Some Childhood memories

by Derek Spratt

SoME ChildHOOD memories

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Derek Spratt

Aknowledgements:

Dedicated to all those who helped inspire and guide me on my journey to adulthood – especially my loving parents

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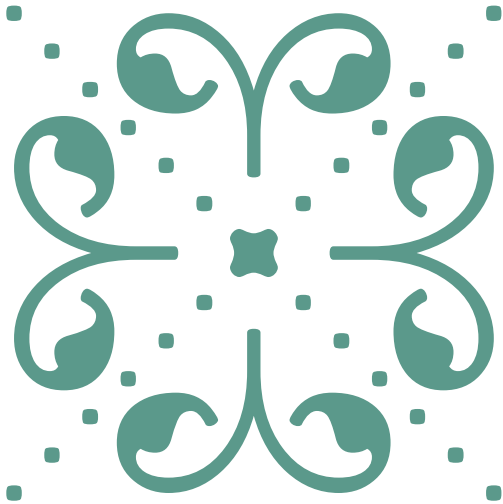
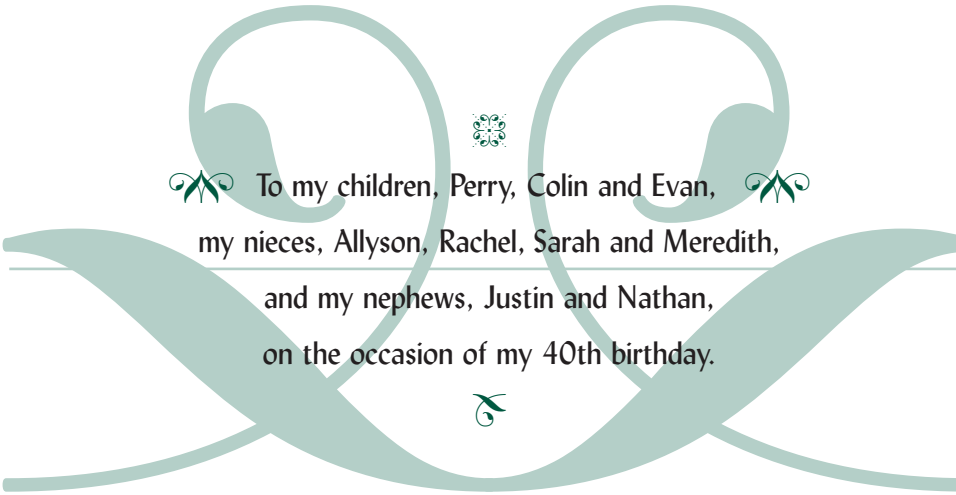
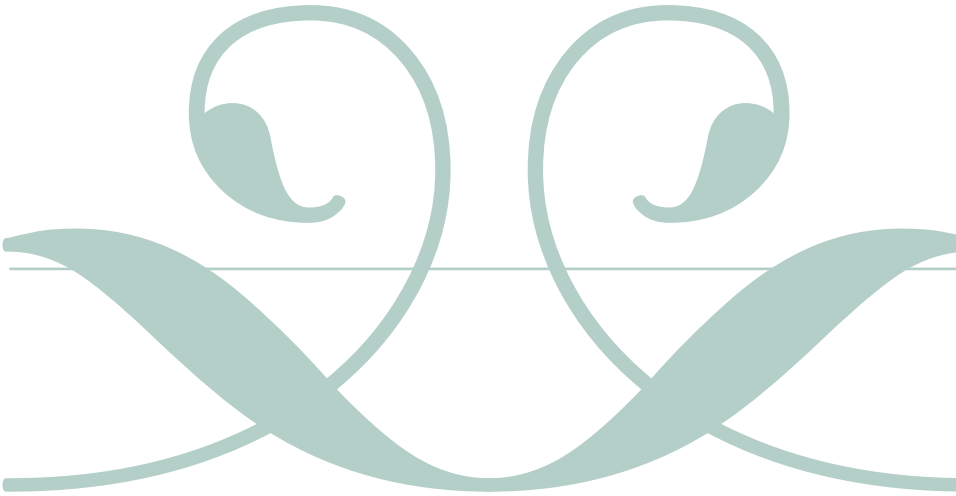




To my children, Perry, Colin and Evan,
my nieces, Allyson, Rachel, Sarah and Meredith,
and my nephews, Justin and Nathan,
on the occasion of my 40th birthday.



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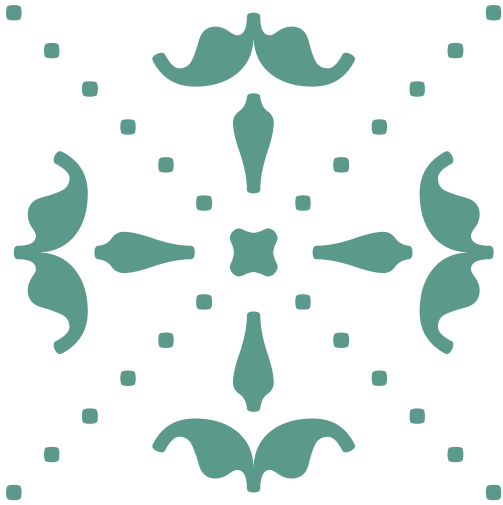


Putting Pen to Paper

I have to say this right up front—it's impossible to not embellish the stories of my childhood. The mind plays many tricks. We edit out the negative or the more mundane experiences, and we re-create the positive ones as larger than life stories in our minds. The stories I'm recounting here don't represent a balanced view of my childhood, but they do represent some of the more compelling episodes, and also shed light on influences that have shaped who I have become. I sincerely hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as I've enjoyed writing them down.

It was October 11, 1961—or so my parents told me and my birth certificate attests—that I arrived on planet earth. At about six-thirty in the morning my delivery took place at the old Grace Hospital on West 27th Avenue just east of Oak Street in Vancouver.

En route to becoming a grand old ten years of age—which for many of my earlier years seemed like such a long-off milestone of future wisdom and maturity—I, like most children thought long and hard about the meaning of life, how I would live it, and what wonderfully great things I would accomplish as I grew up.

It's kind of funny looking back to that time—a time that seems so innocent, particularly when observing my own children at the same age—that such "important" and long term personal goals would be

roiling around in my young mind. If I had such thoughts back then, surely so do my children, my nieces and nephews now that they are the same age as I was then.

This is precisely why I'm writing all of these stories down now. It's not because I'm turning forty years of age and that I worry that I'll forget all of these long ago memories, or that I'm feeling that it's my duty to create a log of my distant past for my own posterity. It's simply because these experiences gave meaning to my life so long ago, and helped shape my journey. I hope that in some small way they may help shape the journeys of my most precious gifts—the next generation of my extended family. Turning forty somehow seems a fitting time to target the completion of this project.

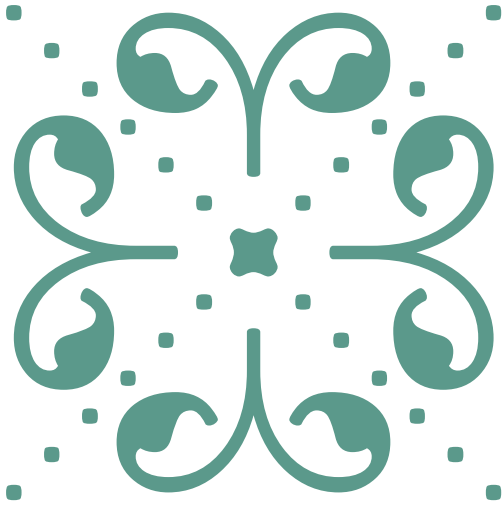
For quite some time I've also thought about writing down an extensive log of, not just my childhood memories, but adult experiences and life lessons learned along the way. A simple paradox however, kept me from moving forward; for how could I write something down that was meaningful to a person of a completely different age and at completely different point in history that would make any sense or convey any real message to them? The answer came to me after being reminded recently how in business one must be ever vigilant in gauging the context into which a message is being delivered.

I have therefore decided to write down my thoughts on more recent experiences and observations for presentation in future missives to be published in two or three future volumes—one covering my post-secondary education and early career years. The

former would be handed over to my children upon graduation from high school while the latter would be presented upon completion of university or college. Perhaps a forth and final volume could be published when I retire from active business with the intent of capturing my ruminations on the nature of business, success and personal happiness.

I decided not to title this volume, "My Childhood" because I firmly believe that no one can accurately remember events from such a long time ago without heightening the colour somewhat. These are the stories that I remember—complete with embellishments and with factual errors—that form my recollection of the more interesting or impressive activities and experiences that my family and I lived through. This isn't an exhaustive dissertation because it would be literally impossible to write it all down—but these stories do represent the bulk of the interesting stories and anecdotes that I remember and hope my extended family will enjoy reading, gain insight and derive value from.

Life is all about living, and happiness is all about being true to one's self—so Perry, Colin, Evan, Justin, Nathan, Allyson, Rachel, Sarah and Meredith, plot your course, think big thoughts and live each and every day of your lives with meaning and passion. And take time to be quiet and alone with your thoughts each day and probe and bring out your ideas and your hopes and inner dreams for the life that is ahead of you. Shut down the noise of other's thoughts, needs and demands and find yours and cherish and nourish them and truly make them your own.



My Mom and Dad

The one thing you don't have the opportunity to do in life is to choose your own parents. "You get what you get" without much choice in the matter. Now that I'm fully into parenthood I realize just how fortunate we all were growing up in the Spratt family—and with the parents we ended up with.

Mom and Dad both grew up in Saskatchewan. Dad was born in 1931 and Mom was born in 1935, and as prairie kids their lives were deeply affected by the grinding poverty of the 1930s depression, which swept North America clean of jobs, prosperity and hope. The disaster of those years occurred a long time ago, even before World War II, but memories of a time when so many people were unemployed and literally starving to death created a lasting impression on everyone who lived through that period.

Imagine our country back then—a time when there was little or no social security to buffer its citizens—no unemployment insurance, no welfare, nothing but the kindness of neighbours who were themselves suffering the effects of the catastrophic economic downturn. It was this widespread suffering that spurred the development of Canada's social safety net programs that today form an integral part of our 'just society'.

Mom's family lived in North Battleford, Saskatchewan and her Dad, Paul Miller, was a

labourer immigrant with next to no education who hailed from Eastern Europe. He worked the railroads around the province and only came home on weekends or whenever he could get away. Her Mom, Laura Southerland, came from a more privileged background. Because she was quiet and humble by nature, she opted for a career as a schoolteacher working in a remote part of Canada during the 1920s. Paul and Laura's tiny home boasted an outhouse in the backyard. Going to the bathroom in the winter was a chilly experience when the temperature plunged to -30 degrees C outside. Toilet paper consisted of torn pages from the Sears catalogue. Think about that the next time you use the washroom!

Dad's family lived in Regina, Saskatchewan, and was more financially fortunate. His father, Maynard Spratt, a graduate civil engineer from McGill University, was the Chief Engineer for the Provincial Wheat Pool that oversaw the storage and transportation of grain for a regional economy wholly dependent on farming. But that didn't mean Dad lived a life of luxury—because back then no one had anywhere near the standard of living we enjoy today in Canada.

No sooner had the depression of the 1930s come to an end, then World War II began. That meant Mom and Dad had to tough out their teen-age years living the nightmare of an all-encompassing world war where millions of people lost their lives—including tens of thousands of Canadians. Maynard was over in Europe for four years fighting the war, while Dad grew up alone with his younger brother and his mother. During that period they moved a number of

times to live with relatives—first to Halifax on the east coast, and then to Ottawa in central Canada.

So, while Mom didn't see her father for many days at a time, Dad also was without his father during his formative years. These were the types of sacrifices people made for their families and their country back then.

By the time the war was over and Canada was getting back on its peacetime footing, both Mom and Dad were considering their plans for the future—that is, what to do about post secondary education and their careers. Dad, being four years older, was the first to pack up and leave the prairies for McGill University in Montreal to attend the same engineering school as his father and enroll in a Civil Engineering program—again, like his father before him.

After graduation and a year off to work, Dad went back to McGill for a Masters degree in Civil Engineering—this time specializing in concrete. It was at this time that Dad first met Mom. Mom had also decided to travel east to study nursing at the Royal Victoria Hospital located right beside McGill's campus. Rumour is that they met on a blind date that was arranged when the engineers at McGill phoned over en-mass and requested female company for an evening out on the town. Those were the days!

Dad was a mature and independent young man, who owned his own car (very rare at the time), and had also saved a considerable sum of money—over $5,000, which was a huge sum, back then. He also possessed the education and the job experience to guarantee any bride a comfortable and prosperous future. Mom was also well educated and trained in a

promising profession. Both believed they shared enough in common to get married. They moved out to Vancouver in 1957 when Dad was offered a new job.

Earlier on, while Mom was still studying nursing at the Royal Vic, her mother had passed away. Her Aunt Edith lived in New York—which was only a two hour train ride from Montreal—helped Mom and supported her as she grew into adulthood. Losing a mother at such a young age was very hard. Mom's relationship with Aunt Edith—born of unfortunate circumstance—positioned Edith as a second mother to my Mom and a grandmother to us.

So out to Vancouver they went. No sooner did Mom arrive than she fell seriously ill with a disease that only recently has been well understood by the medical profession. Today we all know that Celiac Disease is a genetic intolerance to gluten in the digestive tract. Gluten is the 'glue' that is found in grains, such as wheat, rye, oats, barley and malt. Back then Mom lost so much weight that she was less than 90 pounds—just skin and bones—and almost died before finding the strength to rally and eventually recover. Obviously, if she had died, none of us would be here today so it's good that the medical profession started to better understand her condition when they did. Mom's older brother Earl, also passed away around that time after drinking compounded his health problems.

When my brother Douglas was born, Mom was still very thin, but was building strength for her future role as a mother to three children. Dad was settling down as the west coast expert in concrete technologies. It was the perfect time to make

Vancouver home because the entire region was experiencing a huge post-war construction and industrialization boom. Dad's engineering skills and knowledge fit perfectly with the opportunities offered by an expanding economy.

Shortly after I was born, and only a few years after working for other companies, Dad opened his own engineering practice in 1964 at the ripe old age of thirty-three—a business he continues to run today at the age of seventy. Mom's health had improved considerably, Dad had his own successful engineering company, and all three remaining grandparents, Paul, Maynard and Beryl, had recently retired to the West End in downtown Vancouver.

The background to our arrival on the scene (Douglas in 1958, myself in 1961 and Kara in 1963) was one of hardship, hard work and future opportunity. It was an entrepreneurial soup to match the most hearty appetite—children, even those coming from the most modest of starting points could expect substantial economic prosperity during this period—provided they applied themselves. My family was no exception.

The picture of my parents today with their beautiful west side home and two Mercedes Benz automobiles parked in the driveway, their place at Whistler, and their regular trips around the world, is deceiving. For quite literally, none of this existed when we were growing up. Their current home at 6145 Collingwood Street was purchased for $33,000 in 1964 thanks to a loan from Maynard and Beryl. Theirs was a pretty large, but otherwise simple home, built by its first owner in 1953 located in a new sub-division perched on the edge of town. Early pictures reveal a sparsely

furnished home and a simple backyard with a large wooden swing set behind the open-backed garage where the new family room addition now stands.

In the 1950s before Douglas was born, Mom worked part time as a nurse for Dr. Mirhady while Dad built up his engineering practice. They owned two reliable North American made automobiles while our family trips in the 1960s consisted of local excursions to the Gulf Islands—usually with extended family members in tow. It was a simple time and yet it formed the basis for all that would follow.

Dad's business prospered because the local and national economy was undergoing one of the strongest periods of growth this nation has ever experienced. It wasn't until the early 1970s, when the tripartite combination of the OPEC Oil embargo, failure of the US Vietnam war effort, and the change of provincial government to the NDP for the very first time, that intimations of a serious financial storm marred our otherwise secure little world. Fortunately for us we were all in high school by then and there were two Mercedes Benz autos gracing the family driveway.

But what kind of parents were my Mom and Dad? There's an old saying to the effect that you should judge a person by their actions rather than their words. This was particularly true in the case of Mom and Dad—they were both clearly very hard working and completely dedicated to raising their children.

My other friends spent their time playing out on the streets after school and doing homework assignments that were 'average' but not 'excellent' in our teacher's eyes. In our family we were kept busy with

homework, team sports, and music practice while our parents invariably took a personal interest in our school assignments. Ours was the "Spratt family enterprise" and we were anxious to keep up our end of the bargain and bring home those A's and gold stars emblazoned on our report cards.

We knew we were loved, and we knew that we were the number one priority of our parents. Dad made sure we understood his career and that what he did at the office and away on the road was contributing to our own future. He was careful with money and taught us to, "take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves".

Our parents took great care of their parents and made sure that we spent time each and every week with them. Family was important. Respect, good manners, good marks in school, and exposure to as much education and life experience as possible dominated the family agenda.

As an adult, I've shared my observations with others about the challenges of being a good parent. Everyone appears to agree that being a great parent is about the toughest challenge that one can ever face in life (as well as the most rewarding—challenge and reward go hand in hand). My parents knew that and, just as they worked to build their own lives and fortunes, they always took the same care to be the very best parents they knew how to be.

It is in their honour that I am writing these stories of my childhood and the life force that has granted me these experiences—all of them positive and all of them contributing to what I have become. And please remember what I have stated above—these are

"stories"—full of factual errors and colourations—but they are never the less my childhood recollections.

40 years ago the world was a different place

Just as for my parents, the world around me also shaped who I eventually became through influences great and small.

Safety. To a child living today, one of the things that would be immediately noticeable if transported back in time to the 1960s would be the complete lack of apparent concern concerning children's safety—or anyone's safety for that matter. In the 1960s, making a big deal about protecting members of our society from personal harm wasn't very strongly supported in corporate head offices or an emotional issue to be obsessed over in households. It was a different time and everyone knew they just had to take good care of themselves. Even we kids knew this—someone else wasn't going to do it for us.

Toys didn't need to be approved "for under three years" to prevent choking hazards. Seatbelts were "an option" while vehicles remained devoid of air bags, child seats, and legally, there were no requirements to "buckle up". Kids didn't wear helmets while riding their bicycles, there were no pollution standards for industry, and if you got hurt or slowly poisoned from the food you ate or the air you breathed, there were no class action lawsuits to fall back on for compensation.

The majority of North Americans smoked—and they smoked anywhere and everywhere they wanted to. As a non-smoker, if you wanted clean air to breathe you had to step outside.

From Kindergarten onwards, kids usually walked to school by themselves. No one drove their kids to school—it was just unheard of. From the earliest age, kids were free to cycle off into the distance to explore the world around them without parents caring too much about where they were off to. For a kid, it was the ultimate in freedom.

One of the nasty outcomes of World War II, which had ended sixteen years before I was born, was the subsequent development of the "Cold War"—a very real and very dangerous ideology of "good vs. evil"—that is, "capitalism vs. communism". The world was politically split into two camps with the USSR (the old Russia) and the US competing as superpowers while they and their allies busily constructed countless weapons of mass destruction to "counter" the presumed aggression of the opposing ideological camp.

It seems almost comical now, but the 1950s, 60s and 70s were essentially defined by extreme political and military imperatives that drove governments to shell out billions of dollars on armies and equipment while creating an endless series of regional wars for children to watch on television every night. Footage from Vietnam and the Middle East wars dominated the evening news and it was nearly impossible to escape the sight of humans killing each other on a daily basis over ideological differences in our supposedly 'modern' world.

Every child that grew up in that era couldn't help but be aware of the dark side of mankind lurking just beneath a surface veneer of civility. We learned that evil stalked the world and that it appeared to skulk in

the hearts and minds of each and every one of us—a tough and confusing concept for any child to grasp.

Despite political and social fermenting elsewhere on the international stage however, Canada was coming into its own during the 1960s. The two different world wars that Canada had fought spawned aspirations of independence from mother England. When I was in elementary school, we finally got our own Canadian flag. Our economy was very strong (the Canadian dollar was worth more than the US dollar for a time) and our country was growing in international prestige. During much of that decade, Pierre Eliot Trudeau was installed in Ottawa as our youthful and charismatic prime minister while in the meantime Montreal hosted Expo67 and demonstrated to ourselves—as much as the world—that we had indeed arrived.

During the 1960s the bustling port city of Vancouver was itself the centre of a great deal of social and political change. While the West End metamorphosed from a sleepy residential enclave to the high-rise pressure-cooker community that it remains today, the city was also home to its own nascent West Coast hippie movement. Mom and Dad thoughts hippies were pretty strange and would let us shriek, "hippies!" out the car windows as we drove down 4th Avenue.

Miles for Millions walks, protests against nuclear weapons testing, Vietnam, sit-ins, love-ins, riots, the founding of Greenpeace, the first protests against the forestry industry and its clear-cut logging practices—all of it was happening in Vancouver in the 1960s. This was the place where the old ways and the new

ways were in conflict and duking it out firsthand in our own backyards.

From what I can tell, basic schooling today isn't too different from what it was in the 1960s. What was taught back then however, was less balanced. We were admonished of the evils of communism, told that girls were best suited to secretarial work or homemaking. We didn't hear anything about political correctness—gays were perverts, God was clearly a Christian god, recycling was a term that hadn't been invented yet, and you shouldn't smoke until you were at least sixteen years old. There was precious little tolerance for multiculturalism in the school system back then. Yes it was a simpler time, but it was also a time of bias and distortion and unfairness to minority groups.

I generally liked my teachers—of whom a much higher percentage back then were men—and believe they cared about providing as good an education to kids in their classes as the current teachers do today. In some respects however, things were more creative and individualistic back then. Teachers weren't afraid of being themselves and provided a highly individualized curriculum. There were fewer 'thought police' and many teachers got away with some pretty wild things that they wouldn't be able to today—both good and bad.

Technology is always advancing, and in some ways those forces will always be with us. The proliferation of televisions into the homes of every family in North America, in addition to the invention of satellite transmissions forever changed our simple 1960s world. The power of television to influence and shape

public opinion and create consumer demand was just starting to be tapped. Because the medium was so new, we weren't really that aware of it back then. Today, we're much more aware of it.

Being a child in the 1960s meant experiencing, for the first time, live events from around the world on television coupled with an explosion in programming that eventually evolved into today's 500 channel television universe. In the middle of one particularly memorable night in 1969, we even watched the first landing on the moon live on television.

Related to television is the telephone—a more personal and direct form of communication. My parents saw telephone use as a privilege, not a right, and strictly limited the time on the phone—especially long distance calls, which was still very costly at the time. When we arrived on the earthly scene, the telephone was becoming much more integrated into everyone's lives and were installed everywhere possible. Despite the fact that long distance costs had come down considerably we were still taught to write notes before making any long distance calls in order to be more efficient, and thus, minimize the expense. Cellular phones didn't show up until the 1980s.

There were no computers at home, at school or even in use in most businesses. There was no Internet. There were no electronic calculators, fax machines or copiers. There were slide rules, duplicating machines and "carbon copies". Today's electronic world—with its mass production of paper and the transmission of paperless images and messages—just wasn't possible back then. It took

time to produce a document and it took a lot more time and energy to distribute it then it does today.

Large corporations relied on "mainframe computers" to make complex calculations that could not easily be performed by hand while at the same time maintaining databases of information to process financial transactions and search and sort information stored on magnetic tape drives. The power of these systems—costing millions of dollars in the 1960s—constitutes only a small fraction of what a child will harness while playing with Gameboy or Nintendo 64 gaming consoles today.

Credit cards arrived in the late 1960s and with credit cards came the concept of increasing levels of personal debt. Much of the economic boom in recent years has been fuelled by people spending more money than they actually have (its called a "net negative savings rate"). Getting people to "borrow" money and pay significant interest charges for that privilege is every banker and retailer's dream come true. The invention and proliferation of the credit card in the 1960s and 1970s changed forever the nature of consumer buying habits.

I'm not sure it was just the credit card that changed people's habits. Back in the 1960s, banks would only lend people enough money to match payments back to the bank equating to no more than 33% of their monthly income when buying a home. The idea was to make sure that people could "service" that debt. Today, with the relatively higher cost of housing, people think nothing of applying for a mortgage with payments equal to 50 or 60% of their income. Being in debt today isn't the perceived risk that it actually is to

consumers. This perception harms people, but benefits the banks and corporations who want people to buy their products and pay high interest charges. All of this madness started when I was a kid.

The environmental issues we are so concerned with today owe their roots to events occurring more than forty years ago. With rapid economic growth transforming North America into a consumer paradise, protecting the environment was the last thing in most people's minds. Nevertheless it is clear that many of those excesses stimulated today's awareness of these issues. One popular technology of the day, nuclear power, held the promise of a limitless and clean energy source, but scientists and politicians over simplified the risks of this technology and over-promoted both its benefits and its opportunities.

Emerging today appears to be a growing awareness that humanity isn't as brilliant and all knowing, as we believed in the 1950s and 60s. We can't control and abuse the earth and natural resources without harming our own future existence on the planet. We don't have all of the technical answers, and we still have much to learn about ourselves and the universe around us.

Transportation is another area that has changed significantly in the last forty years. Back then, people just didn't travel on airplanes unless they really had a lot of money or their business needs demanded it. Today people will jet around to vacation spots a number of times each year while businesses hold in-person meetings as a matter of course around the world. Air travel has literally exploded in the last twenty years and it is hard to

grasp that, as a kid growing up in the ‘60s, flying on a plane was a special event.

The digital age is now upon us and this means that future generations can recreate and preserve memories of events and experiences with uncanny accuracy and realism. From this time onward, high quality digital audio, video and photos can be captured, stored, transmitted, duplicated and preserved for all time without degradation. No more faded photos in bulky or lost albums, no more wondering what life must have been like in the good old days.

3091 West 20th Avenue

I can't remember too many details about my first home because I was so young while we lived there. We had moved to 6145 Collingwood Street in 1964—well before I went to Kindergarten at the Kerrisdale Elementary School Annex. I remember going to pre-school after being picked up from 6145 in a yellow school bus. It is memories garnered from ages two and three that I'm recounting here at 3091.

I liked bouncing on high-chairs and cribs. I soon discovered that if I shook them hard enough and used my full body weight, I could literally move my 'prisoners box' around the room. I recollect moving my crib to the edge of the room where I could open the door and peer out at the world—especially satisfying when my parents invited friends over and had stashed me out of the way in my room.

Mom & Dad's first House – 1959

3091 was across the street and down the way a bit from my first piano teacher. Douglas, my older brother, was taking piano lessons across the street before we moved. After we left 3091 for 6145, Mom would drive us back to the old neighbourhood to take lessons from the same lady. Maybe that's why I remember the general 3091 neighbourhood as well

as I do, but there are still other memories that stick in my mind from our sojourn there.

