or trades may require years of training to meet qualification standards.

Training can cost thousands of dollars and take more than one year to complete. The course that suits your interests and passions may not be offered locally, which means additional costs to live away from home.

And while you're away there is the not-so-small matter of buying books and school supplies, not to mention the cost of feeding yourself. For married folk with families to help support there is the dilemma of trying to support your family while you are busy at school.

Fortunately, there's been some big news lately from the B.C. government that can help Creston Valley residents feel optimistic about getting a fresh start toward finding meaningful employment. Since last month, people who are eligible for training programs can now access up to \$7,500 worth of training to gain new skills. This is almost double the previous tuition maximum.

Help with costs above and beyond the basic tuition is also available for eligible applicants. ■

*Whether you are looking for short-term or long-term training, there may be financial resources available to help you attain your training goals. To find out about eligibility for financial assistance, head over to Kootenay Employment Services, our local Work BC Employment Service Centre. KES is located at 119 - 11th Avenue North. Our phone number is 428-5655 and our Web site is kes.bc.ca.*



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Kootenay Employment Services Society  
119 - 11<sup>th</sup> Ave N, Creston BC (Behind Shoppers Drug Mart)

# Creston's Best Singer expands for 2013

Submitted

The fourth annual Creston's Best Singer contest is upon us. Will Matt Hansen, Creston's Best Singer for 2011-12, be able to defend his crown or will there be a new champion in 2013?

Exciting changes to the format promise to add some interesting elements to this fun event, which will be spread over three months in the new year.

First of all, the contest has been expanded into a four-night affair from two nights. The expanded format will include a night dedicated to youths aged 14 and under, with the top two singers advancing to compete against the adult singers.

Plus there is an extra night for the competition itself following the youth division night in the quest to find the best singer in town.

For the past two years the contest consisted of an audition night (quarterfinals) that was judged by audience members, followed by semifinals and finals held on a different night. The semifinals/finals night was judged by out-of-town judges.

The new format will start with the youth division, open to as many as 30 younger voices, on Jan. 17.

The quarterfinals will follow two weeks later on Jan. 31 for up to 30 singers aged 14 and older.

The top two singers from the youth division and the top 18 from the quarterfinals will sing in the semifinals on Valentine's Day – a great night to take a date to a singing contest.

All performances up to that point will be judged by audience members.

The top 10 singers from the semifinals will be announced in the March edition of I Love Creston magazine and compete in the Creston's Best Singer finals on March 7.

The finals format will change from the past in that all 10 qualifiers will perform two songs. Judges will combine the scores from both to determine a winner.

It's sure to be a treat for those who like local talent, as the expanded contest means you may have a chance to hear your favourite singers perform four different songs.

The top two singers from the Creston's Best Singer contest will advance to the Kootenays' Best Singer championships June 1 at the spacious and beautiful Alliance church in Cranbrook. ■

*Singers who would like to enter the contest or for information go [www.kootenaysbestsinger.com](http://www.kootenaysbestsinger.com) or telephone producer Vern Gorham at 428-0305.*

*Ticket for the last three nights will be \$10 for adults*

*and \$8 for children and seniors. Ticket prices for the youth night will be \$8 for adults and \$6 for children and seniors. All tickets at the door will be \$10. Tickets available at Blackbear Books, Kingfisher Quality Used Books and Golden Herb Health Foods.*

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Happy Holidays from the Creston Valley Quad Squad

Recreation Sites and Trails BC

# The importance of breathing well

Story by: Creston Valley Yoga Studio

**Y**oga teaches that the body has five layers or sheaths called koshas.

The first is called annamaya kosha and it is the solid body, bones, connective tissue, muscles and organs.

The second is called pranamaya kosha, which is the vital energizing system that makes us alive.

The third, manamaya kosha, controls the body's functions and the emotional mind.

Fourth is vijñanamaya kosha, which is the higher mind and intellect, and fifth is anandamaya kosha, which is the state of unity with spirit or divine.

Our focus will now be on pranamaya kosha or the life force. Yoga teaches that your breath is the physical manifestation of the vital energy prana, which gives you the ability to live and breathe, move about and function in the world. Prana is not material in nature but flows through every part of the body.

