

# Memoirs of One Small Town Boy

## Part 1 – My Learning Years

### Chapter 1 - In the Beginning

According to my Certificate of Baptism, I was born on July 5, 1916 in Grande Mere, Quebec, Canada. I was the second of three children born to David and Margaret Kydd. The eldest was my sister Edith Magdalene who was born January 21, 1915, and died six months later, before I was born. My brother, William Malcolm, (Bill), arrived two days after Christmas in 1917.

There are a couple of old photograph somewhere or other, one showing me in a white dress, possibly after being baptized, and another showing Bill and I on the cement railing on the front steps of our Grande Mere home.

I have a vague recollection of a friend of mother's, Mrs. Aboud, who sometimes took care of my brother and me. (Many years later, when we lived in Arnprior, I met her son, but never got to know him well.)

At that time, dad was working for The Laurentide Paper Company, which, many years later, merged with, and became part of the Consolidated Paper Company.

### Chapter 2 – Amos

Around 1920, dad was transferred to Amos, a small town in northern Quebec, located about fifty miles south of James Bay, which protrudes from the southern end of Hudson Bay. He bought pulpwood from local farmers or contractors, and arranged to ship it to the paper mill in Grand Mere..

I remember living in a second floor apartment and that most of the children who we played with were French Canadian. We all went to some kind of pre-school activities, conducted by the Catholic Church. Everyone spoke French. Dad was bilingual and, because all our playmates were French, Bill and I did too.

My earliest recollections were about getting into trouble. Not too far from where we lived was a freight yard, and as everyone knows, trains, freight cars and steam locomotives are irresistible attractions for small boys, My younger brother and I were no exceptions.

One event that I clearly recall happened when the two of us wandered off toward the freight yard and noticed, that on the side of each boxcar, near one end, a ladder lead to the top. We tried climbing one of these, and discovered the catwalk, about two feet wide, which ran the entire length of

the car on this walk and jump from one car to the next. We were really enjoying ourselves until mother spotted us and was convinced that what we were doing, was not such a good idea for a five year old and his three and half year old brother. She headed our way, collecting a nasty willow switch. She ordered us down off the top of the freight car and applied the switch to my bottom while herding the two of us home. It seemed unfair that I was singled out for the switch application, but she explained that I was the older one and should know better. Child abuse laws at that time did not prohibit the use of willow switches.

Winter came soon after and one day, shortly before Christmas, Bill and I went with mother to the local hardware store, the only one in town. There were all kinds of goods on display, many of which appealed to us, two sleighs in particular. We proceeded to latch on to them, and began dragging them around the store, figuring that mother might buy them for us. Before long, we came to a fat old man with white whiskers and a white fur trimmed red suit and hat. He told us he was Santa Clause and took us up, one on each knee. He asked us lots of questions including whether we had been good and what we would like for Christmas. While he was talking to us, the sleds disappeared and, although we looked all through the store, we couldn't find either one of them.

Christmas arrived a few days later and what do you know? There were the same two sleighs under the tree. So we figured out what happened. That guy Santa took them and played with them until Christmas. After that I never quite believed in Santa Clause.

### Chapter 3 - Vancouver

After a year or so, we moved to Vancouver and lived with Grandma Matheson for a while. She had a nice home at 1376 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, just a few blocks from Granville Street.

Our grandmother was a remarkable lady. She was married to William Matheson, who had been born in Rosyth, Scotland, just across the firth from Edinburgh. They owned a two hundred acre farm near Pembroke, Ontario. They had thirteen children, four of whom died at an early age. Granddad Matheson was killed when cutting down a tree on their farm.

Some time after his death Grandma sold the farm and moved the surviving family, three boys and six girls, my mother and my aunts and uncles, to British Columbia. All of them were successful. She had a nice home on 13th Avenue in Vancouver.

Aunt Mildred, Grandma's eldest daughter, lived not very far away with

her husband, Peter Wright. Uncle Peter owned a big, seven passenger Cole touring car. It had two folding jump seats, facing the rear located behind the front seat. The car also had several spare tires. Uncle Peter used to take us for occasional long drives. Stanley Park was a favorite run and I remember the huge tree that the road passed through, like a tunnel. Other trips took us south of the border. One was to Blaine, Washington. There I recall our visiting an Indian burial site where we saw many bones, some skulls and a few arrowheads.

Muriel, her second daughter, was a nurse at Vancouver General Hospital. She had a great sense of humor, teased the two of us a lot, and loved knitting. She kept all the men in the family supplied with beautiful hand knit wool Argyle socks and sweaters. She loved my brother and I very much, was generous with her hugs, teased us frequently until we were laughing. Every boy needs an aunt like her,

Aunt Edith, the third daughter, married James Gordon who, I believe, had been born in Scotland. He still had a very noticeable Scottish accent, and was manager of a branch of the Royal Bank of Canada in Vancouver. They had one son, Jim, who was about two years younger than Bill. Several years later we occasionally played with him. He had a big electric train layout, and also made model aircraft.

Uncle Jim had the very first radio I ever heard. This was in the early 1920s. It was a crystal set and had earphones. If I remember correctly, it was tuned by turning a dial, which moved a hinged metal plate closer to a fixed plate on the front panel. There was a wire coil, which had several wires connected to it. As I recall, we only heard two stations, one in Vancouver and the other in Seattle WA. I believe the Seattle station was KMOX.

Our mother, Margaret was the next oldest. She had been a schoolteacher in Pembroke. She met dad when he was working as a construction supervisor for McKenzie Mann, building the roadbed for a branch of the Canadian National Railroad, which ran from Quebec City, north of Montreal and connected with the main transcontinental Canadian National line at Pembroke.

Then came Aunt Corrine, another schoolteacher, who remained a spinster all her life. She was quiet but had many outside interests

Finally, the youngest of our aunts, I remember, was all excited at the time because she was about to marry Marjorie, whom Richard Palmer, a horticulturist who was the Director of the Dominion Experimental farm in Summerland, B.C. Their wedding took place in Grandma's home on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Vancouver was a very pretty city with many green lawns and trees. The

vacant lot next door to Grandma's house was large and there were tall bushes to play or hide in. We did not know many other kids so we played together most of the time. When I was six, they sent me off to Cecil Rhodes School, which was located within walking distance. I don't remember much about it or even the name of my teacher. However, I must have been promoted to grade two.

#### Chapter 4 – Coalmont - 1924

In 1924, before the start of the school year we moved from Vancouver to Coalmont, a small town with a population of about 100, located some miles inland, located on the Kettle Valley Railroad, which was part of the Canadian Pacific Railroad system. This line branched off the main transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railroad, east of a town called Hope, then meandered east, north and back south of the main transcontinental line and closer to the US border. It ended at Kootenay Lake, at a town called Proctor. From there freight and passengers took a ferry south to Creston, at the end of the lake, where the railroad continued eastward through the Crow's Nest Pass and the Rocky Mountains to rejoin the main Canadian Pacific line at Medicine Hat in Alberta.

Coalmont served as the shipping point for coal, which was mined in Blakeburn, a town located at the mine head, which was located up and over the mountain from the valley through which the railroad ran. The coal was transported by an aerial tramway from the mine head to the tippie, located at the railroad in the valley. Here it was sorted and loaded onto coal cars for shipment by rail to Vancouver and thence, most of it, by ship to Japan.

Coalmont, besides boasting three general stores, Rossiter's, MacTavish's and Matheson Brothers, and a one-room schoolhouse, formerly the All Saints Anglican church. This housed grades one through grade four or five. It was smaller and friendlier school than Cecil Rhodes.

When we first moved to Coalmont in 1924, I attended this school and was placed in second grade. It was smaller and friendlier than Cecil Rhodes. There was a pot bellied stove to warm it in winter. The rest room facilities were two two-seater outhouses, located over two trench-like pits, a hundred feet or so back of the school. One was for boys, the other for girls. Both were unheated. The schoolroom had a sink and a hand pump, which provided water from a well.

In looking back, I believe that, if the number of students is not too large and the teacher is good, the one room schoolhouse has some great advantages. The students can progress faster or slower than their classmates.

I seem to remember that Mrs. Mills was the name of our our teacher. She handled the school very well and kept us all busy. We all liked her.

Due to he fact that mother and dad had read us to sleep every night, I had come to like reading, and learned reading more quickly than arithmetic. So, early on, I was reading with the third graders, but taking arithmetic with the other Grade two students.

Recess was usually spent outdoors and the equipment consisted of open fields, a ditch, a swing, a see saw and a couple of different sized balls. Jumping the ditch was a bit of a challenge, but it was a favorite activity of the boys. One time when I tried, I missed, fell, and wound up with a fractured right elbow.

Dr Sheffield put my arm in a sling and I was sent to the nearest good hospital, which was in Vancouver. The only practical way to get there was the train. The westbound stopped at Coalmont, on demand at 3:30 AM. I was placed aboard in the care of the conductor. The train arrived in Vancouver in mid-morning where one of my aunts met me and took me directly to Vancouver General Hospital, where Dr. Seldon, the family doctor, set the bone and put my arm in a special sling. Then I was taken to grandmother's house for a few days before being shipped back to Coalmont. I had to wear the sling for several weeks, and when it was removed, I was unable to straighten my arm and the elbow had very little movement.

Back in Coalmont, the treatment for straightening the arm was rather simple. It consisted of a warm olive oil massage, followed by hanging me by the right arm from the top of the big, thick refrigerator door in my uncles' general store. Each treatment lasted for fifteen minute. My protests, though loud and frequent, were ignored, and, gradually, the arm began to straighten. There were several treatments daily. Meanwhile I learned to write with my left hand.

During the school-year, my brother and I spent many frequent weekends and the summer vacation at my uncles' Triple X ranch. Which was located about thirteen miles north of Coajmont, not far beyond Manning Siding.

## Chapter 5 - The Triple X Ranch – 1924

My uncles, John, Bill and Alan were the Matheson Brothers. They also owned the Triple X ranch, located on the Kettle Valley Railroad, about three miles north of Manning Siding, and about thirteen miles from Coalmont.

Bill, my brother, and I spent the summer and, during the school year, most of the weekends. at the ranch. Our uncles also leased several thousand

additional acres of adjacent government owned land, which, though mountainous with quite a bit of forest, provided good grazing.

The ranch business involved buying calves in the early spring, feeding them on the ranch all summer, rounding them up in the fall, loading them into cattle cars and shipping them to the Swift or Burns, meat packing companies in Vancouver.

They kept a few cattle over the winter to provide meat for several stores and other customers, including the Blakeburn company store.

The ranch also had it's own slaughter house where they prepared some of the beef and pork in order to supply these facilities. They also provided poultry, dairy products and what other produce they could grow, including cabbage, carrots, parsnip, potatoes, turnips, radish and horseradish, strawberries, and more.

Every Monday and Wednesday morning, throughout the year a load, of fresh produce and meat left the ranch in time to be there, if possible before the store opened.

During the winter, when the snow was too deep for trucks, transport was by sleigh, drawn by a team of horses and the trip took considerably longer. Cow hides or buffalo robes helped keep driver and passengers on the sleigh warm in winter. Bill and I liked riding on the sleigh, all bundled up in a fur robe.

When the snow could be plowed, usually by a team of horses pulling a triangular wood plow, the truck took over, but the weather could still be below freezing.

There was no anti-freeze then, so in order to keep the water in the radiator and engine block from freezing when the motor was shut down, both had to be drained. It would be replaced after the motor had been running long enough to warm up.

Below freezing weather made engines more difficult to start. The oil became thicker as the temperature fell and multi-grade oil had yet to be developed. To overcome this problem, kerosene was added to the engine oil to thin it to ease starting. However it soon boiled off and regular oil had to be added.

The cab of the truck could be very cold too and car heaters had not yet been invented, or, if they had, we had not heard of them. Heated rocks helped keep the cab warm for a while and eventually, the heat from the engine helped to some degree.

Alan was the youngest of our three Matheson uncles. He liked to tell us stories about some strange animals. One tale, that I particularly recall, was about a side-hill gouger. He described it as being about the size of a medium

sized dog. It had shorter legs on one side than on the other, so that, as it moved along the side of a hill, its body would be upright and level. He told us to keep an eye out for them. Others included stories about a skookumchuck, but I don't remember what they were supposed to look like. We never saw either one. Furthermore I never found a reference to such a animal in any dictionary or encyclopedia. It must be very rare.

We were at the age when we were losing our baby teeth. Uncle Alan devised an unusual method of extracting them. He would tie one end of a strong thread around the offending tooth, seat us on a chair just inside of a closed door. He tied the other end to the doorknob. The first person opening the door pulled the tooth.

Uncle John was the eldest of the Matheson brothers and he, more or less, managed the agricultural part of the business. He understood soil, crop rotation, when to plant, how to apply manure and when to reap. He was a quiet man and said very little. He would occasionally buy some run-down ranch property, rotate crops for a couple of years and fix up the buildings and sell it for a good profit.

Uncle Bill was a very capable businessman, a good organizer and a good money manager. He had a very pleasant baritone voice and would sometimes sing while he was driving the truck. One of his favorites was "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen". I think Kathleen may have been the name of an old flame, who had died. He never married. Alan and John both married several years later.

## Chapter 6 - Trouble at the Ranch

During the school year, when my brother, Bill and I had been at the ranch on a weekend, we were expected to be aboard whatever vehicle was going to Coalmont. It left the ranch around 5 AM on Monday.

One nice spring day Bill and I did some thinking and decided that if we did not show up by the time the truck had to leave, it would go without us and we would not have to go to school until the next trip, later in the week. In order to disappear, we both climbed aboard Rowdy, a gentle old horse which was assigned to us. We had spoiled him thoroughly by frequently feeding him carrots and apples. We needed neither saddle nor bridle with Rowdy. He probably knew that we were up to some mischief and no doubt, approved.

Our thinking was partly right and partly wrong. We were right in that the truck left without us and did not return, but wrong because we did not miss school. When we came back on Rowdy, Grandma showed us how

wrong we were. She met us with lunches already packed, and instructions to walk along the railroad track for thirteen miles and, upon arrival at Coalmont, to go directly to school. She told us that the engineer of the daily freight train would be keeping his eye out for us as he passed, and would report our progress when he arrived at Coalmont.

We arrived at school shortly after lunchtime and Mrs. Mills, our teacher, informed us that we would be staying after school to make up some time. Like Robbie Burns wrote many years ago, “The best laid plans of mice and men aft gang agley”. He was right.

The method used to communicate with the engineer of the moving locomotive, before the days of radio, was quite simple. A hoop with the message attached, was hung on a rod on a message post located by the track. When there was a message a flag was raised. Upon seeing the signal, the engineer would use a long handled stick with a hook to pick off the hoop as he passed. After he had removed the message he would toss the hoop on the ground where it could be collected and reused.

Neither Bill nor I lacked imagination when it came to mischief. There was an old Dodge Brothers touring car, vintage about 1925, which was kept in an open shed, located off the low end of the fenced corral. Bill and I discovered that, if we put the gearshift in reverse and held down the starter button on the floor, we could back the car up the slope of the corral. Then we could drive it back into the shed. Bill and I took turns. Before long we ran the battery down, which ended that driving experience. Fortunately, the car could be started using the hand crank. My uncles wondered why the battery was low, but we thought it better not inform them.

Whenever we were at the ranch, Bill and I had certain assigned chores: collecting the eggs from the hen house, cranking the handle on the De Laval cream separator every morning before breakfast, helping clean the stables and the hen house, gathering the few cows each evening that were used to supply our needs and bringing in firewood.

Some of my fondest memories of the ranch were of the social gatherings. Once or twice a year, all the neighbors from miles around would gather for an evening of entertainment. Everyone who had a musical instrument would bring it. The gathering was held in a very large family room, which had been the main room of the old log cabin, which predated the two-story addition. This new extension had six bedrooms upstairs above a living-dining room-kitchen plus a big pantry.

Centered at one end of the main room in the old cabin was a large fireplace, which would easily hold logs about four feet long. At the other was a small, raised stage with a grand piano and several chairs.



Some of the guests brought violins, other stringed instruments, banjos and some wind instruments. Others had very nice voices.

Bill and I were supposed to be in bed. but since the stairs to the second floor went from this family room, we huddled behind the door at the bottom of the stairs, in our pajamas and listened. To this day, I remember Uncle John singing Stephen Foster songs in a beautiful tenor voice, Aunt Marjorie, Aunt Corinne and mother playing the piano. I didn't recognize it then, but remembered later that mother was playing classical selections from operas. When I look back, it seems amazing how much real musical talent there was among these rural families.