I loved my blue corduroy coat and my 'lambie'. Memories of wearing that coat while driving downtown to the Hudson Bay Company to shop with my Mom and 'lambie' are still with me. We would

Enjoying a pipe on the porch swing with my grandparents—1963

park across the street from the Bay in the multi-story parking lot and walk across the elevated walkway that hangs suspended across Seymour Street just north of Georgia St. I liked to watch the cars drive by below us. I seem to recall that the round guard railings in the parking lot were painted orange against a white concrete background. In the basement of the Bay, my mother sometimes treated us to a hot dog complemented with a frosted malt.

6145 Collingwood Street

A modern new shopping mall called Oakridge Centre located close to our new abode at 6145 Collingwood boasted a number of interesting stores, all connected outside under a covered walkway, with Woodwards the anchor tenant. It was here that Mom purchased her gluten-free rice bread from the famous Woodwards food floor. As a kid, there was no neater destination. The food floor had a conveyor system where the checkout clerks placed full grocery bags in plastic bins, which were then transported down a ramp (much like the luggage handling system at airports today) under the parking lot to a pickup spot. Mom would drive us there and let the nice young men who worked there load the groceries into the trunk.

The food floor had another very desirable feature as well—the mini donut machine located just past the checkout counters against the wall. Mom almost always treated us to sugar coated freshly deep-fried donuts from that machine. We would stand squinting at that machine while it made donuts for what seemed like hours. First the raw dough would squirt out of a tube suspended just above the boiling oil. The dough would then immediately form the shape of a small round donut, raw on the topside while the underside cooked in the hot oil. The small donut would then whirl around a circle held separate from other newborn donuts by little revolving metals fences. At the halfway point, a paddle would reach down, scoop the donut up and flip it upside down to

allow the other side to cook. The donuts were plucked from the oil and dropped into the sugar tray and finally placed into bags for shoppers to take home. Most of the time we just ate the donuts Mom bought us right on the spot.

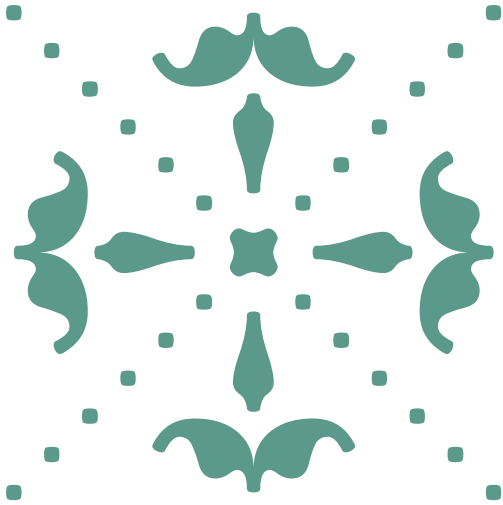
Setting off to Sunday school from our new house—1965

Woodwards was part of Vancouver's heritage and it's sad that the famous store is no longer around. But every year at Christmas time—down at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre—some of the original Woodwards Christmas window decorations from the original downtown store are still put on display.

Back to the specifics of 6145. At that stage in my life, much of my early childhood life consisted in staying awake late and formulating creative ways to spy on my parents and their friends during the highly interesting and active parties held in our new home. My parent's friends were also my friends when they came over to party—to my way of thinking anyhow. And drink—yes, I remember the array of hard liquor and cigarettes that my parents offered their guests because I wound-up as bartender for some of these parties when I got a little older. One of my jobs was to hand out cigarettes from a nice little silver box that we kept in the living room, along with cleaning out the ashtrays that remained a permanent fixture in our living room.

And while we're talking about parties, I also

remember the night when a weary and inebriated guest backed out of the driveway and knocked over the light standard next to the curb and sent it flying across the street. Those were the days—hard liquor, cigarettes, and driving without seatbelts after having one too many.



My Grandparents

There is so much that my parents and in-laws are able to do today with our kids, and they've enjoyed so many great shared experiences together, that looking back, I wish I had more of these types of relationships and experiences with my own grandparents to draw from than I did.

My Mom's mother died before I was born and my two grandfathers suffered poor health because they were both smokers. My Dad's mother and father also drank for a period in their lives. Paul and Maynard both paid an unfortunate price for what was back then, simply a lack of understanding and focus on personal health issues. They died during their sixties—thereby missing out on watching their grandchildren grow up. I hope for my own children's sake that my parents and in-laws will be around for many many years to come.

Both Mom's father and Dad's parents had taken apartments in the West End within just a few blocks of each other. We came to pay our respects almost every Sunday afternoon and would sit and talk together on the park benches next to the bandstand near Denman and Davie Streets. Sometimes we would play cards together at the Spratt's apartment. Grandpa Miller would roll his own unfiltered Players Export A cigarettes with a little hand-rolling machine—something he taught me to do so that I could roll cigarettes for him. Grandpa Spratt liked menthol Lifesavers and would hand them out to us when we asked him. While we played cards, Grandma Spratt

enjoyed serving us coffee with sugar and cream. As I said before, they all smoked—Beryl included.

Easter at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel—1967

When I was still in Kindergarten, our grandparents joined us for a magical trip to Hawaii. We all stayed together in the little beach-side cottages at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on Waikiki Beach—long since torn down to make way for high rises. We stayed during Easter and I remember going out for coconut cream pie with them. When we returned to Hawaii three years later, both Grandpa Spratt and Grandpa Miller had passed away and only Granny Spratt was still with us.

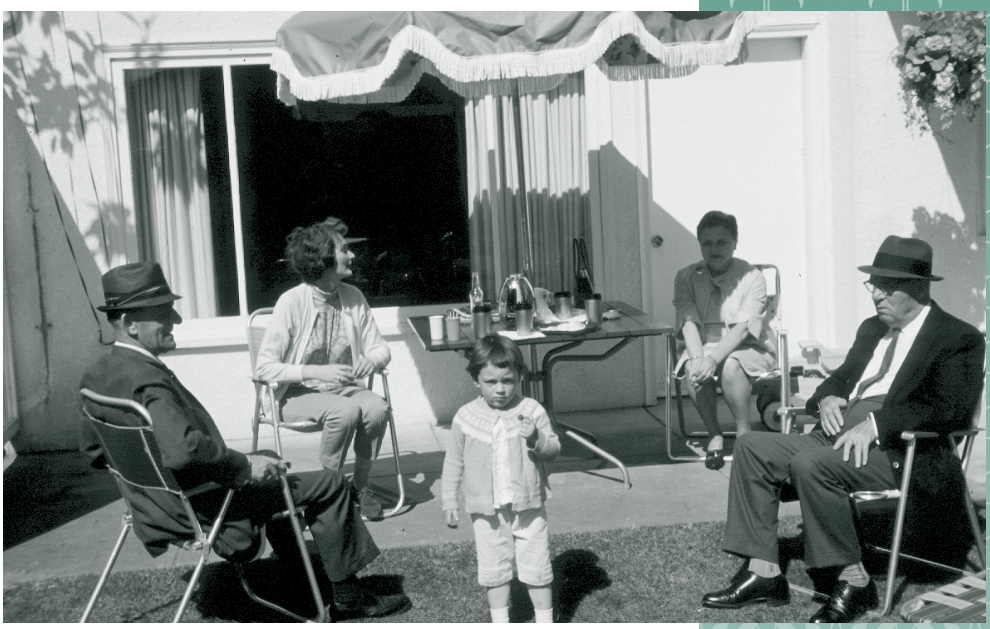
We had a large porch swing decorated with a nice flower pattern sitting in the backyard of 6145 that once graced the back porch at 3091. Our Grandparents would sit on that swing and rock back and forth together on nice days. Thinking back on it, that was kind of odd because they were younger than my parents are today. We don't think of my parents as 'old', but back then, we sure thought of my Grandparents that way and treated them gingerly.

The original White Spot restaurant on south Granville Street near 65th Avenue was a special place where we sometimes congregated with all of the grandparents in the 1960s. You could order steak and lobster for $5.99 back then. It was a dark, narrow, odd little restaurant but was a favourite with the Spratt clan—especially for important occasions such as the

New Years dinners that Granny and Grandpa Spratt would treat us to.

Spratt family picnics were popular and Granny Spratt would join with Mom to put on a great spread for all of us to enjoy. I can't recount all of the picnics that we shared together, but it seemed like a lot. I have fond memories of those times together. Mitzi, our first dog, loved those get-togethers. She would race around the park and woods and share in the meals with us afterwards. We children sat on a big cloth while the adults brought portable chairs to sit on.

I remember clearly, (because we visited them in the hospital) when both grandparents fell ill. Grandpa Miller was made of tough stuff and would still come and take the bus to see us before he got too sick.



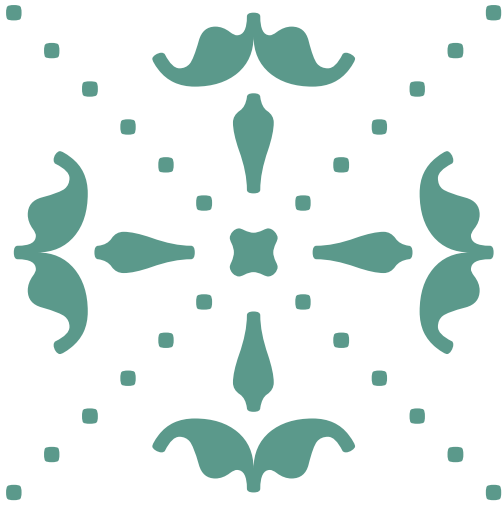
Grandparents holding court at the back of our new house—1966

A typical family picnic with the grandparents, just before I was born—1961

While he was dying of lung cancer he could still be seen chopping down an old tree in the backyard of 6145. He and dad planted that big maple tree in the centre of the yard in 1967. He eventually passed away up at the private hospital next to Oakridge Centre on 41st Avenue—I still think of him there as he slipped away whenever I drive past that spot. Shortly afterwards, Grandpa Spratt's stroke caught up with him and he left us as well.

In the 1970s, Granny Spratt relocated to a Kerrisdale apartment to be closer to us and she would attend Knox United Church with us on Sunday mornings where Mom and Dad often helped out in the Sunday school. After her husband's passing, she became significantly more religious and cut back on her smoking—although she never quit entirely. We would play cards, discuss current events from around the world, and often ventured out on Sunday drives around the city or Stanley Park together. Granny occasionally played a round of golf at the Stanley Park Pitch and Putt with Mom and Dad.

Granny Spratt suffered a long, slow decline but lived long enough to see Justin, Nathan, Perry and Allyson come into this world. For a brief moment in time, four generations of Spratts lived on the planet together.

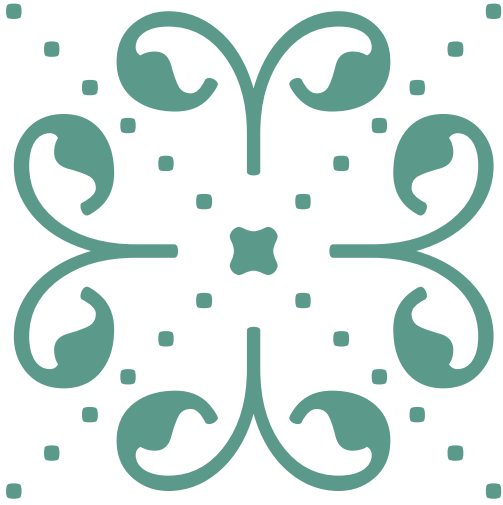


Wearing and breaking my eyeglasses

Like Evan in our family, I was the only child who wore glasses in our household at 6145. Before Kindergarten I was burdened with glasses—and worse yet, I was forced to wear an eye patch everyday day as well. I hated those eye patches as much as Evan hates them today. As for myself, I still have a weak eye demonstrating that the problem—weak eye, was quite real.

Wearing glasses as a young and energetic child meant damaging them often. I succeeded in breaking more than twenty pairs before I made it out of high school. I broke them wrestling on the lawn with friends; I crushed them by accidentally sitting on them; while out riding on my bicycle, they fell off my face only to be run over by a car. In grade six, I got hit in the face by a basketball; and again with a tennis ball in grade seven. At least once a year they needed replacing.

It's hard for people who don't wear glasses to comprehend what a hassle it is for a five year old to be saddled with the dual problem of poor vision and an accident-prone nature. The damned things kept breaking. I feel for Evan and hope that he manages to have better luck with glasses than I did.



My dogs Mitzi and Muffin

Soon after moving into 6145, I remember arriving at a dog breeder's residence and watching a gaggle of newborn miniature schnauzers running around the place. That day we were picking up our own little Spratt family companion and we decided on a girl dog that we promptly dubbed Mitzi. In those days, schnauzers had naturally cute floppy ears and long curly tails—unfortunately destined for the breeder's shears. When we got Mitzi, she had just had her bandages removed.

Now all little puppies are cute but our little Mitzi was the cutest by a country mile. Mom and Dad took a nice wooden box from downstairs and painted it cream white and stencilled her name on the side. It was placed under the sink in the bathroom next to our kitchen. That was her home and that's where she napped for years—in our bathroom. Mitzi loved to sit at the dining-room front window and watch the world go by. When the mailman or milkman came to the house, she would bark and tear about like a crazed animal.

I liked to play with my coloured wooden blocks on the floor next to the window. Mitzi often joined me as I played there. In the winters when the house was cooler, both Mitzi and I would sit next to the heating grate in the hallway and warm up together. This was a favourite place for her to relax on a cold day and we had to be careful not to step on her while she lay there.

Dogs and children develop a special bond—especially once dogs truly become a part of their

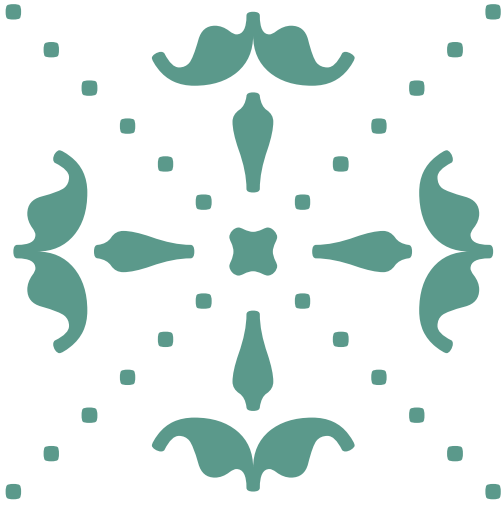
family. They need walks and feeding and sometimes medical attention, and as a child, I helped as much as I could. As I got older I really looked forward to taking Mitzi out for walks. Mitzi died one day when I was away at Courtney Youth Music Camp in high school. I wasn't there to see her suffer—Mom, Dad and Kara drove back with her from Alberta after visiting Douglas who was there on a summer job. They had to have the vet put her to sleep at the end of the trip because she had gone into insulin shock.

Mitzi—1968

Losing a favourite pet is the hardest thing and for Mom it was particularly so. We were lucky to get another dog the next year—and we named her Muffin. She arrived from Ontario on an airplane one fine day and I remember her as being much more playful and friendly to strangers than Mitzi had been. As I struggled, as most teenagers do, with the pressures of growing up, Muffin remained my friend, my confidant, and was always there for me.

Muffin woke me up almost every morning. She would climb up the stairs to my room, right at the top of the staircase, and would paw at the sheets on the side of my bed. She wanted me to initiate our favourite game whereby I would pretend my hand or foot was a mouse under the covers. She would go absolutely mad wrestling with my extremities while I'd be fully awake and ready for the day following our morning play session. There was no need for an alarm clock with Muffin around.

Going away to university was exciting for me, but not for Muffin. She knew something was wrong when I said my goodbyes to her. Up until that time, I had slept every night of my life at home with my lambie tucked under my chin as I went to sleep. I had already decided that lambie would stay home alone on my bed waiting for me to come home at Christmas time. After I had left for Queen's, Muffin bolted upstairs, jumped up on my bed and tore lambie to pieces. This was very unusual for Muffin. She knew how much lambie meant to me and had never touched her before. I think she was letting me know how she felt about abandoning her. It's a sad footnote that she went blind on my wedding day. Mom and Dad were forced to put her to sleep on my birthday later in 1985. I still miss her.



Our Bicycles

In the 1960s, a boy's bicycle was his life. Parents encouraged their kids to ride their bicycles as early as possible so they were free to go wherever their legs could peddle them. We rode our bicycles to school, parks, to the woods, to the beach, and to the river. We rode them to the store, our friend's houses, to cubs and scouts, and we used them as racing machines; jumping them, popping wheelies, skidding the tires, and doing everything possible to make our individual bicycles cool. We used clothespins to clip on baseball cards to make the spokes noisy like an engine. We put on electrical lights to see in the dark. Every kid in the school rode a bicycle and you couldn't live without one. Your bicycle was your best friend and you went everywhere with it—without a helmet.

One of the more interesting bicycle pilgrimages was to the frog-infested ditches next to the Musqueam Indian Reserve located on the flats next to the river. Mom and Dad had given us a couple of nets with really long handles to catch the frogs that hid out in the water and along the banks of the big ditches. We regularly arrived back home with buckets full of frogs to first play with and then release into our backyard. Mitzi would often come out and join us, jumping and growling at the terrified amphibians as they made a mad dash for the bushes.

Although it's been years since I've seen garter snakes around Vancouver, we also occasionally caught them in our backyard as well as down on the flats.

They were great to play with. In the 1960s the Stanley Park Zoo featured an area next to the aquarium where they kept more than 100 garter snakes in a pit. Some of them were much larger than the ones we caught near home—typically 24-inches long with different coloured stripes running down their lengths.

Another occasional visiting spot was the clay deposit-rich banks of the Fraser River. We would cut out pieces of clay, make things with them and let them dry out in the sun. As kids, we also loved to play in the ravine behind the houses across the street from 6145. A network of trails, some of them still evident today, ran the length of the ravine from 43rd Avenue and Collingwood Street to Blenheim Street and SW Marine Drive. We could ride our bicycles up from the old entrance on SW Marine Drive to the old abandoned Skinner mansion that once occupied the entire area surrounding the ravine.

We rode up past the house to the decaying bridge across the ravine which connected to a trail that ran up to the old horse stables at the back of the property boarding on 44th Avenue. There was a wonderful stream with old concrete pools and waterfalls that ran down the centre of the ravine. It was here that the neighbourhood kids played endless war games, got into pea shooting fights, and otherwise explored and wandered to their heart's content. It was an endless playground for a child to have lying literally next-door.

We enjoyed an eclectic mix of neighbours around the Collingwood cul-de-sac. There was Lila the crazy lady who put a sprinkler system in the tree in her front yard during the middle of winter to create a beautiful,

but dangerous, ice sculpture. And there was the Judge who made wooden stilts for all of the kids to wobble around in. We scurried through everyone's backyards and thought nothing of venturing into someone's vegetable garden to sample the carrots or the celery that was growing there. It was our neighbourhood and we all shared it.

One day, while we were out on our bicycles up the street at about 44th Avenue, we noticed a lot of bees in the air. At first there appeared to be maybe a dozen buzzing around us, and then, the sky literally filled with them. Seemingly millions of bees were flying together in formation down the street. While they didn't attempt to sting us, they were humming all around us in thick, angry clouds. We peddled as fast as we could down the street and back to our house only to bail out part way and dash into someone else's home for protection. After about five minutes the bees disappeared and we again jumped on our bicycles but chased after them this time. We eventually discovered them massing together on a stone wall on 43rd Avenue—a complete bee community on some kind of re-location journey together. Later that day they departed for good.

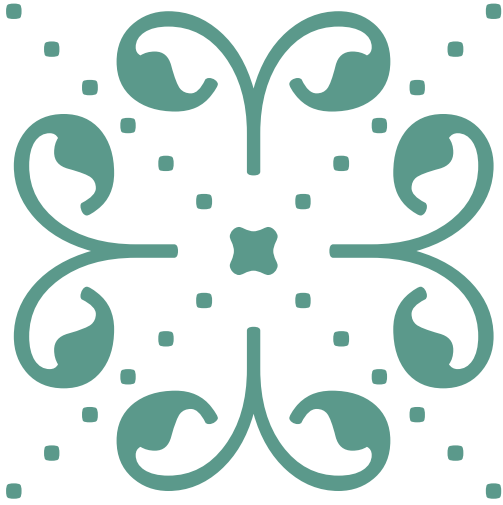
Bicycle technology was simpler back then. As a young child a single speed bicycle was standard issue equipment. Having a three-speed bicycle was something extra special. The hot item in the late 1960s was the 'banana bicycle' with its hip-looking long banana shaped seat that allowed for easy wheelies and other tricks. All that changed the day Douglas became the lucky recipient of a very expensive and impressive Raleigh 10-speed racing bicycle for his

birthday. The whole neighbourhood turned out for the occasion as few people had ever seen such a marvellous machine with its multiple front and rear chain sprockets, thin tires and curled down handlebars. Douglas had clearly arrived and bicycles were poised to change dramatically in and around our community.

Part of the problem nowadays is that Vancouver has grown up and homes like 6145 are no longer on the outskirts of the city. The wide-open spaces are mostly gone now and traffic is more congested. Parents don't let their kids out of their sight for fear that they will be harmed by strangers, and bicycles are often considered too dangerous to ride around the city until a child is at least twelve years old. To an adult, owning and using an automobile lends a sense of power and freedom. To a young child of five or older, back then, a bicycle imparted the same sense of freedom. Perhaps the current mini-scooter trend is bringing back some of that sense of independence and bonding with a transportation device partially lost with the bicycle during the last few decades.

But I also loved my walks to school, and often chose that mode of bi-pedal transport over my bicycle. I liked to take my time getting to school and coming home afterwards so I could have time to myself to think. Just as I still do today, I cherished those moments alone. During elementary school, the Kerrisdale Annex lay only four blocks from home, and yet it was always a fascinating little jaunt. I could cut through the ravine on 44th Avenue or stroll along 43rd Avenue where the spiders made their nests in the holly bushes. I liked to take a stick and pull a spider

out of one nest and put it in another spider's nest and watch them battle it out with the eventual winner often killing the other spider and wrapping it up for a snack later on. In high school the walks were a lot longer and I liked them just as much—so much so that I would avoid taking the bus if I didn't have to be home immediately. Most of my 'ideas' for projects were thoroughly examined and designed in my head during those quiet saunters home.

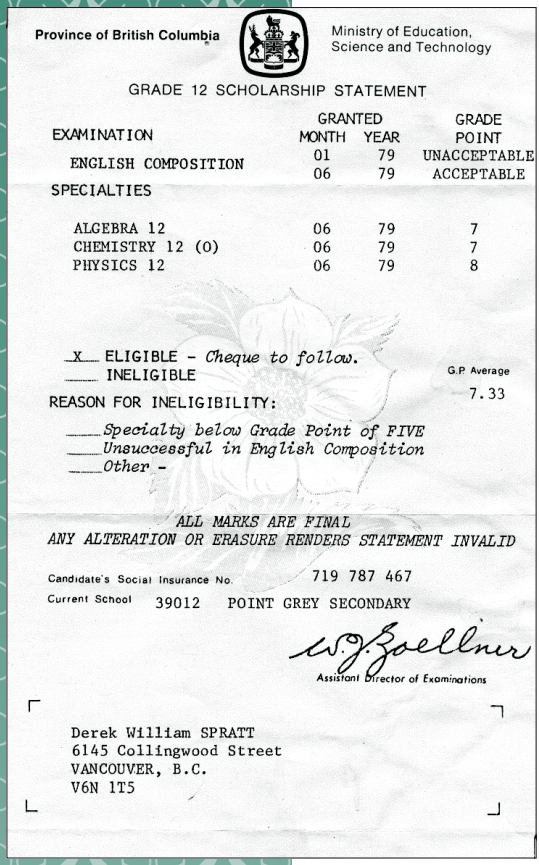


School

I liked school a lot. There were times—just like those early days learning the piano—that I didn't want to do homework or sit in the classroom. All in all however, I felt good about going to school. School was about more than ABCs—it was also about friends, relationships, fitness, general education, and discovering new things outside of the regular school curriculum. Many of my musical experiences revolved around school organized bands and trips. I learned photography at school, electronics, metalwork and woodwork hobbies. I started weight lifting and running at school, and in general, entered university well prepared both academically and otherwise.

While I remember caring about marks in elementary school, I believe that I was more interested in other aspects of the schooling experience until at least grade seven. By then it became clear to me that I could do well academically. By grade eight I discovered that I could win straight As and still have a good time outside of the classroom.

There was a price to pay for getting better marks than the average student—particularly when one expended less effort than some other kids. Some thought it great that others could do so well, but a few kids—a few of whom I thought of as friends—became more standoffish once I started to get good marks. It wasn't that these kids turned actively hostile, but I sensed that they didn't entirely approve of the difference in academic standing between what they



Province of British Columbia

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

GRADE 12 SCHOLARSHIP STATEMENT

EXAMINATION	GRANTED MONTH	GRANTED YEAR	GRADE POINT
ENGLISH COMPOSITION	01	79	UNACCEPTABLE
	06	79	ACCEPTABLE
SPECIALTIES			
ALGEBRA 12	06	79	7
CHEMISTRY 12 (O)	06	79	7
PHYSICS 12	06	79	8

_X_ ELIGIBLE - *Cheque to follow.*
_____ INELIGIBLE

G.P Average 7.33

REASON FOR INELIGIBILITY:

_____ *Specialty below Grade Point of FIVE*
_____ *Unsuccessful in English Composition*
_____ *Other -*

ALL MARKS ARE FINAL
ANY ALTERATION OR ERASURE RENDERS STATEMENT INVALID

Candidate's Social Insurance No. 719 787 467

Current School 39012 POINT GREY SECONDARY

W.O. Boellner
Assistant Director of Examinations

Derek William SPRATT
6145 Collingwood Street
VANCOUVER, B.C.
V6N 1T5

The final result of twelve years of grade school studying—a scholarship

could achieve and what I was able to achieve.

Maybe this is normal. Kids just start to wake up to the fact that life isn't always fair and that some students do better in school than others. Competition for good grades and winning the favour of teachers started in earnest during high school. I just had some trouble with a few of my so-called friends who gave me a hard time about my academic standing and my preferential relationships with certain teachers.

Eventually I began to choose new friends that either didn't care that I wanted to do well, or that also did well. We ran competitions for who was going to get the best marks in class. Dale Penner and I—in grade eleven and twelve we studied and wrote all of our exams together—always seemed to get the same marks. Upon graduation, sixteen of us had made the five-year A honour roll list, including Cheryl and Douglas Vincent. Shortly thereafter, a number of us received $1000 scholarship awards because we also did well on our provincial exams.

