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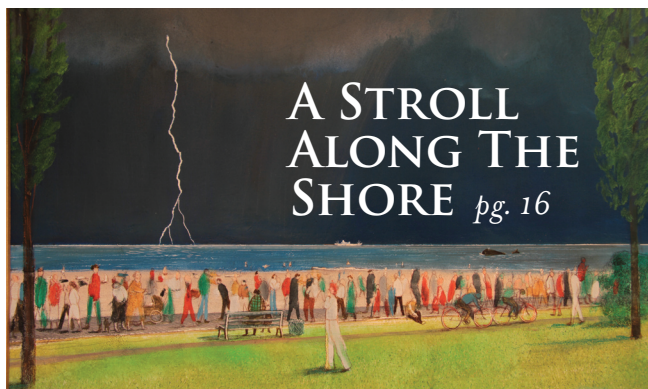
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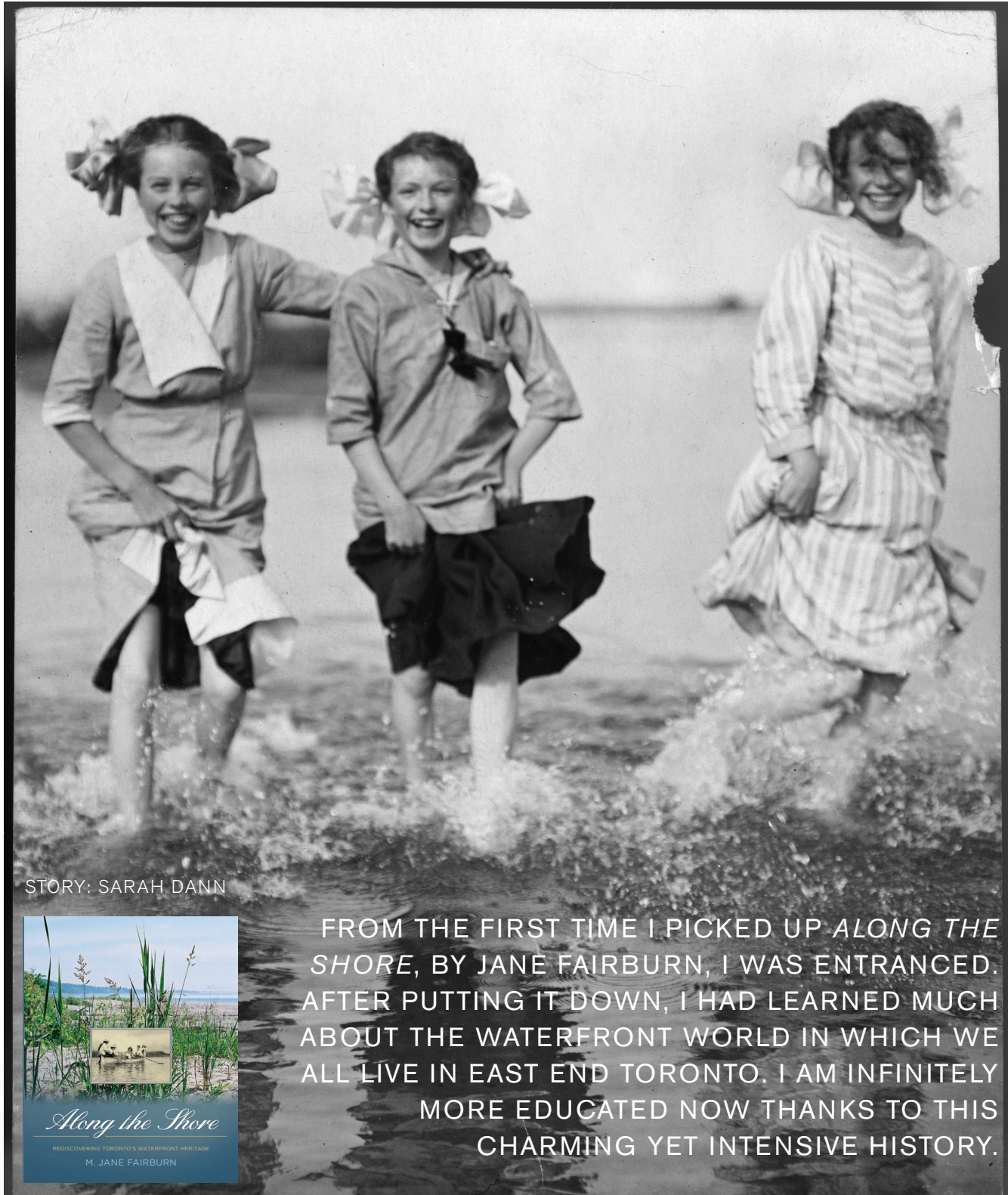
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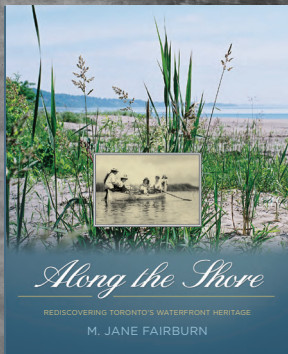
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# A STROLL ALONG THE SHORE



STORY: SARAH DANN



FROM THE FIRST TIME I PICKED UP *ALONG THE SHORE*, BY JANE FAIRBURN, I WAS ENTRANCED. AFTER PUTTING IT DOWN, I HAD LEARNED MUCH ABOUT THE WATERFRONT WORLD IN WHICH WE ALL LIVE IN EAST END TORONTO. I AM INFINITELY MORE EDUCATED NOW THANKS TO THIS CHARMING YET INTENSIVE HISTORY.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE AND PREVIOUS PAGE ARE COURTESY OF THE CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES. THEY ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY THE SAME PHOTOGRAPHER, WILLIAM JAMES. THE ROWBOAT WAS TAKEN IN 1910. THE GIRLS AT LEFT WERE TAKEN ON FISHERMAN'S ISLAND.



