

Our Flood Recovery Story

Town rallies to help artists - by Marie Nagel, February 10, 2005

Wells residents rallied around local artists Bill Horne and Claire Kujundzic last week to help clean up a huge mess after frozen heating pipes burst, flooding their studio and causing massive damage to the interior, including artwork and supplies.

Bill was first alerted to the disaster when he received a phone call in Naramata from his neighbour in Wells, Mike DeWeese, saying, "I've got really bad news."

A combination of a severe cold snap in January followed by a rapid thaw, an eight-hour power failure, and dissipation of antifreeze in the lines over time, caused most of the baseboards on the ground floor of Amazing Space Studio to rupture, spewing hot water across the floors. To make matters worse, it wasn't discovered until a lot of damage had been done.

Bill and Claire had been living in Naramata where Bill was working as Summer Program Director at the Naramata Centre. The job had come just as they completed renovations in order to move into the old Catholic church they had converted to a studio and gallery. Bill hadn't even had a chance to live in the beautifully renovated building. But that prospect was just on the horizon, as he had given his termination notice in Naramata and they were preparing to return to Wells to live and work permanently at the end of May.

After getting the phone call, Bill and Claire left for Wells, stopping at the O'Keefe Ranch near Vernon to use the phone of a friend, Burt Cohen, the resident potter there. When Burt heard their story, he asked if they needed help, and decided to go along.

The sight that greeted them in Wells was devastating.

The print shop, den, bedrooms and storage room were completely flooded. The beautiful fir tongue and groove flooring was now buckled like pyramids. The ruptured water pipes turned the bedrooms into a sauna, and the doors and doorframes had swollen shut. When they were finally forced open, it was a grisly sight. The insides of the doors were thick with slimy mold, and there was mold on the floors, walls, ceiling, and everything in the rooms including paintings, weavings, bedding and clothes.

The rest of the studio and storage room held irreplaceable art works, journals, and keepsakes of sentimental value in cardboard boxes. These were all soaked with water and moldy, and much of it had to be taken to the dump. They included much of Claire's documented history as an artist: catalogues of her exhibitions, newspaper articles about her work, and records of owners of her work, plus their joint financial records, original silkscreen prints, journals from Nicaragua, photographs, and a sketchbook that Claire had made for Bill when they first met in 1981.

"Those are the hard things to let go of," said Bill. "I'm having to learn to not be too tied to material things."

He also felt badly about all the labour that friends and family had put into the renovations. The smaller bedroom had flooring that

was salvaged from the vestry in the old church building. Claire's sister Judy and her partner Ian had installed the shop floor. And the larger bedroom had tongue-and-groove flooring hand-made by Jens Kugelstadt and Bill. Now it all lay in ruins.

To add to the disaster, their insurance policy was void because the most recent building walk-through hadn't been done within 48 hours of the pipes breaking.

In spite of all this, Bill and Claire are undaunted and up beat, determined to overcome this setback, and return to Wells this summer to live and work permanently there.

They are encouraged also by the tremendous outpouring of support and help from local residents and friends. Crews of Wellsians and friends from Prince George and Vernon worked in shifts pulling up flooring, denailing it and wiping it with bleach. They ripped out soaked insulation and gyproc, wiped all affected areas with bleach, and replaced the insulation and vapour barriers. Others hauled boxes of t-shirts, journals and personal records to the Wells Community Hall which the District of Wells had generously allowed them to use. Many trips were made to the dump with items damaged beyond repair, and trips to Quesnel for materials. Some people showed up with soup, devilled eggs, and cookies.

"Everyone was so cheerful and supportive - it kept us going. It was all extremely hard, heavy, unpleasant and uncomfortable work, and it was all done cheerfully," said Bill appreciatively, adding that the building is now stabilized and safe.

Claire said the support of the local people really helped her deal with the losses as well. "I keep looking at what's left, rather than what's gone. It could have been a lot worse," said Claire. "It could have been upstairs as well, but the kitchen, living room and gallery are fine."