Our Spratt family secret weapon during elementary school was Mom—and for certain things—Dad as well. Mom would spend hours and hours with us doing our homework assignments together—not doing them for us, so to speak—but providing

continuous input and direction. We were lovingly pushed along, as she made sure that we always did that little extra, giving our major assignments the focus and attention they deserved. When our teachers marked Spratt family assignments, they knew they were also giving Mr. & Mrs. Spratt a mark as well.

We were well set up at home with our little desks placed in our respective bedrooms and our Encyclopaedia books adorning the den. Today, kids rely on the Internet and Encarta CDs to look things up, but back then you needed to go to the library for information, and we often went to the local libraries for books on the subjects we were studying. We travelled a lot as a family and so did our Aunt Edith who lived in New York, who would send us a continuous stream of clippings from the New York Times as well as notes and letters from her trips around the world. More often than not, these sources of information formed the basis of our reports for school.

I don't remember elementary school being that competitive when it came to academic grades—although I do recall becoming the teacher's pet in grade seven, which was a bit embarrassing. High school proved to be altogether different because kids from three different elementary schools fed into Point Grey—and many of them were smart and also willing to work hard to get ahead. That was OK with me, but it was discouraging to many other students who began to realize that high school was going to stream us into different post-secondary educational paths that would ultimately lead to differing career options.

By grade five I knew that I was either going to take

an Electrical Engineering or Engineering Physics degree program at university. It never occurred to me that other options were available other than engineering school and university, or that I could choose a non-technical degree program. As far as I was concerned, I was already an engineer. All that was missing was my diploma—which meant biting the bullet and going to university. Perhaps that sounds like a funny or arrogant statement, but I was honestly a bit impatient with going through the motions in order to get out into the real world, get an engineering job and do useful and interesting projects—for money.

From Kindergarten to grade twelve, I was exposed to some really super teachers along the way—and I don't mean any disrespect by naming only a few of them here. The ones that really influenced me were:

Mr. Bernoe in woodworking who believed in my abilities, understood my motivation, and encouraged me to tackle really complex job woodworking projects;

Mr. Pottinger in electronics who, despite his grouchy nature, cared about electronics and gave us a damn good grounding in the subject. He also presided over a very cool lab that he allowed us to play in 24 hours a day;

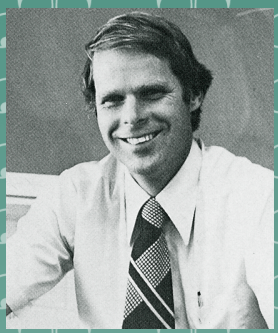
Mr. Kellner in Chemistry who loved the subject and got us to love it as well;

Mr. Nordman in Physics who was the most honest, old fashioned, and loving man ever to grace Point Grey's halls of learning, and who believed I could make it in life if I would only apply myself; and

Mr. Hudson our band teacher who encouraged us to

be all we could be, with literally no limits on our behaviour or musical interests.

I remember two famous run-ins with the teachers at Point Grey. People reading my high school annual graduation quotation will probably wonder why I stated that one of my adulthood goals would be, "to get back at a certain chemistry teacher" (Mr. Kellner). I was a good student and I always got As and liked the subject. I also got bored occasionally and sometimes brought in a good novel to read in class. I started to do this more and more often until one day, completely without warning, Mr. Kellner threw a large chemistry book at my head from across the room.



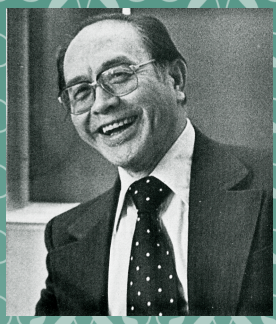
The infectious Mr. Kellner, my Chemistry teacher

It was rumoured that he was having problems at home and he wasn't his normal self. I however, was not impressed and immediately rose and stalked out of his class. Most of the students supported me and felt that he had declared war on one of his best students. He, on the other hand, felt I was disrespectful and was probably right—I just didn't see it that way at the time. Still fuming with righteous indignation, I graduated from high school just a few months later.

One day during grade nine—exactly one week before Halloween—I was fooling around in the 'green room' just behind the school auditorium stage. The drama department was staging a play complete with ghoulish stage props, including a full sized coffin. In my zeal to amuse my fellow classmates I jumped into the coffin, whereupon another musical student, Ian Putz, immediately slammed the lid on my face. I didn't care because I'm not claustrophobic and when I

didn't make a fuss to get out, a number of Ian's other friends picked up the coffin and carried it off the stage and out into the school hallway with me still in it.

The first stop was Mr. Chin's math class and I jumped out just as he intoned his famous "Now class…" I jumped back into the coffin and we repeated this silly game in a number of other classes before making it to Mr. Jones drafting room. Now Trevor Jones was a bit of a wild teacher. He drove a hot rod Corvette to school and didn't really seem the teacher type (he's now a wealthy real estate tycoon driving even faster cars). He immediately cottoned on that it was I, the inimitable Derek Spratt, squirming in the coffin. He jumped on the lid, and forthwith instructed some students to grab a hammer and nails from the woodworking shop across the way.



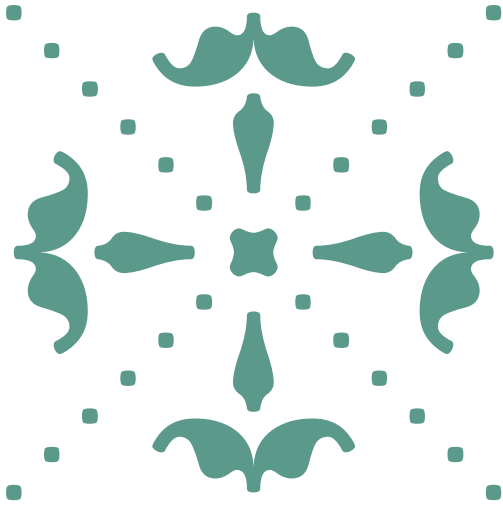
Mr. Chin, one of my more colourful Math teachers

With the help of about twenty nails Mr. Jones hammered that coffin lid shut in his classroom. They then carried me into the washroom, stuffed the coffin in the shower and began to fill it with water. That's when I yelped, "enough is enough" and kicked the lid off with all of my strength. When I finally arrived home, my clothes were covered in black paint and my parents flipped out. Dad marched up to the school and must have really shaken up Mr. Jones. From that day onwards, he was very very nice to me and kept asking how my Dad was. Dad has a temper just like I do and must have let the people at the school know that he was deeply unimpressed with a teacher nailing one of his sons into a coffin.

Cheryl and I met in grade eight—although we didn't talk to each other too much until we found that we were both headed to Queen's together in the fall after

graduation. Cheryl was into the arts and I was into the sciences. But we both shared an initial interest in music. The first day we met was actually in band practice. Cheryl played the flute and sat in the row in front of me. I thought she was kind of cute. I liked to be the clown on occasion so one day I pulled out a tube from my French horn and pretended to pour the saliva from it onto the back of her new jacket. She remembered me for that. Just think, maybe that little prank was the fateful beginning of a relationship that found us dating at Queen's six years later.

Trevor Jones, the Drafting teacher who liked fast cars



Music

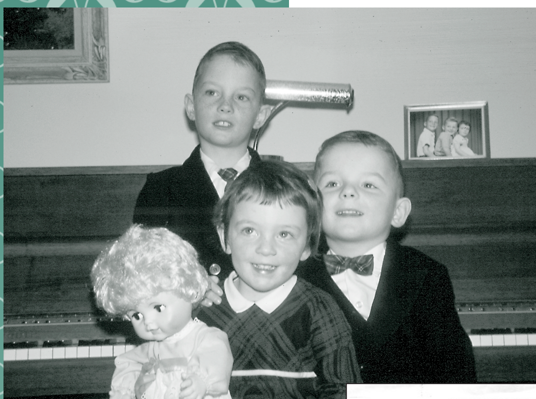
Music in many ways has been a dominating influence my whole life—especially as a kid growing up in the 1970s.

Mom and Dad put us all through the standard Toronto Conservatory of Music piano courses beginning when we entered grade school and kept us at it until we reached the grade nine music exam levels, including the required music theory course materials. We played in recitals every two to three months or so, and we also entered formal music competitions. By the time we entered high school we were focusing almost exclusively on our 'second' instruments—in my case the French horn—that I took up when I was ten years old.

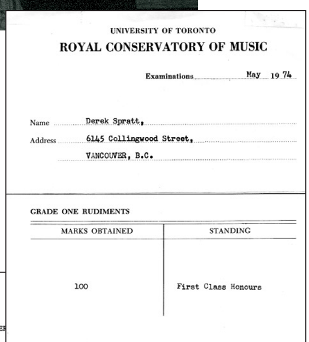
I don't remember having much fun during the early years of piano lessons and being forced to put up with daily music practice until I reached the grade five or six level piano music exams. After that, I could pick up popular sheet music and play for my own enjoyment and that of my friends. When I was able to sit down and play my own musical pieces and other people responded with enthusiasm, I was hooked. By the time I reached high school, I was finished with both formal piano music training as well as lessons with my dedicated old teacher, Miss Coats (who didn't care much for popular music). By that time, I was actively playing the piano in the school Dixieland and Jazz bands and the French horn in youth orchestra.

This opened up a whole new musical vista for me

because the quality of the musicianship with the other students I was playing with had also become correspondingly high. Fortunately, I was able to play with students who eventually went on to become professional musicians. They were:



The Spratt children in front of their piano—1966



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

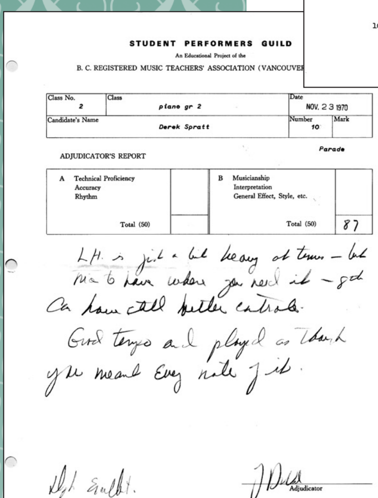
Examinations May 19 74

Name Derek Spratt,

Address 6145 Collingwood Street,
VANCOUVER, B.C.

GRADE ONE RUDIMENTS

MARKS OBTAINED	STANDING
100	First Class Honours



STUDENT PERFORMERS GUILD

An Educational Project of the

B. C. REGISTERED MUSIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (VANCOUVER

Class No.	Class	Date	
2	piano gr 2	NOV. 23 1970	
Candidate's Name		Number	Mark
Derek Spratt		10	

Parade

ADJUDICATOR'S REPORT

A Technical Proficiency, Accuracy, Rhythm		B Musicianship, Interpretation, General Effect, Style, etc.	
Total (50)		Total (50)	87

L.H. is just a bit heavy at times – but nice to have where you need it – [illegible] can have still better control.
Good tempo and played as though you meant every note of it.

[illegible] Adjudicator

Perry White (sax) in our Dixieland and Jazz bands who is now a highly regarded Jazz musician in Montreal and Europe;

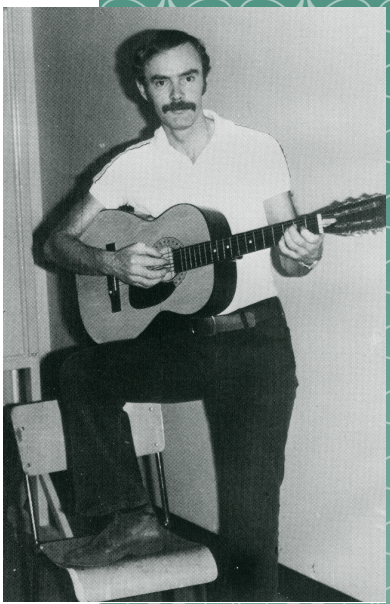
Phil Comparelli (trumpet, guitar), also in our dixieland and Jazz bands, is now one of the lead musicians in the rock band 54-40;

Ian Putz (sax), from our dixieland and stage bands, runs the Jones Boys dance band at Harrison Hot Springs; and Paul Airey (piano), is now a professional musician, composer and film scorer.

My brother Douglas was also very fortunate to play with some musically inclined friends. Douglas played the trombone and adored the band 'Chicago Transit Authority' (later renamed 'Chicago') which featured a mix of hard rock guitar and brass players. Eventually Douglas joined a band in high school that practiced weekly in our basement rec room and played all of the popular 'Chicago' tunes. Peter Carson played guitar and piano in that

band. He was the son of Mrs. Carson, the Kerrisdale School music teacher, and ended up playing the piano at our wedding reception years later. He was a very talented musician. Others in the band included Rob Ferguson on drums (again, one of the best drummers I have ever heard), David Bailey on keyboards, and Peter St Louis on guitar.

Peter St. Louis was a quiet and very likeable boy who lived just a few blocks from 41st Avenue and Dunbar Street. He was tragically killed in an automobile accident when a bus ran a red light and broad sided the van he was riding in. I heard he smacked his head on the front windows frame and died as he lay on the sidewalk. His mother, who had run up the street when people called for her to come to the scene of the accident, was by his side. Peter was one of two top academic students at Point Grey in grade eleven and the whole school turned out for his funeral held at St. Mary's Church (at 37th Avenue and Larch Street) on that warm sunny spring day so long ago.



Roy Hudson, our one and only Band teacher

Douglas' other good friend Grant Wilson was also a great guitarist and was the only other boy in grade eleven topping of the honour role list along with Peter St. Louis (their names were on the walls of Point Grey for the 1975 honour roll year). Physically, Grant was also very strong—even though he was short and skinny. He could beat anyone he came across in an arm wrestling competition.

I liked Grant because he was also interested in electronics and ended up going to Queen's with Douglas and rooming with him as he toiled over his

Electrical Engineering degree. During high school, Peter Frampton ('Frampton comes alive') was at the top of the FM radio charts. Grant built an identical 'effects' box in Mr. Pottinger's electronics lab so he could play the same songs on his guitar in the high school auditorium—using a speaker from his guitar amp that fed into a large funnel, which in turn was attached to a small hose that Grant placed into his mouth to sing into the microphone with—"Do you feel like we do?"

Grant called me a shortly after he graduated from Queen's, and asked about Douglas and whether I had any jobs leads in Vancouver for him. Two weeks after that call he was killed in a power boating accident—they were out on a lake after dark going really fast when they hit a bridge piling, whereupon Grant flew out and hit his head.

Grant and Peter were friends in high school and shared some common interests and friends. They both died before either one of them reached adulthood. It is true that only the good die young.

By the time I reached grade eleven it was clear that Perry White was going to break free from the rest of his musical friends and become a truly great jazz musician (Phil has also done really well in music). He was keen on jazz and encouraged the rest of us to play more and more of it during school concerts as well as independently in the community. We even entered a number of Jazz band competitions together.

Riverbottom line isn't fame and all that jazz

By VALERIE CASSELTON

Open house and pep rallies are things of the past now for the Riverbottom Jazz Band.

These boys have been swinging at clubs like the Cave, the Hot Jazz Society, and the Burrard Yacht Club, and bookings are lining up for them.

The seven boys are all students or graduates of Point Grey School, most of them 17 and 18 years old.

But they jazz and swing their arrangements like young Armstrongs, precise, intense, and very enthusiastic.

How do they describe their attitude to their music?

"That's easy!" band leader Kevin Hall says, "We're out for fun, not fame."

But fame may just come to these students, who have been together for two years and plan to stay together while going on to college.

The band was begun six years ago at school by saxophonist Bill Dudets.

Last year, clarinetist Hall says, "I saw the potential and we broke from the school."

Oldies

Now they're jamming their brand of New Orleans style dixieland Monday nights in Hall's basement, playing oldies like High Society, Basin Street Blues, and Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue.

With Bill and Kevin in the group's line-up are: Phil Comparelli, trumpet; Derek Spratt, piano; Randy Giles, drums; George Fisher, tuba; and Steve Jenvey, trombone.

"In the future we'd like to play the Classical Joint, The Savoy, and the Hot Jazz Club," Hall says.

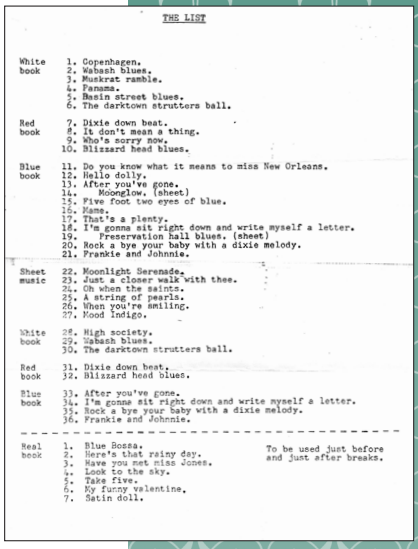
"But we don't get upset if things don't work out, and that's what keeps us together."

SWINGING! Part of the Riverbottom line-up from Point Grey School.

Vancouver Courier Article on our Jazz band—May 10, 1978

Perry and I even photocopied my ratty old jazz standards book that I still play from (the 'real book') one night at Dad's office.

One evening, I invited everyone in the Jazz band to my house for a practice session using the grand piano in our living room. We were going to record the session and wanted a really nice sounding piano. Afterwards, I drove everyone home in Dad's 300D Benz. When we arrived at Perry's house with Phil in the passenger seat, Perry jumped out, popped open the trunk, removed his two saxophones and music stand and placed them on the curb. He closed the trunk and I put the car in reverse and promptly drove over both of his instruments.



THE LIST

White book
1. Copenhagen.
2. Wabash blues.
3. Muskrat ramble.
4. Panama.
5. Basin street blues.
6. The darktown strutters ball.

Red book
7. Dixie down beat.
8. It don't mean a thing.
9. Who's sorry now.
10. Blizzard head blues.

Blue book
11. Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans.
12. Hello dolly.
13. After you've gone.
14. Moonglow. (sheet)
15. Five foot two eyes of blue.
16. Mame.
17. That's a plenty.
18. I'm gonna sit right down and write myself a letter.
19. Preservation hall blues. (sheet)
20. Rock a bye your baby with a dixie melody.
21. Frankie and Johnnie.

Sheet music
22. Moonlight Serenade.
23. Just a closer walk with thee.
24. Oh when the saints.
25. A string of pearls.
26. When you're smiling.
27. Mood Indigo.

White book
28. High society.
29. Wabash blues.
30. The darktown strutters ball.

Red book
31. Dixie down beat.
32. Blizzard head blues.

Blue book
33. After you've gone.
34. I'm gonna sit right down and write myself a letter.
35. Rock a bye your baby with a dixie melody.
36. Frankie and Johnnie.

Real book
1. Blue Bossa.
2. Here's that rainy day.
3. Have you met miss Jones.
4. Look to the sky.
5. Take five.
6. My funny valentine.
7. Satin doll.

To be used just before and just after breaks.

Our Dixieland band song sheet for a typical evening event—1978

It's hard for anyone, even a dedicated young musician that I was becoming, to understand the panic and extreme emotional reaction that I caused Perry at that moment. Immediately after the 'thump', Perry screamed, fell to the ground and rolled around on the grass, clutching his face and howling like someone in his family had just been killed. It took his parents and all of us more than an hour to calm him down. Those instruments were his family, his life, and he had a deeply personal relationship with them. In a matter of seconds (by his way of thinking) I had destroyed his ability to make music.

We tried and tried to find replacement saxophones for Perry, but it was clear that he was always going to long after the ones I flattened under the wheels of the car that night. Here I was the musical friend and fellow band member who caused it all. I still cringe when I think about that night with Phil, Perry and I

together on his front lawn, crying like babies, arms locked around each other. It was real.

Long before all of this transpired, Douglas had turned our basement rec room into a sort of shrine to the Beatles and Chicago after he brought home some of their albums (which I also listened to intently) and had hung their posters on the walls. It soon became our music listening room. Douglas would listen to Frank Zappa and the "Apostrophe" album—first heard on CKLG FM (99.3 MHz on the FM dial which has now been re-named CFOX) which, in 1970, was the brand new 'all album rock' sister station to CKLG AM (730KHz on the AM dial).

Like everyone else, I always listened to the AM radio. Douglas, my cool and well-informed older brother, told me to "get hip" and listen to album rock like Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin on the FM dial. It was Douglas that turned me on to all of these great bands. He went even further by winning a phone-in contest with LG FM that resulted in five new albums from various artists—such as ZZ Top—joining our growing record collection.

Along with Douglas, his Chicago cover band and his cool musical friends (including Jim Littleford who is an ace Trumpeter) who came over to our home all of the time, I was lucky to accompany my parents and Douglas to two excellent rock concerts while still in elementary school—Chicago and Elton John. People were smoking pot all around us (someone passed us a joint and said "this is for Myrna"—honest). Dad came armed with his Nikon camera complete with new 210mm telephoto lens through which he managed to shoot pictures of which I kept for years afterwards.

In 1967 when we still owned the upstairs combination stereo, Mom and Dad purchased the Beatles new Sergeant Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band album. It was also the first album we played on the new stereo that they bought for us and installed in our rec room. That stereo—and Douglas's more mature listening influences—started me on my journey as a life long audiophile and music listening junky. (I talk about my audio obsession in Appendix A.)

My parents never went half way with anything relating to schooling, musical education or training. When I was in grade five, my parents presented me with a very expensive French horn (a Conn 8D which I still own) and lessons from Mr. Bob Creech—the principal horn player for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO) at the time. He later became the musical director of the Vancouver Community College (VCC) and then the director of Western's School of Music.

I clearly remember my first music lesson with Bob. He placed a sheet of music in front of me and I hummed it to him without playing it. He told my parents that I had the unusual gift of 'perfect pitch' and that he didn't normally take such young students on, but that he would make an exception this one time.

True to form, Bob put me in with his other horn students from the UBC School of Music and signed me up for a two-week trip to Courtney Youth Music Camp (CYMC) that he was the founding director of. I was also enrolled in the Vancouver Youth Orchestra, alongside Douglas with his Trombone, and later, Kara on the Viola. At one point or another we all went to CYMC. In my particular case, I went every year up

until the end of high school.

Bob totally spoiled me by accelerating my horn playing musical career in many ways. I was always the worst horn player in any ensemble he brought me into which helped me become a better musician. When there was a VCC stage band, he got them to write parts

Wednesday, Aug. 15, 1973 Comox District Free Press 11

STIRRING RENDITIONS OF THE Hunting Chorus from "Der Freischutz" and the Chorale from "Die Meistersinger" were performed by the Comox Valley Philosophical Horn Society at the Courtenay Youth Music Camp student program, Saturday. An appreciative audience at Vanier High School auditorium gave members of the band hearty rounds of applause at both the beginning and end of their performance.

The Comox Valley Philosophical Horn Society—1973

for horn and would place four of us in there playing hot stage band music. When there was a senior orchestra playing at CYMC, I was given the assistant principal horn position along side fifteen other horn players for production of Mahler's 3rd Symphony.

But, like getting good marks in school, being Bob's little pet horn-playing student caused some friction with other horn compatriots—students like Evan Jones who was a very close friend of mine. At CYMC, Evan and the other young horn players sat with the junior orchestra in the morning while I played in the afternoons with the senior orchestra. I was invited to the senior horn playing workshops and they weren't. This placed me at odds with my friends who were actually just as good musicians and closer to my age.

Like my high school musician friends, many of my youth orchestra and CYMC pals became professional

musicians. I was hooked on music but by the time I made it to the end of high school, I was torn between music and engineering school.

In the summer of grade eleven I had the good fortune to study under a famous horn player at CYMC named Philip Farkas. In addition to having been the principal horn player for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, he had also played with the Boston, Cleveland and Kansas City orchestras, as well as being an instructor at the Indiana University, Northwestern University, Cleveland Institute, Kansas City Conservatory, DePaul University and Roosevelt University. He designed the Farkas Model Horn and a collection mouthpieces and wrote a book titled "The Art of French Horn Playing" that has been called the "bible of Horn-players."

I really enjoyed his stories about living the life of a profession musician—both as a soloist as well as a member in a world-class orchestra. He asked me what I was going to do in my adult life, whether I was going to continue with my horn playing professionally, and I asked him what I should do considering my depth of knowledge and interest in electronics and physics at the time.

Mr. Farkas told me that a very good friend of his and one of his best students was Mr. Pickering of the Stanton-Pickering company—the very same company that designed and manufactured the world's best phonographic turntable cartridges (I owned one of them). Mr. Pickering faced the same dilemma thirty years earlier and opted for Electrical Engineering—while keeping horn playing and music as a hobby. I was suddenly sure of myself and of my future

direction—I was going to continue with my musical interests while earning money through engineering. And it has substantially worked out that way for me as an adult. Looking back on it all I think that was a defining moment for me: I received excellent advice from the right person at the right time in my life.

I wonder if CYMC is still the world-class musical experience that it once was. CYMC attracted students and instructors from all over the world and its concerts were truly amazing. The CBC would bring trucks that contained sixteen-track recording studios, and would tape concerts featuring visiting Russian cello and piano players as well as child protégés. We were treated to world-renowned guest conductors and jazz greats who put on improvisational workshops for the classical musicians.

For a period of time between grade five and grade eight, I had to practice close to two hours a day on my piano and French horn before dinner each night. After dinner came homework so I basically enjoyed little time for myself or my interest in electronics and other boyish hobbies. One of my solutions however, was to record my horn playing for one practice session on a tape recorder, and then play it back the next day while I read books and worked on other hobbies. It worked. Mom never caught me.

So I graduated from high school with a good academic grounding, an obsession with audio equipment and music, and some deep-seated interest in mechanical things. As an adult I'm delighted to report that I'm still wired the same way—these are the things that still make me happiest (in addition to my family which is my greatest gift).

Halloween

Halloween has always held a special place in my heart. It was a time to have some serious fun with friends, and, best of all—pyrotechnics! October days are full of colourful leaves on the trees and the smell of rapidly approaching winter, with crisp mornings, heavy air, and darker evenings. After summer holidays, school was also in full swing and the soccer season well underway.

One day after soccer, Dad packed up Douglas and I and drove us out to UBC where it was still legal to purchase firecrackers. UBC was a separate jurisdiction from Vancouver and kids from all around greater Vancouver made their way out to UBC to purchase fistfuls of Chinese firecrackers from the small Chinese Lucky Market on University Boulevard (right next to where the current McDonalds now stands).

