

Meet Sergeant Major Bill Stewart - A Life in the Saddle

At the GM on **May 26th**, we are honored to welcome **Sergeant Major Bill Stewart**, a remarkable Canadian whose career quite literally put him in the saddle of history.

For nearly four decades, Sgt. Maj. Stewart represented Canada with pride as a member of the world-famous RCMP Musical Ride. Wearing the iconic red serge and riding before audiences across Canada and around the globe, he became a powerful symbol of Canadian tradition, precision, and excellence.

His journey extended far beyond the show ring. Sgt. Maj. Stewart trained riders for royal performances and participated in escort duties for visiting dignitaries - including memorable occasions involving Queen Elizabeth II both in Canada and in London.



In recognition of his distinguished service, he was invested in the Royal Victorian Order - an honor personally bestowed for service to the Crown, and one he considers among the greatest moments of his career.

With stunning photographs and captivating behind-the-scenes stories, Sgt. Maj. Stewart will take us inside the pageantry, discipline, and unforgettable experiences of a life dedicated to service.

➤ **If you enjoy Canadian history, royal encounters, horses, or simply a great story well told - this is a presentation you will not want to miss!**

FFO BOARD 2026-27

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CALENDAR OF FFO EVENTS

2026

- Apr 21-28 FFO Outbound to Leuven, Belgium
- May 26 At Riverside United Church:
 - 11am** All-hosts meeting FF W N Carolina journey
 - 2nd** *member photo session before & after*
 - 12noon** Lunch
 - 12:30pm** Guest speaker & storyteller:
Sergeant Major Bill Stewart
 - 1:00pm** GM meeting
- Jun 07-14 Inbound FF Western North Carolina, USA
- Sep 21-28 Inbound FF Western Colorado, USA
- Nov 09-16 FFO Outbound to Perth, Australia

Note: FFO will pre-order for you a lunch of a sandwich / drink / cookie to have at the FFO GM at 12noon at Riverside United Church on May 26th for only \$10pp.



SMILE FOR THE CAMERA!

The team of Donna Nicholson and Vic Hudon will be updating the photos of our club's members for the FFO Directory and for use in outbound journeys on **Tues May 26th** at the Riverside United Church. The cameras will be set up and ready for you in the altar area of the church at the beginning and at the end of this FFO event.



VP JOURNEYS

BARB DAVIGNON

UPDATE: FFO OUTBOUND JOURNEYS 2026

a) Leuven, Belgium journey (April 21-28, 2026)

FFO Journey Coordinator: Joanne Curran

We are looking forward to meeting two members of other FF club members as they join us on this journey to Belgium. Three weeks until we depart for Europe!

a) Perth, Australia journey (November 9-16, 2026)

FFO Journey Coordinator: Leonard Bonnet

12 FFO ambassadors will be going on this outbound journey. We have just informed Perth of the makeup of our group and in turn, they advised us that planning for our journey is progressing well.

UPDATE: FFO INBOUND JOURNEYS 2026

a) FF Western N Carolina, USA (June 7-14, 2026)

FFO Journey Coordinator: Petra Friedrichson

14 ambassadors will be coming to Ottawa to make new friends and see the sights of Ottawa. The planning committee is finalizing the itinerary and hosting arrangements before the All-Hosts meeting at 11am on May 26th before the GM at Riverside United Church.

b) FF Western Colorado, USA (September 21-28, 2026)

FFO Journey Coordinator: Pierrette Benoit

Planning for the Western Colorado journey is well underway. The Activities Program includes a day visit to Wakefield and another to Almonte, a guided tour of the Chateau Laurier, a cruise on the Rideau Canal and so much more. There will be opportunities for hosts and members to enjoy new sites and experiences while sharing friendships with our ambassadors



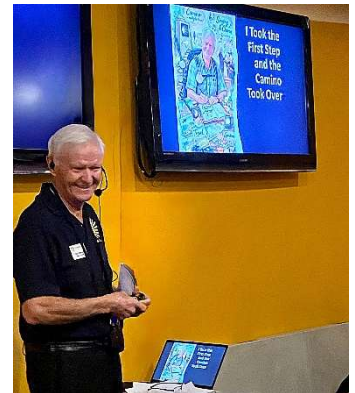
North Carolina Smoky Mountains

FRIENDLY WANDERERS REPORT - Mar 24th

PAUL ROCHON:

I Took the First Step and the Camino Took Over

Paul Rochon recently shared with FFO members highlights from his 2025 journey along the Spanish and the Portuguese Camino.



Through photos of the vistas and floral displays viewed from the sometimes challenging trails, quirky house adornments and historic churches, we got a flavor for what awaits the thousands of walkers who embark on this pilgrimage each year.

Paul's personal anecdotes helped all of us better understand how deeply transformative an experience such as this can be.

What's next for FFO Friendly Wanderers in the fall?

Join Michael and Joanne Curran on Thurs Sept.10th for our first Friendly Wanderers of the 2026-2027 season and learn more about the Philippines!

The Philippines was a destination that we never thought to visit BUT when our son-in-law was posted to Manila, we discovered a country that deserves to be on people's bucket list!



Despite being faced with a barrage of natural disasters each year, the Filipinos are an extraordinarily resilient and genuinely warm, grateful people who live on islands with rugged mountains that plunge straight into turquoise blue waters and stunningly beautiful white beaches.

BUILDING BRIDGES - Here is the 5th story in CapCon's column about making friendships.

Friends Forever

A great aspect of our FFO journeys is making new friends, and I have been blessed with friendship many times over.