Learning to breathe well is one of the most powerful ways to revitalize your body, mind and emotions. By maximizing your intake of oxygen and ridding your body of waste products you improve every body system.

Your breath is your most intimate companion on your journey through life. You began to breathe the moment after you were born and someday you will "expire" with your last exhalation.

In-between your breath is with you wherever you go. Your breath is more important than your wealth or even people you love because, if you lose your breath, you lose everything.

Most people rarely think about breathing and live without breathing well. The stressful pace of modern life, together with sedentary jobs and leisure pursuits, contribute to unhealthy breathing habits. Poor breathing habits can take a heavy toll on physical, mental and emotional health.

Viruses and bacteria thrive when your body is oxygen-deprived and shallow breathing also contributes to many chronic stress-related health conditions.

Yoga is a great body and mind connection and your breath is the interface between the two. Every thought, action and emotion influences your breathing.

By practising breathing exercises you can learn to consciously control and use your vital breath energy to change unhealthy patterns of breathing, thinking and acting.

For example, if a person is a shallow or high breather and is under a lot of stress, they can trigger the flight-or-fight response. When the body is in this state the adrenal glands put out adrenalin to prepare for running or fighting.

The other functions such as digestion, healing and the immune system are shut down, which opens the body to many diseases. Deep diaphragmatic breathing signals the mind that all is well and normal functions are restored.

Focusing on the breath during meditation can bring you into a state of calm equanimity by quieting an overactive mind. We can reconnect with our deep state of being rather than thinking.

Benefits of breathing well:

- Boosts energy and stamina
- Counters tiredness and can reduce need for sleep
- Relieves tension in the body and enhances ability to deal with pressure and stress
- Increases deep vitality which shows in complexion and eyes
- Boosts immunity and releases chemicals that promote healing
- Increases powers of concentration and ability to think clearly
- Brings calmness and mastery to emotions
- Improves verbal delivery by strengthening voice and clarifying thinking
- Overall well-being and ability to be present with the moment, making life more vivid and joyful. ■

*Creston Valley Yoga Studio offers many yoga classes, all of which include pranayama, or breathing exercises, which can be found on the schedule on the Web site [www.crestonvalleyyogastudio.com](http://www.crestonvalleyyogastudio.com).*

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# Mind and body are one



Story by:  
Shifu  
Neil Ripski

**W**elcome to December! I thought it might be time for a little update as to what we have been working on at Red Jade Martial Arts.

Earlier in the fall we started some new classes in tai chi, xinyi, bagua and Chinese swordsmanship, and the response has been great, although many people may think, "Why would I want to learn sword in the modern day, or any of these arts, for that matter?" and they would be asking a valid question.

Of course, tai chi is known for its health benefits all over the world and that keeps it relevant, but what about these other arts and arts involving ancient Chinese weapons? For this to make sense beyond preserving a cultural heritage we have to look a little deeper into what really causes the health benefits from martial arts practice. In this case it is the interconnection between mind and body.

We tend to see our minds and bodies as two parts of us rather than in a non-dualistic way that implies oneness between them. That is, we associate our hand and our minds as two separate things but in truth, both of these parts are really just part of the whole. Your mind is no less you than your tissue is and vice versa.

This is most obvious if we talk about one of today's most common diseases, stress.

We all know where our bodies carry stress. After a hard day at work our necks and shoulders seize up and we need time to let our bodies recuperate for another day.

The funny thing is how we already know deep down that our physical issue with tight muscles is directly caused by our work stresses and yet we still seem to disconnect our minds and bodies as two separate things.

To treat the body and keep it healthy we must treat the mind, and to treat the mind we must treat the body. Thus, how we think directly affects our physiology and how we use our physiology affects our levels of stress and how we think in general.

In many ways, training in martial arts of any type can have very healthful affects on our minds, relieving stress and stress-related issues from our bodies in turn.

When we pick up an ancient weapon to train it is not for any violent purpose; it is to magnify how we think and move in a way that becomes obvious to us and our teachers so that we can better refine the method with which we think and move.

Both of these things must be addressed when we are truly seeking healthful activities. If your instinct is to tighten up and worry about the result of a practice session, perhaps it is pointing directly at another part of your life.

Do you stress about results of an activity all the time or can you relax about doing something, being present in the moment and enjoying the activity just for the sake of doing it?

