

It took me several years to enter into the painter's Georgian Bay world. Despite becoming McCarthy's city housemate in 1987 (read *Go-Get-It-Gal*), I was not invited North immediately. Little was encouraged to distract the artist from her work and back then, I was a mere distraction.

But with time, necessity forged cracks in the routines. Doris' painting companion and dear friend Nan Wright gave up her car but was still keen to join Doris and Ginny for a few days of painting. I was booked as the chauffeur and slowly began to encroach on the painters' summer world.

What I found was unlike any 'cottage experience' I'd had before or since! With deference to Cameron – *if you think McCarthy **relaxes** at the cottage, you're wrong!*

5:30
Rise to put the electric kettle on for tea and the stovetop wash kettle on LOW for the inevitable breakfast dishes. Ah, ha! Mouse caught in the trap. While the kettle boils, toss the mouse out for the snakes to enjoy.

5:35
Back to bed to sip tea and watch the sunrise over Gower Bay. Oh, oh, a duck family with bathtub babies is going by!

6:00
Throw back the covers, march to the dressing room, pull nightie over the head, grab large towel and wrap it about as a modesty shield.

6:02
March towards the water's edge; grab face cloth off the line.

6:03
Drop towel, enter the water, suppress squeal – don't draw attention – submerge body and float for 3 minutes. Grab face cloth off rock and scrub body. Exit water; grab modesty shield and dry vigorously.

6:10
Back to dressing room, change, hang towel on line and prepare breakfast.

6:15
Bring tea or coffee to lollygaggers to wake them. Make own bed – tidy corners, adjust bedspread, fluff pillow – work around cat under the covers if necessary.

6:20
Read or meditate in corner chair while lollygaggers stir.

7:00
Exercise on floor with eight pound weights attached for leg lifts.

7:30
Breakfast with Ginny and Lynne (homemade bread, granola, and marmalade, plus ½ banana, Florida orange and tea) Count wedges in orange and marvel that there is the same number as in yesterday's orange.

8:30
Clear dishes, pour hot water from stove into dishpan over dishes, soak.

8:35
Empty 'pee buckets' and rinse with dishwater (after doing dishes), set outside so the 'sun can do its blessed work' then attend to other chores (draw water; bury the onion bag; cut back growth).

9:00
Enter studio and 'tackle' canvas.

12:00
Lunch (cucumber sandwiches on thinly sliced homemade bread, followed by one homemade cookie and half a beer).

12:30
Return to studio and work.

4:00
Put the kettle on and expect friends to gather for tea.

4:10
Share tea and homemade cookies with all who arrive for social hour.

5:00
Clear away dishes (and guests) and pour tot.

6:00
Dinner (one green veg cooked, one pale veg, one starch, meat and homemade rhubarb wine) set water on stove on LOW to heat for dishes.

7:00
Wash dishes and tidy all.

7:15
Play scrabble with whomever!

8:45
Set mousetrap with bacon tied down.

9:00
Fill hot water bottle and go to bed.

Repeat routine every day of the summer.

It took my first trip to McCarthy's cottage to clue in to keeping up. Never again would I miss the morning dip though often I would linger longer than the allotted 3 minutes in the water. After Ginny's frailty kept her from coming north for the summers, I began to spend endless days at McCarthy's Georgian Bay studio.

Those times were extraordinary periods of catching up to McCarthy. Learning to love snakes. Learning to set boundaries. Learning to embrace simplicity. Learning to accept change and all its offerings. Learning to drink rye. Learning to love Georgian Bay. Learning to branch out... paddle farther.... explore deeper than McCarthy herself had ever done.

Two concepts stand as a model from this cottaging era. First is the notion of partnerships, as defined by McCarthy and her original partners in the purchase of several acres of rock on Georgian Bay.

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Artist Present

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