## Chapter 7 - Grandma Matheson

Our Grandmother was an imposing lady. She was about six feet tall and had a dignified bearing and was the most commanding figure in any gathering. Everybody liked and respected her. She was a community leader.

When Bill and I were old enough to help around the place, she always had work for us to do. She was a wonderful cook and made excellent pies and bread. She believed that idle boys would get into mischief.

At Coalmont, Monday was washday. If Bill or I were around, we had to pump the water and fill the big boiler on the stove. When the water was hot, we had to transfer from the copper boiler on the kitchen range it to the washing machine, using a pail. The washing machine was an early hand operated model manufactured by Easy. It had a handle on the side which one of us would pump back and forth to churn the clothes. After the washing was done, the laundry would be rinsed in a big washtub and then run through the hand-cranked wringer. Everything ran on boy power when we were around. The laundry was hung out to dry on a clothesline.

Grandma had some ideas on how to stay healthy. She believed that drinking plenty of hot liquid in the winter would help prevent colds. She saw to it that there was always something hot to drink, simmering on the back of the kitchen range. We were expected to take some every time we passed by. She also believed in cod liver oil and kept a bottle on the dresser in her bedroom along with a tablespoon. We were expected to take a spoonful every day. Bill and I didn't share this belief because we thought it tasted awful. After some deep thought, we figured that if we could find someplace in her room to dispose of a couple of tablespoons daily, we would solve our problem. We discovered some spaces between the tongue and groove floorboards and figured that, if we rolled up the carpet a bit we could pour the tablespoons of tonic into the cracks, then roll the carpet back, and

nobody would be any the wiser. This worked well for a while. The fluid level of the bottle went down at the correct rate, and the liquid in the cracks disappeared, but, after a while the fish odor became quite apparent and I wound up in hot water again.

## Chapter 8 - Books, Nature and Trouble

Bill and I were fortunate, in that, ever since we were able to understand, mother or dad read stories to us at bedtime. First they were nursery rhymes and as we grew older, boys magazines. The Boy's Own Annual, an English Boy Scout book and the works of authors like G. A. Henty and Mark Twain. We enjoyed them. We learned that even in books, boys can get into trouble. One spring, after reading about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and the latter rafting on the Mississippi river, the Similkameen, or Tulameen, river, (we called it the former), river, which flowed south down the valley past Coalmont, was having it's spring flood. Normally it was only a few inches deep and forty or fifty feet wide as it swirled over round stones, but in flood, it was a fast flowing torrent several feet deep, which overflowed it's banks and became a threat to life and property.

We decided to build ourselves a raft and head down river. There were lots of suitable logs along the banks, as well as numerous planks, left there by previous floods. All we needed was a few spikes and a hammer to nail some together and build our own raft. It only took us a day or two before we were ready to launch.

We pushed off into the river and found the current was pretty strong . We quickly discovered that steering the raft was not an easy job, although we found our adventure fairly thrilling. We were swept along by the swift current, and through some rough rapids. About a mile downstream there was a shallow area caused by a rocky spit which stuck out into the stream. Here we went aground. Unfortunately someone must have ratted on us, because Grandma appeared with a willow switch in her hand.

Now, because of past adventures during which I had supposedly led my brother into evil ways, I wasn't too popular with her, and this river spree turned out to be the straw that got my backside warmed. The laws about child abuse were more lenient then, and Grandma was convinced that I could absorb knowledge by way of my transom. Life is unfair, but maybe she was right because, many years later, I did learn to sail.

After a couple of years his phase of our life at Coalmont and the ranch came to an end when dad located became Camp Superintendent at B.C. Spruce Mills in Lumberton B.C. and we moved there.

## Chapter 9 - Lumberton

Now a ghost town, with very few signs that it ever existed, Lumberton was then a small company town in southern British Columbia altitude 5000 feet, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The only industry was B.C. Spruce Mills, who owned and operated the sawmill, the hotel, the store, the meeting hall, the barn, the baseball grandstand, the skating rink, all the homes, the school, and in fact, everything except the post office and the railroad station. A description of the sawmill appears in the next Chapter.

It was a great town for growing boys. There were streams to fish, hills to slide on in winter, mountains to climb, lakes only a few miles away, a large millpond to play in or on. Everything a boy could wish for was right there, and it was free.

Our house was a company provided cottage, which had a kitchen with a large pantry off it, a living-dining room, two bedrooms and a bathroom with no running water. There were screened porches back and front, a two hole out house and a woodshed, both located some distance behind the house. The kitchen was equipped with a wood burning kitchen range and a pump by the kitchen sink. Water for bathing or washing clothes was heated in a double boiler on the kitchen range, carried in pails to the point of use. Bath water was drained onto the ground near the house. Dishwater was disposed of on the ground farther away.

During the warmer months, Bill and I liked to sleep in a small tent near the house. Then, until the temperature dropped several degrees below zero, we slept on the screened front porch. Our wool blankets were made for, and purchased from the Hudson Bay Company. They were made in several grades, which were classified by point ratings. The warmest were, I believe, twelve point blankets. The point system was derived from the number of beaver pelts the trappers had to trade for them. We wore woolen toques and used three blankets plus a home made quilt on the coldest nights.

The homes were located on two benches on the side of the mountain, across the valley from the railroad. We young ones called those who lived on the upper bench, the top-hill gang and the other the bottom hill gang. Bill and I belonged to the bottom hill gang. This natural division made it easy to organize baseball or hockey teams, or snowball fights.

## Chapter 10 - Off to a Bad Start

Shortly after we arrived, one of the older kids called me over and

offered me a nickel if I could beat up another boy, about my size, who was said to be a bully. This was big money then, and I needed another five cents to buy a fifteen-cent fishing fly. I managed to beat Bill Trussler that day, and found out afterwards that he lived next door. However it was only the beginning. We fought quite regularly after that. Whenever we were caught fighting at school, we would both get the strap. If I remember correctly, the penalty for fighting was five whacks on each hand with a leather strap, which was a little shorter than dad's razor strap. Some of us never learn. We knew we were going to be punished if we were caught in the act, but we still did it.

When dad came home after work, I had to tell him about getting the strap at school, how many strokes and why. He then proceeded to apply the same number of strokes to my bottom with his razor strop. Then he asked me what crime I had committed. We knew the rules and what our punishment would be, and we did not, either then or now, think it was unfair. However if dad thought, the punishment undeserved, he would have a talk with the teacher.

We had other problems at school. One day our teacher announced that the doctor from Cranbrook, a town about eight miles away, was coming tomorrow to give us small pox vaccinations. Then the older kids told us how much it really hurt, and had us pretty scared. As a result, about six of us huddled just before school next morning, and came up with a game plan. We would disappear during morning recess and hide until the rest were all vaccinated and the doctor had gone back to Cranbrook. So at recess we took off and hid in trees in the surrounding woods. The teacher sent the older pupils out to search for us, but they were unsuccessful, and the doctor departed. We were all punished with the strap. Next morning the doctor made an unannounced visit and we received the dreaded inoculations anyway, which, by the way, did not hurt as much as the strap. So much for our strategy, it misfired.

## Chapter 11 - Events at School

One other event occurred at school, which had a minor effect on my life. I fell off a swing while trying to make it go higher than the support bar, and broke my left wrist. Remember that I had broken my right elbow in Coalmont a couple of years earlier, and because it did not straighten out for quite a while, I had learned to write with my left hand. So, now I had to begin all over again, this time learning to write right-handed once more. I still blame my inability to write legibly on all my broken bones.

I had another arm problem while recuperating from this broken arm. It happened during the winter and one day we went skating on a pond. We were not very proficient skaters. My arm was still in a white triangular sling. There was a small Boston Bull terrier on the pond too, that many of the kids had teased. He was partially blind and quite nervous. While I was skating near him I lost my balance. Thinking I was going to fall I raised my left arm, sling and all, hoping to avoid a tumble. The dog must have thought I was going to hit him and jumped up and bit me under the arm, between the elbow and the shoulder. He hung on, taking out a hunk of flesh with him. Someone drove mother and me to the doctor's office in Cranbrook, where the wound was cauterized. I still have the scar.

I don't remember very much about what we did in school, but one project does stand out in my mind. Miss Johnson, our teacher, gave several classes an assignment, which Bill and I both enjoyed. It was to collect as many species of wild plant life as we could, mount them in a folio, identifying and labeling each of them. Sometimes, the two of us worked together and, at other times, alone. As I recall, both of us located, mounted, and looked up the names of more than 200 specimens. I kept the book for many years. It is hard to realize that there are so many different plants around us and that we recognize so few.

## Chapter 12 – Baseball and Black Bears

A major summer pastime for both the men and boys of the town was baseball. The company had built a field with grandstand on a level piece of land, located just off the dirt highway, on the other side of the railroad from town. Behind the grand stand were a lot of jagged rocks. that had fallen down from a cliff on the mountain above. These rocks made it hard to find all of the balls, which had been fouled up and over the grand stand.

We boys enjoyed watching the men playing, but we also paid particular attention where the foul balls went. We helped the men look for them but purposely did not find all of them, because we needed some balls for our own use. So after everyone had left, we replenished our supply. We often used a ball until the cover was knocked off and replaced by friction tape.

This was years before Little League existed. Very few adults were involved. Only a few of us had our own gloves. So it was customary for the players of one team to leave their gloves on the field while they were at bat for the other team to use. Thus there were usually enough gloves to go around.

Top Hill and Bottom Hill were the usual teams. But sometimes we

challenged kids from Cranbrook. When this happened, the visiting team had to walk eight miles each way, because there were only a few cars in the entire town and all the men worked.

I remember one day, when walking home along the gravel highway after a game in Cranbrook, we spotted a fairly large patch of ripe wild raspberries, about a hundred feet or so from the road, and we detoured. I had located a spot where the picking was particularly good, and was eating away when I heard a rustling in the bushes to my right. It turned out to be a cute black bear cub. Then I heard rustling to my left, which was caused by the considerably larger mother bear. She did not look nearly as cute, and did not look overly happy to see me between herself and junior. She started moving my way. It suddenly dawned on me that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. So I ran back to the road and beyond it toward the railroad track as fast as I could. I didn't have a stopwatch with me, but I think I came very close to setting an Olympic record. Thank goodness Mama bear did not follow me very far.

### Chapter 13 - Time with Dad

Both Bill and I loved the time dad spent with us. He taught us to survive in winter, how to use a jack knife to make a shelter from fir boughs, how to make a fire using only a single match, or no match at all, and he gave us each both knives and small round waterproof metal match containers, which we carried with us at all times. He taught us to burrow into deep snow to survive in 40° below zero weather and wind. He took us camping and taught us to leave our campsite so that no one would know we had been there. He showed how to put out a campfire three times covering it with earth and water.

He made certain we learned to swim. His swim teaching technique was really very simple, but effective. Hold a small slab of wood out in front of us, and kick with our feet. We could either kick like a frog or move our legs up and down, bending them at the knees. As soon as we felt confident that we weren't going to sink or drown, he taught us the breast stroke, then, the sidestroke, and finally, the crawl. Before long we played in the water with no fear at all.

We did other things besides swim. Once, while hiking along the railroad track to Lake Moyie to go camping, he showed a large rock, which had been split by blasting, during the construction of the railroad, exposing a fossilized animal that resembled a very large beaver.

One of the men in town organized a Boy Scout troop, and almost every

eligible boy in town proudly joined. It was a great organization, which has had a valuable influence on my life. The troop held most meetings in the company hall, but also had many of outdoors and enjoyed almost all of them.

#### Chapter 14 - A Visit to the Logging Camps

One summer, when I was about 10 or 11 and school was out for summer vacation, Dad took me with him on his rounds of the seven logging camps he supervised. During the day, he would leave me under the supervision of one of the several camp cooks, most of whom were Chinese. They believed that boys my age should work and set me to peeling potatoes for the men's supper or apples for apple pies. They also believed that those who worked deserved to be paid and would give me a whole apple pie for myself for a between meals snack.

Most of the lumbermen were from northern Europe: Finland, Norway, Poland or Sweden. They all worked hard and had large appetites. The food had to be both plentiful and good. Otherwise, they would quit and get a job elsewhere.

These the were the days of the double bladed axe and the two-man cross cut saw, long before the introduction of chain saws. These men were big and strong.

They felled the trees, first sawing a horizontal V shaped wedge from the side of the tree toward which they intended it to fall. Then they made another cut from the other side just a few inches above the V cut. After the tree fell, it was sawed it unto various lengths depending on the quality of the individual log. Then the logs would be dragged by teams of horses and piled on skids from which they could be rolled into the flume, which would float them to the mill.

The flume was a V shaped structure, about as high as my shoulder. It carried about three feet of water in the bottom, and had a gentle gradient such that there was a constant current flow, which carried the logs along the flume from lake to lake, until they reached the pond at the sawmill. Most of the way, the flume was built on a trestle which ran either along the side of a mountain or across a valley, when it was perhaps a hundred feet above the valley bottom. Along side of the flume there was walkway made of planks and a handrail.

#### Chapter 16 – Finding an Elephant

After completing the visit to the camps, dad and I were walking, some six to eight miles, back to Lumberton along the flume. At one point the trestle was high in the air crossing a valley, I noticed something that looked like a large gray animal in the woods on the other side near the valley bottom. I pointed it out to dad and he said it looked like an elephant. Since elephants not native to British Columbia, dad went to the railroad station as soon as we got back to Lumberton and told the station agent, who was also the telegraph operator. He found out that an elephant had gone missing from a circus, which was performing in Cranbrook, They immediately sent out a crew and recaptured it. We received complimentary tickets to the circus as a reward.

I may be the only boy to have found a live elephant in the wilds of British Columbia.

#### Chapter 15 - The Case of the Leaking Bibles

This was the period when the Women's Christian Temperance Union had convinced the British Columbia Provincial government to prohibit the sale and distribution of hard liquor. But people found ways to circumnavigate such laws. One of these circumnavigators was a Swedish logger who worked at one of the camps.

A small problem arose when the freight agent at the railroad station contacted dad and told him that some boxes of bibles had arrived, addressed to this man at camp VII, and that one of the boxes was leaking something that did not smell like bibles.

Dad did not drink, smoke or swear, but still held the respect of all the men who worked with him. Both he and the freight agent knew what was in the shipment but dad delivered them to the addressee with a warning that, "If any man in the camp gets drunk, the bible recipient would be fired." I never heard anything more about the incident, so the warning must have been taken to heart.

#### Chapter 16 - Our Lumberton Navy

Lumberton was where I first became interested in boat construction. The postmaster, Louis Hilton, was a veteran of WW I. His hobby was woodworking, which included making beautiful inlaid furniture and building beautiful clinker built rowboats. Sometimes he would let us watch him as he shaped and fitted the planks to the frames. He never hurried. Everything had to fit absolutely perfectly. I'm not sure whether watching him make his boats had any connection with the following or not..

Across from the railroad station, between the track and the dirt



highway, was a large pond, only a few feet deep and about half a mile long. Grown up Floridians would call it a lake, but in our imagination, it was more of an ocean. The kids in town were divided geographically into two groups, the Top hill gang and the Bottom Hill gang. We were part of the latter gang and therefore closer to this ocean. These two societies were constantly at war. Up till now the weapons had been mostly snowballs and sometimes fists. There were no casualties beyond an occasional bruise or at worst a bloody nose. But this newly discovered ocean provided wonderful new opportunities.

The Kettle Valley Railroad, which ran along side the pond, was in the process of replacing many of the rotting wooden ties with new ones. Our inventive minds conceived battleships built by using short lengths of board, obtained from the nearby lumber mill, to fasten two railroad ties together. These became floating platforms large enough for an admiral and a vice admiral. Poles we used for propulsion and also served as either swords or lances.

Once our bottom hill gang had completed a fleet of two or three of these mighty vessels, the top hill gang found out about them and, just like in the real world, they had to have their own fleet. This created conditions suitable for contests, the object of which was to push the occupants of the other boat overboard. This activity caused quite a bit of yelling, which eventually attracted the attention of the work gang foreman, who immediately ordered the confiscation and destruction of our ships and put an end this activity. It was sad to see our proud ships reduced to rail ties again.

## Chapter 17 - The Sawmill of B.C. Spruce Mills

One of my most vivid memories of our stay in Lumberton was when Dad took my brother Bill and me through the lumber mill.

The first operation took place on the millpond, where a crew of men used pike poles to position the floating logs onto an inclined chain conveyer. This carried them up and dumped them onto a storage rack.