By working on difficult ideas and movements we can look into how we live and work on our issues in more than one form, body and mind. Understanding this is what brings us together each week to train, laugh and heal together.

Any activity can be used in this way. Just look deeper into your tissue and your reactions to what you are doing, stay connected and integrated, and watch how quickly you can affect yourself in a positive way through observation and understanding.

Have a great Christmas. ■

*Neil Ripski teaches kung fu and tai chi at Red Jade Martial Arts in Creston and also teaches tai chi at the Wynndel Community Hall. He can be reached at 866-5263 or at [www.redjademartialarts.com](http://www.redjademartialarts.com).*

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# Proud to be part of the Creston Valley

Story by: Creston Valley Thunder Cats

The Creston Valley Junior Hockey Society, a community owned and operated not-for-profit society, is proud to be an integral part of the fabric that makes up the Creston Valley.

The society is the operator of the junior B hockey team and depends on many volunteers to survive.

By definition, a volunteer is someone who gives a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the community, which is undertaken freely without financial gain. Society is the benefactor of many volunteer hours

and is leading by example.

The Thunder Cats' players are learning to be volunteers and good community citizens. So far this season the players have volunteered by collecting donations for the Gleaners Food Bank in September (Stuff the Bus), participated in a free skate at the John Bucyk Arena and engaged in Halloween Hysteria at the Creston and District Community Complex by taking some lucky kids out trick or treating.

Coming up, as the snow falls, they will be volunteering again as "Snow Cats" to shovel sidewalks around town.

The society, a group of 10 volunteer directors, has a handful or two of dedicated volunteers who help out behind the scenes. These are the men and women who help out with the team equipment, injury prevention, statistics, time- and scorekeeping,

game night activities, raffle ticket sales, billeting players, and staffing the concession, etc.

This hard-working group deserves recognition and a pat on the back. If you talk to most of our volunteers they will be modest. They do what they do for the love of the game, for the community we all live in or for the "boys."

Most do not want public recognition so, out of respect for our volunteers, I will not be naming names, but if you know a Thunder Cats volunteer, let them know they are appreciated.

The society also uses volunteers to help out other community organizations. As mentioned earlier, we held the Stuff the Bus food drive in September. On Nov. 30 the team held its second teddy bear toss, with the teddy bears being donated to the Creston Valley Ministerial Association for its Christmas hampers.

A mini "wishing tree" is at all home games in November and December, in partnership with Pyramid Building Supplies (where the real Wishing Tree is located). People may purchase Christmas gifts for children designated by tags on the tree, with the toys donated to the ministerial's hamper program.

A few games to note in December: Sunday the 16th will be our third Jersey Night and Minor Hockey Night of the season. (It's a 2 p.m. start.) If you wear your Thunder Cats jersey to the game you get in for half price. If you don't have a jersey yet, ask to buy one at our home games.

The Cats also invite everyone to the last game of 2012 on Dec. 31. It's a great way to start off your New Year's Eve festivities.

From the Thunder Cats organization to you and yours: Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year. ■



**Come out & cheer on your local Junior B Team!**

**December Home Games**

**Friday December 7**  
V. Golden Rockets (7:30pm)

---

**Saturday December 15**  
V. Columbia Valley Rockies (7:30pm)

---

**Sunday December 16**  
V. Summerland Steam (2pm)  
*Jersey Night, Minor Hockey Night*

---

**Monday December 31**  
V. Fernie Ghostriders (7:30pm)



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# The wonders of medicinal mushrooms

Story by: **Maya Skalinska**  
Master Herbalist, Registered Herbal Therapist

**M**edicinal mushrooms have been used in healing remedies for centuries. There is reference of their use as far as Hippocrates in 455 BC.

In Asia, the recorded use goes back more than 3,000 years and to this day they continue to be a prominent part of their health-care system.

Here in the western world we're just catching up. Clinical studies on medicinal mushrooms started in the early 1900s in Russia and continue all over the world, with remarkable results.

So, what's so special about them? They are the ultimate adaptogenics as well as broad-spectrum medicines.

Adaptogenics represent a class of natural medicines that help our bodies adapt to all kinds of stress: physical; emotional; environmental; or, chemical.