Bill Horne and Claire Kujundzic have been an integral part of the community in Wells and beyond since moving here in 1995. As full-time practicing artists they have operated Amazing Space Studio and Gallery during the summers, and have become well known as artists throughout the region. They have both taught many art courses and served as directors of Island Mountain Arts. They were also actively involved with helping to save the Wells school from being closed, with Claire going on a hunger strike to achieve the goal. They were also involved with publishing the Nude Cariboo History calendar fundraiser, serving with CARFAC (a group representing artists), and with the Wells & District Chamber of Commerce. The renovation of the Amazing Space Art Studio into a live/work studio and production shop took seven years.

Bill has been working at Naramata Centre as Summer Program Director since September 2003. After becoming seriously ill with shingles at the end of last summer, he decided to resign his position and return to Wells to make art again with Claire in their building.

Claire has also had health problems, and had major surgery in November, from which she is still recovering. Bill had just given his notice in early January to move back to Wells at the end of May.

The total cost of repairing the damage to the Amazing Space Studio isn't yet known, but it will be many thousands of dollars. While the building is now stabilized, a lot of work remains to be done before they can start producing art again. The sub-floors need to be closed up, 1000 square feet of flooring needs to be reinstalled in the shop, den and bedrooms, including filling, sanding and coating. New gyproc needs to be installed in the

bedrooms and other stripped sections, then mudded, primed and painted. All the finishing trim also needs to be replaced.

Friends and supporters are looking for ways to help, and plans for a fund-raising campaign to help them are in the works. There are possibilities of benefit evenings in Vancouver, Prince George and Quesnel, and possibly some web fund-raising with special art items for donors.

Marie Nagel is an artist and former publisher of the Wells Community News.

BAILING OUT BILL & CLAIRE!

after the flood at Amazing Space in Wells

The "Bail out Bill & Claire" benefit on Sunday March 27, 2005 at The Cottage Bistro, 4468 Main Street, Vancouver, was a big success, with wonderful music by Keith Bennett, Bonnie Ferguson, Michael Booth Palmer, Bob Bossin, Ken Hamm, Ron Thompson & Allen des Noyers, and an art auction of beautiful work by Marie Nagel, Skai Fowler, Esther Rausenberg, Richard Tetrault, and Mia Weinberg, as well as a package by Claire.

MCs Erica Johnson & Seth Klein skillfully navigated us through the evening and took care of young Zoe at the same time. Uprising Breads Bakery gave us gift certificates, and Maria Dunn and Bob Franke (as well as Bob Bossin, Stephen Fearing and Ken Hamm) donated CD's. Sheila McKay of CBC's North By North West interviewed us that Sunday morning and kindly posted a link to our website on her program's page.

Ann Kujundzic managed ticket sales and posters, with poster by Gillian Walker, Susan Madsen, Morna Mcleod, Bonnie Ferguson, Corinne Durocher, Murray Bush, Dan Keening, and Cady Williams.

Thank-you all for helping bail us out!
And thanks to Eugene and the Cottage Bistro ;-)
love,
Claire and Bill



MCs Erica Johnson & Seth Klein with Zoe;
photo courtesy of Bruce Stout.

Thanks to all these friends and family members who have generously contributed to the restoration of Amazing Space:

Vancouver – Lower Mainland:

Cady Williams, Ken Hiebert & Morgan McGuigan, David Beaver, Gillian Walker, Janet Lawton, Mushi Berry, Elisabeth Caton, Rae Maté, Sid Sawyer & Syd Portner, David Diamond, Seth Klein & Erica Johnson, Ann Kujundzic, Olive & Ross Johnson, Helen Mintz, Elizabeth Shefrin, Kate Braid, Thuong Vuong Riddick, Susan Madsen & Stephen Mitchell, Helen Hawthorn, Jim Sinclair, Arnold & Susan Shives, Yukie Kurahashi & Dave Martin, Cynthia Flood, Rebecca Bishop, Danny Wong & Barbara Murray, Amos Nir, Andy & Susanne Kujundzic, Mugs Sigurgeirson & Bob Sarti, Tom Sandborn, Barry Truter & Coral Gallagher, Margaret Inoue, Mark Drew, Yasmin Karim, Wendy Dragomir & Tony Legare, Stuart Alcock & Tim Agg, Lewis Silverberg, Michael Kaisaris, Christine Hayvice, Alan Zisman & Linda Read, Eri Ishii, Sherri Burns, Gail Cryer, Ron Johnson, Merilee & Eve McGregor, Alexander Daughtry, Elaine Horne, Ann McKay, Sue Safayan & Tom, Zandrika & Chris, James, Roger & Ildi, Dan Kealing, Corinne Durocher, Mary Macdonald, Nettie Wild, Jocelyn Banyard, Susan & Bruce Stout, Margaret Holler, Marilyn & Dennis Cherenko, Melanie Ray.