Upon joining Friendship Force in 2013, I hosted **Australians** who had come to Canada to "Experience Winter". They brought along hand-knitted scarves and caps to protect them from the cold, not realizing they'd need to layer every part of their body! After borrowing and thrifting additional winter wear they experienced dogsledding, snowshoeing, sugaring off in the bush and a snowstorm. Two years later, I stayed with them in Adelaide and we've connected over Facebook ever since.



On a FFO journey to **Japan and Taiwan** I was fortunate enough to be hosted by two wonderful women, one of whom visited me in Ottawa years later. The friendship I established with my Taiwanese host was the bridge that prompted my Australian

ambassadors to reach out to her when on a cruise, with Taipei as one port of call. That contact prompted my Taiwanese friend to offer a day tour to my Australian FF friends because, in her words, "Any friend of Alberta's is a friend of mine!"

An FFO journey to **Guadeloupe** had me staying with an elementary school principal. As I had been a teacher, we found lots of opportunities to converse, she in English, and I in French; both of us beginners at speaking each other's language. She made a special trip to buy for me the spice used to make *chicken colombo* (see photo right), and whenever I make it, I think of her.



Most recently I travelled with FFO to **Costa Rica**, where I stayed with a member of the FF Alajuela club who regularly sends me photos of lush gardens with beautiful exotic flowers, and of her ongoing travels with Friendship Force. I am so pleased to have travelled with Friendship Force and to have become friends with such welcoming and happy people.



Alberta About

What Makes You Smile?

Smiles are often sparked by a combination of **simple pleasures, meaningful connections, nature, playful experiences, and mindful awareness**. Paying attention to these moments and embracing them can help cultivate more joy in everyday life.

We asked the FFO Board members to share with you what makes them happy.

- ✓ Another smiling face; doesn't have to be human but it helps!
- ✓ A burp from our newly minted grandson and the smile that noise elicits from his big brother.
- ✓ ZOOM giggles from our granddaughters 16,000 kms away.
- ✓ The Senators making the playoffs.
- ✓ A come-from-behind victory, any sport challenge.
- ✓ A random compliment.



Michael Curran

The things that make me smile the most are the simple, meaningful moments in life - visit from my five grandchildren, full of laughter and love; ballroom dancing with my husband, moving together, and just enjoying being together; cooking and sharing good meals; spending time painting or working with resin when I feel creative; travelling to places we've never been before and taking it all in; and quiet walks with our dog. These are the moments that truly make me happy.



Lorraine Chartrand

Staying Strong as We Age: Why Muscle Matters More Than Ever

When we think about healthy aging, we often focus on heart health or flexibility. But two lesser-known conditions deserve more attention, especially as we get older: **sarcopenia** and **dynapenia**.

Sarcopenia is the age-related loss of muscle mass.

Dynapenia is the accompanying loss of muscle strength. Together, they quietly increase the risk of falls, loss of independence, slower metabolism, and difficulty with everyday tasks like climbing stairs, carrying groceries, or rising from a chair. The encouraging news is that preventing this decline does **not** require heavy weights, gyms, or complicated routines.

Simple Strength Training That Works

Muscles respond to **effort**, not equipment. One very effective and joint-friendly method is **timed static contraction** - creating muscle tension without movement.

Each exercise consists of **three 20-second segments**:

1. **First 20 seconds**: about **50% effort** - a modest, controlled contraction
2. **Second 20 seconds**: about **75% effort** - strong and demanding
3. **Final 20 seconds**: as hard as you dare

This final segment should feel **quite challenging**, but it is safe because it is preceded by the earlier segments. Importantly, it must be challenging enough to recruit **fast-twitch muscle fibers** - the very fibers most responsible for strength, power, and independence, and the ones most rapidly lost with aging. Their loss is a major contributor to frailty.

Throughout all contractions, **continuous breathing is essential**. Never hold your breath.

Simple examples include:

- **Chest**: squeezing a yoga block between the forearms with arms bent 90 degrees and fingers pointing upwards
- **Shoulders**: placing a yoga strap or belt around the elbows and pressing outward with elbows at sides, arm bent 90 degrees and fingers pointing forward

- **Upper back**: grasping one wrist with the opposite hand and pulling against yourself
- **Legs**: wall squats where you have your feet far enough from the wall that your knees will not protrude past your toes (make sure the floor or your footwear won't slide) hold for 30 seconds, try to increase gradually over time till you can do for 2 minutes. Aim for 90-degree bend of knees but if too difficult, don't slide down the wall as far.

Performed **twice per week**, this provides an excellent strength-training foundation with minimal equipment and time.

Protein: The Missing Piece for Many Seniors

Exercise is only half the equation. Nutrition - especially **protein** - becomes increasingly important with age. As we get older, our bodies become **less efficient at absorbing and using protein**, yet many seniors eat less of it. This accelerates muscle loss. Metabolic researcher **Ben Bikman** summarizes good nutrition with three simple principles:

1. **Emphasize protein**
2. **Avoid getting carbohydrates from bags or boxes with bar codes**
3. **Don't fear the natural fat that comes with protein**



Protein-rich foods such as eggs, dairy, fish, meat, and legumes provide the raw materials muscles need. Refined carbohydrates and industrial seed oils are best minimized.

The Takeaway

Healthy aging isn't about doing more - it's about doing what matters. A small amount of regular strength work, combined with adequate protein, can go a long way toward preserving strength, stability, and independence. Strong muscles are not about vanity - they're about capability.

Richard Chartrand
Certified Exercise Instructor & FFO member