As far as broad spectrum, here's an example: the king of all mushrooms, reishi. Reishi mushroom is antibacterial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antitumor and anti-candida.

It regulates blood pressure and blood sugar, reduces cholesterol, works as a kidney, liver, lung and nerve tonic, heals the cardiovascular system, helps with insomnia, works on all four types of allergies and is immune-enhancing and stress-reducing. That's just what the newest studies found.

Ancient texts of traditional Chinese medicine state that reishi "enhances vital energy, increases thinking faculty, prevents forgetfulness, delays aging by removing toxins, therefore heals the whole body."

I say that's pretty good wisdom from 3,000 years ago, and that's just scratching the surface. There are many books written on just reishi alone.

How do they work? All medicinal mushrooms have a few common denominators:

1. Polysaccharides, which have been proven

to have immune-regulating abilities. Many herbs such as echinacea are rich with these compounds but medicinal mushrooms have a special component, a protein wrapped around the polysaccharide that creates a crystal-like compound believed to act as a key communicator within our bodies. Proper communication is key to a well-balanced and healthy body. Just as in relationships, without proper communication, it all breaks down.

2. Triterpenes, which are similar to our own hormonal system. They work directly on our endocrine system and the communication within our hormones.

3. Nitrogen-containing compounds, such as amino acids, which are building blocks of RNA, giving proper messages to our DNA. They are also important to our energy system.

There are many more things that make medicinal mushrooms tick but I don't want to bore you with more science. Here's a quick summary of my favourite medicinal mushrooms, other than reishi, of course:

- Cordyceps, which shine in respiratory health, as they improve oxygen uptake and open up the bronchials while reducing bronchial inflammation. As do all mushrooms, they enhance immune function and energy levels and work wonders as a kidney and liver tonic, specifically for hepatitis B. They also inhibit the production of DNA and RNA synthesis in cancer cells. This is the mushroom that became famous after a group of Chinese runners broke nine world records in track and field world championships in 1993. The coach attributed their success to the cordyceps they were consuming on a regular basis, which are now used by many athletes worldwide.

- Shiitake stems are medicinal and the caps are used as food. They are specific for immune-enhancing qualities. Shiitake is one of the best whole body tonics. I

love to use it for any circulation issues and stroke prevention, just as Aspirin is used by allopathic doctors.

- Maitake halts tumour growth, which makes it one of my favourite mushrooms for cancer treatment and prevention. It also works great as a blood sugar regulator and a type II diabetes preventative.

- Chaga works wonders on digestion, kills off parasites, balances hormones and, as with all mushrooms, plays an important role in immune function, energy and overall health.

There is so much more information about the wonders of medicinal mushrooms but if there's only one thing to remember, I say it is this: they are the best immune-boosting, energy-enhancing natural medicines we have found. The health benefits of these amazing fungi just keep on growing as more research comes up. They are truly amazing. ■

*Maya Skalinska is a master herbalist and a registered herbal therapist offering iridology, pulse and tongue analysis, herbal medicine, nutrition consultations and flower essences in Crawford Bay and at Vital Health in Creston. For more information or to book an appointment call 225-3493.*



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# Halifax explosion felt in Boswell

Story by: Tammy Hardwick  
 Manager - Creston & District Museum & Archives

**A**ug. 4, 1914: Britain declares war on Germany and Canada is, as part of the British Empire, pulled into “The Great War.”

The Creston Review, when detailing the call to arms, proudly mentioned the army of 60,000 men being equipped and the stores and munitions that Canada could, and would, contribute.

When it came to a naval war, the Review was rather less confident, Canada having only two cruisers (HMCS Rainbow and Niobe) and two small submarines that were hardly fit for service abroad.

Indeed Britain, harking back to the glory days of the Royal Navy, essentially told Canada that the offer of soldiers would be gratefully accepted but there was no need for her to worry about any kind of naval support.

This is clearly reflected in the enlistments from the Creston Valley; when the local men joined up, they joined the army. To date, we have found only one certain exception to that rule – but what an exception it is.

The one exception is Carl Cecil Wilson of Boswell, and before we go into any further detail about him I'd like to take a moment to thank John Dinn for all his research.

Dinn has spent many hours – probably hundreds – going through newspapers in the archives and military and genealogical records online, and it is thanks to him that we know as much as we do about the local First World War veterans. It is he who found the incredible story of Wilson's naval career.