Victoria – Sidney: Thomas Fielding & Teresa McGuire, Norman Yates, Judy Kujundzic & Ian Crawford, Murray Gudmundson, Michael Lewis, Beth Collins, Graham & Marnie Scholes.

Phil Vernon, Maggie Ziegler, Saltspring Island
Gail Noonan, Mayne Island
Bonnie Klein, Roberts Creek
Millie Jenkins & Jim Dew, Qualicum Beach
Yvonne Gordon, Lumby
Jenny Noble, Mary Gradnitzer, Sylvia Graham, Quesnel
Leanne Dawson, Theresa Healey, Murry Krause, Brian Lewis, Wendy Young, John Howarth, Prince George
Imme Askevold, Creston
Christine Pilgrim, Vernon
Denny & Sara Durocher, Port Alberni
Jim Belsham, Cranbrook
Staff and friends at Naramata Centre, Naramata
Pippa Lawson & Lawrence Purdy, Ottawa, Ontario
Sophia Isajiw, Windsor, Ontario

Lisa Kokin, Richmond, California
Joan Becker & Amir Hussain, Northridge, California
Julie Sherwood, London, England
Sheila Johnson, The Scots Kitchen, Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire, Scotland.

These friends contributed hands-on help:

Sandy Bunce — came from Prince George & brought masks, moral support & worked with us.
Brian Lewis — came from Prince George to help, and did loads of laundry.
Burt Cohen — resident potter at O'Keefe Ranch who came from Enderby to work for six days pulling out gyproc, and re-insulating.
Bob Scott — repaired the heating system in one marathon day, and he and Shannon put us all up overnight on our way to Wells.
Mike DeWeese — cleaned up the first gruesome day.
Jason Griffin — worked tirelessly for days pulling up flooring, & taking out gyproc & insulation.
Yael Wand — dropped her own project to work & bring meals to the crew.
Virginia Wilkins — helped take several loads of art & belongings to the hall.

Holly McRae — worked on the building & hauled boxes to the hall.
Jay Vermeer — loaned his truck on two occasions for dump runs, and with Patrick took another load to the dump for us.
Jens Kugelstadt — worked on his day off pulling out gyproc & later helped reinstall the floors.
Leigh Turner — loaned the use of her garage to store stuff temporarily (while she was moving house herself).
Tod Church — pulled out gyproc.
Brian Lewis, Murray Krause, Wendy Young & Tess Healy — loaned their beautiful, warm house to stay in for a week.
Mona Lepine — worked for 3 days, bleaching flooring, insulating, and moving & repacking belongings that were drying out.
Jody Hunter — worked for two days wiping flooring with bleach.
Judy Campbell — wiped flooring with bleach.
Beth Holden & Kate Sulis — brought lunch and reinstalled vapour barrier.
Marie Nagel — took Claire to town to buy insulation, wrote and distributed news article.
John Yates & Neva Hohn — loaned heaters and cooked dinner.
Gary Champagne — loaned a dehumidifier.
District of Wells — allowed us to use the Hall to store stuff for a few days.
Karen Planden & Dave Jeffrey — for the use of the Sunset Theatre to store boxes of artwork until spring.
Maurice Cullinane — donated coveralls and garbage bags.
Sandra Bodenchuk — brought wood-cleaning compound (de-molding stuff).
Rona — giving us their contractor's price on replacement materials.
Dennis Bogle — helped take three loads to the dump.
Carrie Johnston — sent over devilled eggs.
Heather Pottage — loaned her bread machine.
Yukie Kurahashi & Dave Martin — sent a respirator from Vancouver.
Virgie Pilgrim — advice on insurance.
Barry Denny — got hired on short notice to do dump runs.
Yvonne Gordon — helped get us going.
Karen Ann Milne & Anne-Marie Aspireault — bleached walls, flooring, and hauled wet insulation.
Roy Boyetchko — loaned us his Milwaukee drill to air out the subfloor.
International Wayside — brought supplies from Quesnel.
Naramata Centre — gave Bill time off to work in Wells.
Murray Bush — repaired storage subfloor, helped move wires.
Dave Jorgenson — fixed the washing machine & installed ceiling fans.
Maureen Trotter, Annerose Georgeson & Sandy Bunce — helped rebuild the subfloor.
Steve Ross — helped with subfloors and painting.
Charlie Roots — came from Whitehorse for 2 weeks to help repair the floors.
Pippa Lawson & Lawrence Purdy — helped repair trim material & fill holes.
The Katimavik crew — pulled up the old print shop planking and helped repaint the bedrooms