From here they were picked off, one at a time, by the carriage, which ran back and forth on rails. Each log was clamped in a position which allowed a large band saw to cut a slab off one side of the log. Then the carriage would return and, after moving the log outward the thickness of one plank, run forward to saw another slab. On the next carriage return, the log would be rotated ninety degrees. Now, after another couple of cuts, the log would again be rotated. This process was repeated until the timber was square. Once it was squared it would be sawed into slabs of the desired

thickness.

Meanwhile the slabs, which had been cut had been emptied onto a conveyor, which moved it lengthwise to a group of saws which slit it to various widths as determined by the quality of the slab and customer needs.

These cut pieces were placed on another conveyer which now moved them to the piano, a set of parallel circular saws, a foot or two apart. These could be moved up or down by the operator, who sat on a bench facing a number of levers on a sort of keyboard which bore a slight resemblance to that of a piano. Each lever controlled an individual saw each of which was operated by one of the levers.

The operator could select any number of saws, depending on how long he wanted each piece to be. Again he could decide that the particular piece of board before him could be cut to make three eight foot boards, and would operate the appropriate levers. The next piece might contain some bad knots or other flaws, so he could take a couple of chunks out of it and get two useable boards of some other length.

After surviving the piano, a conveyor, referred to as the green chain, took the cut timber through a long covered shed, where the green chain gang sorted the boards according to width and length and stacked them into piles, which were taken to the lumber yard where the boards were stacked to dry.

Most of the workers on the green chain were Chinese. They lived in a boarding house near the company hotel, and kept pretty much to themselves. We heard them referred to as a tong.

After the lumber had dried sufficiently, it would be hauled to the planing-mill, where it would be processed into various shapes, shiplap, tongue-and-groove, moldings, or just plain boards, depending on the customers needs. Finally, it would be loaded into freight cars and shipped.

Many of these operations created small slabs of wood, sawdust and wood shavings, none of which were wasted. They were used, mostly for fuel for the furnaces, which provided steam to power the mill machinery and to run the electric generators, which supplied both the mill and the town. As a result there were no unsightly piles of sawdust or lumber lying around. Some was sold for firewood to heat the worker's homes and fuel their cook stoves.

I remember that Dad occasionally ordered a load of wood, which was delivered in a wagon pulled by a team of horses. The wagon had a body like that on a dump truck and held a cord of wood. It would be dumped in a pile near the large woodshed behind our cottage. Just in case you have forgotten a a cord measured eight feet by four feet by four feet, which is a lot of wood to chop.

The chore of splitting this wood was assigned to Bill and me. Needless to say, Dad had taught us to use the axe safely. When the wood was split, we had to pile it in the shed, and later to transfer it to the wood-box, which was located on the back porch.

## Chapter 18 - More Books, Nature and Another Near Disaster

Dad or mother still read to us every evening at bedtime, and taught us to love books. I still find a good book more fascinating than most TV shows. Grandma Kydd gave us each a beautiful red leather bound volume by one of the classic novelists every Christmas, Scott, Stevenson, Dickens, Hugo Dumas and others. More than eighty years later, I still have, and occasionally read these great stories again.

We each received an electric train set for Christmas. Bill's was a Lionel, mine, an American Flyer. Bill Trussler also had a train. In the spring and summer, the three of us would connect them up as one outdoor railroad. This joint railroad venture brought an end to our fighting.

We also learned to love the outdoors all year round. One Christmas, we were each given a pair of skis. All they had in the way of harness were toe straps. We knew nothing about ski boots, but learned to go downhill, slow using a snow plow formation, how to turn by shifting our weight to the down hill ski which was pointing toward the desired direction. We also learned how to climb by sidestepping. We fell frequently, picked ourselves up just as often, and loved the sport.

We made a bobsled using two smaller sleds and a plank. We enjoyed that too. And we tried to use Dad's snowshoes, which were far too big for us. As a result they were not as much fun.

There was a town outdoor skating rink. The kids were allowed to use it when it was not in use. However if it snowed, we had to shovel it first. There were always shovels and scrapers in a nearby rack. No problem.

In the summer we were outdoors most if the time that we weren't in school. Sometimes we followed streams for miles, finding deep pools in which to fish or swim. I don't remember any swimsuits. Skinny bare was OK as long as no adults were around. We never played with girls then.

One day we were walking on top of a log dam which was quite slippery because of the water flowing over it. Once my brother lost his footing and was swept over it into the turbulent pool below and then down stream. The rest of us hurried off the dam down the bank of the stream shouting and creating a lot of noise. Fortunately for Bill, one of the men in a nearby stable heard the uproar and ran downstream and hauled him ashore before he got

hurt or drowned.

Another time we were playing on a dump wagon and Bill managed to cut his hand on a dirty tailgate fitting. This necessitated an emergency trip to the first aid station in town and his being taken to the doctor in Cranbrook for a tetanus shot.

Then came the beginning of the Great Depression and the market for lumber disappeared. B.C. Spruce mills closed the mill, and dad became unemployed. We moved back to Coalmont with mother's brothers who always needed help at the ranch, even though money was scarce.

## Chapter 19 - Coalmont Again (Circa 1927/28)

Both Dad and mother had plenty to do. Mother helped out as a clerk at the store, while Dad worked at both the store and the ranch.

We were both big enough now to help around the store after school during the week, and at the ranch on weekends or during school vacation. We both wanted bicycles and finally Mother agreed order two used ones from Vancouver at a cost of thirty dollars each, with the proviso that we were to earn enough money to pay back half the cost. For days we checked every train to see if our bikes had arrived, and when they did, lost no time before informing mother and urged her to come to the railroad station so we could pick them up. They were in crates and required some assembly. We were the two happiest kids in town. After a couple of scraped arms and knees we learned to ride them and soon expanded our range of activities by miles.

Bill and I derived no pay for our work at either the store or the ranch, Our only source of income was from collecting beer bottles for the two cent a bottle refund. After considerable exploration we found a number of locations where men frequently discarded bottles. We visited those places at regular intervals. After a few months we had paid off our debts.

## Chapter 20 – Fire at Barnes Mill small

I believe that Mr. Barnes and Matheson Brothers owned the small sawmill, known as Barnes' Mill. Power to operate the mill was supplied by an old Case gasoline tractor, which had been at the Triple X Ranch. The mill produced a couple of freight car loads of lumber each week, most of which was shipped to Vancouver.

There had been a forest fire near the sawmill, just a few miles from Coalmont. When the fire got close enough to the mill, the wind blew blazing

fir and pine branches through the air, some of which started fires in some of the piles of sawdust which surrounded the mill.

There were a number of 45 (Imperial) gallon gasoline drums, some full and some empty, stacked nearby. When the fire got close enough, the wind blew blazing fir and pine branches through the air, some of which started fires in the sawdust. These heated the barrels, causing the gasoline vapor in the empty ones to explode. Most of the full barrels did not catch fire. The exploding barrels went off like rockets and flew some distance through the air starting other fires. About a year later, when we were climbing the mountain on the other side of the valley, we found one of the barrels about a mile from the blaze. Gasoline vapor is obviously a pretty powerful explosive.

## Chapter 21 – Haying Time at the Ranch

Summer at the ranch was a time we both enjoyed. Bill and I did men's jobs, which included driving teams of horses to and in the fields. We would harness them at the barn and then ride them a mile or two, to the upper or lower meadows and whatever piece of equipment we would be using that day. Bill usually hauled wagons loaded with hay, from the field to be stacked in the open air and I usually handled the team doing the stacking.

The days were long during the haying season. We were up and had breakfast before dawn. Breakfast was a large meal with fruit juice or prunes, oatmeal porridge, pancakes, bacon and eggs. fruit or pie, and beverage. The adults had tea, coffee or milk. Bill and I were restricted to milk, which was fresh every morning from our own cows. What we had at breakfast was whole milk, the cream had not been separated. It was not the two percent or less stuff we get today. Nor was it pasteurized, but the herd was frequently tested for tuberculosis. This was before pasteurizing was required.

Bill and I did men's jobs. After breakfast we went out to the barn, harnessed up our teams of horses and rode them a mile or two, to either the upper or lower meadow and whatever piece of equipment we would be using that day. Bill usually hauled wagons loaded with hay, from the field to be stacked in the open air and I usually handled the team doing the stacking.

Haying was to me, an interesting operation. The harvesting started shortly after dawn. Horse drawn mowers cut swaths, about six feet wide. Next came the horse drawn rakes. The rakes were much wider than the mowers and piled the hay into long rows so that it could dry in the sun. The following day these rows were loaded onto the hay wagons, which hauled them to the stack.

Each wagonload consisted of two sling loads of hay, each weighing about a thousand pounds. A sling resembled a hammock made of rope and strong slats, which was divided lengthwise into two halves joined with a coupling that could be released by pulling a trip rope. The first sling would be laid in the bottom of the wagon. Then men would pitch hay onto it, until it was about three feet deep. A second sling was then laid on top of this half load of hay, and a similar amount of hay loaded on top. The team of horses then hauled the wagon under the gin poles at the stack for unloading.

The hoist, used for stacking the hay, was constructed using two poles, similar to telephone poles about forty feet long set up like a bipod. Their base straddled the haystack and their tops were lashed together. There were two pulleys attached to the peak. One was for a line to hoist the hay slings and the other was to swing the peak of the gin poles back along the length of the haystack.

One rope from a post, driven in the ground at the rear end of the haystack limited the forward position, so that it would be above the position where the loaded wagons would stop to be unloaded. Another rope, which had a log weight on it, ran from the loading end of the stack to another post, driven into the ground some fifty feet in front of the stack.

Two ropes were hitched on to a team of horses. One rope would hoist the sling load of hay till it was above the level of the hay already on the stack. The other, after the sling was at this level, would move the poles back along the stack until it was above the area where it was wanted.

At this point, the sling would be tripped and come apart at the bottom dropping half a ton of hay onto the stack below, where it would be spread carefully, much like thatching a straw roof.

This stacking process could be very dangerous and required extreme care, because half a ton of hay could easily kill the man it fell upon. Since Uncle John was the most experienced stacker, and since his life was the one at risk, he made absolutely certain that whoever drove the stacking team tied the correct knots every time the lines were adjusted, and made no mistakes. Since I was usually that driver, he made certain that I learned how to tie the bowline knot correctly, and I have never forgotten. The knowledge of knots served me well in later years when sailing.

## Chapter 22 - Unusual Ranch Hand

Working in the hot sun made us thirsty so we all drank lots of water. Sam, a black mongrel who belonged to Uncle Alan was our water boy. He was of very mixed parentage but must have had a lot of hound in him in

order to have such big ears. He weighed about sixty pounds. His job was to get water from the creek and take it around to the workers in the field. Alan had made special pail with a lid, which overhung the top of the pail. Sam knew how to hold it by the thick, padded handle, dip it in the water of the creek till it was close to being filled, and then take it around to each of the men. He did this to all except one, who had kicked Sam once, and as far as the dog was concerned, could get his own water. His reward was lots of petting and ear scratching.

Since I brought Sam into this story, perhaps I should mention some other events in which he was involved. They may be hard to believe, but I saw them happen.

One day Uncle John had been up on the mountain on the other side of the valley, with Sam. They were checking on quite a few cattle that were feeding on wild grass. Towards noon it had become quite warm and Uncle John had taken off his leather jacket and hung it on a low branch of a tree. He came back to the ranch without it and did not remember until it we were at supper. He didn't want to leave it there all night any more than he wanted to saddle up a horse and go up after it. He made some comment about whether Sam was smart enough to go and fetch it.

Sam took off, trotting across the floor of the valley, heading for the mountain. About half an hour later he came back with the collar of the jacket in his mouth and the rest of it up and over his back so that it did not drag on the ground. We were all amazed.

Another incident involved Sam and Slaughter-house Mike, a black cat who got his name because he always hung around the building we called the slaughterhouse when cattle were being readied for the meat markets. Sam normally had no use for Mike. However one evening after dusk we had been hearing coyotes barking up on the mountain in front of the ranch when suddenly there was a loud wail of pain from a cat. Sam, who had been in the main room of the ranch, took off out the screen door and into the night.

A little later we heard some noise like a dogfight up on the mountain side, then some yiping, if there is such a word, and shortly after, Sam was at the door with Slaughter-house Mike by the scruff of the neck. When he was let in, he deposited the cat at Uncle Alan's feet, as though to say here's your useless cat. Mike was chewed up a bit but was not beyond salvage. I suppose he had one less of his original nine lives remaining.

Some days later, several of us were sitting in the main room of the ranch house discussing Sam. Uncle Alan said that he had taught Sam to protect Aunt Marion, his bride of less than a year, and that he was confident that the dog would do so. The hired ranch foreman, Tex, who had been with

them for several years, and had used Sam to help him herd cattle on many occasions, was with us. He said that it was hard to believe that a dog could be trained to protect one friend from another friend. He suggested that he sit beside Aunt Marian and touch her arm. Alan warned him that Sam would go after him, but Tex moved over beside Marian and he touched her arm Sam immediately went for him and grabbed him by the wrist. He did not bite, but he sure convinced us that, as long as he was around, Marion was safe.

## Chapter 23 - The Forest Fire at the Upper Meadow

There was another day that I remember vividly. While I was leaning back comfortably on top of the partially completed haystack waiting for the next load of hay to arrive, I watched a freight train go by on the track which ran along, just a short distance away close to the base of the mountain. It was pulled by a steam locomotive, which was sending lots of sparks out of its smoke stack. Some of these must have landed in some dry brush along the track, because a few minutes later I saw that the brush had caught fire and spread to the fir and pine forest the side of the mountain.

Our haying crew did not have the resources to do anything but to watch it burn. They did send up a crew of riders to move the cattle out of the expected path of the fire, which burned for about three days. During the the next couple of days the wind drove it in a circle up and along the top of one mountain, then back into the valley and back toward the ranch buildings. All the buildings were saved except the blacksmith shop. Investigation showed that a defective fire screen in the stack of the locomotive was the cause, and the railroad reimbursed my uncles for the cost of rebuilding the shop.

Seeing with my own eyes how quickly a forest fire can spread reinforced the message of the fire prevention posters, which even in the late 1920s, had been fastened to trees along roads everywhere. The warning read something like. "It takes 500 years to grow a forest but only a minute's carelessness to burn it down.

## Chapter 24 - Activities at the Ranch

One of the jobs Bill and I loved was catching fish for dinner. We learned the favorite haunts of the trout. the ponds above several beaver dams, the deep pools of clear water just below rapids, or the other deep spots by shaded banks. Sometimes we had to creep on all fours or squirm on our tummies through groves of willows to reach some of these spots

When fish was on the menu, Bill and I would set out in the morning



with a brown bag lunch and instructions to come home with about fifteen rainbow trout all at least twelve inches long. We made our rods from willow switches, which grew along the banks of the stream and the guides from haywire. We did not have reels. I believe the line was cotton or linen. Nylon was yet to be invented. For bait we had to find worms, catch minnows or grasshoppers, whichever the fish would eat. No one heard of fishing licenses.

There was one old trout we were not allowed to keep. He was big, not very smart, and only had one eye. He always seemed to get caught, but never learned to ignore whatever bait we used.

I guess fishing kept us out of mischief. However, we managed to get into other trouble. One time we lassoed a big boar, approximate weight 600 pounds. We couldn't hold him, so we snubbed the end of the rope on the top log on the corral fence. The fence logs were a foot or more in diameter and about twenty feet long. Unfortunately the fence only slowed the boar momentarily before the it collapsed. This ended the contest. We eventually retrieved the lariat and started thinking of some way of repairing the damage before any of my uncles arrived.

No such luck. Uncle John discovered us in our dilemma, but deferred punishment. Instead he showed us how to use block and tackle, gin poles, a team of horses, levers etc., but he made us repair the damage ourselves. It took us a couple of days, but he made it into a valuable learning experience. After that we never tried to lasso the pig again.

There was an old Dodge Brothers touring car, vintage about 1925, which was kept in an open shed, located off the low end of the fenced corral. Bill and I discovered that, if we put the gearshift in reverse and held down the starter button on the floor, we could back the car up the slope of the corral. Then we could drive it back into the shed. Bill and I took turns. Before long we ran the battery down, which ended that driving experience. Fortunately, the car could be started using the hand crank. My uncles wondered why the battery was low, but we thought it better not inform them.

School began after Labor Day, so Bill and I were sent back to Coalmont where, at this time, Grandma ruled the roost.

## Chapter – 25 Grandma Matheson

Grandma was a great cook, made wonderful bread and pies, and insisted on a neat and clean house. There was always a large pot on the back of the stove with something good simmering away. Bill and I always tried to be on hand when her freshly baked bread came out of the oven. It not only

smelled good but tasted wonderful. She would tell us we should wait for a while for it to cool before eating it, but there was no way for us to be that patient.

