

# THE INDEPENDENT SOURCE

AUGUST 2014

ISSUE 8, VOLUME 2



## SNAPSHOTS FROM THE HIGHLANDS (Or, “What I Did on my Summer Vacation”)

By Dwight

My grasp of the cultural history of Scotland took a great leap forward this summer. My wife’s college friends found an early 19<sup>th</sup> century manor house with enough rooms that 18 of us found ourselves in Scotland in the hills above the south shore of the Moray Firth, near the village of Forres. Our home for eight days, Burgie House sits in the shadow of the ruins of Burgie castle, over which our landlady’s ancestors, the Dunbar clan, presided since 1600 AD. Burgie was a fabulous (if somewhat damp, mouldy, and decrepit) base from which to explore castles, museums, and the occasional distillery, with the help of the warm and friendly Scots. A few quick highlights:

From our castle, adventure lay in every direction. So, it seems, did Hurricane Bertha, the remnants of which made landfall in our front yard on our second day. Talk about an authentic Scottish experience! Our driveway became a river, roads washed out, railway lines shut down, villages were flooded: the Spey River overran its banks in the town of Aberlour (the distillery was unharmed), and patrons of the Mash Tun pub on the east bank of the Spey could cast a line from their seats while enjoying a wee dram.

Randolph’s Leap, near Logie Steading, is a famous jump across a river gorge, on the River Findhorn. The waters there rose 50 feet in 1829 during the Moray floods...and guess what happened the day after we visited? By the way, Randolph (who was Earl of Moray in the 14<sup>th</sup> century), never made the leap...it was actually his enemies escaping his clutches after their attempt to do him in failed. Randolph did not want to honor the scoundrels by naming it after them. He also had his men track them down to the cave in which they were hiding and kill them...nasty business being a Scot in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

East of Forres is Inverness, and north of Inverness is the Glenmorangie Distillery. One fine morning in August (and by fine I mean the rain was fine), the Macdonald clan, for many years the owners of Glenmorangie (before selling to Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton in 2004), treated us to the Tain Highland Games (after a distillery tour and tasting, of course). Three clans did battle across many traditional Scots disciplines, from bagpiping to highland dancing to caber toss. Do not mess with Angus Young, two-time winner of the caber toss. And whole smoked mackerel on a stick is Tain’s best-kept secret.

To reach Edinburgh from Forres, one can choose to drive through the back roads of the Highlands, through treeless landscapes painted in a spectacular palette of blooming heather. The narrow roads and rally car speed limits make for some exciting travel. The destination, Edinburgh, is, in short, spectacular. And the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, set against the towering walls of Edinburgh Castle, is in and of itself worth the trip. An international gathering of military bands and dancers from 46 countries, the Tattoo bills itself as “the greatest show on earth.” I can say it’s certainly up there. Oh, bring a



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blanket and wear raingear...and sit back and enjoy an evening that will leave an imprint on your soul.

I hope you enjoyed these few quick snapshots. I have plenty more...ask me about the Benedictine Monks at Pluscarden Abbey and their robotic lawnmower. As the Scots say when hoisting a single malt, Slàinte!



## EDUCATIONAL TIDBIT

### Canada Pension Plan (CPP): Sharing Benefits with a Spouse

Many people are not aware that spouses (or partners) can share CPP retirement payments if both are 60 years of age or older. This article will explain how CPP sharing can be an effective tax strategy for your retirement plan.

#### What does “CPP Sharing” mean?

Married or common-law partners who are together (not separated or divorced) and who receive CPP retirement pensions can share their pension benefits on the portion of the benefit earned during their time together. As this is a form of income splitting, this may offer some tax savings if the individuals are in different tax brackets. If only one of the spouses/partners is a CPP contributor, they still have the opportunity to share their pension. The overall benefits paid do not increase or decrease with CPP sharing.

#### What are the advantages of “CPP Sharing”?

CPP Sharing can be advantageous from a tax perspective if one spouse has a much lower retirement income than the other. For example,

suppose one of the spouses/partners qualifies for the maximum CPP benefit and has other retirement income of \$80,000 a year. They will be required to pay tax on the CPP payments at their marginal tax rate, which will be approximately 43% (depending on the province of residence). If the other spouse/partner had only worked sporadically and has no other income, the first spouse/partner could direct up to 50% of their CPP payment to the other spouse/partner and realize significant tax savings.

		Taxpayer	Spouse
<b>No CPP Sharing</b>	Other Income	80,000	0
	CPP	11,520	0
	Tax Due	24,181	0
<b>CPP Sharing</b>	Other Income	80,000	0
	CPP	5,760	5,760
	Tax Due	21,681	0
<b>Annual Tax Savings</b>		<b>2,500</b>	

#### What are the eligibility requirements and application procedures?

To qualify for CPP Sharing, at least one of the spouses/partners must be a CPP contributor. Both spouses must be at least 60 years old and already receiving (or applied for) a CPP retirement pension to qualify. The pension sharing arrangements cannot be backdated.