Many friends, co-workers & family called and emailed with their love & moral support, which sustained us while we cleaned up. Thank-you! (if we forgot anyone, please let us know so we can add their names)

...you all helped save our building!

Your generosity has filled us with gladness.
Thank-you.
love,
Bill & Claire



buckled flooring



mould on door



Drywall gutted from bedroom.



print shop subfloor opened,
with blowers & dehumidifiers



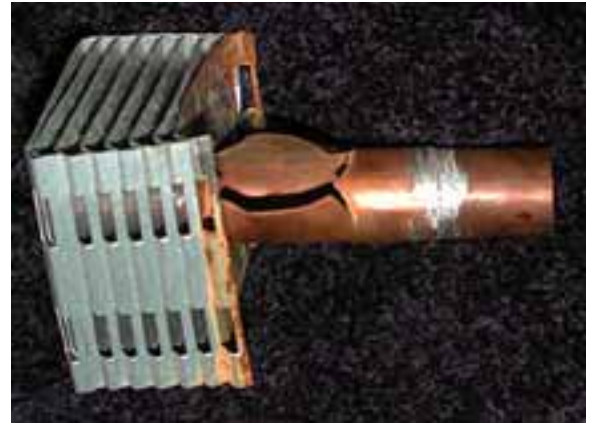
Jens and Tod pull out soggy insulation.



wet insulation removed



Claire with a piece of burst copper baseboard line.



closeup of burst copper baseboard



the floor spike that grazed a Kitec heating line by .5 mm, draining the antifreeze from our system and eventually causing it to freeze and rupture.



Jason Griffin & Bill pulling up print shop lino and plywood



spraying bleach solution to kill mould spores



Judy Campbell and Jody Hunter scraping, bleaching and stacking salvaged flooring.



Burt Cohen & Mona Lepine reinsulate underneath bedrooms.



Numbering planks so they'll go back together easily after repairing subfloor underneath.



Katimavik crew pulling up planking;



removing subfloor planking in print shop and den



bucket of nails from deplanking party



Bill & Sandy Bunce pulling up old den subfloor



drilling subfloor joists for ventilation



Claire sweeps up print shop



patching damaged concrete in print shop



planks airing out



Bill & Sandy Bunce nailing new plate to concrete.



Bill & Maureen Trotter restringing print shop subfloor



repaired, insulated print shop subfloor



Steve Ross & Bill screwing around with the decking



Charlie Roots replanking print shop subfloor



Annerose Georgeson & Charlie Roots vacuum after replanking print shop



re-laying tarpaper on print shop subfloor



temporary bedroom in the gallery



Bill & Charlie re-routering tongue & groove flooring for bedrooms



replaned homemade fir flooring



Pippa Lawson & Lawrence Purdy cleaning up salvaged trim



Jens Kugelstadt laying bedroom floor



Pippa filling holes in flooring.



laying, sanding & filling fir flooring



Jens Kugelstadt applying last coat of urethane



guest bedroom — back!



Bill's favourite salvaged flooring with nail stains :-o



gyproc replaced in bedroom



Katimavik painters Rachael and Nila



main bedroom repainted;



Claire in repainted storage nook



Steve Ross



silkscreen washout tub



new air vents in shop floor



print shop with salvaged & new plywood



Murray Bush & old [confessional?] door panel...



...fir door rebuilt with homemade flooring and installed



gallery bathroom finished with catalpa wood from Naramata Centre



new catalytic Blaze King wood stove