She was also a capable mid-wife and was frequently called on for her assistance. Whenever a visiting minister came to town, she would make certain that there was a fair sized congregation on hand to hear him.

Grandma was about six feet tall and had an erect and dignified bearing. She was the most commanding figure in any gathering. Everybody liked and respected her. She was a community leader.

When Bill and I were old enough to help around the place, she always had work for us to do. She was a wonderful cook and made excellent pies and bread. She believed that idle boys would get into mischief.

At Coalmont, Monday was laundry day. If Bill or I were around, we had to pump the water and fill the big boiler on the stove. When the water was hot, we had to transfer from the copper boiler on the kitchen range it to the washing machine, using a pail. The washing machine was an early hand operated model manufactured by Easy. It had a handle on the side which one of us would pump back and forth to churn the clothes. After the washing was done, the laundry would be rinsed in a big washtub and then run through the hand-cranked wringer. Everything ran on boy power when we were around. The laundry was hung out to dry on a clothes line.

Grandma had some ideas on how to stay healthy. She believed that drinking plenty of hot liquid in the winter would help prevent colds. She saw to it that there was always something hot to drink, simmering on the back of the kitchen range. We were expected to take some every time we passed by. She also believed in cod liver oil and kept a bottle on the dresser in her bedroom along with a saucer and a tablespoon. We were expected to take a spoonful every day. Bill and I didn't share this belief because we thought it tasted awful. After some deep thought, we figured that if we could find someplace in her room to dispose of a couple of tablespoons daily, we would solve our problem. We discovered some spaces between the tongue and groove floorboards and figured that, if we rolled up the carpet a bit we could pour the tablespoons of tonic into the cracks, then roll the carpet back, and nobody would be any the wiser. This worked well for a while. The fluid level of the bottle went down at the correct rate, and the liquid in the cracks disappeared, but after a while, the fish odor became quite apparent and I wound up in hot water again.

Grandma was a kind lady, always willing to help someone who was needy. During the depression in the late 1920s, there were many men who rode the freight trains from town to town in search of work

I remember one time when one of these men came to the Coalmont store and asked her for a dime for a cup of coffee, and her response. “No. I certainly cannot spare a dime for a cup of coffee. But if it’s work you want, I have a job for you.”

There was always work around the place. Wooden boxes that canned goods and produce came in, had to be split for kindling, garden that needed weeding or weeding, Bags of grain which needed to be shifted and restacked to avoid dampness, etc.

It was Monday and Grandma was going to start the laundry, she told him she was going to wash the men’s shirts and asked if he wanted his done too, which he did. At lunchtime, she asked if he would like to join us for a bite to eat. At the end of the day, he had a clean shirt on his back, a full stomach, and a few coins in his pocket.

The next time he came through town, he no longer asked for a dime for a cup of coffee. His request was, “Mrs. Matheson, is there anything I can do for you today?”

To me this is welfare at it’s best. As well as taking care of his immediate needs, she had restored his pride.

## Chapter 26 - Refrigeration Without Electricity Invites Trouble

During the winter, the ice on the lake froze to a thickness of several feet. When it was about two feet thick it was ready to harvest. They used ice saws to cut it into blocks. Then, the men used tongs to load it onto horse drawn sleighs, in order to haul it to ice houses at both the ranch and at the Coalmont store.

The blocks of ice were stacked ten or twelve feet high, about fifteen feet wide and twenty feet long. Two or three feet of sawdust packed around the sides and on top of the ice to serve as insulation. As a result, the ice would last all year.

Bill and I never had difficulty in finding a way to get into trouble. In fact, I think it came to us.

The icehouse at the ranch had an inverted V shaped roof that extended over a shed, located behind it. The space under the roof was open at both ends to allow air to circulate. Several barn swallows used the crannies in the rafters to build their mud nests,. Bill and I frequently used these nests for targets at which to throw stones.

One day, Bill and I were practicing our rock throwing accuracy. Unfortunately, Great Uncle Edward was visiting the ranch and, unbeknownst to us, had parked his new Chevrolet sedan in this shed, Suddenly we heard

crash of broken glass. Upon investigation, we found that the source of the noise was the driver's side window of Uncle Edward's car. Uncle John had also heard the crash and found the two of us. He used the nearest available weapon, which happened to be his hand, on my inverted bottom.

## Chapter 27 - Unusual Ranch Pets

While at the ranch, we had some unusual pets, a baby deer and a baby bear. They both arrived because of hunting accidents, both involving Uncle Alan. While on the range one day, checking on the cattle, he spotted a buck deer, reached for the carbine he always carried by his saddle, fired one shot and the buck toppled over. Unfortunately the bullet also killed the doe that was standing behind her mate. This left the fawn without a mother. After hanging the two dead deer in a tree to retrieve later, he brought the fawn back to the ranch, put it in a pen in the barn for a time where it could be fed cow's milk from a baby bottle. It survived, was weaned and fed hay, and had a bell hung around its neck. For several years, it stayed near the ranch and could be seen feeding with the cattle we kept through each winter for our own use. Unfortunately it had no fear of people and eventually fell victim to another hunter, who thoughtfully brought the bell back and expressed his regrets.

The bear cub arrived because of a similar accident. Uncle Alan shot the parent and brought home the cub, again on his saddle. He had a bit of trouble because the horse did not fancy having a live bear on his back.

Again, the cub was fed with a baby bottle and became quite friendly with those who fed him. He also liked to play, which included wrestling, and Bill and I liked to rough and tumble with him. This was fine while he was small, but as he grew, he became stronger and rougher, so we had to quit. When he was thought to be large enough to live in the wild, he too, was released, but we did not see him again.

## Chapter 28 - Train Wreck in Coalmont

Like most boys our age, we were fascinated with trains. We always waved at the engineers who, to us had the most exciting jobs in the world, and were thrilled when they returned our waves. One time, in Coalmont, Bill, Sonny Shaw and I were watching a locomotive, three loaded coal cars and caboose turning around on a Y. The train had backed through one leg of the Y, switched onto another leg and was moving forward down the second leg. After the engine and one of three cars had passed, the piece of rail in

front of where we were standing, broke under the second car. The second and third cars rolled over on their sides and dumped their contents, some forty tons of coal from each car.

Because, the three of us were at the scene, we were automatic suspects. We were escorted home and turned over to the custody of our families until further notice. I believe that, today, it is called grounded. A couple of days later, the investigation found that there had been an existing partial fracture, as evidenced by signs of rust in the rail that broke, and that for once, we were found innocent. This turned out to our advantage at a later date.

My uncles shared in the operation of a small sawmill at Barnes Siding, just a few miles east of Coalmont. Most of the lumber was shipped to Vancouver. The same train that hauled the coal to Vancouver also took the lumber.

A few weeks after the train wreck, the engineer who had seen us at the scene saw the three of us and asked if we would like to ride in the cab of the locomotive while he went to pick up three carloads of lumber at the mill and bring them back to Coalmont, where they would be hooked on the coal train and taken to Vancouver.

Our acceptance was immediate and enthusiastic. He even let each of us handle the big lever, which controlled the steam flow to drive the pistons. We were thrilled. In our imaginative minds, we were real engineers, driving a real freight train. I still remember how, as the locomotive accelerated, it shook from side to side until it reached running speed when it was fairly smooth.

Even today, I wonder how many boys ever were lucky enough to have the thrill of such an experience. Many have never even seen an old steam locomotive.

## Chapter 29 - The Livery Stable Fire

The livery stable was a large barn like building located near the railroad station and water tower in Coalmont. Some cows, several horses and the doctor's car, and other equipment were stored on the ground floor, and hay was stored in the loft.

One day we were passing by on our bikes and noticed smoke coming from the loft. It was obvious that there was a fire. We decided that the barn was on fire and did the first thing that came to our minds. We led the horses and cattle out of the barn and secured them. Then we put the doctor's car in neutral and pushed it out and away from the building. By this time several adults had appeared and we were immediately accused of starting the blaze.

Once again we were on the suspect list and placed under supervision. Several days later, it was determined that the fire was caused by spontaneous combustion in some moist hay, which was stored in the loft. Once again we were declared innocent.

### Chapter 30 - The Whooping Cough Symptoms

There was another event during which we ran afoul of Grandma. It happened when a whooping cough epidemic passed through the town. Those students who started to cough were sent home from school for a two-week period. So after some serious thought Bill, Sonny Shaw and I decided to develop a pretty convincing sounding cough, and were sent home. But somehow we had not convinced Grandma. She sent us to Doctor Sheffield, the only doctor in town doctor. He was not convinced either. However he decided to avoid taking a chance that he could be wrong and advised Grandma to keep us home. She did, but we did not enjoy our holiday. Because the job she gave us was not a very pleasant one.

Matheson Bros. operated a trucking business and one of their contracts was hauling beer for Princeton Brewing Company to the Coalmont outlet, as well as returning the empty bottles. People would bring the empty bottles to the store for the refunds. The bottles had to be packed in the barrels in a special manner, in order to pack 12 dozen bottles in each barrel. The odor of stale beer is not particularly pleasant and does not improve with long exposure, which is what happens when you have to bend over several barrels as you fill them with bottles.

Because of this enforced barrel filling activity, we did not enjoy our time away from school, particularly because after we had spent the first week slaving away, we came down with the real thing. Trying to put something over on Grandma didn't ever seem to work too well. But I guess some of us never learn.

### Chapter - 31 Blakeburn

Blakeburn was a small company town, located on the other side of the mountain near the entrance to the mines coal. As well as the buildings associated with the mines, there were a quite a few cottages for the miners families. Many of these families were customers of Matheson Brothers

At that time, the road from Coalmont to Princeton and Blakeburn ran south along Parish street, turned sharp left, immediately after crossing the bridge over the Similkameen (Now called the Tulameen) River as it

continued toward Granite Creek. Between the bridge and Granite Creek, there were a couple of one man gold mining operations. Just before reaching Granite Creek, the road to Blakeburn turned left and shortly began to climb toward the town.

Uncle Bill made deliveries Tuesdays and Saturdays. When he made one delivery, he took orders for the next. He also took a supply of staples such as butter, eggs, fruit, vegetables, sugar, flour, etc. which were sold from the truck. In the summer he also had ice cream and other goodies.

Bill or I would go along on the Saturday runs and when not helping carry parcels, would sell ice cream, mostly to other young people. Ice cream was five cents for a single scoop cone. However, if the customer was a pretty girl and she smiled nicely at us, and Uncle Bill was not around, the scoop turned out to be a little larger.

After the Saturday delivery, in order to collect payment for his bills, Uncle Bill usually visited the company owned dining hall, after the miners had received their pay. Sometimes he had to wait for a while before all the men got there.

Many of the miners passed the time playing poker. Occasionally they ask Uncle Bill to sit in for a hand or two. I was merely a bystander, but I will remember one game all my life.

One player was a Polish farmer who worked at the mine whenever he could. The farm had not done well during the past year and he was hoping to recover some of his money in the game. Instead he continued to lose heavily. When he had no money left, he bet his farm and lost. He then bet his wife. That created such an impression on me that, except for a rare friendly game, I have never played since.

Winters were cold there. The average temperature for the month of February was below 0° F. Occasionally there were heavy snow storms dumping as much as a foot per hour. When that occurred, visibility would be almost nothing. I can remember one Saturday when we were coming home from Blakeburn, spending over an hour shoveling the track for one wheel while Uncle Bill dug the other so that the tires could get enough traction for the truck to be able to climb the hill.

## Chapter - 32 Vancouver

As economic conditions started to improve, Mother and Dad decided to start a business of their own in Vancouver. It was a mom and pop convenience store, located next door to a drug store at the corner of Dunbar Street and 27th Avenue. We lived in another empty store, around the corner

from the drug store. There also were apartments above this block of stores.

Bill and I attended the Point Grey Junior High School, which at the time was a brand new, state of the art concept. It was several miles away, so we rode our bikes. Besides the three Rs, the school had a large auditorium where many interesting programs were presented. I particularly remember the seeing *The Mikado*, and another by Gilbert and Sullivan, a lecture by Beebe about his deep sea diving Bathy-sphere, and a movie, in slow motion, showing how plants grow. Pictures were taken once every fifteen minutes, and then shown as a movie. The flower appeared to be growing right before your very eyes.

There were workshops for both boys and girls. The boys had woodworking, electrical, printing and metalworking shops. We spent two months in each and the last two months in whichever shop we wished. I had a hard time choosing but finally decided on the electrical shop. (I actually made an electric motor, which worked.) For the girls there was art, stenography, handicrafts and home making. There was a well-equipped gymnasium and fields for outdoor sports, including soccer, rugby and baseball.

There were several Japanese students in my class. They were a serious group and attained high grades. It seemed to me that they tried to determine which of the other students did best in any subject and then tried to understand how he or she studied. Then they would copy that technique, and they did it very well.

Before school, both Bill and I had morning paper routes for *The Vancouver Sun*. The routes were adjacent and we ran them as if they were one route, One of us ran the east west avenues and the other handled the north and south roads. We received bonuses if we signed up new customers, which we did quite successfully. We built up our routes until they were the two largest routes for the paper..

After school on Thursdays we had another paper route for a free weekly paper, *The Point Grey Times*. It amounted to almost 300 papers. Friday evenings and Sundays, we delivered for the drug store. Many of their customers gave us tips. On Saturdays we worked for a Chinese vegetable market. Besides delivering, we also helped in the store, serving customers, cleaning, removing unsightly leaves from produce, restocking vegetables and any other job that needed doing. The owners worked hard themselves and treated us as if we were family, which meant we were expected to keep busy. They had a cook stove in the room behind the store and there was always something cooking on it, mostly vegetables of some sort. Everything was tasty and nothing good was ever wasted. We enjoyed working for them.



They were nice people.

Vancouver was a beautiful city, situated between Burrard Inlet on the north and the Fraser River delta to the south.

There was much to see and do. Bill and I managed to find time to explore the tidal flats at the mouth of the Fraser River where there were two rusty derelict freighters, half buried in the sand, We climbed all over them but found no treasures of any kind. I'm sure they had been well picked over long before. We were lucky not to get hurt

We swam, both in the Fraser River and at Kitsalino beach. We biked around point Grey, rode through beautiful Stanley Park and saw again the large Douglas Fir tree which the road went through.

From Dunbar Heights, where we lived, you could see North Vancouver across the Burrard Inlet and Grouse Mountain beyond. The mountain was covered with snow in the winter. One could ski in the morning and swim in the afternoon, although the water was mighty cold.

I will always remember the time mother took us to Victoria, another beautiful city where we stayed at the Empress Hotel. It was one of several world-class facilities owned and operated by the Canadian Pacific Railway. While there, she took us to see one of the most beautiful spots in the world, the Butchart Gardens. They had been planted in an abandoned stone quarry. Flowers were everywhere you looked. Friends who have visited the gardens recently, some eighty years later, told me they are still lovely.

### Chapter 33 - Farewell to British Columbia

In 1929, Dad received a letter from an old friend offering him a job, which involved buying pulpwood in Ontario for the Consolidated Paper Company. He accepted, and went east immediately. After a few months, he was transferred to Three Rivers, Quebec. He wrote and asked Mother to close up the store while he looked for a house so we could all be together again.

Before we went east, we went back to Coalmont for a short time during which Bill and I worked at the ranch. Uncle Bill taught me to drive the Dodge truck. When he felt I could handle it, he gave us a job unloading bushel bags of grain from freight cars at Manning Siding and delivering and stacking it in the grain shed at the ranch. The siding was about three miles over a narrow dirt road.

It was heavy work. Each bag weighed about sixty pounds and each truckload held about one ton. We would heave one bag up onto our left shoulder and tuck another under our right arm and take them from the freight

car to the truck where we would stack them. When the truck was loaded we would head for the ranch. If we met a car on the narrow dirt road, one of the two vehicles would have to back up to a turn-out where there was room to pass. More frequently than not, it was me, and I became quite proficient at backing up. At that time I was thirteen, but driver's licenses had not yet been invented. When I look back, we must have been pretty strong twelve and thirteen year olds. I can't even throw one sixty- pound weight around now.

Leaving British Columbia was an occasion of mixed emotions. We had enjoyed the ranch, liked Vancouver and the time spent in Coalmont and Lumberton, but we also looked forward to being back with dad. In any case, we had no choice.