Upon our arrival, we were shocked to see so many kids lined up, and depressed to find that the store had actually shut its doors to firecracker sales for a few hours to let its regular customers purchase their groceries without being mobbed by the kids outside. Lots of kids were lighting off firecrackers around the crowds of people who had yet to secure their own supplies—everyone was hungry to get their own stash of miniature explosives.

Dad approached the storeowner and explained he had driven a long way with his boys (a white lie) and only wanted a few firecrackers—not the "bricks" (20 to 40 packages of 50 to 100 firecrackers each wrapped

in red paper in the shape of a brick) that everyone else wanted. The owner smiled and led us to the back of the store into a storeroom that was stacked with bricks of firecrackers from floor to ceiling. He let us take a few packs of each type of firecracker—little ½-inch "lady fingers", some 1-inch red ones, and some 2-inch atoms (with yellow, blue and white strips). Douglas and I each snagged two packs of each type (about 500 firecrackers in total) and went home the happiest boys in the world.

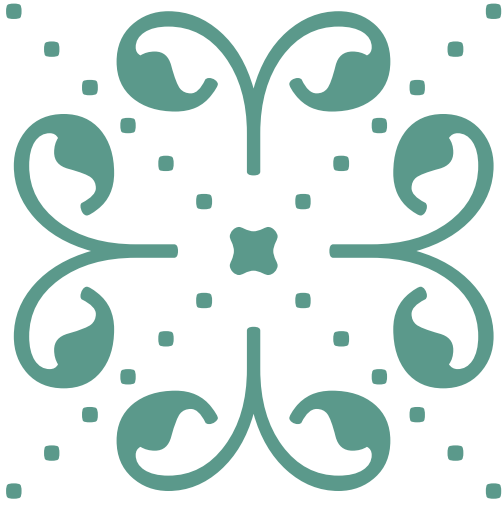
Punks (slow burning incense sticks) were often used to light firecrackers—and they were initially my favoured personal method of lighting them off. But by the time I was in grade six, I was using a cigar for the same purpose. It may have been a costume that I was wearing once, but nevertheless, from that point onwards, I always carried a cigar with me to light firecrackers with on Halloween night. My usual team-mates were other neighbourhood kids—such as Drew Atkins and Douglas Vincent. We also carried screechers and other fireworks to light off as we saw fit, collected candy, pulled pranks on each other and the homeowners we visited on our rounds, made lots of noise, and occasionally relied on our arsenals to do stupid and dangerous things to each other.

The neighbourhood fireworks display around the Collingwood cul-de-sac next to our house crowned the end of a long evening of trick-or-treating. Kids would still be lighting off firecrackers as the parents prepared and managed the impressive fireworks displays. One Halloween night a kid managed to lob a fistful of firecrackers into the cardboard box holding all of the fireworks, and within a few moments the

sky was ablaze with fireworks all going off at once. Everyone scuttled behind the trees and bushes as fireworks shot off at all angles—and in the end no-one was hurt but a lot of money and effort went up in smoke in a few seconds time.

By grade four or five, I was getting into electronics as a hobby in a big way. At Christmas the year before, I had been presented with a Radio Shack electronics kit. It contained resistors, capacitors, transistors, inductors, switches, and a manual explaining how to make a number of different projects. One of them was how to construct an amplifier with a microphone and speaker. I decided to mount this kit on the front of a cardboard box and create a robot costume, complete with flashing lights and a microphone and speaker set-up so that I could talk from inside and the people outside would hear my voice over the amplifier. The box was painted silver and it was my all-time favourite Halloween costume. As I did my rounds of trick-or-treating that year, I received a lot of positive comments about it.

Getting ready to head out for some trick-or-treating—1966



My favourite projects

It's no secret to my friends and family that I live for both my pet projects and my toys. I have always had one or more projects on the go at any given time, and I get downright obsessive about each and every one of them. Sometimes the bug bites me for relatively short periods and sometimes a life-long interest develops, then ebbs and flows—holding me and then temporarily releasing me. I say this because I often feel that these projects control me, not the other way around. I feel compelled (such as publishing this book) to do them to the best of my ability, and to the limits (or beyond) of the financial and time resources available to me. I gain tremendous satisfaction from these enthusiasms—even though they often conflict with day-to-day tasks, responsibilities and other family interests.

The first projects I tackled in my childhood were little things like building structures out of wooden blocks in Kindergarten classes. I got in trouble on more than one occasion when other children in the class would come along and attempt to join in my solitary endeavours. I would suffer their involvement only so long as they did things exactly the way that they needed to be done. The moment they crossed the line and produced poor quality work, they were kicked out. I sometimes hit other children with the wooden blocks if they wouldn't leave me alone . . . something that usually earned me a 'time out'.

The word 'alone' as a negative expression doesn't really sit right with me. I've always, from my earliest

memories, enjoyed being alone with my thoughts and my projects. It always seemed easier to achieve the desired results by avoiding having to coordinate, communicate and cooperate with others of lesser talents. So you see, this is something I've had to struggle with as a personality defect for a long time.

I loved working on Lego projects at home. Perhaps my first major projects were things I built out of Lego. These weren't simple 'build it and tear it apart' morning projects, but rather things that I spent hours and hours working on and building up. One that sticks in my mind was a Lego 707 airplane with four engines on the wings that I repeatedly flew around the neighbourhood—sound effects included.

Meccano was an even better and much more complex technology to work with. There were nuts and bolts, pulleys, cables, sheets of metal and other neat things. Meccano was versatile—almost anything mechanical that you could think of could be built with it. It was also more sophisticated and not something I really got into until I was a bit older.

Dad had a great little workshop in the basement of 6145 that he didn't seem to mind sharing with his kids. The only time we got in trouble was when we took tools to my friend Drew Atkins house on 43rd Avenue and didn't bring them back home. We had a good supply of wood and woodworking tools, both manually and electrically operated. We also had metalworking tools and even electrical components at our disposal. There were paint and brushes for final finishing work, and, if we needed anything else, the Quick Service Hardware store was only a two-minute bicycle ride away up on Dunbar Street. It was kid

heaven—if you were into tinkering and tackling projects like I always was.

I guess my real interest in electronics started with the Christmas present of that basic Radio Shack electronics kit that ended up forming the basis for my Halloween robot costume. I ended up using the furnace room to set up a formal electronics lab and hung a great big sign on the wall saying "Danger, High Voltage Electricity"—complete with electrical wires from an old telephone set dangling from the sign. Mom got mad because the furnace serviceman wouldn't go into the room after he saw the sign.

The nearest Radio Shack store was all the way over at 41st Avenue and Cambie Street, which was a long bicycle ride, but by grade five, I was making the journey on a regular basis. I would read the Radio Shack catalogue from cover to cover every night in bed and literally memorize each and every page and part number from that one hundred-page catalogue. Radio Shack was the source for all my electronic components until the middle of high school, after which I bussed it to RAE Industrial Electronics at 1st Avenue and Main Street, or ordered components all the way from Future Electronics in Montreal.

Douglas and I had successfully lobbied Mom and Dad to buy us our own stereo system when I was in grade five. That was a big deal for us as solid state (transistors vs. tubes) electronics were just coming into fashion for home entertainment systems and televisions and so was FM radio—and we got both things in a great new stereo system of our own. The amplifier specifications were: 20 watts RMS per channel at 1% distortion feeding 8 ohm, 6-inch full

range speakers. This helped spur on my interest in music but it also got me totally wired on audio electronics equipment.

For my twelfth birthday I received a light organ kit. Dad helped me solder together this three-band kit and also helped assemble the 2′ by 4′ box with 150 Christmas lights in it that the light organ electronics lit up. A light organ is something that translates sound into light. The electronics circuitry in the light organ filters the sound into different pitch ranges—low notes, mid range sounds, and high frequency sounds. Depending on the loudness of each sound, the lights—which represent different colours for each spectral band—glow brighter or dimmer. The box was painted matte black inside and out and there were three strings of miniature lights stapled to the back of the box—red for low notes, green and yellow for the mid range, and blue for the high sounds. The front of the box had a Plexiglas cover—made of the same material used to cover up fluorescent light fixtures—defused the lights into beautiful patterns.

At the teacher's request, I took the completed light organ to school after writing about it in my journal and ended up showing most of my classmates how it worked during an entire afternoon (classes were rotated in every fifteen minutes). The principal told me afterwards that I should consider becoming a teacher when I grew up because I was able to explain technical things well to people who didn't know as much as I did. He said that I got people excited, which made them remember what I was saying.

Back at home we would turn down the lights in the rec-room and listen to Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the

Moon" album all evening while lounging on the green couch watching the light show the light organ put on for us. It was also very popular with our friends who came over just to stare at the light organ.

In grade nine I ordered a more complex light organ kit featuring a four-band "active electronics" circuit design (it used op-amps configured as active filters rather than the first light organ's passive and less accurate filters). I mounted the light organ electronics into its own control box and added additional electrical outlets to drive separate floodlights, which I placed in each corner of the room to complement and reinforce the lighting effect of the main 2′ by 4′ box. The yellow and green lights in the box were also separated out to allow full four-channel operation inside the box as well. I ended up bringing that light organ control unit to Queen's University along with the floodlights and used it at dances to great effect a number of years later.

That second light organ came from a kit manufacturer in Texas called SWTP—South West Technical Products. And like the Radio Shack catalogue, their brochure became another electronics Bible for me to memorize and fantasize about.

Douglas had a good friend by the name of Kevin Bull who was also a great musician (he runs a successful electronics firm in Richmond today) and another very smart friend, Geoff Auchinleck. Both became mentors of mine in high school during my time spent in Mr. Pottinger's electronics lab.

Kevin and Geoff always seemed to be in the electronics lab working on something or other when I was there. I stuck to them like glue and learned

everything I could from them when they weren't poking fun and playing practical jokes on me. Kevin's favourite pastime was hooking up a capacitor to a power supply, hanging it out the window of the lab, and then turning up the voltage until it exploded. He also liked to confuse people by making up all kinds of nonsensical words and using them to describe his projects. They were both highly intelligent and very intense individuals and knew their stuff inside and out. Kevin was the one who indoctrinated me into the wonders of op-amps while Geoff taught me about sound generators and audio circuitry.

Mr. Pottinger, my Electronics Teacher

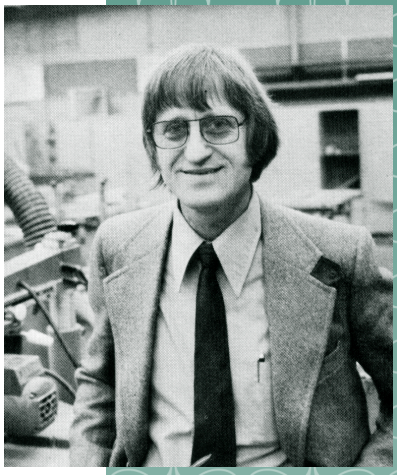
In high school I also built a digital wristwatch, a twelve band active equalizer for my stereo, a five band active LED bar graph display unit, and an active filter for my new speakers. Those speakers turned into a multi-year construction project and ended up weighing in at more than 130 pounds.

By early high school, I was making the rounds of all the audio stores in Vancouver with Drew Atkins, and knew all of the high-end equipment, and had memorized most of the technical specifications by heart. We collected the manufacturer's brochures and read every available magazine on the subject. I had my heart set on building a state-of-the-art recording studio and equipping it with electronics equipment and speakers that I designed and built personally. The speakers were to be the first step in this journey.

Something like 70% of all studio monitors back then were made by Altec Lansing. I owned their catalogue showcasing their line of individual speaker

components in addition to a manual on how to construct and tune a speaker cabinet for them. These speakers were called "Voice of the Theatre"—at the time they were used in most of the movie theatres and stadiums throughout North America. The high frequency units were very large—18-inch wide horns and woofers were also available in 12 or 15-inch diameters. These were the top of the line speakers and I wanted them. But in the end my limited budget wouldn't stretch that far. I also needed a powerful amplifier and a great turntable to complement the speakers in the system I was assembling.

So I settled on Philips speaker components after drafting up the design for the cabinets in grade ten. I ordered the speaker components from Toronto by mail with a money order. They arrived some four weeks later. Opening the box and taking out the components was like a dream come true.



Mr. Bernoe, my Woodworking Teacher

Mr. Bernoe, the woodworking teacher at school, helped me with the cabinets. Dad also assisted me in purchasing the 4 by 8-foot sheets of ¾ inch high-density particle board while I ended up taking the bus to a specialty wood supply vendor located on SW Marine Drive in order to hand select the maple bracing material for the insides of the cabinets. Somehow I managed to heave more than 75-pounds of maple boards, 8-feet in length onto the bus that picked me up at the foot of Granville Street, carried me down to Broadway Street, and then up Dunbar Street. This journey involved changing buses twice without killing myself or anyone else in the process—surely they wouldn't

let someone do that today.

I then lugged the wood from 41st Avenue and Dunbar Street back home and, the following day, got Mom to drive me to school with it. Good thing I had been weight lifting at high school.

After another six months of cutting, drilling, sanding and finishing the cabinets at school, Dad took my creation to a friend of his who then showed me how to finish them with simulated wood grained arborite. Most of the arborite work was undertaken in the backyard of 6145 with contact cement, a sharp knife and some files to finish the edges because we didn't have a router. After some additional painting and trim work, it was time to assemble the Philips speaker components into the cabinets and listen to them.

I had already purchased a 65 watt per-channel Kenwood amplifier (which was a lot of power at the time), a matching high-end AM/FM tuner, and a Dual turntable with a Stanton pickup cartridge, and was ready to rock. I also had my equalizer and light organ in the mix. It was bliss and I must have logged hundreds of hours of listening time with that system before I moved on to Queen's. I had every intention of bringing the system with me to university but it turned out that the boarding rooms at school were far too small for such a large stereo system.

It was at the big high school graduation party held

at our house that I used those project speakers for the last time. After that, they were the world's biggest boat anchors. Those speakers were definitely the most significant project I had attempted to tackle up until that time—that is, until I designed and manufactured my first line of concrete maturity meters during my last year of engineering school.

I didn't touch any microprocessors or digital processing circuitry until my university days. Microprocessors and digital circuitry were just being introduced to the world in the mid 1970s and they weren't an aspect of the audio experience that I was interested in at the time.

At the end of high school I read about the pending introduction of CD players and digital audio and ended up spending a great deal of time researching and experimenting with digital audio and computer music technologies during university. But these new technologies, which were about to revolutionize my cherished hobby, were just a twinkle in the electronic world's eye by the time I exited high school.

The completed stereo system—1978

In today's digital electronics world, digital storage of music addresses the most significant area of concern among traditional audiophiles—that of perfecting musical reproduction at its source. In effect, the source is fixed and as near perfect as can be with digital audio, and there's no amount of money or tinkering that can significantly change any of that. No more analogue tape decks, turntables and cartridges to fuss over—although the voodoo black magic audiophiles of today still tend to think they can hear the difference

between one CD player and another. Maybe they can hear a difference, but it is a lot smaller than it was back in, “the good old days”.

Dale Penner, the friend of mine who I studied with in high school, was also very interested in electronics and science. He built one of the ‘Pong’ (as in electronic ping-pong) television game kits in 1976. Pong was the very first gaming console ever developed for television entertainment use. There were no digital components in these systems—they were completely analog inside. After Dale finished his unit we would sit around and watch with fascination the first precursor technology to modern gaming consoles. Nobody back then would have ever guessed how complex and popular these types of games would become three decades later.

Home chemistry experiments

In elementary school, Douglas was given a great chemistry set featuring large and small test tubes, beakers, a bunsen burner, crucible, stoppers, tubes, etc. as well as a range of chemical supplies, all in their little plastic containers. Douglas would work away mixing up different compounds with what can only be described as 'interesting' results. I never got a chance to really get my hands into those experiments, but at some point down the road when he abandoned that chemistry set, I started to use the remaining components to make my own chemicals.

My favourite chemical was gunpowder, which required three components: saltpeter (potassium nitrate), charcoal (carbon) and sulphur. We had lots of sulphur from Dad's office. He used to heat it up to form a liquid and then pour it in moulds to make super hard caps for the concrete cylinders that he was going to test for compressive strength (sulphur has a much higher compressive strength than concrete does and melts easily. It is very useful for creating a smooth and completely square surface for the compression ram to press against).

We'd get the saltpeter from the local druggist who would willingly dispense it to us grade school kids. In old boys' schools saltpeter was used to suppress sexual urges but I'm not sure why any druggist would dispense it today. We just wanted to blow things up, not lose our interest in girls.

To make gunpowder you need about 20% charcoal

from briquettes, 60% saltpeter and 20% sulphur. You can use a crucible to grind up the individual ingredients until they are finely powdered and then carefully mix them together. At this point, you shouldn't subject the gunpowder to any friction or shock or it will ignite.

We placed the gunpowder we made into various containers in an attempt to manufacture firecrackers and explosives but it didn't work that well. The most fun was pouring it into a long line, lighting it and then watching the powder flash from end to end almost all at once. We didn't want to make cannons or other truly dangerous things like pipe bombs—I think we knew our limits when playing with this stuff.

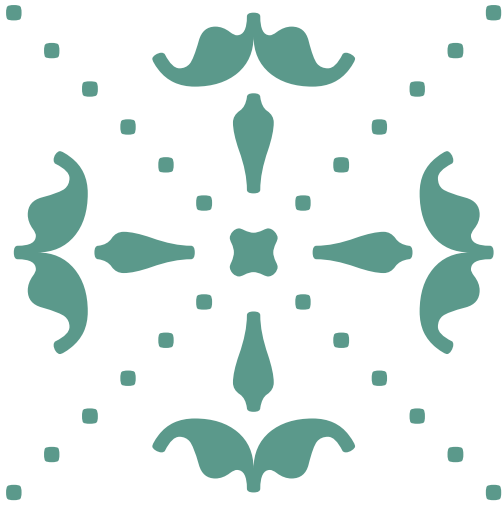
When we weren't trying to burn up ants, we used our magnifying glasses and some help from the focused rays of the sun to heat sulphur up on the front street-side curbs. It was tough to get the sunrays focused enough to start the sulphur burning, but it was possible (it was much easier to get paper to burn which ignited at a lower temperature). The sulphur would liquefy, and then bubble. You could tell that it was starting to burn by the smell of the gases it would give off (not a very nice smell so you noticed it right away). As the sulphur burned (oxidized) it turned a dark brown colour, and once it cooled, became very brittle. The sulphur would burn without much air and it was hard to put out so we usually just let it burn out on its own.

Once I got a little carried away and took some gasoline from the lawn mower jerry can and mixed some of it with the sulphur I was burning. The little cup that contained the gas spilt on my shoes and

caught fire. This wasn't exactly funny. I knew quite well that if I didn't put out the fire quickly my legs would burn. With my long pants, on I high-tailed it to the front lawn and rolled around on the grass like we were told to do in school. I don't know if that was what put out the fire or if the gas just burned off. By the time my Mom came running out to see why I was yelling I was just standing there with the shoelaces burned off my new running shoes.

In high school I took out a chemistry book on advanced experiments that talked about how to manufacture chlorine gas. Chlorine gas was one of the chemicals used during World War I to kill enemy soldiers on the battlefield. It attacks the lungs by mixing with the saliva to create hydrochloric acid. Not nice stuff, but fascinating nevertheless.

I constructed the required apparatus including three beaker chambers, designed to produce the gas and then filter it out using lime mixed with water if any excess was created. Well, I managed to put too many of the raw ingredients into the first chamber and the pressure in the second container caused the stopper to pop out. I ended up with a full blast of pure chlorine gas in my face. Instinctively I jumped back while taking a big breath in. The effect was immediate. It felt like someone had placed a blowtorch in my mouth while I inhaled. I was overwhelmed by the pain in my throat and lungs and thought I was going to die. It was at least fifteen minutes before I felt I could breathe properly again and a number of days before I felt completely normal. After that I was more careful with home-cooked experiments.



Accidents around the house

Our family Doctor, Dr. Mirhady, played an active part of our lives. Remarkably, right up until 1997 when he retired at the age of seventy-seven, he operated his practice at the back of an old single story building beside the bus turn-around loop at 62nd Avenue & Granville Street.

Whenever we caught the flu or suffered a deep cut or infection, off to his office we went. Our route always took us down 49th Avenue to Arbutus Street, then down and around the corner to the West Boulevard, and across the railroad tracks at 64th Avenue along to his office down the back roads of Marpole. This is still my preferred route to the airport from our house when traffic is heavy on SW Marine Drive. It saves a lot of time. Mom was onto something back then and as a boy with a fairly good sense of direction, I knew that route off by heart.

My first major accident occurred when I was two years old. I fell down some steps onto broken glass and cut my left leg near the knee. The only thing I think I remember is the visit to a medical clinic at Broadway Street and MacDonald Street (where the Royal Bank is today) to get stitches. Today that scar is four inches long.

When I was in Kindergarten I had another accident. We had just come home from our first trip to Hawaii with our grandparents, and it was bedtime. My parents used to love to play tricks on us. When they had to 'pass gas' they used to pause and whisper "shhh, listen to the crickets", and then let one go.

We'd all start to laugh and fall about the place with the smell and the humour of it all.

Well, as they say, "like father, like son", and so I felt that I had to play a little game that night. My plan was to run the length of the hall, jump into the air, and fart just before landing on my parent's bed. Well, after getting up a tremendous speed I leapt high into the air and the fart rang out clearly for all to hear—just before I crashed headlong into the wooden headboard and split my head wide open.

Everyone laughed and thought my crying was laughing. It wasn't until they saw the blood running off of my scalp that they realized I needed to go to the hospital. I don't know why this happened, but the nice doctor at the hospital convinced me that local freezing was unnecessary. They sewed me up with a good number of stitches that surely comprised some of the most painful moments of my youth. I'm pretty certain that my current fear of needles can be traced back to that evening on the operating room table when tears streamed down my face muffled under the green operating sheet they had placed over me.

Another accident involved minor surgery to remove a large wooden sliver from my groin area, which I had secretly harboured for close to a week while at Pioneer Pacific camp. We used to suspend ourselves on a log pole over a sandpit and use pillows to knock each other off into the sand below. On that particular occasion I lunged forward to hit my opponent and managed to thrust a piece of wood into my body from the pole we were straddling.

That was a pretty awful situation and having it still embedded in my body (down there!) when I got

home made matters worse. I never said anything to the female nurse for fear that I'd have to disrobe in front of her. It took local freezing and a scalpel to cut out the wood buried half an inch under the skin surface. Even today it gives me the shivers to think about that accident.

My brother Douglas managed to have a pretty spectacular accident around the same time. He was showing off to some of his friends by trying to pole-vault using a stick which unluckily slipped and jammed him in the eye. He came flying into our living room and rolled around on the floor while my parents assessed the situation. Because of all the blood and gore, they figured he had lost his eye. Surgery eventually told the truth. Fortunately he managed to escape with only a big eye patch and some stitches. To this day I get nervous watching children playing with sticks. Poor Colin managed to get slashed just below the right eye this summer by Evan and received even more stitches than Douglas did back then—history repeats itself.

Kara managed to offset all of this male-induced self-affliction by grabbing an iron from the ironing table one fine day and giving herself second or third degree burns all across the palm of her hand. She really screamed a lot when that happened. I'm sure that left a strong impression with her about leaving hot irons out for her own children to play with.

In grade three I was with my family playing in the Kerrisdale Community Centre gym on the parallel bars when another boy wanted to take his turn swinging on them. I let him have his way but grew impatient waiting for him to relinquish the bars. I put

my right hand on the lower bar support tube just above where it slips into the collar where there was a pin for adjusting the height, and I did the unthinkable—I pulled out the pin. My hand was instantly pulled into the collar just as soon as the boy put his weight on the lower bar that it was supporting.

I lost about one-third of the palm of my hand in that instant. I looked at the blood and the large hole where my skin should have been and thought, "this should hurt more than it does"—but Dr. Mirhady told me that I had lost the nerves in my palm as part of the deep cut. I got to wear an arm sling to school and had a full hand-bandage that needed to be changed every couple of days. This garnered me a lot of attention at school. I was a star.

One day Dad brought home some nasty chemicals and a large pressurized spray applicator to treat our shingle roof with preservative. Dad got up on the roof and start to spray the lowest layers of shingles while standing above them, and then he stepped back and sprayed the next layers, and so on. We were all out standing on the front driveway watching him negotiate the steep section of roofing over the garage.

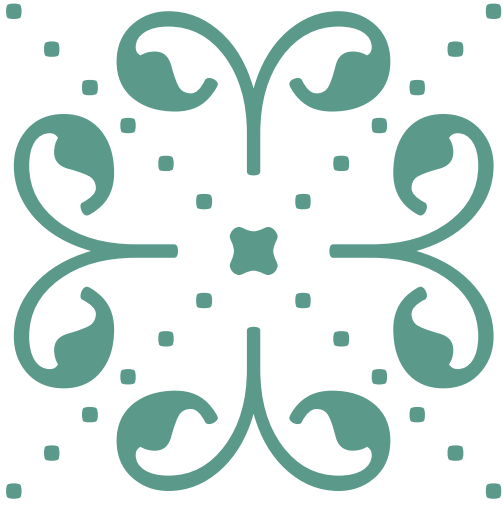
He had managed to spray all the way up to the top edge of the roof when he missed his footing and began to slide, faster and faster down the freshly treated roof while still remaining on his feet. He managed to throw the spray applicator and chemicals to one side as he leapt from the roof at the right moment and cleared the distance across the driveway and sidewalk and landed feet first onto the grass without hurting himself—a distance of maybe fifteen

feet horizontally. He had hit the ground so hard that the impressions made were clearly visible as deep gouges in the grass for weeks afterwards.

Dad also managed to get hit by a car while riding his bicycle to work one day. After cutting him off and slamming into the car broadside, Dad flew over the car and landed squarely on his bottom. He was sore for a few days but I'd say we all felt pretty lucky that nothing worse had happened to him. This was the beginning of the much-dreaded health-craze that hit the Spratt family in the 1970s. Mom and Dad discovered, and embraced with almost religious fervour, the hot new health consciousness trend.

Dad was running and biking everywhere and we were being tortured with a steady diet of health food for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Things like glasses of milk with raw eggs, cod liver oil, liver, brussels sprouts, non-hydrogenated peanut butter and granola were all we were basically allowed to eat. Dad crashing his bicycle was perhaps an opportunity to witness one of our own parents suffer from the very same health craze they were subjecting us to.

But not one Spratt family member broke a single bone as we grew up. Given our activity level and the relative lack of supervision and attention to child safety that characterized those days, we got off pretty much scot-free when it came to major family accidents.