"One of my happier accomplishments was to record the stories of people who live along the shore. There is a strong component of oral history."

~ Jane Fairburn

**From my first peek through the pages of *Along the Shore*,** it was apparent that this was not a superficial look at the history of Toronto's waterfront. The book was budding with visuals, full of facts and organized into thoughtful sections for each segment of the Toronto waterfront detailed in the book. It was when I discovered that author M. Jane Fairburn (who goes by Jane) was a lawyer, that the vast amount of research contained in this beautiful book finally made sense.

"The book represents more than ten years of research," Jane tells me when we sit down in the backyard of her home along the bluffs. But it really goes much further back than that I find out as she continues. "As Norman Jewison told me when we did a lengthy interview, 'You can never really escape your early influences.'" Jane's took place along Toronto's waterfront. "I was raised wandering through Highland Creek," she tells me. "My earliest memories are from the waterfront around the Rouge and looking out at that large expanse of water from a young age."

*Along the Shore* takes a close look at four communities: The Scarborough Shore, the Beach, The Island and The Lakeshore. Each section is broken down into a further seven sections which are relevant because they indicate just how much history is covered with respect to each area. They are:

The Nature of the Place; Beginnings; Settlement; Resort Era; The Village; Destruction and Loss; and Renewal. In other words, a complete overview of past to present. And while the book is very organized in its approach, it is designed so you can pick it up and start with any section and either read it completely or move around. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of *Along the Shore* is that even with sixteen pages of works cited, it is an easy and a charming read.

This is in a large part due to the many stories included in the book. Jane says, "One of my happier accomplishments was to record the stories of people who live along the shore. There is a strong component of oral history."

Added to these is Jane's own story, the one that led her to write the book...Ten years back Jane was taking a break from law to raise her children. She had a toddler and two very young twin babies at home and life was very busy. She lived on the bluffs and was out for a run one day when she slipped on ice, and took a tumble right over the edge of the bluffs at a point known as "Killer Hill" - clearly not a place you want to be. She was clinging to the top of the bluffs, alone, with a broken leg. She found herself looking out at the lake and asking herself the as she says, quintessential Canadian question, "Where am I?".



The painting below by artist Laurie Jones shows William Ward and his sisters out for a possibly fateful sail on the bay. Laurie Jones grew up in the Beach and now lives and paints on the Toronto Island.



REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR AND THE ARTIST, LAURIE JONES.



Jane Fairburn, centre, with editor, Jennifer Knoch and publisher, Jack David both of local publishing company ECW Press. Appropriately, they are pictured along the shore at the Balmy Beach Club where the book launch party was held in June.

"This was a lake I'd never seen before. It was a large inland sea and a cold one at that. I was thinking, what was this like when it was really wild?" Home with her young kids and an active mind, Jane set out to answer that question. "History became my lens and my tool," Jane says, "I decided that to reference place and understand the place I was in, I needed to understand geology and geography and I also had to reference the lens of time."

This was where Jane's skills as a lawyer came into play. She had a lot of experience with interviewing and was able to take a consistent and detailed approach to the research. It quickly became apparent that as well as the information available in books, many living people had stories to share and Jane spoke with many people as part of her research. "The book is essentially a group of stories," she says, "A unique cast of characters emerge from the book."

Several of these individuals attended Jane's book launch in June. Jimmy Jones of the Island, for instance,

visit this story link at [www.localmagazine.ca](http://www.localmagazine.ca)



The painting below is by famous local painter, William Kurelek and exists as a side altar mural at Corpus Christi Church in the Beaches. It depicts a storm gathering over Lake Ontario at Woodbine Beach.



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and many others. The lineup for autographs looked like a celebrity book signing not a first-time author's, but Jane is a very warm and friendly person and she clearly has made a lot of friends along the way. Amongst these are her editor, Jennifer Knoch and publisher, Jack David of local publishing company ECW Press (featured in *Local* in January 2012). In her speech, Jennifer mentioned that *Along the Shore* is one of the most complex projects she has worked on and Jane concedes that it was largely the permissions for the many visuals - paintings, photographs, maps and more - that made the project a massive challenge. ECW Press deserves credit for the lovely layout of the finished product. The fonts, paper, even the section dividers make this a beautiful read.

I found it notable that Jane was able to organize each section of lakefront under similar headings. She explained, "Once I got into the archives, what became quickly clear to me is that it is one connected shoreline from east to west. We are not only connected geographically and geologically

but also people had similar experiences in the east and west. That is the way the city evolved, along the shore."

So from our earliest beginnings, native settlements to fishing communities, deforestation and resorts to more recent developments, the book uses poetry and art and photography to tell us about our own lakefront history. It is a testament to Jane that her book features first-ever published paintings, like the one above from local artist William Kurelek. And paintings like Laurie Jones' on the previous page were shared to tell the tales of our history in a way that resonates.

At the book launch, a few people including Mark Mattson of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper (see *Local* article, *The Lake With Love*, Summer 2011), commented on "Renewal" being the final chapter of each section and the optimism this inspires about the future of our lakefront communities. And indeed, talking to Jane, I can imagine another book in another ten years. As Jane says, "It is through the lens of these communities that we are still connected to the lake."