Within a few weeks of Britain's suggestion that Canada could best support the war effort on dry land, the Royal Navy found itself unable to meet the challenges of a new and ominous threat: the German U-boats. (HMS Pathfinder, the first British warship to fall victim to a U-boat, was torpedoed on Sept. 5, 1914.)

Suddenly, the offer of Canadian naval support was very acceptable. The Royal Navy's Canadian Volunteer Reserve (RNCVR) underwent a rapid expansion, recruiting 6,000 men to serve on patrol and escort vessels.

Wilson had been working on his family's fruit ranch in Boswell since about 1910. Perhaps he found farm life too quiet. Maybe it was just too much of a struggle for his parents to support a large family on a small ranch. Perhaps Wilson was following the example of his eldest brother, Rupert, who joined the Canadian army in January 1916.

Whatever his reasons, sometime after his 16th birthday in December 1915, Wilson left Boswell for Esquimalt, where he added a couple of years to his age and joined the RNCVR. We don't know the precise date of his enlistment but the date of birth he gave when signing up – Dec. 14, 1897 – is exactly two years before he was actually born. That is a pretty good indication that he was 16 when he enlisted. (The Naval Reserve required recruits to be at least 18.)

In June 1917, a ship left Esquimalt for Halifax and it is entirely possible that Wilson was among her crew members. The ship, the HMCS Shearwater, was the tender for the two little Canadian submarines. They were being transferred to Halifax to be prepared for service in the Mediterranean (though they never actually crossed the Atlantic).

The voyage to Halifax took four months and along the way the Shearwater and her





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HMCS Niobe can be seen to the right, sending out a plume of coal smoke, surrounded by the devastation of the Halifax Explosion in December of 1917.

two small companions became the first Canadian warships to pass through the Panama Canal.

In Halifax, the Shearwater and Wilson met HMCS Niobe. The Niobe was already an aging ship when she was transferred from the British Navy to Canada in 1910. She ran hard aground in 1911 and, though repaired, never fully recovered.

After a year on convoy and blockade duty she was worn out. In September 1915, Niobe was converted into a depot ship – a floating headquarters and dormitory – in Halifax harbour. She remained on this duty to the end of her career in 1920. She still had one big event to witness, though.

By Dec. 6, 1917, Wilson was an able seaman aboard the Niobe. That morning, a series of whistles from other ships in the harbour drew the Niobe's crew on deck.

A French munitions ship, Mont-Blanc, was frantically whistling to a Norwegian transport, Imo, to yield the right-of-way through the narrows at the mouth of the harbour. The Imo was, equally adamantly,

signalling that she could not do so.

At 8:45 a.m. the two ships collided, with the Imo driving nine feet into the Mont-Blanc. When Imo attempted to pull away, the grinding of the hulls sent sparks flying into the Mont-Blanc's hold.

The Mont-Blanc was fully loaded with TNT, picric acid and benzol. Within minutes, the sparks had grown into a raging fire and a cloud of black smoke rose above the ship, visible from everywhere in the harbour.

Niobe's captain sent a volunteer crew of seven to the Mont-Blanc in a little steam launch that served as Niobe's tender. Sources differ as to their intent. Some say it was a rescue mission for the Mont-Blanc's crew. Others suggest the launch was to tow Mont-Blanc away from the dock. Still others say the orders were to scuttle the munitions ship.

In the end, it doesn't really matter what that crew was sent to do. At 9:04 a.m., the Mont-Blanc exploded with a blast that momentarily exposed the harbour floor and released a shock wave that was felt in Prince Edward Island.

The Niobe, 700 yards away, was severely damaged. Her launch was even closer. It and its crew, with Wilson in the bow, were never seen again.

Wilson was one of more than 200 men from the Creston Valley who served in the First World War. In his two years of service he witnessed – and indeed was part

of – many of the significant, if wobbly, first steps of the Royal Canadian Navy.

He was a participant in one of the most well-known events in Canadian history and died a hero's death – eight days before his 18th birthday. ■

For more information contact the Creston and District Museum and Archives by phone at 428-9262, e-mail at mail@creston.museum.bc.ca or the Web site www.creston.museum.bc.ca.

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