#### Chapter - 34 Vancouver to Three Rivers via the Scenic Route

Mother wanted us to see more of Canada as we traveled back east. So we left Coalmont by train, spent a few days saying good bye to our relatives and friends before boarding the steamship for the Canadian Pacific cruise ship which took us north through the scenic inland passage between Vancouver Island and the coast of British Columbia to Prince Rupert. Here we took the Canadian National Railroad train, which passed through the Rocky Mountains. We spent a couple of days at Jasper Lodge, a beautiful hotel in Jasper National Park. We saw some bears and a few other wild animals. There was a bit of excitement as we came into Edmonton. One of the four-wheel trucks on one end of our sleeping car, derailed at one of the switches in the yard as we approached the station. The car bounced along for a short distance, but remained upright. I missed most of it because I was sound asleep, but woke up as they were getting the car back on the track. The rest of the journey was without incident.

Whenever we could, Bill and I sat out on the little balcony on the back of the observation car at the rear of the train, much impressed by the magnificent scenery. I also remember the great meals which were served in the rather formal dining car.

We spent a few days visiting Grandma Kydd in Montreal, before taking another train to Trois Rivieres, (Three Rivers if you don't speak French).

#### Chapter - 35 Three Rivers, Quebec

This was a city of about forty or fifty thousand, located about half way between Montreal and Quebec City, where the St. Maurice River flows into the St. Lawrence River from the north. The place derived its name from the

fact that the St.Maurice forms a delta which created Wyagamack and Crow's Island, and gives the appearance of three separate rivers flowing into the St Lawrence. The majority of the populace were French speaking.

The city was home of several paper mills, International Paper, St Lawrence, St Maurice and Wyagamack, as well as-Canada Iron Foundry, and Wabasso Cotton Mills. All the paper mills were located on the banks of either the St. Lawrence or St. Maurice rivers, Wyagamack being situated on the island of the same name. The town boasted a street-car line, equipped with four wheeled trolley cars.

Since the trolleys were operated by one man, who drove the street car and also collected the fares sat at the front, he was unable to see what happened outside the back of the car. He was therefore unable to see the kids hanging on the rear when the streets were slick with ice in the winter. This was more fun than riding inside. It also saved carfare.

## Chapter – 36 Our Three Rivers Home

Our house was similar to many French Canadian farm homes. There was a porch across the front, which continued around the side. It had two bedrooms and a bath on the second floor, and a parlor, a living room, dining room and a kitchen downstairs. There were a couple of connected sheds off the kitchen. Mother used one for laundry and food storage, and the other for a wood shed.

The property went back two or three hundred feet and then down a steep slope to the St Maurice River. There was enough space in the side yard for a skating rink in winter. We had to make the ice and clean off the snow ourselves. Bill, I, and our friends, used it a great deal in winter. We played hockey and developed a game, playing hockey on our bikes. It was hard on both the bikes and the players, but kept us out of mischief.

Aunt Helen, my father's sister had given us a lady's bicycle, which she had as a girl sometime around 1904. It had a chain guard and a lot of lacing to keep a lady's long skirts from getting caught in the spokes or chain of the rear wheel. The rims were made of wood, several pieces of differing color, beautifully fitted together. I'm afraid we did not treat it with the respect it deserved.

Across the street, from the front of our house was the soccer field and it was used a great deal in summer. Many of the employees of Canada Iron Foundry and Wabasso Cotton had worked in England, Ireland and Scotland where soccer is a major sport. They played the game very well and set a good example for us.

When their game was over we took over the field along with a lot of the French kids. Sometimes they would play around one goal while we did the same at the other end of the field. At other times we would play against one another. Because we watched the men play, we learned to play a fairly good game.

## Chapter – 37 Our First Real Boat

Bill and I decided that, since we lived on a river we needed a rowboat in order to explore and fish. After searching for some time we located an old punt, which was available for six dollars. It was designed for use in sorting pulpwood and had seen better years. It was about twelve feet long, four wide, and very stable. The beam tapered to a width of about two feet at the bow and stern. The bottom curved up at both ends so that it could be rowed over floating pulpwood logs. These logs were about six or eight feet long and eight inches in diameter. We pooled our resources and borrowed a couple of dollars and bought it. However, before we rowed it home, we had to replace one floor plank and caulk most of the seams with oakum and tar. Then we painted it a bright red.

The boat allowed us to try our hand at fishing with some small success. Using worms for bait, we laid out a line perhaps fifty feet long, across part of the river. Every few feet we attached several short lines with baited hooks. We would leave these for several hours, sometimes overnight. Frequently, when we hauled them in, we found one or two good-sized fish, or an occasional eel attached.

One time we were rowing across the St Laurence River when an ocean going freighter was heading upstream to Montreal. Until it passed only a few hundred feet away, we had no idea how big the bow wave of a large ship was, but we learned in one quick lesson.

We were also able to camp on Crow's Island whenever we wanted and swim off the sandy beach. School vacation allowed us to extend our range considerably. Together with a couple of friends we would pack a small tent, food, blankets, cooking utensils and dishes and head up some river, camping until our food, supplemented by fish we caught, and corn we borrowed from some farmer's field, ran out.

When we weren't camping by boat, we used our bicycles. I can remember one time, with the old wedge tent set up by a stream, when we caught trout while sitting inside the tent. Another time during a storm,, we watched the lightning, playing across the sky. And then the time we were in the tent during a rainstorm and we developed a worm race. Each of us had a

worm, which we raced between two lines drawn on the ground a couple of feet apart. They weren't very fast, but it was more interesting than doing nothing.

Mother insisted that we tell her where we were headed. She must have worried about us a great deal, but she continued to allow us to do our thing. Times have changed, and not for the better, because today, I know of no place where a group of teenagers could go off on their own and do the things we did safely.

## Chapter – 38 Wild Games

We engaged in many challenging outdoor activities, some of which our parents, had they known what we were doing, might not have approved.

Most kids play some game of chicken, just for the thrill of it. Ours game involved the freight train, which brought pulpwood to the Wyagamack paper mill, which was located on the island of the same name. In summer we boys would stand on the railroad bridge as the train approached. The idea was to see who would be the last to dive off before the train hit them. The engineer must have been driven crazy with worry and would blow the whistle frantically, because there was no way to stop the train in time. But we all dove off safely. Of course, after scrambling ashore, we immediately disappeared because we knew that the police would be called when the engineer found the first telephone.

Another game we invented preceded today's X games by several decades. There were two ski jumps located on the western bank of the St. Maurice River about two miles north of the city. One jump was smaller than the other and allowed a skier to jump about 75 feet, while the other allowed jumps of about 150 or 200 feet. Because it was the middle of the summer, instead of using skis to go off the jumps, we used our bicycles. We approached the sport with caution, (I use the term loosely), starting only part of the way up on the smaller jump as we began. After we mastered the small jump, we started practicing on the big one. We all survived, but the front forks of my bicycle did not. I had some difficulty explaining to mother what I had run into.

There was also a skating rink and a toboggan slide located in a park near the Wabasso cotton mill. The slide consisted of a wooden tower, about fifty feet high with a slide sloping down and then leveling out along the level ground. This was coated with a surface of ice for the toboggans. Sometimes the surface was rather bumpy. There were steps along side the slide, up which we hauled the toboggans. One day while skating at the rink, we

decided to try going down the slide on skates. Our approach was again, very carefully planned. The first attempts were made from part way up the slide. After we had mastered that distance, we would try a little higher until, we were doing it from the top. All went well, until Willie McDougal fell on his rear end, tore the seat of his pants, and sustained some bottom damage to his person. He had some problems explaining his condition to his mother when he got home.

## Chapter 39 - Our First Airplane Ride

One winter, a barnstorming pilot in an airplane, equipped with skis, visited our city. It landed on and took off from the ice on the St. Maurice river. His biplane was a Waco Moth, with an OX5 radial engine and two cockpits. Several boys, including Bill and I, gathered to watch, since airplanes were not a very common sight in 1930. He took passengers up for short flights charging them a penny for each pound of their weight. After he made a few flights the engine started acting up so he decided to work on it. Soon the crowd dwindled, until only my brother, Bill and I remained.

Since he was having difficulty climbing up and down with parts or tools in his hands, while he worked to remove and replace one of the cylinders, he appreciated the fact that, despite the cold, Bill and I stayed to help him. When he was finished and had the engine running smoothly again, he asked us if we would like to go for a ride while he tested it in flight. There was nothing we would like more, so we climbed aboard and the two of us squeezed into one of the cockpits.

The take off on the ice was smooth and he flew up the St. Maurice River for about thirty miles, circled Grand Mere, the town where we were both born, and then returned. On his landing approach, he flew under a span of the highway bridge. It seemed as if the wings barely missed the piers of the bridge. The flight lasted about an hour, quite a bit longer than that, which the other passengers had had to pay for. Needless to say, we were two happy boys. I am not convinced that mother was overjoyed when we told her about it, particularly the part about flying under the bridge.

## Chapter 40 - Leg Trouble

In 1930, domestic refrigerators were made of oak and had insulated metal liners to hold the ice. They looked like fine furniture. Electric refrigerators were still to become commonplace. Ice was delivered in summer by horse and wagon and in winter by horse and sleigh.

The iceman used tongs to carry the blocks of ice to his customers, and put them into the refrigerators, or ice boxes as we usually referred to them. There were frequently chips of ice in the wagon or sleigh and we liked eat them.

One day later that winter, I was riding on the sleigh when it capsized and I injured my knee. After waiting for a month or so, the doctor decided to put it in a splint and confine me to bed for six weeks, while the patella rejoined the shinbone.

The most exciting that happened during that period was watching the British dirigible, the R100, fly over town on it's way from England to Montreal.

After the splint was removed, both legs were weak and my right toe pointed down quite a bit, sometimes dragging. This improved slowly but for several months I walked with a limp. For quite a while the kids all called me Peg Leg.

This handicap did not interfere with our ability to invent some new adventure. The Shawinigan Power Company had a hydroelectric plant at Shawinigan Falls, some thirty miles north of Three Rivers on the St. Maurice River. A power transmission line crossed the St Laurence River, which was nearly a mile wide at Three Rivers. The transmission towers on either bank were several hundred feet high and presented a challenge to us, "Who could climb the highest." Looking down was a little scary, and as one climbed higher, it became a lot scarier. But finally when we were near the power cables your body tingled and it felt as though your hair was standing on end, we called it quits and came down. With the power line voltage being several hundred thousand volts, this may not have been one of our wisest escapades, but we survived.

## Chapter 41 - The Great Duck Hunters

In early spring all the paper companies used the St Maurice river to float pulpwood down from the north, where it had been cut during the winter. Each company would brand their logs by stamping brands on the ends with a special sledgehammer. Just upstream from Three Rivers, the logs would be sorted and guided into lanes, separated by log booms which led to the different mills. These booms consisted of rafts of squared logs. Each raft was about three logs wide and about twenty feet long. The rafts were chained together end to end, and the boom could be a mile or more long.

One spring Bill and I used one of these booms to go duck hunting with

dad's 12 gauge shot gun. It was an old Stevens with a breakdown action. There was a lever on top of the butt of the gun, just behind the back end of the barrel, which, if pushed to one side, let the barrel to hinge down and eject the used shell and enable the loading of a new one.

I, being the eldest, had the responsibility for the gun, and therefore carried it and had the first shot. As we were walking along the boom, we saw some ducks sitting in the water in a small bay. We were able to get fairly close and I took aim and fired. The gun had a very strong kick, which knocked me backwards off the boom and into the cold water, which still had hunks of ice floating in it.

Bill, knowing that his turn to use the gun was next, made the decision that saving the gun was more important at the moment, than saving his brother. He let me take care of myself, grabbed the gun and kept it dry. When I got back on the boom, he told me I had a bloody nose, because, when the gun kicked, my thumb had tripped the breakdown lever. This ejected the empty shell, which hit me on the bridge of my nose, right between my eyes, hard enough to make it bleed, and as we found out later, gave me two black eyes. To add insult to injury, I did not hit a duck.

## Chapter 41 - Activities

Bill and I had enjoyed our Boy Scout experience in Lumberton but there was no troop in Coalmont. Fortunately there was one in Three Rivers, which we joined. It met in the local armory once a week. The troop camped every summer at Camp Tamaracouta. We both enjoyed the scouting experience and worked hard to become King Scouts, the equivalent of an Eagle Scout in the USA. At that time the British and Canadian monarch was King George V. Today the equivalent grade, in Canada, would be called a Queen Scout.

In 1930 or 1931, (I guess my memory is slipping), John Buchan, the well known author, now Lord Tweedsmuir, was Governor General of Canada. He visited Three Rivers to officiate at some special event. Naturally, the town wanted to have a welcoming ceremony, which became an opportunity for the Scouts to demonstrate some of their abilities.

The mayor consented to have the scouts deliver his welcoming message to John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir, by flag in Morse code. I was selected to be the signaler for the Governor General. Both my reading of the welcoming message, and sending the reply went through OK. You can guess who had a swelled head, when the Governor General shook my hand and congratulated me.



At that time Three Rivers had a baseball team in what, I believe was called the Can-Am League. It was a low budget farm team of the St. Louis Browns and did their spring training in town. Because they did not have a large roster, they used the Three Rivers High School team to practice against. Our team would be reinforced with their catcher and pitcher and we would bat against our high school battery. It was excellent training for our coach and team.

One of their players only had one arm, but he was able to field, throw and hit very well. He had a special glove made so that when he fielded a ball, he could flip the glove back and throw with very little delay. I believe his name was Appleton and that he later did play in the major league. He was a wonderful example to us all of how to overcome a handicap. That year our high school baseball team won the Quebec High School Provincial Championship.

## Chapter 41 - Catching up with French

The province of Quebec required that all school children take French in every grade. British Columbia did not. As a result, our French was far behind the other students. Luckily, we both had excellent teachers who lost no time in bringing us up to grade level. Miss Mount taught Grade VIII and had me off to a good start and in Grade IX, Madame Marceau was our home-room teacher and would not allow any student to speak a word of English in her class room. Neither would she allow anyone to ridicule another student because they made an error when trying to speak French.

All fifteen of us respected her and she expected us to do our best. She was my all time favorite teacher. Every morning we had a non-sectarian devotional period, which in her class consisted of a different student reading a chapter of the Gospel of St Luke in French.

We weren't exactly angels, and one day, when she was out of the room, we got a basketball out of the cloakroom and were tossing it around the room. One pass hit the chandelier, knocking it down causing quite a bit of damage. We were very quiet when she came back into the room and were expecting a lecture on behavior. But all she said was that she would have it fixed and leave the bill on her desk.

Two days later the chandelier was back where it had been and there was a bill for fifteen dollars on her desk. The following morning every one of us brought in a dollar, and when she came in she thanked us. It was a wonderful lesson in how to deal with people. We had lived up to her expectations.

Years later, after she had retired and moved to Montreal, she lived in an

apartment not far away from where we lived. I visited her and enjoyed her so much that I continued to do so.

## Chapter 42 - Three Rivers

Mother and dad attended church regularly and encouraged Bill and I to go to Sunday school. Our teacher was a Mr. Pringle. He was a foreman at Canada Iron Foundry. He was a big man, about 250 pounds, all muscle and no fat, not the usual Sunday school teacher type. His lessons were based on the travels of the disciples and he made them come alive.

Each year Three Rivers had a country fair. One year there was a shooting gallery. It had air rifles that shot corks. The booth had three shelves, each with a number of prizes on display, mostly stuffed animals. If you knocked a prize off the shelf it was yours. I went up to the booth and paid my quarter for five shots with the air rifle. The rifle I used fired about three inches low and to the right. So I compensated and walked away with four prizes. I paid another quarter and won five more. He decided to make use of my shooting ability and asked me to help him attract customers. I was to wander around in the crowd and then come to the booth, pay him a quarter, which he provided, buy five shots, win some prizes, and after a while, bring them back and put them back in his stock. For me, this was an easy source of some money.

Several years later, I was visiting my aunt and uncle in Ottawa and took my cousin Betty to a fair there. The same man was operating a shooting gallery, so I thought I would get a couple of prizes for Betty. I paid him a quarter, took a ranging shot and asked her which one she would like. She pointed to a teddy bear and I knocked it off the shelf. Then the man recognized me and we talked for a few minutes, I did not take any more shots, because of our past relationship.

## Chapter 43 Montreal, The Final High School Years

After two years Dad was transferred to Montreal, found a flat on St. Urban St., not far from where Grandma Kydd lived. On moving day, Bill and I rode from Three Rivers to Montreal, on top of the load of furniture in the back of the open moving truck.