Our go-karts

Our red wagon that our kids still play with when they come over to visit Granny and Grandpa Spratt at 6145 was the precursor to our go-karts. Dad got together with Douglas and I and built a simple push go-kart for us to ride on when I was in grade five. And like the red wagon, we painted the wooden go-kart red as well. This go-kart was used (if you can believe it) on Dunbar Street to race down the steep sidewalks. It was also used more or less safely on the slopes of our neighbour's driveways as well as down and around Collingwood Place, which was a great racecourse with its long sloping corners and relatively little street traffic. The simple hand brake would stop the go-kart if we pulled hard and long enough on the handle. We certainly got our exercise pushing it back up the hills for our subsequent runs.

Getting the red wagon and our first Lego set for Christmas

In the spring in 1972, Dad decided to repeat his own childhood experiences of motorized transportation and embarked on a project to modify the wooden go-kart and essentially bolt on a gas lawnmower to the existing go-kart with the blades removed. It was simple and effective with only a few modifications required to bring the throttle and the clutch cables routed up front to where the driver sat.

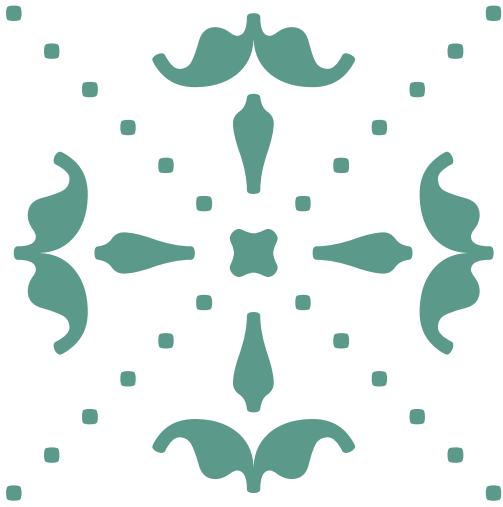
Lawnmowers aren't exactly fast moving machines. They are designed to have you walk behind them as they operate- but this was a perfect vehicle for young boys to ride up and down the backyard and out and around the streets near our house. We drove it as far as Kerrisdale Annex on occasion and often carried more than one person on that go-kart at a time. It was a tough and reliable design and it really helped us learn more about mechanics because we are always making adjustments and changes to improving it or keep it running smoothly.

Taking the go-kart out for another cruise around the neighbourhood—1972

The Quick Service Hardware store on Dunbar Street was our source for things like pulleys and v-belts that we used to couple the engine to the lawnmower base. The clutch assembly was no more than a tensioning pulley on a lever that caused the V-belt to engage and move the go-kart forward. We could make the go-kart go faster or slower by changing the size of the pulleys—we quickly discovered that changing the top speed potential also affected acceleration and hill climbing ability. The faster the top end speed, the less the go-kart wanted to accelerate or climb hills. And with some of the belt and pulley combinations we tried, we got fast enough to realize that the foot steering mechanism would be too sensitive for our own safety. Around ten miles per hour was the upper limit. Being only

six inches off of the ground at ten miles per hour seemed plenty fast indeed.

The speed and gearing of this old wooden go-kart probably triggered what continues to be a life-long pursuit of mine. Namely; to wring more power and speed out of any car I have ever owned. I believe I would have been interested in these things anyway (I used to draw pictures of dragsters from books in the school library and yet I had never been to a race tack), but the hands-on experience with the engines, gears and tools taught me to trust my instincts and curiosity. It taught me to explore, take chances and risks—as well as reap the rewards when something new worked out. These remain some of the most cherished memories from my childhood.



Our mini-bikes

In the 1960s, fabulous industrial educational facilities were added to Point Grey High School. By the time Douglas arrived there from Kerrisdale Elementary School to enter grade eight, the school boasted a startling array of electronics, woodworking, metalworking, and automotive shops that students of every grade could attend. These facilities may very well still be in use, but I know that soon after Douglas got to Point Grey, they had closed the automotive workshop and converted it into a combined metal and woodworking shop. Demographics have changed on the west side of Vancouver, but back in the 1970s it was still very much a mix of blue collar and white-collar families. Some of these kids learned their adult working trades at Point Grey.

I loved metal and woodworking and worked very hard at being the best craftsman in the class. I won special dispensation from Mr. Bernoe, the woodworking teacher to work in the shop at lunchtime when it was off limits to other students. My projects were typically large and complex affairs. The normal classroom time allotted wasn't nearly enough to get the job done. There was one thing I never got to do and I was really envious of Douglas for having the opportunity—and that was to fabricate and weld up a mini-bike frame, bolt together the engine, clutch, wheels, brakes and accessories, and then ride it home from school.

Douglas did indeed build that mini-bike frame. One

day the entire Spratt family drove to a mini-bike shop once located on SW Marine Drive and purchased the four horsepower engine (our old go-kart had a two horsepower engine from a lawnmower), centrifugal clutch, chain, front and rear wheels with integral brakes, handles, throttle, cables, seat and helmet. He rode that mini-bike around our local streets with his friends (proud possessors of mini-bikes all) as well as far across Vancouver and into the UBC woods and down on the flats by the river. Unfortunately poor Douglas crashed his mini-bike after trying to leap over a ditch. He ended up bending the front forks into the engine. He took it back to school and fixed it up.

I managed to wrangle a ride or two on Doug's mini-bike. It was a fairly tall bike frame, but as a younger and smaller child I had some difficulty staying balanced on it when travelling at low speeds. Once I took it up to the lane between 42nd Avenue and 41st Avenue to watch the demolition of the old houses lining 41st Avenue across from the IGA (then a Safeway). I didn't see the big pothole yawning in front of me. I hurtled off the mini-bike and managed to tear the jeans right off my right leg and scrape a good patch of skin off at the same time. I damaged the handlebar grips and the brake lines as well. I pushed Douglas' mini-bike home and went inside and cried. Again, Douglas fixed it.

In grade eight or nine I got the biggest and best birthday present of my life. I was sitting at the kitchen table after coming home for lunch and for some reason Mom and Dad were both away from the house at the time. Peering through the kitchen window, I saw this man on a mini-bike coming down the street

and then drive up our driveway and around the side of the house. It was Dad on a new mini-bike and it was a surprise birthday present for me. Dad had taken the engine from Doug's old mini-bike and persuaded the people at the motorcycle and mini-bike shop at 29th Avenue & Dunbar Street (now the Soda's restaurant) to install it on one of their mini-bike chassis. It was beautiful with a full front and rear suspension with springs and nice wide tires. It would do thirty miles per hour full out.

I rode that mini-bike every day that I could and I rode it everywhere. I even rode it to school when I could get away with it. In the wintertime I put a ski on the front wheel when it snowed and zipped along the streets like a snowmobile. I rode with other friends who also had mini-bikes and loved to go to the school grounds or the UBC woods bouncing over logs and hills for "air time".

Once I hit a log when racing to pass a friend on a narrow trail in the woods and flipped the bike and myself end over end without seriously getting hurt. Another time I rode full speed on a sidewalk and then jumped the curb onto the street without realizing a police car was right beside me. On one occasion, a policeman came to our house looking for me while I was out riding my mini-bike (I don't remember how my Mom explained that to the officer but he went away and left us alone).

Like the go-kart, my mini-bike was modified to go faster over time. First I welded up a new exhaust system at the metalworking shop at school and next eliminated the head gasket to increase the compression ratio of the engine (using liquid gasket).

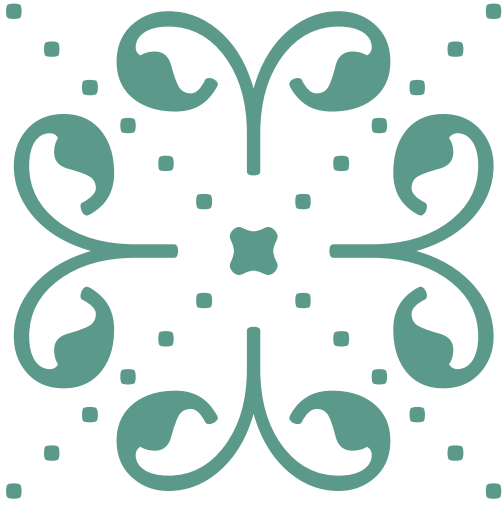
Finally, I locked up the engine throttle governor and modified the throttle linkage to allow it to be over revved. It was loud and fast. I ended up roughly calculating the constant value of 3.1, which is the ratio of the radius of a circle to its circumference, to allow me to design different gear ratios. Dad told me "there's a standard constant called 'pi' which equals 3.141592635 that you can use"—that's when I realized that mathematics was really a tool for engineers to make cool things go faster. Math wasn't boring at school because I could use my math knowledge and skills to design things like modified mini-bikes.

That mini-bike ended up being the source of significant trouble in the neighbourhood, but not of my doing. A number of adults were standing around talking to each other one fine summer day when one of my adult neighbours asked if he could take my mini-bike for a spin. I insisted that he wear the helmet. When he put it on, I reminded him to do up the strap properly. Then I proceeded to explain about the speed governor and throttle being modified. His response was unexpectedly testy: he was fully able to control a "kid's" bike etc. etc. Then, in front of about ten people, he revved the mini-bike up and immediately drove at full tilt down the driveway and into the back of a parked car across the street.

I freaked out and raced to my mini-bike (which he had been thrown clear from) and noticed he had damaged the foot peddles and handlebars—just like I had done three or four years earlier with Douglas's mini-bike. I was mad. Everyone else had rushed to this man and was helping him up while it was all I could do to restrain myself from hitting him. He was

angry with me and let everyone know how dangerous that mini-bike was. Hours later his wife drove him to the hospital with a broken collarbone and torn leg ligaments. He was on crutches for about two months and wouldn't talk to me after that. It was his stupidity and yet he blamed me after refusing to listen to my warnings. I was the one left with the broken bike that I had to fix on my own.

At some point my interests shifted more and more towards electronics and stereos. Because I needed every cent to do justice to my new hobby, I put an ad in the paper and sold my mini-bike to another kid. A man came, looked it over and eventually gave it to this really small kid. That mini-bike was too powerful and quick for someone that young. But he took that wonderful mini-bike away from 6145 and I never saw it again.



Our pellet gun

Just like in the movie "A Christmas Story", Mom and Dad bought us a 0.177 calibre pellet gun (rifle) for Christmas one year. We set aluminium pop cans up against the green cedar tree in the centre of the backyard and took turns shooting from the new addition back deck. When we got bored, we would take aim at some of the large trees in the distance and see if we could hit any of them from 100 yards away or more. I'd hate to think where some of the missed shots ended up landing.

A 0.177 calibre pellet gun isn't that powerful but it can cleanly punch a hole through both sides of a can and would pierce skin if you ever shot anyone. There have been cases reported of people getting killed by pellet guns.

William Yu, a high school friend and today a business associate, used to come over to play at my house. One night, while my parents were out, we strolled outside and had some target practice fun with the pellet gun. Then I got a little crazy and started to chase William around the backyard with the loaded gun. I pretended to shoot into the ground near his feet but managed to shoot his foot (the pellet went right through his shoe and just missed his big toe).

After that, I realized that I better stop using real pellets and started to stuff pieces of paper into the barrel instead. I thought these wouldn't hurt him. I was wrong. Later that evening when he was sitting in the family room, I took aim from the kitchen and shot him in the leg just below the kneecap. It drew blood

and he tackled me and threatened to beat the crap out of me. I said, "enough, you can shoot me if you want" and he aimed the gun at my head and then fired off to the side. The blast wound up punching a small hole into the cedar wood paneling—indicating that even a little paper wad can pack a significant punch when accelerated to a high enough velocity. That hole is still in the wall of our family room behind one of the pictures.

Some memorable trips

Our family went on numerous trips over the years—far too many to cover here. In the 1960s when money was tight, our family vacationed mostly in the Gulf Islands near Vancouver. We spent time at Shawnigan Lake near Victoria when I was really young, which is where Douglas learned to water ski. We would drive down to Victoria and visit with our great grandmother on the way home. Later on we went to Hornby Island and stayed at a resort, which is now the site of the provincial park there (some of the buildings are still standing, although they are beginning to fall apart). We even stayed once or twice at the Island Hall Motel in Parksville.

At the dock on Shawnigan Lake—1966

After two years at Pioneer Pacific Camp in grades four and five, I was sent to Camp Deka, which was run by the Brown family up near 100 Mile House. I went there for four years in total. Today, Camp Deka is a YMCA camp and the Upper Deka Lake, where it is situated, is just as remote and beautiful as it was then. At that time, the camp housed 48 boys at a time in 6 tents of 8 boys each. There was no electrical power.

There were horses to ride, canoes to paddle, and everything was done the old fashioned way. For refrigeration, blocks of ice were sawed from the lake

in the wintertime and stored in a shed with sawdust as an insulator. Camp Deka was magical and I learned a lot about the outdoors and camping, horse riding, and hiking.

The Spratt family kids in New Orleans—1976

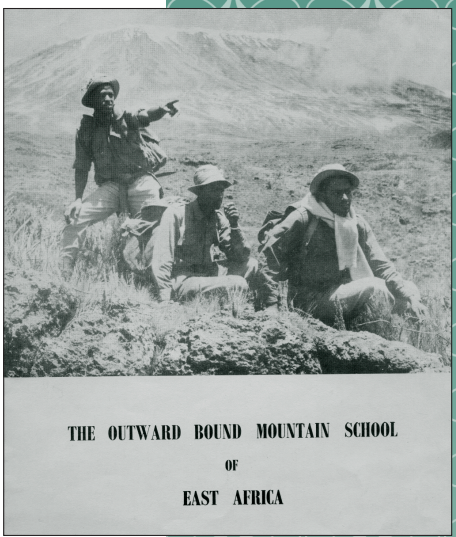
During one nightly campfire session each season, Mr. Brown would act the part of the 'great chief loonie-goon'. We would all cry out to the far side of the lake where the spirits resided and ask for the 'great chief' to bless us with his presence. After a while Mr. Brown would appear out of the woods with a large native Indian mask on and then proceed to conduct a supposedly sacred ceremony with all of us. It was all really over the top and helped make Camp Deka a memorable experience for us all.

Mr. Brown died after my third year there and during my forth and final year, it was apparent that May's heart was no longer in it. She sold the camp to the YMCA and eventually became an alderman at Vancouver City Hall. Coincidentally Cheryl's cousin, Gordon Newman, was at Camp Deka during the same time I was, and appeared with me in some of my camp photos.

Douglas was a 'senior' at camp the last year he was there and got to sleep in a tent with only one other boy. They were a gruesome duo, as they would set traps for mice by lining a pail of water with peanut butter with a little ramp made of wood. The mice from all around the camp would run up, splash into the water and then drown as they tried to eat the peanut butter. Douglas would then hang up the dead mice by their tails on the clothesline outside their tent

for the rest of us to see.

During the summer of grade ten I went to Africa and Europe with other groups of students from Los Angeles, New York and Kansas City to take part in the East African Outward Bound experience. It was a three-week trip away from my family and home and it had a profound affect on how I felt about my life and my upbringing. I'll leave the details of the actual trip and Outward Bound experience for another time ('to serve, to strive, and not to yield'), but I will talk a bit about what it was like to experience a society so alien to our own culture and lives in North America.



The Outward Bound Mountain School of East Africa Brochure—1977

Kenya was once a part of the East African Republic along with Uganda and Tanzania. Collectively they were a British colony. In 1977, Kenya, and its capital Nairobi retained a European ambience. But outside of the city limits were tribes still living as they had for thousands of years. Most of the wildlife was in protected reserves, but the people living there remained frozen in the past.

Kenya was poor but a few of the people I met and talked to (some from remote villages) were interested in learning about Canada and possibly getting an education here. I was shocked to find out that they knew more about Canadian geography and our economy than I did. To North Americans, these people were at a severe disadvantage and yet they held on to the promise of advancement and education in Canada.

Some of these people wrote to me when I came

home from this trip. I felt so strange coming home to a country where everything was so clean and modern and safe, and yet people all seemed to take everything around them for granted. Across the globe lay a far different world so different from my own reality back home in Canada.

One Christmas during grade four, we travelled to New York to visit Aunt Edith who ran the Beard Girls School there. Edith's brother Chester, a United Church minister from Montreal, was also there. It was a very special time for us to be together. We got to see the wonders of New York. Included in our itinerary were visits to Radio City Music Hall, The Natural History Museum, The RCA and Empire State Buildings, Edison's labs, the Holland tunnel, and many other things.

Edison was one of the greatest inventors the world has ever seen and it sure made me thoughtful after visiting his labs and hearing about a life rich in trials, errors and successes. I realized that accomplishing anything great and new in life requires effort and some degree of risk taking—and that failure is just part of the road to success. You have to condition yourself to accept setbacks and continue working on new ideas and projects.

It was cold back east that winter, and Douglas, Kara and I amused ourselves some of the days by running around the school halls (the home Edith stayed at was attached to the school) and building snow forts and such. We even managed to catch a squirrel with a trap made from a garbage can. I brought home my treasured HO gauge train set from New York, which was my Christmas present that year.

Every September the Spratt family trekked to the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE). Most of it has been torn down now, but Perry, Colin and Evan have managed to see and experience some of what it was like when I made those annual pilgrimages as a kid. To me, the PNE was about food as much as it was about rides and entertainment. I tasted my first Orange Julius at the food court and ate my first Belgium waffles with strawberries and whipped cream along the midway.

Getting our fill of the rides at the PNE—1963

When I was five years old, we were treated to a stay at the original Disneyland Hotel and a four-day visit to the magic Kingdom. Many of the rides we sampled are still there today, but the original futuristic space and science area is long since gone. The 1960s were a period of great hopes and enthusiasm for space travel and the new Disneyland theme park was on the leading edge of promoting futuristic science and space travel to the public.

Every few days there would be a main street Disney parade and we lined up along the side of the street in anticipation of the coming parade floats and actors. I asked Mom and Dad if I could walk down the street a short ways for some reason I no longer recall, and they replied that was fine. A few minutes later when I returned to where they were sitting, everyone had stood up and I couldn't locate their whereabouts.

The parade was starting and I couldn't stay out on the street any longer so I was forced to go back into the crowds on the sidewalk. I believed I knew how to get back to the Disneyland Hotel via the little shuttle tram service that we always took back and forth, so I simply decided to meet my family back at our hotel room. I walked back out the entrance, went to the tram loading area and jumped on. No one stopped to ask why a little boy would be out by himself. About four hours later I was reunited with my family. We were all quite relieved to be together again.

Earning my allowance

As Spratt family children, our required chores around the house were basically limited to yard maintenance and taking out the garbage. For some reason we didn't think of the Saturday car detailing sessions as "work"—even though it was quite a time consuming process. Cutting the grass with our gas powered lawnmower and trimming the edges of the lawn was a big task, taking up to two hours end to end if the lawn hadn't been cut in a while (because the grass catcher had to be emptied more often). Douglas and I usually split the task, alternating front and back lawn duty. Why Kara didn't have to cut the grass remains an open question—in my mind anyhow.

There was a side benefit to cutting the lawn, and that was mower maintenance. The engine needed gasoline on a regular basis, and that meant the occasional trip to the Home Gas Station at 41st Avenue and Collingwood Street to fill either the one gallon steel jerry can, or later, the five gallon plastic container at $0.48 a gallon ($0.12 per litre). We were also expected to buy bread at $0.25 per loaf (a bit more if it was cut for us) at the bakery at 41st Avenue and Dunbar Street. In addition to the gas, the air filter had to be washed in solvent and rinsed, then re-oiled, the spark plug had to cleaned and gapped. More often than not, the starter pull-cord would break and would have to be replaced—which required a partial disassembly of the engine to accomplish.

The lawn mower was our entree to the world of

mechanics. We used real tools to work on a real engine and learned to understand carburetors, governors, magnetos and ignition systems, pulleys, gears and more. We used the lawn mower every week for hours at a time, and learned how to keep it operating in peak condition—for if it broke down we couldn't earn our allowance. It also formed the engineering foundation for go-karting and mini-bicycle experiences later on.

Going to work with Dad

Gordon Spratt & Associates (GS&A) was an integral extension of the Spratt family. Dad left promptly for work every morning at about 7:45am and returned around 5:15pm for dinner. Sometimes he would come home for lunch if he was in the vicinity. We'd often come home from school for lunch and visit with Dad in the middle of the day. Mom would sometimes make waffles or French toast too, which made lunches pretty special.

We knew that Dad worked for himself and that he had associates and employees working for him in his engineering firm. He took important business calls around dinnertime, when things were heating up at the office. People came and went from the house on business matters. We used GS&A pads of paper and we had lots of work related engineering items around the house, such as equipment, drawings, and chemicals, to remind us that Dad was a Civil Engineer specializing in concrete technologies. We even saw his picture and name in the paper a number of times.

Dad took us to his office on the weekends, so we knew the various staff members and the layout of the office quite well. We learned about Civil Engineering and on occasion he would take us to a job site to climb around the construction projects—something we always found interesting. Later, after the age of twelve, we each got to actually work part time for Dad at his office or in his engineering labs. Many of my summer jobs I had later, involved working for

Dad's friends and business associates in the construction industry.

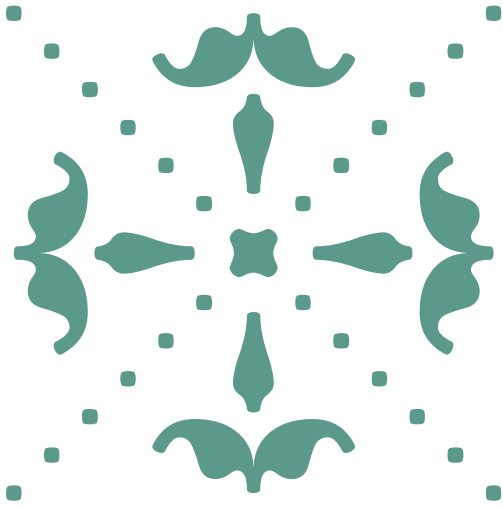
One of the things that I enjoyed most in the 1960s, was being invited to fly with Dad on float planes while he searched the gulf islands for gravel deposits which provided the raw materials for concrete, and therefore construction projects, throughout BC. Most of the well-known gravel deposit and production sites on the West Coast back then, were the result of Dad's handiwork (like Nelson Island). These were the Wild West days, and Dad would try and bring back as many soil samples as possible.

The small seaplanes that we flew in could only carry perhaps 600 pounds in combined cargo and passenger weight—having kids along for the ride didn't help that much. Dad would load up the plane and the pilot would attempt to take off. If we couldn't get off of the water, we would pour out a small amount of gravel from each of (maybe) twenty different bags and try again until we eventually made it off the water and back home. He never suggested leaving one of his kids behind though. What a great Dad.

Those were fantastic trips. Inevitably, we flew into wild forests where there was always something of interest to discover and explore. One time in particular I remember finding a beautiful tree frog that I accidentally left in my pants pocket and left to die after we came back home. Poor frog. There was always marine wildlife to observe as well—such as clams, starfish, otters, seals and fish in and around the water's edge.

Dad taught us about work and work ethics on these outings. He loved what he did and never ever

complained about his work. Work was something very personally rewarding for Dad and he always wanted to provide the very best services to his clients. He still does at age seventy today. We met Dad's most important clients and they saw how Dad was a dedicated family man who was deeply devoted to his children, and would make sacrifices to bring them along on these trips and to construction sites to see the world beyond the school playground. If there's one environmental influence that had shaped my personal adult interest in business and my entrepreneurial drive, it started on these trips with Dad.



Getting into trouble

It started simply enough. Kenny Brooks was my classmate and neighbour who lived directly behind our house. We played daily until he moved away at the end of grade three. Like most kids, we were always searching for something new and interesting to get ourselves immersed in. My teachers told me that Kenny was a bad influence, but my wild side was quite willing to complement his dark nature. Looking back, I think it was convenient to blame my troubles on his influences because more often than not, I was the instigator.

One day we decided to climb onto the roof of the neighbour's house located just south of 6145. The house has a flat roof and is situated at a lower elevation than 6145, so it was quite easy to climb up on. We made the jump to the pool shed and discovered we were hidden from view by an overhanging fir tree. There lay the pool, perfectly blue and no one was there to spy what we were up to. One of us decided to throw a small rock into the pool and within a few moments we were climbing up and down from the roof with larger and larger stones in tow. We eventually hauled up some really big rocks that made wonderful splashes and tossed them as far as we could into the deep end of the pool. For some reason we never bothered to consider what an inconvenience this would represent to the owner of the pool who would find it very difficult to remove these rocks later on.

Well, my Dad ended up cleaning up the pool and

you can guess how much trouble Kenny and I got into when we finally confessed to our little prank.

Another time we seized upon the idea of hiding in the woods looking over SW Marine Drive just past the end of the cul-de-sac and tossing eggs at the cars and trucks passing by us. This was a modification of the old snowball throwing ritual that we were practiced at. We could now enjoy the very same pleasures in the summer time as well. We nailed a nice looking red convertible sports car and thought we'd been awarded a gold star for excellence in accuracy, when a man came charging through the woods behind us—apparently he had driven around the block before catching us red handed. He claimed we had damaged the paint on his car and wanted to get our parents to pay for repair costs. I don't recollect how we got out of that one, but I do remember being pretty scared at the time.

One day on the way home from school, Kenny and I found a discarded electrical cord and took it into his basement and plugged it into the wall to watch the bare copper wire ends spark madly and burn holes in the linoleum floor. We were so impressed with the physics of the experiment that Kenny volunteered to tell our grade three teacher all about it in class the next day. She totally freaked out and lectured us on and on about how we had almost killed ourselves.

In grade four, after Kenny had moved away, a couple of us young boys figured we could have some fun by putting dirt in plastic bags and throwing them into the air. We wanted to pretend the bags were fighter planes that had just been shot down in combat and were streaming smoke as they crashed into the

ground. We did this for quite a long time before we got bored, and eventually wanted someone to lob them at. Some girls were walking on the sidewalk to school and we hid in the trees and nailed them as they walked past us. Later that morning one of the girls stood up in class and pointed straight at us and told the teacher what we had done. It was off to the principal's office for the bunch of us.

Winter was fun when it snowed. Busses were highly prized targets. We used to lie in wait and cream them as they drove past on 41st Avenue. One day (in grade eight) I rode the bus home from school with my French horn and schoolbooks in hand. After jumping off the bus, I dropped my horn, grabbed a fistful of snow and then hurled it against the window of the bus as it started to pull away. The glass shattered. The driver immediately slammed on the brakes and sprang out to grab me. I turned around, picked up my horn and books and attempted a daring escape only to spot my Mom at the corner waiting in her car to drive me to my horn lessons. There I was, trapped, with everyone in the world witness to the ignominious spectacle of me getting fined for damaging bus property.

