

## All the best in 2015 to everyone.

My birthday is on New Year's Eve and every year I choose the venue and the bride picks up the tab. In



past years I've chosen the Prescott Tavern and Colonnade Pizza but since this was my milestone 70<sup>th</sup> birthday I chose the cottage.

This was an almost green Christmas with very little snow but it was a bit on the cold side when we got there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Our little air tight Napoleon wood stove responded on the first match and had the place nice and cozy in about four hours. Luckily we let Henry talk us into a covered porch when he designed our extension and I had stored a good

supply of wood last fall so no going out to the wood pile this year. We have no running water in the winter so have to bring it with us. Shades of living in Bradlo when I was a kid, fetching water, wood and



braving the cold out house. We have a

compostable toilet and the foam seat never gets cold (remind me to tell you my story about a plastic toilet seat at 65 below some day).



Satellite TV and phone have been disconnected for the winter and my little TV was able to pick up CTV2 for reruns of Corner Gas and a very fuzzy Global so we had to rely on walking and reading to pass the time.

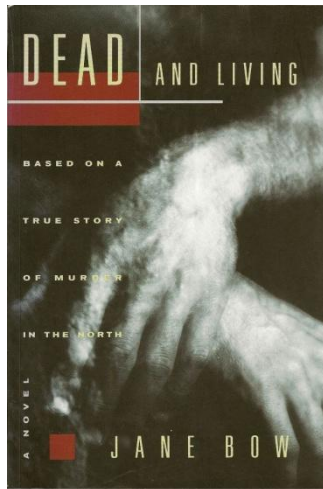
Weather was a bit on the chilly side, about 10 below, but walking briskly kept you warm.

I spent most of my time in my new rocker recliner and managed to read four of my Christmas books in four days (and still have another six to read).



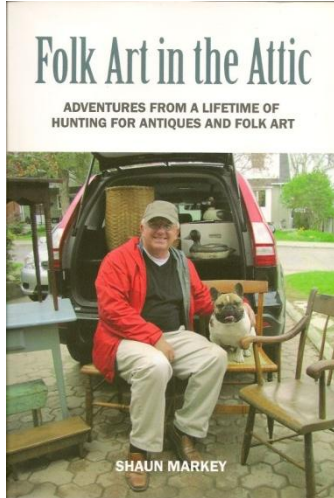
The books were on extreme ends of the literary scale and may not appeal to everyone but they were all worth the read. Here is a quick summary in case you need something to read.

**Dead and Living. By Jane Bow, 1993.** Based on the true story of a cabbie murder in Geraldton in 1947. Albert Richer, a 22 two year old cab driver who had come to Geraldton from Hearst, picked up a fare at Jerry's Taxi Stand on a Sunday night in April 1947 after just two days on the job. His body was found in a snow bank by snow plow driver Wes Christian two days later about five miles east of town. The roof sign had been torn off and the cab stolen, along with the driver's wallet and \$25 cash. Jerry's Taxi was owned by Gerald Lamontaine of Hearst. On Tuesday the stolen taxi was found in the bush near Hearst. Though police had a good description of the last fare as provided by fellow driver Ronald Saumure, no arrests were made at that time.



Twenty five years later a man, who had been having recurring nightmares about the murder, turned himself in to the RCMP in Vancouver and admitted to the crime. A trial was held in Thunder Bay in 1973 but, since the evidence had been destroyed in the interim and the man was suffering from alcoholic blackouts with large gaps in his memory, he was found not guilty and set free. There was some evidence that he was in the area in April 1947 and he was questioned by police at that time but he was not considered a suspect. Doctors who examined him in 1973 felt he had read about the crime and over the years had assumed guilt. Author Jane Bow, who covered the trial for a Thunder Bay newspaper, wrote this novelized account of the trial twenty years later entitled Dead and Living which was published by the Mercury Press. It can be found on Amazon.ca.