We both attended Montreal High School, which was located across University Street from McGill University. (It has since been demolished.) The school served both boys and girls, but was segregated into two different sections. The gym was separated by sliding doors, one half used by girls and

the other by the boys. Combined, it became a very large one for special events. There was also a swimming pool, which was used separately by both schools. We had the use of Molson Stadium for football and track facilities, and were able to use a Montreal park on Fletcher's Field for soccer. For hockey practice and home games, the school used the Montreal Forum, where at that time, both the Montreal Canadiens and the Montreal Maroons played their National Hockey League home games.

Montreal High had a strict dress code. Boys were required to wear dress slacks and shirts, jackets and ties. Girls wore uniforms. Discipline was strict. Students were expected to study and do well. Perhaps was one reason why we were proud of Montreal High.

The curriculum included English literature and composition, history, French, algebra and geometry, Latin or Greek, physics or chemistry and physical education. Latin or Greek were required if you wished to attend university.

At that time, the early 1930s, any high school graduate who had passed the matriculation exam would be accepted at any Canadian university. However, even though McGill would accept a student who had passed this exam, unless a good grade level was maintained a large percentage were dropped, both during and after the freshman year, and a small percentage after the sophomore year. Most students who survived their sophomore year graduated.

Montreal High Physical Education had a staff of three, Mr. McCrae and two assistants, whose names I can't remember. One was a lady who worked with the girls, The other, a man who worked with the boys. Mr. McCrae had the ability to make everyone enjoy gym and the athletic program. He encouraged us to try every sport and seemed to find time to coach and encourage every student individually. Our track team usually won the Eastern Canada interscholastic events.

My brother, Bill still holds the Canadian interscholastic 60 yard hurdles record which he set around 1933. One reason is that the event was discontinued when everything converted to the metric system.

Each year, Montreal High entered a team in an interscholastic track and field competition. When I was in my final year, we had three entries in the shot put event. Each contestant was allowed three attempts. I led off for our team and broke the old interscholastic record. Gordon McCrae was next and he beat me by inches, then Jim Tedley beat Gordon. On our second try, the same thing happened. The third attempt was a repeat performance, with Jim being credited with the new record. It is not very often that nine new records are set in the same event in one day by the same team.

Some of our teachers, including Mr. Clarke, our Latin teacher, was also the soccer coach. I found this out because I needed help in Latin.. He told me to come to the soccer practice and he would try to work in some time with me. When I got there he was standing near the goal at one end of the field but there was no goalkeeper. He asked me if I had ever played goalie and I mentioned watching good soccer in Three Rivers. He asked me to tend goal that day.

The McGill University soccer team was using our High school team to practice against, so the competition was tough. It was not long before a McGill player got past our defense and kicked a hard shot at the upper left hand corner of the goal. It was much too hard to try to catch. All I could do was use both fists and punch it up and over the crossbar. Knobby Clark, as we called him, was impressed and told me he would see that I learned my Latin if I would be his goaltender. It was a good deal because, thanks to him, I did learn some Latin and did pass the final exam. Also our team won the city school championship, with no losses and one nothing to nothing tie. Furthermore we determined never to lose a practice game to the McGill squad, and we didn't. Most of the credit was due to good coaching and the two very outstanding players on defense. They seldom allowed any opposition team player to get a good shot on our goal.

There were other teachers who worked to help me graduate. Edward Cushing was our homeroom teacher in Grade X. He had a way of talking to us individually after we received each report card. He used every method he knew to urge us to do better. I remember him telling me that there was no good reason why I should not be near the top of the class, and he kept after me till I was. He was a good friend and he also had two nice looking daughters that we met occasionally. He coached swimming and water polo, and made sure I tried out.

Then there was Cookoo McBain, our English and History teacher. We gave him that nickname because his eyesight gave him problems and he had to use two pair of glasses. Each had one horn removed from each pair so that he could change them quickly in order to switch from looking at the text to watching the students. I enjoyed English and the way he taught it. But I did not particularly care for Greek and Egyptian history with their impossible names. He threatened me with failure if I didn't buckle down. He told me, in front of the class, that I wouldn't get anywhere in life if I wouldn't tackle a problem because I didn't like some part of it. He made me so mad that I determined that I would pass, just to prove him wrong. Which I believe was what he intended. It worked.

Our homeroom teacher in Grade XI was Mr McNeeley. He was not

very tall and we referred to him as Willie. He also taught us Algebra, a subject he loved, and he made us love it too. He opened our class in the morning with the Lord's Prayer, and his version of the prayer ended with the words " forever and ever amen take out your algebras." There was no pause or punctuation mark of any kind after the word "amen".

I always did all the homework examples and I can remember doing algebra working at them one night until two in the morning and as a result, not doing any of the Latin assignment. Mr. Clark was not pleased when I explained the reason and he said something like, "Kydd, if you ever come in with the same excuse twice, I'll have you thrown out of school." I couldn't help it if I preferred algebra to Latin.

#### Chapter 44 - More High School Year Activities

On the way home after school we walked past Grandma Kydd's house. She lived in a four story stone building, built shoulder to shoulder to all the other buildings in the block. The ground floor had an informal dining room, a big pantry and the kitchen. The first floor had a formal dining room and a living room. The second floor had two bedrooms, a bath and a sitting room where grandma spent most of her time with Aunt Helen in attendance, usually at her beck and call, as well as her terrier, which she spoiled rotten.

My grandfather had worked for the Montreal Gazette more than fifty years and when he retired, was Editor-in-Chief. As a result he had a fine library, which lined one wall of the sitting room. It included books by such authors as Dickens, Emerson, Macaulay, Shakespeare, Tennyson and others. I still have some of them.

The top floor had two bedrooms and a bath. There was a dumb-waiter which connected the kitchen with the informal, first floor dining room, and to the second floor. In the rear was a small courtyard and what had once been a carriage house. It was an interesting place to explore.

Grandma always had apple pie and milk for us if we stopped by on our way home from school. I usually did. Occasionally Bill would too, but not as often as I. Thus I became her fair haired boy. Usually I usually devoured a large slice of apple pie and a glass of milk.

Scouting still interested me and I became a member of the Scout troop, which met at the school. Eventually I became the troop leader.

The Beckingham family had been friends of the Kydds for more than one generation. They had served together as deacons and elders at the First Presbyterian Church. Their son Jack was General Manager of Canadian Marconi Company, one of Canada's leading radio and electronic firms. He

was encouraged any boy who had an interested in radio. He discovered that I was and encouraged me to get involved. I did not realize then, the important effect this man would have on my life. He gave me some parts and diagrams so that I could build my first radio. It was a crystal set, which allowed me to receive two local stations. Then he gave me an old tuning coil assembly and a tube. The battery radio set that I built with them extended the receiving range to thousands of miles. Besides local stations, I heard a Mexican station. I think it was XOM, WLW in Cincinnati, KDKA in Pittsburg and several others. I recall listening to some events on the radio that were history making; the time when Babe Ruth pointed to the stands and then hit the ball over the fence, just where he had pointed. Another was when the German Zeppelin, Hindenburg caught fire as it was landing at Lakehurst, N.J. I was able to hear foreign stations in Europe and Africa. I remember a Cairo, Egypt station news broadcast in which the announcer was reading an item proclaiming the intention of driving the Israelis into the sea. History repeats itself.

#### Chapter 45 - Still More High School Year Activities

Bill and I were beginning to develop different groups of friends. He was very interested in music, the guitar in particular. His music teacher, a Hawaiian named Ben Hoaki, played Hawaiian guitar regularly on a local radio station and occasionally on networks. Sometimes Bill played on the program with him. Ben wanted Bill to play with him on a regular basis, but Bill wanted to finish school and go on to college. Playing a guitar in some night spot in a drinking environment did not appeal.

Aunt Helen tried to teach me the piano, but she had her problems with me. She insisted that I would never learn to play well until I learned to count. She was right. She had a beautiful contralto voice, and one song I loved to hear her sing was Danny Boy.

Bill and I both went to Sunday school at the First Presbyterian Church. We were in two different classes, both led by men who influenced our lives. Norman Clelland, an insurance sales manager, led our class and Bill McLair, a lawyer, worked with the Amici Club, to which Bill belonged. These two men did a lot of good work in the community, and encouraged their students to take part also. They organized an athletic league which included basketball, softball, track and field competition and social activities like picnics, winter sleigh rides and dances. Our young people were so involved in these activities that none of us became involved with drugs or crime of any kind. Some of us remained with these classes after we entered the work

force

I was asked to be treasurer of the Sunday school, which was not a difficult job in itself. However in the chain of command, it ranked fourth after the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Secretary. This may not seem much of a problem, but one day it was to me.

The routine of the Sunday school service followed a regular pattern. The entire school gathered in the main hall and the Superintendent led them all in an opening prayer and announced any special events. Then everyone went to the different classes. Afterward they all came together in the main hall for the benediction.

If the superintendent was absent, the assistant superintendent handled the opening ceremony. If both of them were absent, the secretary did the honors. You can guess what happened when all three were absent. Yours truly as Treasurer, inherited the job, and one Sunday I found myself on the platform in front of the whole Sunday School, trying to think of what to say for an opening prayer. I had never before spoken in public, and was momentarily tongue-tied. After a long pause, I suddenly realized that there was no reason that a bunch of other kids could scare me so much that I couldn't speak, and went ahead and managed to say a prayer. Ever since then, whenever I have encountered a problem finding words, when speaking before an audience, I think back to that occasion, and remember that no one should be able to scare me enough that I can't talk, and get on with my message.

One of our favorite summer time activities was swimming and one of the best places was The Montreal Swimming Club, located on St. Helens Island in the St. Lawrence River. There was a diving platform with several levels, and occasionally they would promote diving contests. Most of the diving was fairly simple, swan, jack knife, back, somersault, etc. None were as complicated as what we see on today's competitions. We did do a few pair dives, including some from different levels. They also had some races, and though I never took any formal training, I did place once in a Provincial Championship in the 100 yard breast stroke.

As high school graduation day approached, I realized that I did not have the money to go to McGill and that I would have to find a job.

Chapter 46 - Canadian Marconi Company

When Jack Beckingham learned of this he told me to see him at Canadian Marconi the day after school was out. He advised me to dress neatly, wear a white shirt and tie. So I packed a lunch and was there next

morning, when the factory opened at 8 AM. I asked for him and was told he was busy, but that I could wait if I wanted.

Nothing happened until just before lunch when a man came out and told me Mr. Beckingham wasn't available yet. I continued to wait and about 3 PM, he appeared and informed me that I had passed his first test. I had shown patience. Afterwards he spoke to the employment officer, who told me I was hired and was to report the following morning.

Walking in from the bus stop next morning, one of the other workers asked if I was a new employee. When I said yes, he commented that it was a terrible place to work, that I would start at twenty cents per hour and that would be all I would ever get. He was right about the twenty cents per hour to start. I was assigned to the grounds keeping staff, given a shovel and a wheelbarrow and told to take horse manure from the pile, located back behind the tennis court, and spread it on the floral shrubs. The factory grounds were beautifully kept, with the company name spelled out in floral letters. After three days, I had developed some unpleasant blisters but was still shoveling. Beckingham came out and asked how my hands were. I showed them and he smiled and told me I had passed the second test, I had stuck to it. He suggested a pair of gloves.

They used the ground maintenance crew as a source of extra manpower when needed, and, after a few days, I was moved indoors and put to work as a janitor sweeping the floors in the machine shop and punch press rooms. One of my least favorite jobs was cleaning out and removing the scale from the inside of a hot water tank. It was about ten feet long and four feet in diameter and hung horizontally from the ceiling. There was an access port, bolted in one end of the tank, big enough for a man to crawl through. I am somewhat claustrophobic and was very nervous all the time I was inside. The next assignment was as a punch press operator, stamping metal parts. Then I was put to work on the assembly line where I was taught to insert parts, connect wires in radio chassis and to solder.

I rarely saw Mr. Beckingham, but he advised me to go to night school now, before I had so many other demands on my time which would prevent me from doing so. I followed his advice and started by taking a course in electricity at Montreal Technical School, followed by two years in drafting at Sir George Williams College and some correspondence courses.

Meanwhile I was moved into the test department where I started by aligning and tuning the domestic radios off the assembly line. This was done in a copper shielded room so as to avoid interference from other sources such as radio stations or electrical static.

Sometimes a radio would not operate properly due to an incorrect or



defective part, a wiring error, or an improperly soldered joint. That set would be removed and set aside for trouble shooting, which was done by technicians with greater skills. These people earned a higher salary. Fortunately, because of my hobby and night school efforts, I became a trouble-shooter.

## Chapter 47 - Off Season Work

At first the work was seasonal and I spent the off-season servicing radios, working with sound equipment, and anything that had to do with electronics. One summer I operated the sound system at Blue Bonnets Race Track. There was a thunderstorm one afternoon and a bolt of lightning hit the flagpole at one end of the finish line. The resulting power surge blew the fuses on the power circuits supplying both the public address system and the lights in the grand stand. The crowd started to panic immediately and I had difficulty pushing through the people to get to the fuse box. When I succeeded in replacing the blown fuses, the music came back on and the crowd seemed to calm down immediately.

The sound system was operated from the press box, which hung from the roof of the grand stand. There were reporters there from several press services and racing organizations. They always had twenty-five cent bets among themselves on the main events. One of the reporters was from an outfit called Racing Form. He would predict which horse would win and he was almost always right. But he never bet. When asked why, he said that betting would influence his selection. We all respected his dedication to the objectivity in performing his job.

Another off season job opening became available with Booth Brothers, a store which sold and serviced radios, where a friend of mine, Wilbur Doig, who also worked at Canadian Marconi, also worked. We serviced most radios in the customer's homes, and frequently received nice tips, Particularly around Christmas time.

## Chapter 48 - Social Affairs

During the first couple of years after graduating from High School, I did not have any special girl friend. Once I took a former classmate from Three Rivers High school, Doris Smith to a dance. She had sat in the desk behind me in grade nine and, no doubt to get even with me for teasing her, she would occasionally stick a pen point in the seat of my pants. Those were the days when desks all had ink wells and her attacks left ink marks on my

underwear, which I had to explain to mother. Doris was good company but we never became serious. On other occasions I called on my cousin, Dorothy to be my date. She too was a lot of fun and even after her engagement and marriage to Jimmy Rillie, all of us remained good friends.

Both my brother and I liked Aunt Amy and Uncle Tom Kydd, Dorothy's parents. Aunt Amy made wonderful short bread and always seemed to have some on hand. Uncle Tom was an editor on the staff of the Montreal Gazette, where Grandfather Kydd had been Editor-in-chief until he retired in the 1920s. Between the two of them they had served the paper for more than a hundred years.

Uncle Tom was a member of the Montreal Swimming Club to which Bill and I also belonged. It was located on St. Helen's Island in the St. Lawrence River. I can remember how he used to float on his back reading a newspaper, a magazine or a book and never get them wet. He was also a bit of a tease. He once showed us a Traffic ticket that he had received in the mail, for failing to stop at a railroad crossing at a specific time and date at some small town in northern Quebec. He replied with a multi-page letter, stating that he had not been anywhere near the town on that day, and went on to tell them where he had been and what he had been doing and who was with him at the time the ticket was issued. He also mentioned that his car did not fit the description on the ticket. Then, in the very last paragraph on the last page, he described his car, and explained that the license plate number on the ticket was not his.

## Chapter 49 - West by Car

The spring of 1937 was one I will always remember. It was the slack season at Marconi and a friend asked if I would go with him to pick up a new Plymouth at the Chrysler factory in Windsor, Ontario and help him drive it to Penticton, British Columbia. I jumped at the chance and we took the train to Windsor, passing through London, where the Thames River was still above the flood stage caused by a huge storm a few days earlier. We saw houses which had been deposited in trees, railroad sidings where sections of track hung over long stretches where the roadbed had been washed away.

When we arrived at the factory, he filled out the papers and took delivery a brand new light blue Plymouth sedan at the Chrysler factory. It was shiny from the sailing ship ornament on the radiator to the spare tire cover at the rear. He drove to the first gas station, where he filled up the tank before we headed for the bridge, which crossed to Detroit. We passed

through Ann Arbor where my cousin, Margaret had attended the University of Michigan a few years previously, then on past South Bend, Gary, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Fargo, Bismarck, Billings, Butte, Missoula, Coeur D'Alene, Spokane and Wenatchee.