One of my grade nine friends liked pellet guns as much as I did, but his Dad wouldn't let him have one. So he did something really bad—he stole $80 (which I didn't know about until afterwards) from his Dad. The two of us skipped woodworking class in the morning and hopped the bus downtown to Eatons where we somehow proceeded to convince the clerk in the sporting goods department that we were actually sixteen years old and could purchase an air pistol.

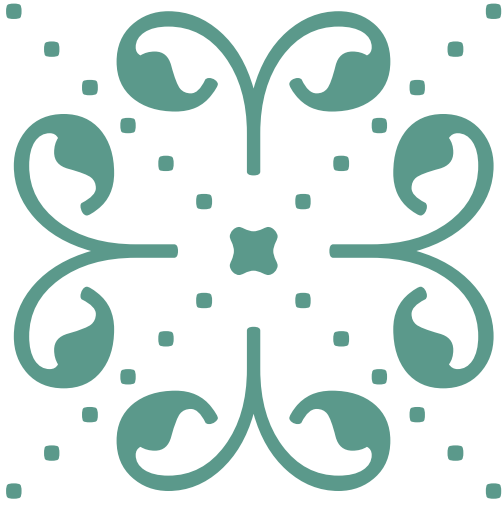
We took our newly purchased air pistol directly to the school grounds and spent about an hour firing it at garbage cans etc. I remember that it looked exactly like a 38 special revolver, but that it didn't have much firepower. It couldn't even punch a hole in a pop can. I got bored quickly and was also worried that we'd get caught skipping school so I went back to class. The other boy was none too smart and started to flash the pistol at other kids and carried it around in his pants, pretending that it was a real gun. Sometime later that day the police were called to the school and he was strip-searched in the principal's office. They thought he had a real gun—which is what one of the kids had told a teacher. I was very lucky to not be dragged into that mess as his parents and the clerk at Eatons that sold us the gun all got involved. Ugly stuff.

My biggest day of trouble making occurred in grade nine or ten sometime around Halloween. I had discovered that some types of thick string, when lit with a match and then blown out, continued to burn like a cigarette—slow and steady. A 2-inch length of cord took up to ten minutes to burn through. If you worked a pencil lead through the string near one end and you pulled through the fuse of a firecracker, you could in effect create a nice time delayed explosion.

My plan was to place a five-firecracker time delayed "bomb" in the boy's washroom at school on the third floor. I lit the string at 1pm, blew it out, placed the package behind one of the toilet seats, and left for my social studies class on the other side of the building. Fifteen minutes passed and nothing happened—I was sure that the fuse had gone out. And then "Bam! Bam!

Bam!"—and I mean it was loud. Super loud. And I was 300 feet away or more.

Almost everyone in the school talked about it. I kept really quiet because I was sure that if anyone knew I had done it I'd be expelled. One of the teachers nearer to the washroom had almost passed out from fright because he thought someone was firing a gun in the school. It was funny, and yet I knew I had gone too far with that prank. I never did anything like it again for fear of being expelled.



My first work experiences

For a kid, it's a thrilling moment when he/she first starts on the journey towards financial independence. Kids know that they are wholly dependent on their parents for financial support and that their only option is to be good and line up for their weekly allowance.

As a young man, having a separate, controllable source of revenue meant that I could choose my own purchases and get more of the things that I wanted. Young boys knew that delivering newspapers was a lucrative part time job. This doesn't appear the case anymore. Kids of all ages congregated after school at the newspaper shacks located all around the city, waiting for the daily drop-off of the newspaper bundles from the delivery trunk.

Ours was behind the old Safeway store between 41st Avenue and 39th Avenue in an old green shack. It could be a rough place at times with kids fighting and causing trouble. At the age of twelve I signed up to deliver the Kerrisdale Courier. My route ran between Dunbar Street and Blenheim Street on 39th Avenue—an ideal route if there ever was one.

I liked to walk my route, as it was more efficient than riding a bicycle and having to get on and off all the time. My clients didn't want the paper thrown at the house anyway so I learned to place each paper where each person wanted it. I was personally responsible for collecting money owed for the papers I delivered and therefore got to be on a first name basis with most of the homeowners.

A number of the homeowners were older retired people and they reflected what was then, the blue-collar nature of Kerrisdale. These people lived in little 'post-war bungalows'—those 700 square-foot boxes that were built just after World War II following a real estate boom that hit Vancouver in the late 1940s and 1950s. One of the people I liked to talk to was an old sawmill worker who told me stories of how, over the years, four of his fingers had been cut off by the saw blades at the mill. These were working class people who sacrificed a lot to raise their families and few of us today can understand how tough it was for people of that generation to make ends meet.

Another lady, who eventually moved into an old age home, was a classical music lover who liked to talk to me about my horn playing and involvement in the symphony orchestra. She really took an interest in me and acted as though I was one of her children. I liked these people and I think they liked me. It was inspiring to make money and be with customers who I liked.

In grade eight the Courier held a contest for the delivery person who signed up the most new homes to take delivery of the newspaper. I put my heart and soul into it and was one of five winners in the contest. We were treated to a lunch together and got our names and photos on the front-page of the paper.

When I turned twelve I was old enough to be able to baby-sit the other kids in the neighbourhood. A lot of people thought that babysitting was a girl thing, but I never had a problem with it and none of my friends made a big deal about it either. I liked to baby-sit because it mainly revolved around entertaining young

minds and then putting them to bed and getting down to some leftover school homework—and getting paid quite well in the process. I baby-sat up until the end of high school for six different families around the neighbourhood.

The money from my paper route, babysitting, and other part time jobs allowed me to buy some of the things I wanted, like albums and parts for my go-kart and mini-bike. As I got more and more into electronics, my jobs helped me afford more electronic components as well as increasingly sophisticated audio gear. By the time graduated from high school I had a very good stereo system.

My Dad encouraged us to come and work at his office and do odd jobs for him in the evenings and on the weekends. We could take out the garbage, do filing, and work in the lab sifting gravel samples with the shaker (each layer was a different sized mesh screen and the material left in each layer was then weighed and tabulated for a written report). Later on we also made up batches of concrete for testing on the compressive strength machine—which applied thousands of pounds of force to cylinders of concrete in order to break them, and thus, determine how strong the concrete design was.

Dad asked me to use my knowledge of electronics to help him solve a problem with the concrete testing work he undertook for clients. He wanted to use a process called the "maturity method" to calculate the strength of concrete from a measurement of the temperature of the concrete as it cured, rather than physically breaking the cylinders to determine how strong the concrete was. By the end of high school, I

was helping him set up the temperature data loggers we had rented for selected job sites as well as working in his lab to measure concrete strength using thermocouple sensors embedded in the concrete.

I built up a waterproof wooden box in our backyard to place the rented data loggers into and eventually put them on a number of job sites around Vancouver. Later on in university I would go on to develop a line of 'concrete maturity meters' that I initially sold to Dad's company, and then eventually licensed to other engineering firms both locally and back east. They became my first commercial product line.

My first job outside of GS&A was during the summer of grade ten with Weir-Jones Geo-Technical Engineering Services Limited. Dr. Ian Weir-Jones was an immigrant from the UK and had been a professor of engineering at UBC. His engineering company specialized in testing materials and soils for the construction, oil and gas industries. My first job with him involved a one day trip out to the gravel pit beside Westwood Raceway to set off small explosives, sending shock waves through the earth and recording the reflected 'P and S' waves, which helped determine what kind of materials lay deep beneath the surface. It was compelling work.

The next summer I worked for Ian full time and also ended up bartending parties at his home out at UBC. One of the more interesting jobs was climbing onto the roof of the Harbour Centre tower (35-stories high) and then setting up wind measurement devices and data loggers on the roof. I like heights and that was a huge thrill, even if it was dangerous. One day I climbed up the 150-foot tower on the roof, which

remains the highest point in downtown Vancouver today, and proceeded to take pictures of the world 575-feet below me.

The view from the top of the Harbour Centre Flag Pole

Looking down from the top of the Harbour Centre flag pole to the roof 125' below my feet—1978

Ian offered me an evening job during grade twelve and I accepted it because all of my savings were going into buying expensive audio gear for our rec room, and I also needed the extra money for university. I worked two nights a week cleaning up his shop and helping build and wire data loggers in addition to other miscellaneous tasks. Some of this equipment was used during my final high school summer job when I went to work on the Revelstoke Dam project for Ian's company.

Most of my high school friends had summer jobs working at places like McDonalds or pumping gas. I was very fortunate to gain technically relevant job

experience as well a make a considerable amount of money before and during university. It helped me in school, helped feed my hobbies, and most importantly, it gave me exposure to the real business world—one that I would eventually be building a full time career in.

By the time I graduated from university I had the equivalent of almost three years of technical job experience as well as tens of thousands of dollars in income. That said, I had managed to spend most of it along the way and I needed to continue to work minus the nest egg that my Dad had managed to save up at the same point in his life.

Transitioning into puberty

Puberty occurs when your body begins to develop reproductive function—that is, the ability to make babies. Boys and girls reach puberty from anywhere between the ages of eleven to fifteen. Typically, it occurs around age thirteen for boys, which means that the transition from elementary school to high school aligns very closely with the physiological changes driven by puberty.

In grade six, some girls in my class started to display noticeable physical changes and everybody would talk about it. The boys in my classes didn't seem to be having any noticeable changes until grade eight but some of the girls sure did before that time. We were all very interested in all of this, but at the same time we felt nervous, as it hearkened in our first collective step towards adulthood.

Boys start to produce testosterone at the onset of puberty. Testosterone is a powerful hormone that stimulates the development of the body's sexual organs (and interest in girls), as well as triggering things like thicker and more pronounced hair growth on the face, in the armpits, and in the groin area. The skin gets oily which clogs the pores and produces pimples, and the sweat from exertion starts to smell. Finally, the pitch of boy's voices drops suddenly and dramatically.

So for boys in my classes, grade eight and nine were key years for having these uncontrollable changes take place. It dramatically affected our lives because it changed how we looked, how we sounded, and

what we were interested in (girls). We were self-conscious about our pimples and our voice changes. Perhaps I was no different than every other boy, but I felt that my acne was terrible and spent a lot of time worrying about and trying to control my facial blemishes. For the first time in my life, I thought of girls obsessively and agonized over what they thought of me. I'm sure the girls were feeling exactly the same way about themselves.

In elementary school the interactions between boys and girls wasn't much different than boy-to-boy relations. My male friends and I often played with and talked to girls minus any romantic undertones. That was not the case in high school. In our own minds, the position of girls shifted radically with puberty. Testosterone also helps stimulate muscle growth and my interest in weight lifting (another passion of mine) allowed me to dramatically alter my body as I worked out. I could perceive the muscle growth and noticed my strength increasing with each passing month. My friends were often in the gym with me working on their muscle development as well. We were trying to impress each other as much as we were trying to impress the girls.

By the time we reached the end of high school, all of the girls were fully grown up while many of the boys were still in the process of physical change. Some boys had grown beards or moustaches and were tall and muscular, while others were still thin and young looking. Looking back at my high school graduation photos, I notice that most of my male friends still had a lot of physical growing up to do—myself included. I was only 135 pounds at graduation

while today I'm 175 pounds and in relatively good shape at the same height. I had a 28-inch waist in 1979 and a 34-inch waist today.

My first real girlfriend would have to be Julie Winn who I met at CYMC in grade ten. She was tall with long brown hair and was quite good looking. I told her friends one day that I liked her and we ended up talking to each other after her giggling friends literally pushed us together. We talked and talked and went on long walks during the two weeks we were together, but I never kissed her because I was too shy. She asked me to once, but I got embarrassed, turned beet red and changed the subject in a hurry. How wonderfully innocent.

When camp was over, we ended up writing to each other at least once a month for a period of about two years. I loved writing those letters and receiving hers (I still have them) and it meant a lot to me when I was back in school in grade ten to have someone close to me emotionally but far away physically (she lived in Vernon, BC). She gave me quiet confidence that I was OK even though I was an apparent 'zero' with the girls at my own high school. Julie and I made a number of plans to get together but we never met again and lost contact with each other over the years.

Julie was a friend of Shannon Dayton's at CYMC who was dating another friend of mine. Shannon lived in Victoria, BC, and the next summer at camp we started to show some interest in each other romantically even though her old boyfriend was still hanging around. We began to write each other while still in grade eleven and by the fall of grade twelve,

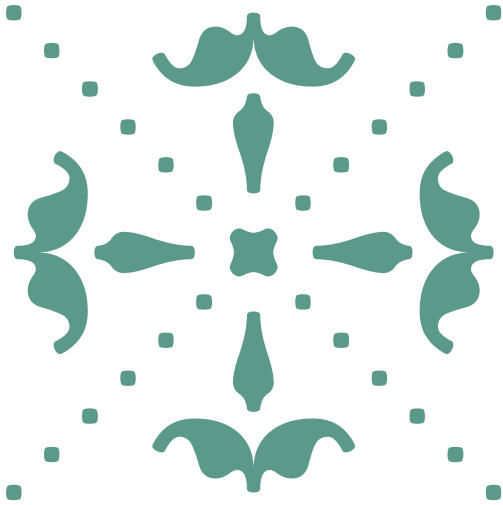
we both confessed that we had some feelings for each other. I took the bus over to see her in Victoria a few magical times and also managed to connect up with her during a band trip there.

In the summer of 1979 after our graduation we planned to get together many times, but I ended up working at the Revelstoke dam project for a good part of the summer. My close horn-playing friend Evan Jones and I finally got together when I was in town early in July, jumped in his parents red 1971 convertible Ford Mustang and drove to Courtney, picking up Shannon at her summer cottage along the way.

We spent a wonderful weekend together with old friends, partying together under beautiful star lit skies on the grass fields in front of the school until the sun came up in the morning. Thinking back on it now, it all seems like a dream but I'm sure it was as perfect a weekend as any in my life—my last summer at CYMC and my last summer as a high school student living at home. It was the end of a wonderful era for me.

Shannon, Evan and I all said our good-byes at the end of the weekend and I headed back to my summer job in the interior of BC with people I didn't like and didn't want to be around. What a contrast. Shannon drove with her family to Edmonton to attend a college there, while I headed to Queen's back east. We continued to write but our lives were moving in opposite directions. By the following summer I was dating Cheryl, who I married five years later. Again, I still have all of the letters Shannon wrote to me and she still has all of mine. Our families have gotten

together on a number of occasions and it's fun to look back on the days when we were writing each other and sharing our innermost thoughts. Simple times with high hopes for the future.



Fitness

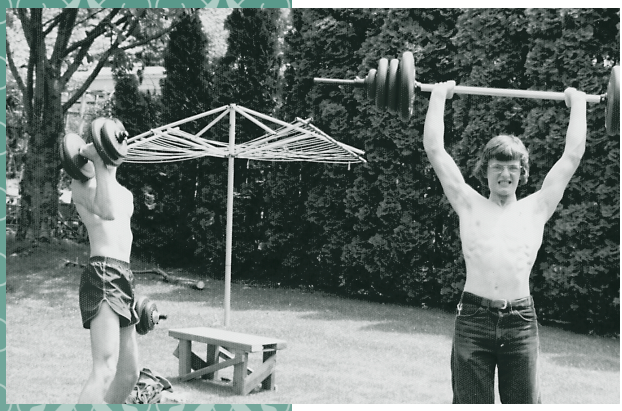
Dad was active as an assistant coach on my soccer team until the end of grade seven, when I stopped playing. We had a good team and managed to win the city championship in my last year against another team consisting of much bigger boys who were certain at the beginning of the game that they were going to steam roll over us.

It was a classic game of intelligence and agility against brute force. I always played left defence and it was my role to get the ball out of our end zone and away from our goal and up to the forwards to allow them to score. I was fearless as a young soccer player and would often run straight at the advancing forwards who were attempting to shoot on our goalie. The biggest boy on the other team tried to run me down and I drove into him as hard as I could and he passed out right there on the field. I must have really winded him. It was the psychological turning point in the game because he couldn't play the rest of the game. We ended up winning by two points.

Another boy in elementary school had bullied Douglas so Dad enrolled him into Karate at the YMCA. Douglas took karate seriously and earned his yellow belt with tough old Ron as his coach. I remember Ron arguing with a student who thought he was as good a fighter as Ron. Ron took him outside and beat him up. After watching Douglas take Karate at the YMCA, I decided to take the basic courses there as well.

All of the Spratt kids did well in track and field

during high school. At the old Brockton Oval in Stanley Park, Douglas ran in the city finals one year, covering the 400 meters in 57 seconds—two seconds faster than my best ever time. William Yu and I both excelled at the 200 meters and competed together in school track meet events. Kara was one of the best runners in the school. While in grade eight she outran most of the grade twelve girls. The Spratt kids were good runners.



Mark Thomson and I working out in our backyard—1977

Music severely limited our after-school and weekend extracurricular activities during high school. None of us joined sports teams after elementary school. Like Douglas however, I suffered a few run-ins with school bullies in grade eight and decided that I would never allow anyone to bully me or beat me up. I turned to weight lifting as a solution.

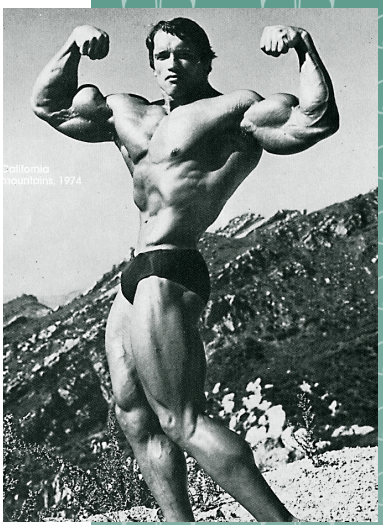
Mom and Dad helped me buy my first weight lifting set, and shortly afterwards, I built my first pulley system for additional weight lifting exercises and built a bench to create the impression of a proper home gym. I gained strength and muscle mass very quickly and bought some additional 25 pound plates for working out with. I used the school gym a lot too and soon learned to train with other weight lifters. William Yu's brother Geoff was a big weight lifter and he used to let us go to his house where he had set up a pretty good gym in the basement where William and I would work out. They both ate tuna

fish from the can while I preferred to drink protein powder shakes after our workouts. We really took our lifting seriously.

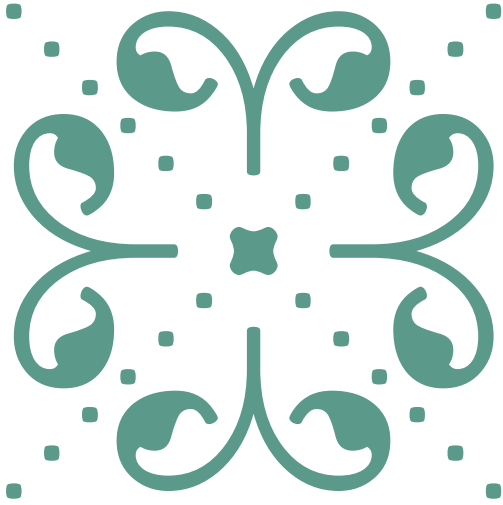
By grade eleven I could bench-press 260 pounds even though I weighed exactly half that amount. This was considered a worthy goal. As with electronics, I considered it important to read up on all of the current trends in weight lifting and even went to hear visiting pro body builders speak on the subject.

When I was in high school, Arnold Schwarzenegger had just recently won the Mr. Universe competition six times in a row. It was quite a revelation to see him morph into an actor after stereotyping him as the world's most well developed man. We believed all body builders were stupid and couldn't comprehend how he could possibly make it in Hollywood. We were wrong.

Some habits started when you are young tend to stay with you for life. I've always liked weight lifting as an adult. Recent science indicates that weightlifting is actually as important to physical fitness as cardio workouts are.



Our inspiration, Mr. Universe, at his peak on California Mountain



The Spratt family car culture

Saturdays were car days in the Spratt family. And the whole family got into the weekly car detailing and maintenance routine. Nowadays, people perceive cars as something detached from themselves. My Dad grew up during a time when you literally had to be your own mechanic if you wanted reliable transportation. You had to know quite a bit about how old cars worked because in the 1930s and 40s, you were often required to change tires, tune a carb, change spark plugs, oil, gas and air filters on a regular basis. Not knowing how to do this could pose a major problem if you were on a long trip away from town.

From the earliest days at 6145 (which had a wonderfully wide and long driveway) Saturday afternoons were given over to the ritual of car detailing with all family members involved in some way or another. Each car received a basic wash—the favoured method was to spray the car with a hose and work each wheel-well carefully in order to wash out all the mud and debris. Then someone got a pail of hot soapy water and used a clean wash mitt to carefully wipe down the exterior surfaces. The interior floor mats were pulled out and washed as well, then rinsed from top to bottom. Next came the scrub brushes—liberally doused with Ajax powder to clean the white walled tires. Then family members would pull out the household vacuum cleaner that had to be plugged into the light socket in the ceiling of the garage. I could barely reach if I got up on the tips of

my toes. Last of all came the interior window and surface cleaning.

Next we propped the hood and checked the various fluid levels. Air filter cleaning came next. And, more than a few times a year, we wound up changing the spark plugs and drained, flushed and refilled the radiator. Back in the 1960s, I don't remember us using anything but water in the radiators, but Dad must have used anti-freeze in the winter months. Under full throttle, we would then set out on an "Italian tune-up" journey down the UBC highway to blow dry the car and clean out the engine.

Kara with Dad's last Chrysler New Yorker—1967

We would also polish and wax the cars every few months using a separate polishing compound on the chrome trim. Dad would also fix any paint chips with a carefully refined technique utilizing a fine paintbrush and a toothpick. Then, and only then, were the Spratt family cars ready for the Sunday drive with the grandparents.

Dad would often pull the car over beside the Home Gas Station at 41st Avenue and Collingwood Street after we returned home from a typical outing, and he'd let one of us jump into his lap and actually steer the car down the street while he controlled the accelerator and brake peddles. We would even be allowed to steer the car into the driveway and garage. Today's cars all have air bags that prohibit anyone under the age of twelve from sitting in the front seat of a car. Too bad.

Family road trips together

With the prevalence of air travel today, it's becoming less and less common to drive long distances in an automobile together as a family. In the 1960s however, the relative cost of air travel was very high and the number of cars on the roads across Canada and the US were only a small fraction of what it is today. Our family loved to drive long distances together and did so on a regular basis. My parent's trips to Seattle started in the 1960s when the whole family would go down on the weekends to shop together. We drove to California a number of times and also drove to many different ski destinations in Canada and the US because we loved skiing.

With our great grandmother in Victoria—1966

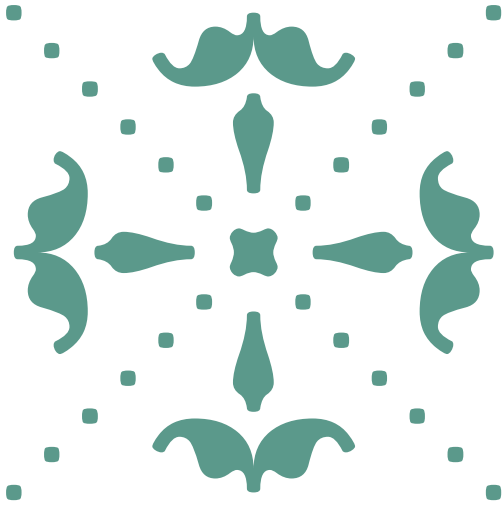
I don't remember the family fighting a lot in the car but we certainly had the opportunity to do so—especially because we were always sitting three across in the back seat of the car and sometimes we drove for eight or more hours together in a single day. Dad was famous for his incredible eyesight. He could read highway signs and car license plates from huge distances away—handily beating the rest of the family in spotting such things. We played games in the car and otherwise learned to relax and let the miles go by. Today our hurried culture seems terribly at odds with the very idea of settling back for a long drive to some distant destination.

Once we drove out to Sears in Burnaby to get air conditioning installed in Dad's car—it was a rare treat in the 1960s to have air conditioning installed. As a result, we no longer had to roll down the windows in search of cooler air as we blasted down the highways together. Cars were much larger back then and boasted yawning trunks that could swallow as much cargo as any minivan or SUV can today.

Mom's hot rod 1970 280SE

1969 was a turning point for my Dad and his cars. He had always been a steadfast Detroit iron man—his love of Chrysler New Yorkers was legendary. You could say he had brand loyalty. But he knew someone at Mercedes Benz and got what he thought was a pretty good deal on a 1969 280S four-door sedan. It was green and came with a carburetted 2.8 litre engine and Mom drove it around. But Dad didn't like something about it and traded it in within the first year for a blue 1970 280SE—complete with a mechanically fuel injected, high compression 185 horsepower engine.

Even at nine years of age, I knew this was something special because the Saturday detail and tuning sessions turned into drag strip runs down the UBC highway with our first and only car to break eight seconds from zero to 60 miles per hour. Dad would let me time his runs while he raced down the highway. The route was always the same—out to the lookout point along the highway, take a U-turn and then pull over to the shoulder and wait for traffic to clear. Then count down and blast off. If there were anyone or anything to blame for my drag racing interests, it would have to have stemmed from those fond memories in the passenger seat of the 280SE with Dad at the steering wheel.



Dad's first diesel Mercedes Benz

Going from a V8 Chrysler or Mom's highly strung 280SE to a 240D diesel is about as radical a shift in driving experience as anything I can possibly think of. Here's my Dad, a solid, performance oriented kind of guy, who knows how to do a decent brake stand with an automatic shifted car, and all of a sudden there's this 1974 diesel with something like 60 horsepower sitting in the driveway. And it was taxicab yellow. Not a high point in my Dad's automotive legacy. But it was the peak of the OPEC oil embargo crisis and thousands of people and automotive companies were making pretty drastic changes in their automotive choices too. This was the end of the 'muscle car' era—sadly, a lousy time to grow up as a young car enthusiast.

Now there was a lot more to those early diesels than just an extreme lack of power. They also stank, belched black smoke when they accelerated, rattled and made horrible mechanical sounds when idling. Coaxing one of these beasts to start required warming up the electrical glow plugs for 15 to 20 seconds before attempting to get one of them moving. And then you were subjected to a cacophony of clacking and ticking that could awaken the neighbours three houses away.

I was only a few years away from getting my driver's license and I didn't want to be caught dead in that thing. Fortunately, he upgraded to a 300D when the new models came out three years later—complete with a softer shade of yellow and more power.