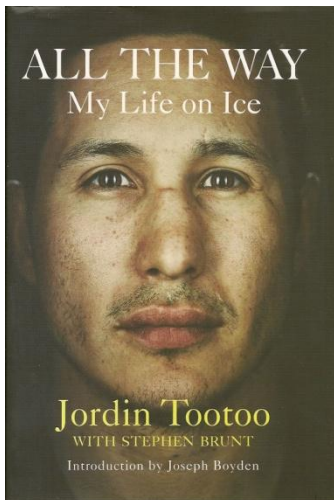
**Folk Art in the Attic**, by Shaun Markey, 2014. Sonderho Press. My wife and I started collecting antiques



in the Ottawa Valley shortly after we got married in 1970 as bargains could be had at country auctions. Our kitchen table, that we still use today, came from a Montgomery and McNeely auction in Carleton Place for the princely sum of \$15. Our upper limit was \$20 and we still have washstands, hutches and coal oil lamps that we bought at various auctions in the 70s and 80s. Though we never met him, author Shaun Markey covers the same ground that we did visiting auctions, antique stores and yard sales in Pembroke, Golden lake, Wilno and Ottawa. He was more of a picker and a dealer and was after the higher-end antiques which we could not afford but it is interesting to follow his path over the same years. He would spend his weekend knocking on doors of old farm houses and talking the folks out of old furniture that they had relegated to the barn or basement. You can find him today at the Bank Street Antique

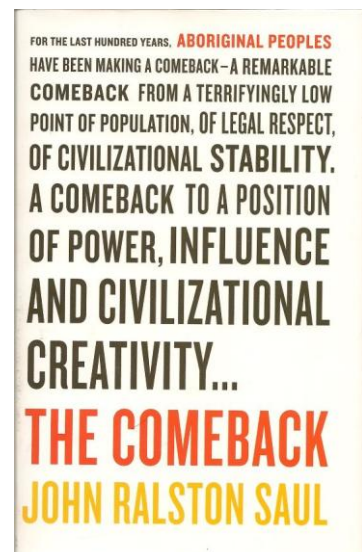
Market south of Sunnyside where he has a room to himself near the front. The antique market is in a down turn right now but I found a couple of neat new stores worth visiting. There is a group market down in the Britannia area on the corner of Britannia and Howe and another place called Crazy Carl's across the street from the Parkdale Farmers Market next to the Carleton Tavern. Pay and display parking is quite costly in that area but go North a couple of blocks and you can find free street parking.

**All the Way, My Life on Ice** by Jordin Tootoo with Stephen Brunt 2014, Viking Press. This book will open



a lot of eyes about the real world of a hockey star. Tootoo does not pull any punches about life growing up in an isolated community where alcohol was the main entertainment and hockey stars got a free pass on bad behaviour. He started drinking at fourteen and talks candidly about the suicide of his older brother Terence, the first Inuit pro hockey player. (Jordin was the first in the NHL). He also talks about his experience in the World Juniors, his relationship with country singer Kelly Pickler and his near fall from grace in the NHL which finally caused him to stop drinking three years ago. Jordin is back in the NHL with New Jersey Devils this year but who knows what he might have accomplished as a player if he had not been drunk for the first part of his career.

**The Comeback**, by John Ralston Saul, 2014. The other three books might be considered light reading but better get your dictionary handy when you tackle this one by one of Canada's leading intellectual authors (and husband of Adrienne Clarkson, former Governor General of Canada). Saul tackles the issues facing the First Nations in Canada going back hundreds of years to the European colonial attitudes that set the



agenda for the development of North America and treatment of the “Indians”. You’ll have to read this book and form your own opinions on his theories. He does give a good explanation of the origins of the “Idle No More” movement of last summer. Four women from Saskatchewan took a stand against the government’s omnibus bill in defence of the environment. First Nations youth, realizing that they had a voice, then mobilized to take stands on various issues and demanded change. Saul thinks that this movement will continue and that this is the Comeback of the title. Might be a good idea to read this book so in ten years you’ll have an understanding of where it all started if he is right.

Bye for now Ernie, Sandy and the Panther (Well done Slovakia, Go Canada Go)