1937 was one of the years when North Dakota suffered from terrible dust storms. There were stretches of highway where the ditches on either side of the road were filled with sand. Sometimes it was difficult to see the pavement because of the drifted sand. We saw abandoned farm homes where sand had drifted as high as the second story windows. There were no signs of life. It looked like a desert wasteland. We were caught in one sand storm. It approached us from the west, appearing like a huge dark wall of cloud. As it came closer we slowed down, finally stopping because we could no longer see the road ahead, or even the ship radiator ornament on the engine hood. We switched off the engine and closed all the windows. We put handkerchief over our noses and still seemed to be breathing sand. After about half an hour, the storm passed, we went slowly on, using the telephone poles along side the road to guide us. Otherwise we could no longer distinguish where the paved road stopped and the ditch began.

Across these prairies, the road seemed to go on in a straight line forever. Where the highway ran beside a railroad, the road, the tracks, and the telephone and telegraph lines, all seemed to meet at a point in the distance. When there were low hills, there appeared to be several levels to the illusion.

One night, just after dark, a big jackrabbit tried unsuccessfully, to cross the road, right in front of us and became dazzled by our headlights. We were unable to stop before we hit him. The results were twofold. Unfortunately he was killed and the car suffered a softball size dent in the left front fender.

We parted ways at Wenatchee, Washington, my friend driving north along the Okanogan River to Penticton, BC, and I taking the train to Vancouver, where I arrived with twenty-five cents remaining in my pocket. This was enough to buy streetcar tickets and get to my Aunt Edith's place where there was always food and a bed.

## Chapter 50 – A Visit to Coalmont

After visiting for a few days, during which I spoke to Arch Woodhouse, who was married to my cousin, the former Muriel Wright. He was Superintendent of the Japan Wharf in North Vancouver and also the western Superintendent of the Vancouver, St Laurence Steamship Line, which chartered ships to transport cargo, mostly lumber to Nassau in the Bahamas,

New York, Quebec and Montreal.

I asked him if it would be possible to work my passage back to Montreal on a freighter. He said he could arrange that on a ship that was one leaving later in May. Since that was all set, I decided to visit Coalmont and the ranch, so I took the train. The Kettle Valley Railroad provided some marvelous scenery as it wound its way eastward up through the Coquahalla Pass. For several miles, the road bed ran either along a ledge which was blasted into the face of a cliff, under a shed which carried rock slides or snow avalanches safely over the track, through tunnels, some of which had openings, which allowed one to look down and see the valley floor with the stream running a thousand feet below. At other times the track ran on high wooden trestles as it crossed a gorge or from one side of the valley to the other. As the train wound around some curves, if your car was near the rear of the train, you could look out the window and see the steam locomotive going in the opposite direction.

The prevailing wind on the west side of the mountain range is westerly and is laden with moisture, which it picks up while over the Pacific Ocean. As the mountains force the air to rise, it cools and the moisture condenses and causes heavy rain or snow. As much as fifty feet of snow has been recorded during some winters. Occasionally there are wrecks. One had happened several years earlier and the wreckage could still be seen far below.

For a short time I worked either at the Coalmont store or the ranch. I remember one Saturday after making the regular deliveries, Uncle Bill took me to a country dance in Blakeburn. I felt rather awkward at first because I did not know any of the young people, but that did not last long. I was asked to join a group and thereafter enjoyed myself. I had to be taught some of the dances, since they were unlike the ballroom dances, which were popular in the east. It turned out to be a pleasant evening.

On my first visit to the ranch, after an absence of several years, I went by what was called the stage, a seven-passenger car, which made a trip up and down the valley several times a week. When I got out of the car at the ranch and started walking down the long fenced road to the house, a dog started to bark. At first he sounded as if the big Collie was warning me to stay away, but as he came closer the tone changed to a welcome. Finally Sharkey, who had been a puppy when I last saw him, jumped up on me and licked my face. He wanted to play again.

It was good to be back in familiar places and earn a little pocket money. But shortly, I had to catch the train back to Vancouver in order to catch my ship.

## Chapter 51 - East by Ship

After signing on for a shilling a month, I went aboard the British freighter to work my way from Vancouver, British Columbia to Montreal by way of the Panama Canal with stops at Nassau, Bahamas and New York. We took departure in late May, passing through the scenic Burrard Inlet, the Straights of Juan de Fuco into the Pacific. We had a full cargo of lumber, both in the holds and piled about fifteen feet high on deck. both forward and aft of the bridge. The lumber on deck was held down with big chains, with links more than an inch in diameter. The chains were pulled tight by big ratchets.

When we left, the ship seemed top heavy and had a considerable list to port until the ballast was finally adjusted shortly before we headed into the big Pacific Ocean swells. She sailed better then, but my stomach wasn't doing quite as well as the ship. I paid a visit to the lee rail where the old cook found me. He issued an invitation to visit the galley telling me he had something that would make me feel better. I wasn't certain what he had in mind, but the promise of relief overcame my caution. It was just as well I went, for he really had a cure. At first the treatment sounded worse than the sickness. The prescription was a cupful of stewed prunes,. The directions were to down them, make another trip to the rail if necessary, and repeat the dosage once or twice or as required. Believe it or not the medicine worked. After the second trip to the rail I was cured. His theory was simple. Stewed prunes taste pretty good going down and not too bad coming back up, much better than trying to bring up that other stuff. And I didn't worry about him any more.

British ships keep an excellent watch at all times. There was always a lookout at the bow, another on the bridge, usually on the wing opposite the deck officer. When not scrubbing the crew's mess or chipping paint I was sometimes assigned one of these lookout tasks. At the bow there was a bell. If the lookout sees something ahead to starboard, he is supposed to ring the bell once, if to port, twice, and if dead ahead keep ringing. Every half hour the ship's bell signals the time, and the bow lookout must report. At night he shouts that lights are bright. But depending on what he thinks of the deck officer he may shout words that sound similar, but which the editor would not permit. By the way, British seamen do not lack for vocabulary suitable for any occasion.

One night off the California coast, a passing ship blinked a message at us in Morse code. I was on bridge lookout and the first mate was duty

officer. He asked me if I had had any idea what the message was. Having learned both Morse and Semaphore in Boy Scouts I answered "What ship is that". He seemed pleased that I knew at least something, and told me to answer after showing me how to use the Aldis lamp. Then came the next question "Whither bound". So I answered that too.

This turned out to be a critical event for me, because the mate began to educate me in maritime affairs, This included introducing me to the different constellations that were visible during shared night watches. Soon thereafter as we headed for the Panama Canal. He pointed out the Southern Cross, a prominent constellation in the southern sky.

A few days later he put me on the wheel and gave me some brief instruction. At first, like most new helmsmen, I had a tendency to over-steer. This caused the steering motor to make noises, which could be heard throughout the ship and almost immediately, Captain Scott came charging into the wheelhouse with fire in his eye, demanding to know who was steering his blankety-blank ship all over the blankety-blank ocean. Then giving me a glaring look he said, "Oh it's you", and stamped away leaving me shaking a bit. Except for some temporary loss of confidence in my seamanship abilities, I was otherwise OK.

We anchored off San Pedro where we took on fuel oil and supplies, including beef, which had been shipped all the way from England. This was the day, I believe, that Marilyn Monroe died. Then we left for the Panama Canal, where several locomotives towed us through the locks and huge cuts. In some places, because of the danger of earth slides we weren't allowed to use the ship's engines. Culebra Cut was very impressive with the embankments towering well above our masts. The builders certainly had to remove a lot of earth while excavating the canal.

## Chapter 52 - The Hurricane

After the transit, we headed for Nassau, in the Bahamas and, on the way, encountered a hurricane in the Caribbean. As the seas built, the captain, for the first time during the voyage, recalled the bow lookout only minutes before we started taking waves over the bow. He also ordered a strong rope lifeline to be rigged from the crew's quarters astern to the bridge structure amidships. We were each issued a length of line, long enough to tie around our waist and take a couple of turns around this line, whenever we moved about on deck. From then on conditions became more and more violent. The waves were so large that in order to avoid breaking her back, the ship had to take them on the quarter and even then she dipped the bow

under with every wave. The ship made all kinds of screaming noises, as she was twisted by the waves. When the propeller came out of the water each time the stern rose, the diesel engine would race. And then slow, as it dug in on reentry. The entire ship shuddered as the individual blades took hold.

Soon two other events occurred. First, I had another case of the woozies, a condition, which the cook noticed and cured quickly with a dose of the familiar medicine. And then waves started coming completely over the decks, and the chains holding down the deck cargo of lumber, forward of the bridge, began to snap. As they broke, the two lengths would fly off, one to either side with such violence that they would tear loose from their anchor points in the deck. Then the lengths of broken chain would splash into the sea some distance abeam. The lumber thus freed came crashing aft smashing all the glass in the front of the bridge. Some timbers, carried by the huge waves, penetrated the exhaust stack high above the bridge, where they remained until we arrived in Nassau. For a while Captain Scott thought that the bridge might have to be abandoned and had the emergency steering station astern manned as a precaution. For more than 24 hours he remained on the bridge and always seemed as cool as a cucumber.

Perhaps because of my tender age, I didn't have enough sense to be scared by the fury of the storm. When we were in a trough, the wave crests seemed to be level with the top of the masts, which I later discovered to be 113 feet above the waterline. I listened to the noises made by the ship and tried to distinguish between propeller shaft bearing shrieks and the screaming of the hull as it twisted visibly as she drove through the waves.

Some other ships, laden with coal or steel, were reported sunk within a few miles of us, when their hatches were stove in and their holds flooded. We were lucky, for although some of our hatches gave way, the lumber in the holds provided enough buoyancy to keep us afloat, even though some boards tried to escape through the hatches, but couldn't because they jammed.

Some hours later, the wind dropped somewhat and although the seas, while still large, became much less violent, allowing us to resume our course and increase speed. Then the engines stopped because of an injector failure. The engineers went to work but advised it would take quite a while to effect repair. By this time we were in the Windward Passage without much room to drift before being driven ashore. As a precaution, the captain called a tug from Nassau, but the repairs were completed before it arrived and we were under way once more.

While they were working on the engines, I managed to get a look at them. They were very different from any engine I had ever seen. They had

three vertical cylinders, each with two opposed pistons. The explosion took place between the two pistons, driving one up and the other down. The crankshaft was at the bottom of the engine and there were external rods connecting the upper pistons to the same crankshaft. The engine consumed 72 gallons of diesel fuel per hour at the cruising speed of twelve knots.

## Chapter 53 – Nassau

The following morning we dropped anchor in the roads off Nassau. While we were off-loading lumber onto lighters, some Bahamians came along side in small boats, offering to sell us rum for a shilling a bottle. The shilling then was interchangeable with either a US or Canadian quarter. The size and color of the bottles varied, as did the quality of the contents. But the drink produced some amazing results.

That night some of us were sleeping on deck where the breeze made things much cooler than below decks. The ship was lying, beam on to the swell and rolling enough that the mast would swing out over the water, first on one side of the ship and then on the other. About midnight, there was a lot of cheering and clapping, which woke me. There was a contest in progress. The object of the game was to see which member of the crew could remain standing on his hands on the railing of the crow's nest for the most swings of the mast. I did not feel I was qualified to enter. Actually I was too scared or perhaps too sober, but a Danish engine room attendant won hands down, before one of the officers appeared and, in very clear terms, declared that the game was over.

Even before the days of the big casinos, Nassau was an exciting place and next day some of us went ashore to do some exploring. I remember seeing some beautiful straw hats but had only enough money on hand to invest in a drink at the Royal George. Later in the afternoon there was more excitement aboard when a crewman was reported missing. The town was searched without success. Then, a party was organized to search the grassy island, where I believe the casino has since been built. The deserter was found at last and returned to the ship. The main reason for the search was to avoid a lot of inconvenient red tape that develops when a ship departs a port with fewer crewmen aboard than arrived thereon. We did manage to get in some swimming in the beautiful water. Several of us dove off the bridge, some forty feet above the water and had a long climb back up the boarding ladder.

Finally, shortly before we got under way, we saw some sharks swimming near the ship, and asked the engine room crew build a big hook.



We then rigged a line with chain for a leader and a barrel for a float, and tried to catch us a shark. For bait, we talked the cook out of a large slab of salt pork. We had enough foresight to realize that our prey would be quite heavy, so we wrapped a few turns of our line around the drum of the steam driven winch, after making sure that steam was available. A short time later as the bait drifted astern, a fair sized shark appeared and after nudging the bait a couple of times he retreated a short distance, then rolled over on his back and headed for the bait with his jaws gaping open. We all thought we were going to catch him but just then the propeller started to turn and scared him off.

#### Chapter 54 – Nassau to Montreal

Shortly after leaving Nassau, we passed the famous British cruiser, HMS Ajax close aboard. When we neglected to dip our British ensign, the Ajax sounded a blast on her warning siren. This brought our skipper hastily to the bridge in a rather unpleasant mood, which was made apparent by his choice of words. Our ensign was then promptly dipped.

Just a few years later, during World War II, three light cruisers, two British and one Australian, HMS Ajax, HMAS Achilles and HMS Exeter, despite their much smaller guns, encountered, and using smoke screens to advantage, outmaneuvered, outfought, and bottled up the mighty German warship, Graf Spee, which retreated into a in a South American port, where she eventually scuttled herself. It was an amazing demonstration of seamanship, skill and courage, because the Graf Spee's larger guns outranged theirs by more than a mile.

Riding the Gulf Stream, we headed for New York. As we passed Cape Hatteras at night well off shore, we could see the loom of the powerful light, even though it was below the horizon. Finally we tied up in Brooklyn during of one of the longshoremen's strikes. This meant that we had to unload the cargo using the ship's cranes. I was assigned to a steam winch on one of the two booms on the foremast. Two of us had to work as a team, first hoisting together as the load was lifted from the hold. Then, while my partner paid out line, I would haul in until I had the entire load swung out over the dock where I then lowered it onto a waiting freight car. I suspect professional crane operators might have been more proficient, but we managed to get the job done.

Finally we were able to obtain some shore leave and made a quick trip to big city, where I purchased a very pretty conch shell lamp with what very little money I had left.

After we departed New York, there was very little excitement until off Halifax, where we were running in light fog. I was on bow lookout and saw many porpoises playing around our bow. Suddenly, out of the fog dead ahead, a fishing trawler appeared, crossing our bow from port to starboard.. I rang the bell like crazy. Our whistle blew many short blasts and the engines went full astern but the trawler still seemed to be about to be rammed. Fortunately she passed under our bow at the last second as I looked straight down onto her stern deck as she nearly scraped the bow on our starboard side. Her propellers were churning up a mess of foam as we missed her by only a few feet. She must have had her nets hauled aboard for, as far as I could see, we didn't snag any. You might say I was a little scared. Later, I learned that a ship like ours, making 12 knots takes as much as a mile to stop, even with the engines full astern.

The voyage up the St.Lawrence River was quiet and beautiful. Quebec city was very picturesque with the Chateau Frontenac Hotel standing out among the Buildings. I saw my old hometown, Three Rivers, with its paper mills on the north shore. Many long narrow farms fronted on the river. Finally we arrived in Montreal just in time for my birthday.

## Chapter 55 - More Canadian Marconi

Within a few days after returning home, I was called back to work at Canadian Marconi, this time testing commercial communication equipment. This was a very interesting period because I was able to work on a wide variety of equipment and learn a great deal about component design and test equipment.

Because most of Canada's population live within about a hundred of the United States border and the remainder is spread out, many people in the less populated areas lack adequate communication service. To relieve this situation, government radio stations played a big part, and Marconi made much of the equipment they used.

Most Canadian ships leased Marconi built radio gear and operators. British and many foreign ships used equipment supplied by Marconi Wireless and Telegraph Company of Great Britain. When servicing was needed, we provided it.

The Canadian armed services, army, air force and navy used a great deal of Marconi equipment, some of which was quite advanced for the time.

We built some multi-head recorders, which used sensors to measure elapsed sound delay to plot the position of enemy artillery instantly. The British navy used radio equipment in which wire recorders were used to

transmit code at three hundred words per minute. This was much faster than other methods at that time. These radio stations were installed at naval bases throughout the world. One was in the Falkland Islands.

Canadian Marconi also manufactured speech-scrambling coders and decoders, as well as experimenting with radar, which was not perfected for another two or three years.

They designed and built the multi-channel short wave radio beacons, which Pan American and BOAC used for their transatlantic clippers. These stations were installed in Botwood, Newfoundland and Foynes, Ireland.

Another project was developing a communication system designed to send FM radio signals over high voltage transmission lines.

These different systems offered a great opportunity to learn and understand electronics.

Life was not all work and no play. The company had a putting green, which many of us used at lunch time. Playing every day when the weather was good improved our putting. They also had a softball team entered in a senior amateur city league. I managed to make the team, first as a right fielder and then as catcher. We won the city championship one year. We also played inter-departmental hockey. Most of our games were played at the Montreal Forum, where the Montreal Canadiens and the Montreal Maroons of the National Hockey League, played.