Over the years Dad has stuck with his initial enthusiasm for both diesel technology as well as brand loyalty to Mercedes Benz. Diesel technology has come a long way since those first behemoths of the early 1970s. His latest automobile, the E300, is a highly refined, very civilized and adequately powered vehicle. It gets unbelievable fuel economy—a fact that continues to bring miles of smiles to my Dad's face every time the subject comes up in conversation.

My first driving experiences

When I turned sixteen (you guessed it) I had to drive Dad's 300D, not Mom's 280SE. On my very first night out alone with the car, I took it out to the highway and attempted a performance test so as not to embarrass myself in front of my friends at a later date. I just simply had to know what that bucket of bolts was capable of.

There was a definite technique to driving such a heavy and underpowered vehicle—you had to anticipate gaps in traffic to accelerate into, and you had to sneak up beside people if you wanted to get the inside lane jump on them at an intersection. And you didn't dare drag race anyone up a hill, for neither the 240D nor the more powerful 300D could even maintain a decent speed up even the slightest of inclines.

So there I was, out on the highway on my first time alone behind the wheel of an automobile, searching for some missing acceleration, and it simply wasn't to be found. I swung the wheel around to pull a U turn on the highway where my Dad always pulled his cars over, but instead of slowing down and stopping, I stepped on the accelerator peddle and managed to spin the car in a circle, right in the middle of the two lanes. Good thing there were no cars coming because I ended up pointed the wrong way around on the highway—facing the oncoming traffic.

From a physics standpoint, what had happened relates to the fact that diesels don't have much power

but they do have lots of torque. With a short first gear in that 300D, that torque was significant—particularly if you had a running start like I did going around the corner. The combination of cornering forces and acceleration forces on the rear wheels had caused a loss of traction and the result was a spin—what race car drivers call "throttle induced over steer". Another reason I got hooked on automotive racing early on is it just plain feels good to be in a rear-wheel drive car.

I chugged home and handed the keys back to good old Dad. He immediately went to open the trunk to get some office supplies out and saw that everything in the trunk had been thrown to one side—including his very expensive Nikon camera equipment which had left the camera bag and was scattered all over the trunk. I wasn't popular that evening.

Some time after that Mom and Dad travelled to Europe for a holiday. Douglas was away at university and I had the car to myself. I even drove it to school a few times with friends in the backseat. On the way home from school one day I bumped into a curb while going too fast around a corner. I must have bent the steering or suspension because the wheel was no longer straight after that. I had planned to get it fixed before Mom and Dad got home.

I was king of the world with no parents around and a car all to myself—even if the steering wheel was a bit crooked. I was still going to orchestra on Saturdays and had offered to drive another horn player home after practice. When I left his house, I tried to accelerate to catch the light at the intersection which was just about to turn red. I made it through the intersection OK, but as I crossed the railway tracks I

changed lanes and hit a bump that caused the car to come back down hard and bottom out the front suspension on one side.

I remember hearing the muffled sound of metal hitting pavement, but it just didn't seem like a big deal as I roared west on 49th Avenue back to my house with the radio blaring away. Once I merged onto SW Marine Drive however, I noticed that the car was labouring a bit and didn't want to maintain speed. As I turned up Blenheim Street the 300D was shifting poorly and I knew something wasn't right. As I turned onto 43rd Avenue I realized that the car was wounded—perhaps mortally. Then I noticed that the oil pressure gauge was reading "zero"—a bit too late.

Getting ready to take the 300D out on grad night

I coasted to a stop and got out and saw a line of oil leading back from the car into the distance. I had cracked the oil pan at the point where the drain plug screwed in and the engine had seized up as result of running the engine without oil pressure. I was obviously in deep trouble. What should I do? I phoned my boss, Ian Weir-Jones, who drove a nice BMW, and I told him what happened. He told me to call a tow truck and get it down to Mercedes Benz and then he told me to call my father in Italy and tell him the truth about what had happened. I did so, and Dad was pretty calm and cool, all things considered. The first obstacle to redemption had been overcome—or so I thought. That's when things went from bad to worse.

Within an hour of arriving at Mercedes Benz by tow truck the next morning, the mechanic informed me I was looking at a total engine replacement with something like $5-6000 in costs. Today, that figure would be closer to $20,000. It was a lot of money. And I had to go to ICBC and tell them what happened, and then I had to call my parents in Europe and give them the really bad news. ICBC didn't like my story, and, in the end, the bill was only partially covered by Dad's insurance. When my Dad picked up the car after arriving back home, he found a can of beer under the driver's seat (which I don't remember putting there)—and dropped the hammer on me.

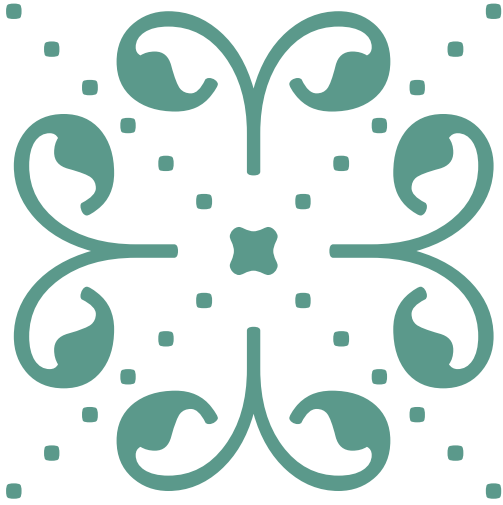
For years, I had saved money leading up to university. It was up to me to pay for tuition amounting to about $1,500 a year as well as all non-room and board expenses. From all my part time jobs I had saved a total of $3,500 and was ready to live like a king at Queen's, but Dad insisted I pay a full $2,000 as punishment for all the problems he had suffered with me and the 300D. My only salvation lay in landing a good paying summer job for the summer of 1979 and making up most of the difference before arriving at Queen's that fall.

Panicked by the financial mess that I was in, I hadn't noticed that Mercedes Benz had quietly fixed the steering problem without putting anything on the invoice for my Dad to read. They had seen I was in trouble and had buried at least one of my sins for me. In appears that one of them had probably remembered what it was like being a teenager and had sympathy for a boy mired in a world of trouble with his Dad.

The convertible VW Bug

In 1978 my Dad did something that must have been triggered by some form of mid-life crisis—he bought a beautiful baby-blue convertible VW Bug with a white interior and soft-top. It was fuel injected, had a nice radio and was a blast to drive. With the top down we drove all around the place, waving and smiling at everyone. It wasn't practical and there was no decent place to store it because 6145 has only an open two-car garage. Despite this, we managed to park cars end-to-end when the bug wasn't in winter storage at my Dad's office.

In mid June of 1979, about a week before high school graduation, we threw a couple of parties at the beach out at UBC and Spanish banks. I got permission to drive my friends out and back in this great little car. With the beautiful weather, it was just the perfect way to go. A number of years later when the weather was starting to corrode the exhaust system and bodywork, just after Cheryl and I got married (we used it as our getaway car at our reception too), Dad sold it and turned around and purchased a Porsche—but that's a story for another time.

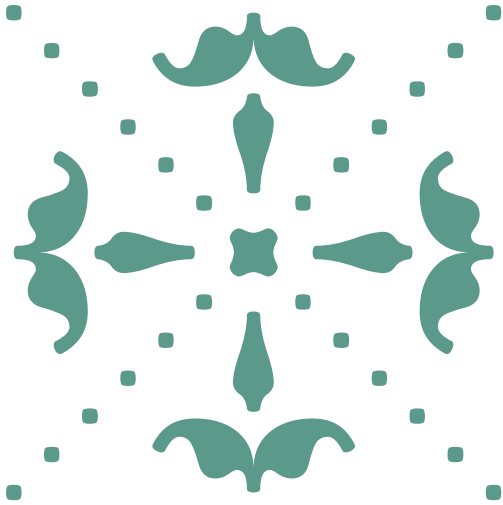


Friends

One of the strange things about getting older is how people tend to change and grow apart after being close childhood friends. I meet a lot of people who say that don't keep in touch with any of their childhood friends. But that doesn't need to be the case—I've been lucky enough to have a lot of friends still around me that I've known since early childhood.

Drew Atkins, Douglas and Barb Vincent, Evan Jones, Shannon Dayton, Geoff Yue, Dave Boyd, Bruce Jeffreys, Graham Thom, Andy Shaw—these are examples of grade school friends that Cheryl and I still see and who's children also know our children. When we graduated from high school we made a decision to stay in touch and we were lucky enough to live in the same city with our families.

It's fun to keep life long friendships alive and I'll encourage my kids to work hard at trying to create the same situation for themselves as they grow up.



The BIG high school graduation party at our house

Some things just sort of happen. And sometimes they get totally out of control. At least that's the way I remember the grad party in our backyard. 6145 has a big backyard, and the house itself isn't small either. Word was going around that an afternoon grad party was going to be held immediately after school on the very last day of the year. I thought that I had a good backyard for such an event, and without telling my parents the full extent of the invitation list, I let people know that my place was up for grabs.

In truth, there were other people that had also volunteered their family homes. It was far from certain that my offer would be accepted by more than just my immediate friends. I wasn't exactly "Mr. Popularity" at school and some of the other kids who were not even friends of mine would surely avoid my place. But that isn't the way it worked out. Within minutes of the school bell ringing, in groups both small and large, close to 200 grad students arrived at our house. The idea was to hold one big bash and make it really rock and roll. Good thing I had a big stereo.

This whole high school graduation thing was a big event, for it was going to be the last time that childhood friends would be together before setting out on different paths into the labyrinth of adulthood. There was no turning back the clock—we all knew these were special times together, times that were fast

slipping away from us. Those last few days at Point Grey were certainly to be remembered. Back in 1979, we were blessed with warm summer June weather (which we don't often get in Vancouver) and most of us spent our lunch hours lying on the grass outside the school doors signing each other's annuals and sharing our plans for the future together.

I still take time to read the notes teachers and fellow friends wrote in my annual—more than twenty-two years ago. We were proud that we had made it through grade school together and we were starting to get a feel for what life would be like beyond our familiar world. Each of us had made different plans, and only four of us had decided to travel back east to Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Two of those students were Cheryl and I, and another was Drew Atkins.

It was immediately apparent that the number of cars arriving was far larger than our street parking capacity could handle. The resultant gridlock transformed surrounding streets into a huge parking lot stretching more than two blocks to 43rd Avenue and beyond. Mom and Dad weren't home and I was trying to play host and policeman at the same time. The music got louder and louder and the alcohol started to flow (none of us were of legal drinking age so this was a bit of an iffy thing).

I had blocked off the upstairs and tried to keep everyone outside and contained to the basement bathroom. But I couldn't keep track of everyone and soon people started to wander upstairs. There were people everywhere and I have to admit that it was a blast. Everyone talked and laughed and really got into

the event. When my Mom arrived home, she (amazingly) kept her cool and immediately went to the neighbour's house to peer quietly into our backyard without being noticed. There was no room for her car in our garage or driveway so she had parked there.

When she realized the true extent of the crowd in our backyard, she approached from the street only to be greeted by one of my female guests, Mary Wolfe, who immediately fell down drunk in front of her after burbling, "Well hello Mrs. Spratt, it's so good to see you . . ." I walked around the corner of the house just as this exchange was underway and did my best to explain that things weren't happening as expected. Mom however, was a good sport and wound up chatting with the students who had congregated in the kitchen. Even twenty years later at our grad reunion in 1999, old students talked about that party and the time they spent talking with my "cool" Mom in that kitchen.

By that time people had been drinking for quite a while. Our household possessions were getting broken downstairs. I worried over the stereo and other possessions getting broken or stolen or cigarettes getting dropped on the floor. There was a lot of garbage inside and outside the house. When my Dad came home, we told people to start making alternative plans for the rest of the evening. By about 6pm the last person had left and the cleanup started in earnest.

Shortly after that, one of our neighbours came over crying because one of the kids from my party had killed their dog after driving over it at high speed

with his motorcycle. It seemed that we had not taken adequate precautions in regards to drinking and driving. It was a bit of a downer that such a great party had an unfortunate incident like that associated with it.

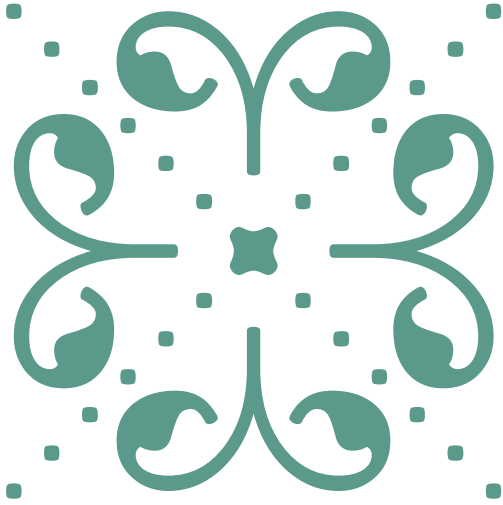
Douglas Vincent, Geoff Yue and Dave Boyd all reappeared on our doorsteps and asked if we had seen Don Chow, who had gone missing at some point during the afternoon. We politely informed them that everyone had gone and they left.

At about 7pm, my brother had just left the dinner table and gone upstairs when he re-appeared and stated that someone was sleeping on the floor of the upstairs bathroom. I checked and it was Don. He had decided to lie down and have a nap after his pee because he had been drinking too much and felt a bit sick. He must have been there on the floor for three or four hours. Doug, Geoff and Dave came back again later and picked him up. They were also good enough to help clean up the backyard while Don lay quietly on one of the patio reclining chairs.

Downstairs was a complete mess. People had been using the freezer as an ashtray for cigarette butts and someone had managed to stuff a potted plant into the ceiling air vent in the bathroom. My speakers had holes in their cones and the couches and carpets were stained with beer and dirt. But we got things sorted out and after a week or so the house was back to normal.

But the summer was in full swing and I had completed my scholarship exams and it was time to plan for my move away from home. My personal belongings were being organized and packed and

taken to the train station for transport to Queen's. And I was sorting through all of my favourite possessions trying to decide what to bring and what to leave behind. Some of the things that I left remained frozen in time. After releasing them from storage some years later, they immediately reminded me of my goodbyes to friends of twelve years or more, many of whom I've not seen since.



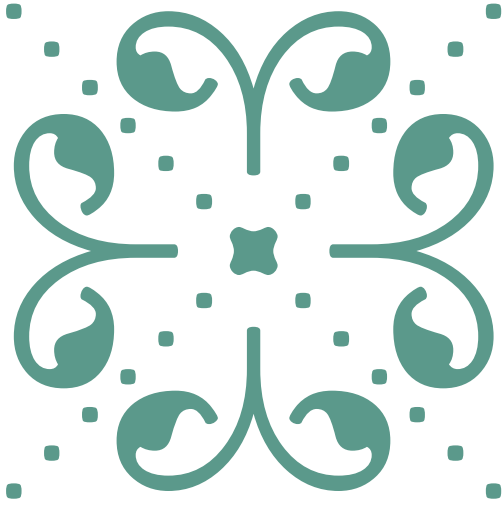
Epilogue

Growing up with my family and living out my youth in Vancouver was a magical and happy time, being surrounded by my friends, my musical experiences, and my many projects. Today I'm as happy and content a person as I've ever been in my life, but at the same time I can state with conviction that the time from 1961 to 1979 was a banner period for me.

As a result of having taken the time to organize my thoughts and write this book, I've been given new perspective on my relationship with my own children, and I'm also able to see more clearly what defined my own youth. It has energized me to try and do more things with my own kids, to let them take more chances, to let them have more independence, and to expose them to as many new learning experiences as possible. It is their life and yet I know I can do more as a parent to bring forth the wonder of what the world has to offer them if I put forth just a little more effort on this front. These are some of the new goals I have set out for myself as I turn forty.

Being young and growing up isn't always easy. There many times that are challenging and tough for any child, in any family. Parental love, understanding and compassion are needed during these periods. It works both ways too—children need to be aware that their parents aren't perfect, and that there are often a number of factors outside of their influence or control that impacts family life from time to time. It must be a give and take environment.

It has been a labour of love to produce this book. I'm now more aware than ever of the wonderful gift of life we have all been given, and of the limitless opportunities we all have before us, no matter what age we are. We are all blessed in countless ways.



Appendix A

Background details on my grade school audiophile obsession

I learned a lot about science and specifically physics through my developing interest (which became an obsession) in audio equipment in grade school. I learned all about logarithmic equations and their practical application to human senses. For instance, it takes a ten times increase in sound energy levels for something to become apparently twice as loud. This also applies to our sense of light, and also to how our nerves in our body function and communicate with our brains. It is an amazingly efficient and ingenious way for our bodies to provide us with the ability to sense an extremely wide range of sensory perception inputs with the limited internal dynamic processing capabilities of the cells in our bodies.

Sound and electronic representations of sound (as well as radio frequencies for that matter) are all a represented by the 'decibel' as a unit of measure (named after a famous Canadian, Alexander Graham Bell—in the inventor of the telephone). 1dB is the minimum difference in sound level that a human can hear, while 10dB represents double the apparent volume or sound level, and 20dB is four times, and so on. There are many different subsets of decibel measurements used for different types of signals: dBa, dBv, dBmv, etc.

Sound has a range of pitch or frequency, and the quality of an audio component is often expressed in terms of its ability to transmit a wide range of sound frequencies without degrading the sound quality. A frequency response curve, from 20 Hertz (the lowest sound a human can hear) to 20,000Hz (or 20KHz, the highest sound a human can hear) is also plotted in a log scale with dB on the Y-axis and frequency on the X-axis (a so called dual log scale graph).

All of this technical mumbo jumbo was critical to know if I wanted to make any sense at all of what an audio system was all about.

Along with dBs and Hz were various types of distortion specifications that I

needed to understand. For amplifiers the distortion was measured as a percentage of the clean signal, such as 0.1% THD (total harmonic distortion) with the amplifier operating at full rated RMS (root mean square) power into a particular impedance load (how much current was being delivered along with the voltage to the speaker coil).

There were also measurements of IM (inter-modulation) distortion as well as things to consider like momentary peak output power. For tape decks, 'signal to noise ratio', 'channel separation' and 'wow and flutter' were important specs with a lot of technology going into processing circuitry like Dolby A, B, C, S and Hx Pro and dbx that attempted to get around the physical limitations of magnetic tape media.

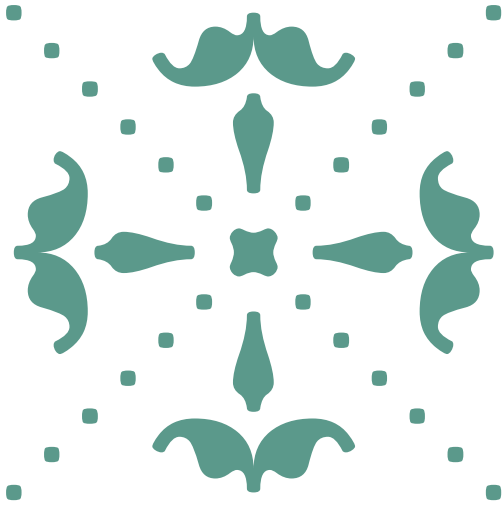
FM tuners had their own unique specifications for 'selectivity' and 'sensitivity' while speakers also had specs for 'sensitivity' and 'off-axis frequency response curves' to consider. It was an endless journey into the minutiae of audio science and I managed to build a complete understanding of what the whole range of specifications really meant to the listener—an audiophile hobby for life was developing the more I learned and discovered.

A really big thrill for me was spotting the manufacturers who would mislead consumers with inaccurate specifications—I felt that I had to know what it all meant to avoid being cheated by unsavoury stereo salesmen who usually knew just barely enough jargon to be dangerous.

Speakers are physical things as they convert electrical signals into sound pressure waves, which in turn interact with the acoustics of the speaker enclosure and subsequently the room, that the speakers are placed in. This is where things got really tricky and subjective for me. You can have a perfect cartridge and turntable (the precursor to the modern CD player), a perfect pre-amp and power-amp and then the speakers would turn it all into mush. A good speaker system at or near rated power would have distortion levels somewhere between ten and one-hundred times higher than any amplifier and a good speaker enclosure and excellent acoustic room would have a frequency response accuracy ten times worse than any amplifier would. So you can see why I became highly interested and involved in understanding and mastering the principals of acoustics and speaker design—it was the weak link in the

audio system chain—and still is today with modern systems.

Very little of the mathematics and physics of this was covered in high school and even some of it wasn't covered during my undergraduate classes in electrical engineering at Queens. I ended up taking some graduate level computer music courses that got into these areas in my forth year, in conjunction with pure music composition classes that managed to cover most of the rest of it. For my whole adult life as an Electrical Engineer I have drawn on the knowledge and experience I gained between grade six and grade twelve in this subject area. It has helped me understand radio frequency communications almost as well as any specialist in wireless technologies, and cable television infrastructure—both areas I have invested my career in and made successful financial investments in.



Appendix B

Extracts from my personal journal from elementary school

August 7, 1971
Letter home from Pioneer Pacific Camp

Hi Everybody,

I just came back from an overnight trip. I think you will want to know so I will tell you. Well it was sort of a treasure hunt—we had to find clues to get to the place. The place was three miles away from Frazer Point and we ended up at Frazer Point so we walked along the beach until we came to a cement wall, a man said it was Adams pool (whatever that is)?

Every person forgot their bathing suits, so they went swimming naked (even me) ha ha. After we had dinner and went to bed. Blinker, one of the counselors, told us some ghost stories then I fell asleep. In the morning I cooked some pancakes. Later I raced Flex to Pioneer Pacific and I defeated him.

After lunch 5 or 6 people barfed (it must have been breakfast). I can't say any about what's happened or I'll go ahead of time. Oh by the way I'm looking forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Love, Derek

P.S. On the way to Adams pool there were five wasp nests (8 people got stung)

September 7, 1973
My Motorized Go-Kart

I love making things. Last summer I made a go-kart, so this summer I made another go-kart, only this time it had an engine (gasoline) in it. It had a throttle and brake and it could go up to fifteen miles per hour. My go-kart can climb a forty-five degree slant (it can't right now because it has a flat tire). It has a two-horse power engine and has a high gear ratio. The engine is mounted on the base of a modified lawnmower and the back wheels are mounted on the base. The frame is made out of wood and the front is steered by foot, and it has a padded seat.

My friend, Drew Atkins made a go-kart that was roughly like mine.

Luckily I live on a dead end street, so I can ride my go-kart around the cul-de-sac, and even more lucky is that my neighbours all think it's great, so they don't complain. Of course I had a top-notch muffler on it.

September 12, 1973
My First Experience As a Caddy

Last weekend I went caddying at Shaughnessy Golf Course during their two-day tournament. It was the first time I had caddied.

The first day was for all the men and it was a trick tournament. The second day was serious golf and you had to have a par of 72 to take part in it. If you got a hole in one you would win a car. They had five cars to give away as prizes. The last day you were put in teams of three. At the end of the game the highest under par was sixteen. You were only allowed three quarters of your handicap. Well anyway, I caddied twice on the first day. The first man paid me four dollars and the second man paid me five dollars. On the second day I caddied once and I got four dollars and fifty cents. In caddying I had to: carry the bag of clubs, wash the golf balls, hold the flag when he was putting, and hand him his clubs.

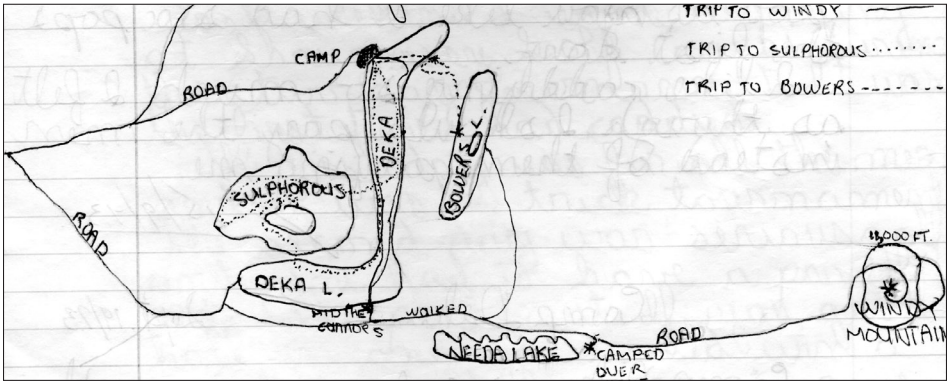
One of the best things about caddying at Shaughnessy was that you could eat as much food as you wanted and drink as much pop as you like. I had six pops the first day.

I like caddying so much I felt as though I should pay the men instead of them paying me.

September 19, 1973
Camp Deka

Camp Deka is a boy's camp in the Northern part of British Columbia. It is on Deka Lake and it is at least 20 miles from civilization. I went for a two-week period in July. The camp is run by Mr. & Mrs. Brown. The nearest town is Lone Butte, 38 miles from camp.

The first day at camp we just got organized. By the way I have eight boys at my cabin group and a counsellor & C.I.T (counsellor in training). The second day our group canoed to a lake (Sulphurous) 20 miles from camp and we stayed over night. Then we canoed back to camp. The second trip the group took was to Windy Mountain. It was a two-night trip and this is how we got there.



A map of our hiking and canoeing trips

Another trip we took was to lake Bowers (for lunch). In all, the group canoed about 50 miles and hiked about 25 miles. When we weren't on a trip there was some camp activities like: Craft Shop, Canoeing courses, kayaking courses, row boating swimming, and hiking. The food is good, and so is the weather. The camp is very large (96 acres) & it is in three different places.

The camp is great but the worst thing about it is the 10-hour bus trip to camp and the fact that there is no electricity. I've been to camp Deka twice and I think it's a great way to spend a summer holiday, if you don't mind mosquitoes and black flies too much.

September 26, 1973
My first trip on a 747

One fact about a Boeing 747 passenger jet is that it lands and takes off by computer and the jets are also used for carrying cargo and the launching of other super-sonic jets. When I flew on one I found that if you had to sit in the middle of the centre row in the jet you were very unfortunate because there are no windows near and you can't get out of your seat because you are surrounded by lots of other people. I flew Air Canada. The jet holds 400 people and there are twelve washrooms. The 747 has two floors. In all there are six cabins: A. Voyageurs Lounge (second floor); B. First Class; C-D-E Economy; E. No Smoking cabin. I was in cabin E. The jet has four very powerful turbine engines that supply the power. It lands and takes of very smoothly and it has a speed of 565 miles per hour while cruising.