To apply for sharing of CPP retirement benefits, both spouses need to apply to Service Canada. Forms are available online. You will need to provide your social insurance number and original marriage certificate or proof of common-law relationship.

#### When does the “CPP Sharing” end?

The CPP sharing arrangement will end if the spouses separate (for at least 1 year) or divorce, or if one of the spouses dies. If the common-law relationship ends or if either partner dies, the CPP sharing arrangement ceases. The CPP sharing will also end if both spouses/partners request that it be cancelled. Service Canada must be notified if any of these situations occur.

#### Conclusion

CPP sharing is an effective tax strategy for spouses who are in different tax brackets. Tax savings can be accomplished by sharing

retirement income with the spouse in the lower tax bracket. If you would like more information on how CPP benefits are calculated and recent changes to the program, please contact us.

*Source:*

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## BOOK REVIEW

### The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion

Review by Jessica

I just finished reading The Rosie Project and loved it! It had been recommended to me by a couple of reliable sources and was assigned for our most recent book club reading.

The story follows Don Tillman, an awkward but oddly charming genetics professor who is brilliant but socially inept. After many bad first dates he has sworn off of love, until he has a bright idea. Don decides to launch the Wife Project, which includes having potential mates complete a 16-page questionnaire. He feels this will help him meet his perfect partner. It is a scientifically valid survey which will filter out unpromising candidates – the drinkers, smokers and late arrivers included!

Not surprisingly, the Wife Project isn't much of a success, but along the way he meets Rosie. Don disqualifies her right away as a suitable mate, but he quickly becomes intrigued by her quest to find her biological father. An unlikely relationship develops as they collaborate on the Father Project, and are thrown into a series of entertaining situations and scenarios.

The book was warm, intelligently written and made me laugh aloud! The character development is excellent and it is not your typical romantic comedy. I think most would enjoy reading it and it is especially a great summer read.

The Rosie Project was first written as a screenplay and in 2013 was published in Australia. The book rights have now been sold in 14 countries and has been optioned by Sony Pictures. Graeme Simsion is currently working on a sequel to the Rosie Project.

## MATURITY MATTERS

### 10 Tips to Boost Your Memory

When we reach our mid-30s, our memories begin to fade and we'll continue "forgetting" as we age. That's normal. As we age, we become busier and have more to remember. Here are 10 tips to boost memory:

1. Get organized. Make a list of tasks, or jot things on your calendar or in your daily diary. Don't put things off; do them as soon as possible so you won't forget.
2. Take time to remember things. Normal aging changes the brain, making your mind less efficient in processing new information. Slow down and pay full attention. Repeat what you want to remember several times to yourself and you probably won't forget it. Listen carefully during conversations to remember details and people's names.
3. Diet is important too. Fruits and vegetables provide antioxidants - substances that protect and nourish brain cells. Essential fatty acids found in fish and vegetables also protect and maintain proper functioning of the brain. And drink water: dehydration causes fatigue, making it hard to concentrate.
4. Mental exercise stimulates the brain's nerve cells to produce new dendrites (connections between nerve cells that allow cells to communicate with one another). This helps the brain store and retrieve information, at any age. Challenge yourself with ongoing education, games and sports that require strategy and concentration (like bowling, golf, chess, crosswords, puzzles), start a new hobby, learn a new language, or learn to play a new instrument.
5. Regular, moderate, physical activity increases the neurons (nerve cells) in the brain. Exercise improves cardiovascular health, which improves blood flow to the brain. Those who stay physically fit, also remain mentally fit.
6. Learn to manage stress. Stress and anxiety interfere with concentration, so it's important to have relaxation time. Spend at least 15 minutes daily to breathe deeply and clear your mind.

Soak in a hot tub or treat yourself to a massage.  
Take regular vacations.

7. Think positive. Being happy and having a positive outlook makes you more alert. When you're alert, your senses are more open to receiving information.

8. If you are worried about your memory, get evaluated by your doctor or a specialist. Many factors contribute to memory problems. These include using certain medications, poor vision and hearing, vitamin deficiencies, fatigue, depression and stress. Depression, in particular, can cause problems with memory and

concentration; it's often mistaken for Alzheimer's disease in older adults.

9. Get regular medical checkups. Abnormalities in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood sugar levels, and thyroid gland can affect your brain's functioning.

10. Don't worry about being forgetful. You're not the first person to drive off with your coffee cup sitting on the roof of your car. Unless you feel your forgetfulness is unusually frequent, don't panic. Staying calm improves alertness and, therefore, keeps your memory sharp.

*Sources*

Maturity Matters Newsletter, Volume 14, Edition 9

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