I also played badminton, which was quite a popular game in Canada, and became a fairly good player.

During this period I bought my first car, It was a used 1930 Model A Ford California cloth top coupe with a rumble seat for which I paid fifty dollars. It saw plenty of use, and was definitely the most economical vehicle I have ever owned. I took people to work and they provided enough gas, not only for going to and from work, but to cover most of my other travel as well.

It had a lot of miles on it and one winter I did an engine overhaul on it. This involved removing the engine, bringing into mother's kitchen, removing the head, the pistons, honing the cylinder walls, replacing the piston rings with oversize ones, and then reassembling everything. During this procedure, I managed to spill dirty black engine oil all over mother's nice clean linoleum. She was not happy, but, as always, found it in her heart to forgive me. When I put the motor back in the car, it worked fine, and ran for several more years before I sold it for seventy-five dollars and bought a second hand Dodge two-door sedan.

A group of us liked to ski, and the Laurentians were not very far. The train was inexpensive. We usually bought tickets to Shawbridge, the first

station in the ski area. Then, because the train was so packed that the conductor could not pass through the aisles, most of us remained aboard till we passed a couple more stations. Then we skied cross-country back to Shawbridge and caught the evening train back to Montreal..

## Chapter 56 - The White Elephant

My brother, a friend, and I heard a rumor that the lifeboats, off some derelict Great Lakes freighters, which were mothballed at Sorel, Quebec, could be bought for \$25.00. We decided to investigate the rumor. The three of us took off in Lulubelle, as we had named my ancient Model A, with enough money in our pocket for the transaction.

The rumor was indeed true and the watchman at the gate told us we could select any of the several remaining lifeboats. After inspecting them all, we chose one built for twenty-three passengers, constructed of pine planking over oak ribs. It must have weighed a ton or more. and would have to be moved across the decks of three rafted freighters before we could launch her. We paid our cash and told him we would come back with another friend's truck the following weekend.

We arrived, as promised, and using timbers, log rollers, blocks and tackle, ship's davits, sweat, muscle and appropriate language, we slowly maneuvered our yacht-to-be across the decks of three ships and hooked her onto the davits, which would finally launch her. We also scrounged around to locate several pair of oars and stowed them aboard. The moment of truth had come, and our troubles were about to begin.

The launch was successful, until she was afloat momentarily. Then the water came in. She leaked some at every seam and a lot through a drain hole in her bottom for which we could find no plug. The one important item we had neglected to bring was a bucket. Since we couldn't get her back aboard the freighter, we had to move her as fast as we could, to where the truck was parked, about a quarter mile downstream. So we proceeded with determination. We arrived off the truck with about a foot of water in the bilge, and a worn out crew. We had also learned two important lessons. Firstly. Check your boat before you launch it and Secondly. Rowing a boat with a foot of water in the bottom is not easy.

Using planks and rollers, we towed her onto shore with the truck and let most of the water drain out through the seams and hole where it had come in. Then we proceeded to solve the next problem, that of loading her aboard the truck. Fortunately, there were plenty of wood timbers of all shapes and sizes lying about, so we used levers and wood blocks to lift first one end and

then the other until she was high enough to back the truck part way under her. Then with planks, rollers, block and tackle, we loaded and secured her aboard the truck before heading home. We also tidied up the yard slightly by borrowing some timber for off-loading. Then we took her to a friend's summer home in St. Eustache, just north of Montreal, which was only a few hundred feet from the water.

None of us knew anything about marine construction or maintenance, but we were forced to learn. Scraping, caulking, ship carpentry, painting, and scrounging became a way of life. The bills made our initial \$25.00 investment seem insignificant. We had obviously underestimated both the expense and labor required.

Someone told us more keel would help her sailing ability, so we bought a twenty foot oak beam and bolted it to the bottom of the existing keel, adding ten inches to the draft. When we thought she was ready to launch, we used the liberated planks and rollers to move her to the river where we sunk her to let the wood soak and swell for a few days. Then we bailed the water out to make certain the leaks had stopped.

## Chapter 57 – The First Voyage

Since Bill and Jim were back at MacDonald College in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, and I had the only car, we decided to move her to a location close to the college. However, deciding to, and getting her there were two different problems.

Faced with the option of either rowing her the fifteen miles to Ste Anne or borrowing a very old 5 horse power Evinrude outboard motor, you remember the type with the exposed flywheel on top that had a fold down crank handle. We chose the outboard approach, and were immediately faced with another problem. There was no place where the motor could be mounted on the boat that would allow the propeller to reach the water. We now had to devise and construct a wooden frame to hang off the stern and support the motor. Having accomplished this, we foolishly believed our problems were over. They were, in fact, just beginning.

We took off one Friday evening with a gentle breeze and were enjoying a pleasant cruise under the stars, but not for long. The stars disappeared, the breeze developed into a wind and the wind into a storm. The waves built and finally swamped the motor. Using brute force, the three of us hauled it aboard and started to row, but could make no headway against the wind. So we headed downwind toward the nearest bay where we hauled her up on shore and tied her to a tree. We carried the motor to the highway and tried

to thumb a ride into Ste. Anne to a friend's garage, where we could dry out the motor. At three in the morning, there were very few motorists and none of them wanted to stop for a bunch of incapable, sodden sailors with a grungy outboard motor. We decided to leave Jim with the motor and Bill and I hiked the ten miles to get my car. When we returned, several hours later, we found Jim, still baby sitting the motor, tired, hungry and, judging by the way he spoke, not the best of moods. He wanted to know what had kept us so long and had a few unkind comments.

After transporting the motor to the shop, we eventually succeeded in drying and restarting it. Back again to the boat, which we once again launched and continued our voyage. All went well until we came to a lock. Not knowing about nautical charts, the lock was a complete surprise. We had very little line and no fenders. The lockmaster loaned us some line but we had to use oars to fend our vessel off the sides of the lock. Then he asked the name of the vessel and that of the captain. Next, he asked the name of the vessel and that of the captain.

Thoughts of naming her had never entered our minds and I don't think any of us wanted any responsibility for the present situation. But one of us must have mentioned something about some sort of damned, white elephant and that is what the lockmaster wrote down. I was at the stern at the moment fending off, and therefore nearest the tiller, so he entered my name as captain. Hence the vessel became The White Elephant. We omitted the adjectives. Thus is history made. Finally, we reached our destination and dragged her up on shore in a friend's backyard to complete construction.

## Chapter 58 - A Motor for the White Elephant

From a junkyard, we bought a Model A Ford truck engine, complete with transmission, drive shaft, universal joints and a gas tank. We didn't know whether we needed it all, but there was no difference in the cost. We packed it all in a trailer and towed it, behind the old Ford, to Ste Anne.

Then in an old, run down marine salvage store in Montreal, we saw a three bladed bronze propeller, which looked as if it turned in the right direction as the truck engine, so we bought that. We later found that it had a twelve-inch pitch and a twelve-inch diameter. Aboard the boat we rigged a framework from which we calculated the angle at which to drill for the propeller shaft.

Unfortunately we could not borrow a drill of sufficient length to go completely through about six feet of oak and therefore had to improvise. We figured that we would have to drill part way through from outside the

boat, and then, finish the rest from the inside. We drilled as far as we could from underneath, then did the same from the inside the boat and found that we still had about a foot to go. We then resorted to burning the rest of the way with a red-hot pipe. Finally, after burning ourselves a couple of times, we succeeded. Luck was with us for our holes miraculously lined up. Now someone told us we needed a stuffing box (shaft log to knowledgeable mariners), a thrust bearing and a cutlass bearing, about which we knew anything. Fortunately our advisor took pity on us and helped us overcome these problems. We took some measurements for, and had a propeller shaft made, mounted the engine and gas tank, and soon were ready for a trial run.

This turned out more successfully than we might have hoped. We proceeded slowly at first. The engine made no complaints and we didn't leak or sink, so we increased speed. About this time a fancy cabin cruiser overtook us and made some disparaging remarks about our clumsy craft and then began to pull away. Being young and of course sensitive, we opened the throttle and pulled along side in order to make a suitable reply. They responded by speeding up and we did the same. Finally we gave her full throttle and wonder of wonders we left him behind. All of this showed our wisdom in calculating and selecting the proper engine and propeller combination.

Now that we had power the problem of obtaining a suitable mooring presented itself, but was solved by obtaining an aluminum beer keg from a friendly tavern, buying some chain from a hardware store and a big cracked flywheel off an old punch press, which we found in a scrap yard. The flywheel weighed about 300 pounds. Loading it aboard and setting it in a suitable place proved to be not too difficult.

## Chapter 59 - Sails for the White Elephant

Next came the problem of designing, obtaining materials for, and making a mast and sails, which involved some judgment calls. At the time we didn't know the difference between sloops, ketches, yawls, or whatever. However, after much discussion, we finally agreed that she would be a gaff-rigged sloop. We went into the woods about twenty five miles north of Montreal and cut some spruce trees, a tall straight one for a mast and two shorter ones for boom and gaff. We cut a couple of extra just in case we goofed. After peeling them we let them dry for a while before varnishing.

Then Jim remembered a friend who was in the canvas awning business who would sell us some material and let us use his loft and a sewing machine on weekends. Using chalk, we drew a sail plan on the floor and

proceeded to cut strips of canvas. We cut the cloth a little larger than the plan so that we would have some extra material to sew around the rope in the edges of our sails. (We hadn't learned yet that pieces of rope were called lines, and none of us had mastered such terms as luff, leach, or foot, let alone tack, clew or head). We trusted to luck that the proportions of jib to main, length of gaff to length of boom, etc would be satisfactory and I don't think we ever knew for certain.

Anyway we cut, sewed the seams, and bound the edges of our sails. Then we discovered another problem, how to secure them to mast, boom and gaff. We started off by installing brass grommets on three sides of the main sail and two sides of the jib. This allowed us to lace the sail to the boom and gaff with manila rope, but it was obvious, even to us, that this would not do at the mast. Then, I think it was Bill, suggested iron rings. So we had a blacksmith shop make us some iron rings, which would fit loosely around the mast. Thus another obstacle was overcome. Of course we needed some pulley blocks and cleats. We bought the blocks and made the cleats using hardwood.

Everything was eventually put together and we were ready for another sea trial, this time under sail. Perhaps ready is not the correct word, since none of us had ever even been on a sailboat of any kind. We had to learn everything from scratch, but proceeded with stout hearts.

It proved simple enough to sail down wind. We just put the main sail out on one side of the boat, and the jib out the other. The wind pushed us along just fine.

But getting back to windward was a different kettle of fish. We had heard about tacking, which is like zig-zaging to windward. We tried it and found that the best we could sail was about 50 or 55 degrees off the wind. Eventually we managed to return to our mooring. This event called for a beer.

Now began our real sailing education. We did not have a chart of Lake St Louis. As a matter of fact we didn't even know there were such things. So we proceeded to navigate using what I later called the Braille system. This allows one to learn quite quickly and accurately, where certain shoals and rocks are but it leaves something to be desired in that it does not give any advance notice. We also discovered that a collision with a rock usually caused the crew to lose their footing, fall fairly hard, and utter some unusual words as they picked themselves up from the deck or wherever else they found themselves. Fortunately, we did not discover too many rocks,



One shortcoming of our vessel soon became apparent. There was neither shelter from the elements nor a place to sleep. We decided therefore to deck her over and build a cabin. We consulted a friend, who was the local manager of a lumber business, and received some good advice.

He suggested that, because the glue in ordinary plywood would not withstand water, we should use marine plywood. He told us it only cost a little more. (By now we had learned that everything that has to do with a boat costs a little more. But we also found that little becomes very large).

As construction of the cabin neared completion, vacation time approached, and we were advised that a dinghy would be a useful adjunct. Luckily another friend knew where we could buy a small row boat reasonably. All it needed was a little caulking and a new coat of paint. It was soon refurbished and tied off astern, but unfortunately our knot tying ability had not kept up with our other skills. One morning, three days before our scheduled departure, the dinghy turned up missing and was by then, a long way down the St. Lawrence River.

The only solution was to build a new one. We bought plans, wood, more marine plywood, hardware, primer and paint, and since we were all working different shifts that summer, our boat building progressed around the clock, and the dinghy, with only one coat of paint, (All she ever got., ) was completed the morning of departure.

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the clock, and the dinghy, with only one coat of paint, (All she ever got) was completed the morning of departure.

## Chapter 61 - Cruising Aboard the White Elephant

Lake St. Louis is not an Ocean, but to us the first cruise was an adventure. The bunks were hard, and we had no mattresses. Most of the meals were cold. We had no real stove. But we did have an ice chest. And we did not forget the beer.

Despite the lack of luxurious accommodations, we three enjoyed our cruise very much. Certainly, the fact that our vessel was largely the result of our personal efforts, contributed to our satisfaction. We had learned a great deal about boats, weather and working together and with others.

About a year later we had a rather interesting experience. We had sailed across to the south side of Lake St Louis, across from Dorval, where a young couple sailing on a small boat capsized some distance from shore and were unable to right it. The girl was not a strong swimmer and seemed to be having some difficulty. We started the engine, moved along side and hauled her aboard first. She was cold, so we wrapped her up in a blanket and then took the man aboard too. We headed for shore where their friends were gathered and left her with them. Then we took him back, helped him right their boat and towed it to shore.

By now we had used what little gas we had, which, because of wartime gas rationing, wasn't much. Their friends took our gas can and scrounged a couple of gallons of fuel before giving us a nice send off after a couple of beer. I guess we had made some new friends too.

## Chapter 62 - McGill University

In August 1939, just before Canada entered World War II, I began to realize how much more I needed to learn in order to get ahead. All the time I was working, I had been taking evening classes in electricity, communications and engineering drawing. Meanwhile I had managed to save enough to attend McGill University. The company approved and I started the pre-engineering year.

The freshman year in engineering had a very heavy math and science load, Algebra, trigonometry, geometry and calculus, chemistry, physics, and, spread over three semesters, botany, geology and zoology, as well as English literature and composition. McGill stressed English in all their fields.

Although I had not played football in High school, I tried out for the

freshman team and succeeded in earning a position on the line, despite being the lightest man on the line, tipping the scale at a maximum of 199 pounds. I was never able to reach 200 pounds, no matter how I tried.

I was not sure I would make the team until the very last practice, when we were training against the varsity squad. Part way through the practice game, I was told to play safety, a position, which I had never played before. Russ Merifield, a senior who, a couple of years later, married my cousin was one of the best ball carriers on the senior team, broke through our team and had only me between him and the goal line. The coach had not seen that he had just been knocked slightly off balance after avoiding an attempted tackle, but he did see me tackle him low around the ankles and bring him down. The coach came over and told me that I had just earned a place on the team. It was as second-string right middle. (Right tackle in US football). During the opening game of the season, our first string player was injured, and for the rest of the season, I played sixty minutes every game, both on defense and offense.

In every game, the opposing team would try to run the first two or three plays through me, thinking that, because of my size, it would be the weak spot. However they would run into a solid wall, not because of me, but because two backfield players were backing me up on each of those first few plays. When these plays were stopped cold, the other team changed their targets, and our backfield then played their normal defense. I felt slightly compressed during those few plays.

Training for, and making the team resulted in a lifelong benefit for me. All the players had to give up smoking and train hard. I felt stronger and healthier and attributed this to giving up smoking. I have never had a desire to smoke since.

In September 1939, Canada declared war on Germany and our lives changed. The McGill ROTC enrolled students and the all the football players joined. Those who were members of the senior class volunteered in the service of their choice, and were given commissions.

During the summer I was in the ROTC, our unit spent two weeks in training at Farnham. One thing I remember was the RCAF. (Royal Canadian Air Force), bagpipe band, marched through our camp every morning playing music, which nobody could possibly sleep through. Almost every evening some of the pipers would entertain us with beautiful Scottish tunes. I also remember marching to their band and feeling that we could keep going forever.

Meanwhile, I studied hard and had just completed my freshman year, when Jack Beckingham, General Manager of Canadian Marconi Company

asked me to come back and head up a new department to manufacture quartz frequency control crystals which were desperately needed by the Canadian armed forces, particularly the Royal Canadian Air Force. He also asked Don Richan who had just graduated from McGill, to be my assistant. The reason for choosing me was because of my previous practical electronic background. In any case we were a good team and became close friends.

Our period in the academic world was over and a new learning experience in the business world was about to begin. We were being sent to Chicago to learn the crystal manufacturing processes.

Edward M. Kydd