Some of the good things about 747s are that you can watch a movie, listen to music, it's quiet, there's good service and it's a non-stop flight. Some bad things are that it takes far too long to board because of all the people, and unloading is bad too because all those suitcases take a long time to be unloaded, and if you don't get a window seat you don't see anything the whole time.

November 2, 1973
Music

I think music is one of the greatest things in the world. I play the French horn and piano. There are great advantages to playing a musical instrument. You can play in groups and you can go to music camps like Courtney Youth Music Camp. I went to CYMC this summer and last summer. Some of the teachers at CYMC are the best in the world like Robert Barrows (French horn) and Ray Still (Oboe).

The hardest thing about playing an instrument is learning to play it. I practice three quarters of an hour on horn and the same on piano. Usually, when the student starts the instrument he is really keen. Then, after a few weeks his (or her) ambition dies down. Why most students quit after a while is because after a while it gets hard and in order to improve at all you have to work very hard. Most kids can't hack it.

Last June I took my grade six piano exam. The worst thing about it is that you work for months and in six minutes its over. For your grade six piano exam you have to prepare three tunes (memory), scales, studies (two). The teacher will give you ear tests and sight-reading. Your mark is out of 100 and everything counts. I had a young Russian teacher named Boyanna Loyich. I got honours but my teacher said she marked too hard. The Royal Conservatory of Music rates like this: 80-100 first class, 70-79 honours, 60-69 pass, below 60 insufficient to pass.

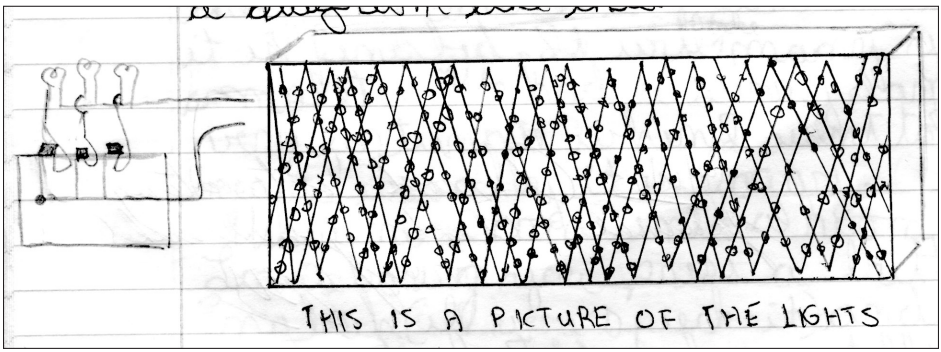
I have four music lessons a week (two theory lessons, a piano lesson and a French horn lesson). I also have Junior Symphony practice on Saturdays. My advice to anyone that wants to play a musical instrument is to be prepared for lots of hard work. It sure is hard on yourself when you're playing a musical instrument and you see your friends playing hockey on the road, but its fun playing with other kids.

November 16, 1973
My Light Organ

October 11 was my birthday. This year I got a light organ kit, clothes and a new record.

A light organ is a series of coloured lights in a box. The box is plugged into a record player or a radio. When the sound waves get inside the light organ, the lights light up according to the different sound waves.

My Dad helped me put the kit together one night. We had to weld the transistors, compasitors and other components to a printed circuit. Then the next day we went to a shop on Robson Street to ask a man that makes light organs if he would give me some information on how to build the rest of it. He told me how large to build the box and how to wire it up. He drew a diagram like this:



I used mini Christmas lights. My light organ is black on the outside and inside, with a sheet of plexi-glass over the lights. It is 4 feet high, 2 feet wide and it has 1 foot in depth. I have red, blue, green and yellow lights in my light organ. The lights are controlled by the kit I put together. Most light organs are about 1½ feet high and ten inches wide. My light organ has about 150 lights in it. The blue lights are most sensitive to the sound, the red lights are second and the green and yellow lights were least sensitive.

Although my light organ isn't quite finished yet, it should be done by Monday. Would you like me to bring it to school?

December 1, 1973
My Dog

My Dog's name is Mitzi. She will be nine years old in February. We spent a long time looking for the right dog. Mitzi is a spayed female miniature schnauzer. One of the main reasons we picked a miniature schnauzer is because they are odourless and don't shed hair.

Before we bought her we shopped around and talked to people and read a few books. Some of the kennels we went to were dirty and unsanitary but the kennel we bought our dog at was clean and the lady had perfect control over the dogs. When we bought her we picked the runt of the litter because she had a nice beard and was the cutest.

We were given special instructions on how to take care of her, take her outside frequently and praise her when she went to the bathroom. Dogs never like to go to the bathroom in their beds, so if you keep them in a box they will have bladder control. Mitzi almost never went to the washroom in our house. We took her to obedience school later on.

Mitzi was always healthy but she took sick suddenly one day last spring. We thought she had died in our house. We took her to two vets but they both said she had been poisoned or she was having kidney failure. The last vet kept her for a week and he phoned back to my Mom and said she should be put to sleep. My Mom said she would take her home even if she would never get better. She couldn't stand and had a high fever. The vet gave Mom some antibiotics and Mom fed her with a syringe for three weeks. They also gave her baby aspirin. She carried Mitzi outside to let her go to the washroom and kept her quiet and warm. Then one day she stood up, started to eat and drink by herself, and from then on she got better. We gave her vitamins too. Mom and Dad went to the library to read about dogs and think she had distemper because she hadn't had her booster shot, but the vets didn't know what was wrong so you can't trust the vet. Mother said a dog will die in a vet hospital if you leave them there, because even if they can get better they might die because they think their family has deserted them and dogs need to be loved a lot. Especially when they're sick.

December 12, 1973
Alexander Graham Bell

Alexander Graham Bell is most famous for his invention of the telephone. He was also famous for important contributions in medicine, aeronautics, marine engineering, genetics, electricity, sound and speech. He was also a teacher.

Bell was born in Scotland in 1847. His mother Elisa Symonds was a portrait painter and an accomplished musician. His father Alexander Melville Bell taught deaf-mutes to speak.

Bell moved to Canada and later to the United States to further his career as a teacher and scientist. Bell was 27 years old when he worked out the principal of transmitting speech electrically, and was 29 when his basic telephone patent was granted in 1876.

I visited the Alexander Graham Bell Museum at Beddeck on Cape Breton Island. Beddeck became his summer home and it was here he did the research on aeronautics.

Bell made many aeroplanes that flew. His first one was the seventh one to fly in the world and it was the first public demonstration in North America. I saw some great things at his museum at Beddeck. I saw: his first Morse code telegraph made in 1875; his 1877 phonograph; the iron lung; the tetrahedral kites and drawings his early ones and other ideas; many photos of early air craft (Bell was interested in flying throughout his life. He conducted a long series of experiments with man-lifting kites to test the lifting power of plane surfaces at slow speeds); the graphophone.

The French government awarded Bell the Volta prize of 50,000 francs for his invention of the telephone. He used the money to help establish the Volta Laboratory for research and work with the deaf.

Bell spent most of his later life at his summer home. He worked at his laboratory or sat at the piano playing old Scottish tunes. He said he disliked the telephone because it interrupted his experiments. And he died near his home in Nova Scotia at Beinn Breagh on Aug 2/22.

December 15, 1973
Overture 1812 by Peter Tchaikovsky

Peter Tchaikovsky was a Russian composer. He usually composed rather sad music but he also wrote some spirited music, as in the Overture 1812. People usually think of an overture as being an introduction to something, but it may also be entirely independent.

When I played my French horn in the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Akiyama conducted us in the 1812 Overture.

In 1880 Tchaikovsky was invited to write an Overture for the opening of a cathedral in Moscow, to celebrate the remembrance of the Russian victory over Napoleon. He did not stick to the exact order of the historical events, but created through his music a general impression of the battle, with prayer, fighting and the joy of victory. Napoleon's army is represented by the theme based on the "Marseilles". This is finally overpowered by the hymnic melody of the prayer with which it opened. At the third theme Tschaikovsky introduced the wedding song "At the gate, the homeland gate" (flute and clarinet). In the final part you hear bells, the hymnic theme of the prayer with the Tzar's Hymn in the bass.

We played it without a chorus, but Tchaikovsky originally planned it with a chorus, large, orchestra, bells and cannon fire. Don Adams (the percussionist from the Vancouver Symphony) used a recording of a cannon at the end of the 1812 Overture at the Sunday performance, but he fired a twelve-gauge shotgun several times at the Monday night performance. He didn't tell any members of the symphony he was going to do it, and we were all shocked. In fact a clock fell off the wall at the back of the stage when he fired the gun (15 times at least), and a lot of the symphony members say he should be fired for not warning the players. Mr. Creech said some of the players were having hearing problems two days later. Oh well, the 1812 Overture was fun anyway.

December 31, 1973
My Christmas

Even though the weather was mild and not much snow fell my Christmas was pretty good.

We had two Christmas trees this year. One of them was a small fir tree and the other one was an Austrian Pine. We put the fir tree in the family room and the large one in the living room so the people that walked by outside could see it. Our whole family decorated it.

Tony and I went to the movie "Jonathan Livingston Seagull." We both think it was a good film and it had excellent photography.

I got lots of gifts this year because I have a lot of relatives. Some of them were: a large model of an airplane, an Olympus 35mm camera, a pair of Adidas jogging shorts, a stand to hold my books up. My aunt gave me the book "People & Places" by Margaret Mead and a very good Quiz Book. (My aunt used to be the principal of a private girls school in New Jersey, U.S.A.) The model I got has two electrical motors that run the landing gear and turn the propeller automatically. I have put more time into my model this Christmas than anything else.

I wrote thank-you letters to everyone that gave me a gift and that always takes a lot of time.

Some of the wires got crossed up on my light organ and it blew up, but I fixed it this Christmas and it works beautifully now. Lots of my friends have been over to see it and even the adults like it.

Tonight is New Years Eve. Last year I stayed up and made a lot of noise at twelve o'clock, but this year mother said we're over tired and can't stay up. Happy New Year anyway!

February 4, 1974
The 1974 Car Show

A little while ago I went to the 1974 Car Show at the P.N.E. Showmart Building. They had almost all the kinds of '74 and some '73 cars in three large buildings. In the first building was a small rock group and in the second building there was a band (Dal Richards) playing modern songs. In the corner of the last building there was another little group. There was a piano player that was fantastic, a bass guitar player and a drummer. I think the last group was the best.

The main difference between last year's cars and this year's cars was that this year's cars have bigger bumpers that were more crash resistant; they have more pollution controls, but the diesel cars haven't got any; seat belts are safer and cars can not be started without them on; some cars have new colours and have different bodies. The only completely new car is the Ford Mustang II.

They also had some racing cars and some antiques cars that were restored by the Craven "A" Foundation.

The three most beautifully restored antique cars were: 1) 1931 Cadillac Rumble Seat Coupe. It was special because it had a sixteen-cylinder engine—the largest engine ever made in North America. 2) 1931 Deusinberg. It was special because it had a supercharged engine and in '31 was on of the fastest cars in the world. 3) 1911 Rolls Royce. There was also a beautiful Corvette Stingray there.

The reason we went to the car show was because when my Dad asked about our new car the man at the Mercedes Benz office gave him five tickets to the car show.

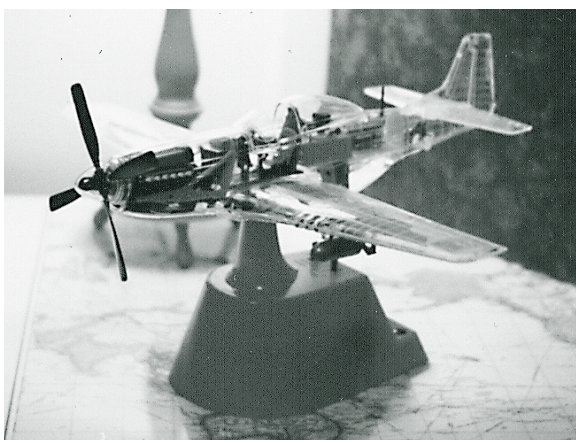
I think car shows are great, because of the bands and it's fun looking at all the cars.

February 8, 1974
My Favourite Model

My favourite model is the one I got for Christmas. It is a U.S.A.F. F-51D Phantom Mustang. The wingspan is 17", and it is 14" long. The outside shell of the model is clear plastic so you can see inside it and it has four different colours for the parts.

There is an electric engine inside the plastic motor that makes the propeller turn. The window over the cockpit moves back and fourth the wheels go up and down at the touch of a motor button and even the small wheel at the back of the plane goes up and down automatically. When the wheels are brought up the wheel covers act like doors and lock the wheels in the plane.

On the stand of the plane there are two leavers. If you pull the lever on the left, the bomb on the left drops. This is the same with the other lever. The model was very hard to build because it has so many working parts controlled from remote places. If you don't do everything exactly like the instructions say, nothing will work. Luckily I built the model correctly so everything works.



The model has a lot of decals on it and some painting but when I took the picture of it I hadn't put any on yet. The reason I like this model more than any other model is because: 1) it is clear plastic and the model has four different colours in it; 2) it has a lot of moving parts; 3) it is sturdy; and 4) because I enjoyed building it.

February 22, 1974
CYMC

Courtney Youth Music Camp is a music school that is on Vancouver Island in the town of Courtney. You board in a high school and you sleep in dormitories. Since this is a Senior Secondary High School they have a large cafeteria with a kitchen. The auditorium is huge and it is equipped with: ropes that hang from the ceiling; bleacher balconies that pull out from the wall on the side of the gym; eight basket ball hoops that come down from the ceiling; and a huge retaining wall that comes from the wall at the touch of a button and cuts the gym in two pieces for small concerts; an electronic score board on each side of the gym; a large stage (almost twice the size as the one Kerrisdale School); cupboards that have equipment for almost any kind of sport; foam mats; a big grand piano; and apparatus bars. Beside and joined onto the gym are a series of study rooms and two washrooms for men and two for women. Both washrooms contain large and modern looking shower rooms. This building is separated from the rest of the school.

This year and last year the directors of the camp was Mr. Creech (my French horn teacher).

Many famous musicians come to the camp to teach and perform in concerts. This year an oboist Ray Still (the best in North America) came with a French horn teacher that was very good and a trombone teacher from the U.S.A.

You can almost get a lesson for any instrument.

The wake up bell goes at 7:15 in the morning and breakfast is from 8:00 to 9:00. Music lessons start at 9:00 am. At 10:25 there is a short break. Lunch is from 12:00 to 1:00. At 1:00 the lessons start up again and they last until 2:30. From 2:30 to 5:00 is recreation time and you can do swimming, gym activities, horseback riding and tennis on the courts etc.

Dinner is at 5:30 to 6:30. At 7:30 there are concerts performed by the students. At 10:00 the kids thirteen and under go to bed. The older kids (14-18) go to bed at 12:00.

There are two symphonies: the junior and the senior orchestras. There is also a wind ensemble, and junior band and senior band.

You can stay at camp for two weeks to five weeks. The first two weeks are for private lessons only. The next two are for anyone and the last week is for senior students. This year it's going to be a little different.

The camp is pretty serious and they don't want to work. Two people were kicked out of the camp for possessing drugs. You won't gain anything at camp if you fool around. A few people went home because they didn't do anything. You are pretty much on your own at C.Y.M.C. and you have to be pretty mature to get anything out of it.

April 5, 1974
My Spring Break

Since I am going to Banff with the youth orchestra of Canada I had to do my homework and work ahead on my schoolwork during my break.

Just after the holiday had started, I went night skiing with Martin Behr on Grouse Mountain. We got there at 6:00 pm. We skied the Blueberry chair lift. We stopped skiing at 10:00pm and got to the bottom of the chair lift at 10:30pm. As soon as we got off the gondola I heard three screams and three male streakers ran by us. Martin and I ran after them and we cornered one of them behind a large garbage can. Just after that my parents picked us up. Seeing the streaker made the evening more than worthwhile.

Another thing I did during the break was practicing with our chamber groups. Mrs. Brown was very helpful. She had music for everyone but Tony so Tony played some of the harp parts. It's beginning to sound pretty good.

Once my Sense and Feeling project was finished I went over to Browns and we did sectional rehearsals together.

We also had several symphony rehearsals during the week and I worked on my model airplane as much as I could.

On Sunday our family went to Whistler Mountain. The skiing was fantastic and I skied on Harmony Bowl, G.S., Dads Run, Franz's, Lower Franz's, Gondola Run, and Whisky Jack to warm up on. The only things that spoil Whistler are that the Round House is far too small and the parking lot is a terrible muddy mess. If you can stand that, it's the best skiing around.

April 30, 1974
Going to the Canadian Festival of Youth Orchestras

The Canadian Festival of Youth Orchestras was when all the youth orchestras across Canada went to Banff, Alberta to the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts buildings. Vancouver's Youth Orchestra was lucky enough to be invited and there was only a fifty-dollar charge per student for two weeks including transportation because it was sponsored by the Canadian Government. It was a bargain.

On the way there:

Everyone in the orchestra was told to be at the C.M.S. (Community Music School) at 8:00am Tuesday morning. Unfortunately the bus was not there until 9:30. This bus was a Grey Hound. There were 35 students in our group.

The first stop we had was in Hope. We stayed there for 15 minutes. Our next stop was in Princeton where we ate our bag lunches. We arrived at Penticton at 4:30. There we were met by our billets. We were taken to their homes where we had dinner. We also had breakfast with them. Then I was taken to a high school at 8:00am where we player our concert. After that was over we said "good-bye" to the billets and went to a restaurant where we had lunch. At 1:30 we got on the same bus and left Penticton. Shortly before Banff we stopped and had some dinner at an A&W restaurant. Our group arrived at the Banff Centre at 11:30pm. After unloading the bus, we went to the office, got our nametags and folders with all the information we needed.

While we were there:

I got the key to my room and unpacked my suitcase. About 12:00pm I looked out my window and saw three deer. There was only one other person sharing my room. F. horn too.

For the next few days we practiced the pieces of music that we were going to play at a concert under guest conductors. Every orchestra had to play a concert one night of the week.

When it was out turn to play, we were conducted by Janos Sandor from Budapest, Hungry. Our concert was a success.

After all the orchestras had finished playing, people from all the orchestras

were chosen for a festival orchestra of 130 musicians. I wasn't chosen. On the last day this orchestra played. Unfortunately, I fell asleep during the concert, so I don't know how good it was.

During the week we had some time off so we could have recreation time. One time I went to the Banff Hot Springs pool. Some of the other times I went downtown to look around.

The teachers were excellent. A famous brass quintet called "Canadian Brass" was on the faculty. They included trombone, French horn, two trumpets, and a tuba. There were also very good teachers for the woodwinds, strings, and percussion. The four guest conductors were Mr. Sandor from Hungry; Victor Feldrill from Toronto; John Carerue from Britain; and John Avison from Vancouver.

After all the orchestras had finished playing we had a party and a dance. One good thing was that the food was great. This is how my times tables went: 7:00-9:00am Breakfast; 9:00-11:30am Rehearsal; 11:30-1:30 Lunch; 2:00-5:00pm Rehearsal; 5:00-7:00pm Dinner; 7:00-8:30pm Rehearsal; 9:00-10:00pm Concert.

On the way home:

On the morning of the 20th we left Banff and started for home. Just before we left we gave our conductor a bottle of Champagne. We stopped in Revelstoke for 30 minutes to have lunch. At about 3:00pm we arrived in Kamloops. After dinner we have a concert. Then we met our billets. After breakfast we left on the bus and arrived in Vancouver at 4:30pm.

Four unfortunate things that happened to me were that I lost my wallet somewhere on the way to Banff, so I was short of spending money, my horn was damaged. I also got a cold and was over tired.

Appendix C

Biography of Philip Farkas

(from the Indiana University Web Site)

Philip Farkas was born on March 5, 1914 to Emil Nelson Farkas and Anna Cassady Farkas. As a child, Farkas' first exposure to music was with a piano in the Farkas home. His parents were not musically inclined, but his mother thought piano lessons were important, as popular thought of the time dictated. Farkas also learned how to play the mouth organ, and became quite good.

At age twelve, Farkas joined the Boy Scouts. The troop needed a bugler, so Farkas volunteered. Farkas had no experience of the instrument prior to this, so he employed the help of a neighbor who was a jazz trumpet player. In a short time Farkas became proficient, and remained a bugler until age fourteen.

At about that time, Farkas started to show signs of asthma, and his parents thought that playing a wind instrument in the school band would help. The bass drum and the tuba were the only instruments available. Farkas selected the tuba. Because the tuba was so heavy, Farkas took the streetcar to get to and from school. He did this until one day the streetcar conductor decided that the tuba was taking up too much space on the streetcar. Farkas asked the conductor what instrument he would be allowed to take on board. The conductor spotted a group of band students on the street, and pointed to a French horn case. Shortly afterwards, Farkas and his father went to downtown Chicago and rented a Schmidt horn for $3 a month. Farkas loved it immediately, and it was at that point Farkas decided he wanted to become a professional horn player. The year was 1927.

Farkas' first horn teacher was Earl Stricker. In 1930, Farkas became a student at Calumet High School, and played in the band and orchestra there, as well as in the All-Chicago High School Orchestra. Also, Farkas began studying privately with Louis Dufrasne, a great horn artist of the time. In addition, Farkas began playing with the Chicago Civic Orchestra.

In 1933, Farkas began his career as first horn player in the newly formed Kansas City Philharmonic, his first professional job. He had not yet finished high school. In 1936, Farkas finished his tenure with that orchestra, and began a period as first horn in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra until 1941. From 1941 to 1945, Farkas played first horn with the Cleveland Orchestra. From 1945 to 1946, he played first horn in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In 1946, Farkas returned to the Cleveland Orchestra. One year later, Farkas returned to play first horn with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and continued in that capacity until 1960.

In 1960 Dean Wilfred Bain of the Indiana University School of Music told Farkas that the School's horn professor had left, and wanted to know if he was interested in the position. Believing that the pressure of playing under Fritz Reiner was not good for his health, Farkas accepted. During his tenure at Indiana University, Farkas gave many clinics and performed as soloist all over the United States. He also founded a publishing company, Wind Music, Inc., shortly after his arrival in Bloomington. In April 1978, Farkas received the honorary degree of Doctor of Music from Eastern Michigan University.

Farkas retired from the School of Music in 1982. The stress of travel and responsibilities at the School of Music had increased dramatically over the years, and had been taking its toll on his health. For the remainder of his life, from 1982 to 1992, Farkas remained active as a performer and clinician.

Farkas died on December 21, 1992.

Appendix D

Multimedia—musical influences from 1961 to 1979

Since such a large part of what was important to me as a youth related to my interests in music, I felt that a multimedia component to this publishing effort would be appropriate. Therefore I have provided these CD selections of my musical influences from 1961 to 1979 in the back sleeve of the cover of this book. Here is a description of the musical selections found on both CDs – sit back in front of a good audio system or put on a set of headphones and turn back the clock to the music which defined my youth:

CD #1
Track 1 - Medley of my parent's records:

Other than my Dad's 78rpm selections of Concert band and Dixieland jazz music, the popular songs of the early 1960s that I remember my parents playing on their original monophonic Philips 'tube' audio system were:

The Beatles 45rpm single "She Loves You" / "Can't Buy Me Love" (1964); and
Lulu 45rpm single "To Sir With love" (1967)

Mom and Dad purchased an Electrohome 'transistor' stereo system in the late 1960s, and they bought a number of new 12-inch LP (long play) 33rpm records including:

Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass
Floyd Cramer
The sound track from the movie "Sound of Music" (1965), and finally
The Beatles - Sergeant Pepper's Heart Club Band (1967)

Tracks 2, 3 & 4 - Medley of my brother's records:

Older siblings help forge a path for younger children to follow on and Douglas certainly took the lead in the music department on my behalf. Here's only a partial list of the great musical groups and albums that Douglas exposed me to:

The Beatles – Abbey Road (1969)
The Beatles - Let it Be (1970)
Chicago - Live at Carnegie Hall (1971)
Chicago – Chicago Transit Authority (1969)
Pink Floyd - Dark Side of the Moon (1973)
Pink Floyd - Wish you were here (1975)

Yes – Fragile (1972)
Rick Wakeman – 6 Wives of Henry VIII (1973)

Frank Zappa – Apostrophe (1974)
ZZ Top – Tres Hombres (1973)
Mahavishnu Orchestra - Visions of the Emerald Beyond (1974)
Peter Frampton – Frampton Comes Alive (1976)
Genesis – Trick of the Tail (1976)

Selections of my own music:

The advent of the LP 33 rpm format encouraged musicians to produce "album concept" recordings – often including songs that ran the length of the whole side of the record which could be as much as 22 minutes long. This was one of the reasons why FM album rock broadcasting took off. For decades AM broadcasting had been formatted around the two to three minute "single" 45rpm recording technology, and people started to become interested in listening to LP songs on the radio – hence the move to stereo FM broadcasts.

Unfortunately, this trend lasted only for about ten years (the 1970s decade) as current broadcast industry trends are now firmly back into singles of three to five minute lengths (on average), even though the CD format allows for up to 74 minutes of total music playing time. In my high school years I got into the habit of sitting down and listening to a whole album from end to end. There wasn't much use listening only to one or two songs as you would miss the point of the album concept – the record was produced to make an artistic statement as a whole.

Here's a small sampling of the artists and albums that my friends and I discovered and listened to most often:

Track 5 – Piano / Keyboards:

Elton John – Honky Chateau (1972)
Elton John – Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy (1975)
Billy Joel – Piano Man (1973)
Supertramp – Crime of the Century (1974)
Gino Vannelli - Storm at Sunup (1975)
Gary Wright – Dream Weaver (1975)

CD #2
Tracks 1, 2 & 3 – French Horn / Classical:

Mozart Horn Concerto No. 3
Mahler Symphony No. 3
Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5

Track 4 - Jazz:

George Benson – Breezin (1976)
Chuck Mangione – Feels So Good (1977)
Joan Armatrading – Show Some Emotion (1977)
Billy Cobham – Crosswinds (1974)
Return to Forever – Romantic Warrior (1976)

Track 5 – New Age / Alternative:

Jean-Michel Jarre – Oxygene (1977)
Premiata Formeria Marconi – Photos of Ghosts (1973)
Frank Zappa – Studio Tan (1978)
Devo – Q: Are We Not Men (1978)
The Cars – The Cars (1978)

Track 6 – Soft Rock:

Steely Dan – Aja (1977)
The Little River Band – Help is on its Way (1976)
Loggins & Messina – On Stage (1974)

Track 7 – Hard Rock:

Boston – Boston (1976)
Black Sabbath – Sabotage (1975)
Van Halen – Van Halen (1978)
AC/DC Highway to Hell (1979)

Notes

Notes