

ALHS ARCHIVE SPEECH

Rosemarie Parent, May 2018, Nakusp

We have the Archives today because of my late husband, Milton Parent. To tell his story and how this came about has to start with his parents and grandparents who were early pioneers. They all were do-ers and added much to our small town of Nakusp with their work.

In 1892, the town of Nakusp came into being with men clearing the land, while others were erecting the hotels that were built that year. Only the Leland is still standing.

In 1893, the Genelle brothers, who came to Nakusp from the east, built the first mill. They needed a boom-man and sent word to Grampa - Joe Parent - who worked on the large booms on the Mirimachi in New Brunswick. He and his wife Alice moved here in 1896. They were ardent Catholics and visiting priests held masses in their home. Many of the early residents were Catholic and a fund was set up to build a church. Gramma - Alice - spent many hours gathering funds for the church and when it was built in 1904, Gramma was asked to name the church which she did – Our Lady of Lourdes.

They had 7 Children, 6 girls and one boy Joe Parent Jr. Dad was an excellent student and because you could only go to grade 8 in Nakusp, he went to Revelstoke to stay with an older married sister to go to school there for two more years. He was top of the class but when he returned to Nakusp, he decided he didn't want to be cooped up in an office all day and instead became a logger. In those days you had to stay in camp usually for a month at a time. When home along with chores to be done, he also was the treasurer of the Recreation Association from 1923. They built a grandstand, concession stands, outdoor washrooms and a band stand for Nakusp's Brass Band. They kept the buildings in good order and also worked on the ball field for the games which were the highlight of the July 1st celebrations – usually between Nakusp and Burton. When Nakusp was incorporated in 1964, Dad became the first Mayor.

Milton's grandparents on his mother's side were the Leveques. Grampa Eugene and Gramma Evalina and their family of four children came to Revelstoke in 1904 from Winnipeg where both their families had moved from various places. In Revelstoke, Grampa became very ill and almost died of a burst appendix; the doctors thought he didn't have a chance. Grampa – Gene - was convinced that if he went to sleep he would never wake up so asked his wife to hold his hand and let him sleep for 20 minutes, then 30, until he could sleep through the night. When he was released from hospital, he was not able to work as a barber but managed to go door to door in Revelstoke selling books. In 1908, a job came up at the mill in Comaplix for a trimmer, which he successfully applied for. They moved there and as his health improved, he was soon cutting hair at night as well. In 1911 word came that a Barber shop and billiard hall was for sale in Nakusp. Grampa and Gramma fell in love with the town and they decided to buy the business. This building is opposite the Leland Hotel- now the Happy Buddha. The family lived in a rental house until they could build a home.

Grampa bought 8 lots of land between 3rd St and 4th St on 3rd Ave. and started building on the lot closest to town. When Grampa built his house, he had the carpenters put all rooms including the bedrooms, on the bottom floor. On the full top floor, he prepared for his museum. Word went

round town and items started to come in such as stuffed animals and birds, guns, native utensils and so on. Children brought him bugs, snakes and other items for which he gave them a few pennies for candy. The Siamese pig which you saw at the museum last night was given to him by the local doctor who had been called by Sam Henry to come remove the pig. He was sure that evil spirits had come to his farm. Grampa went to the funeral parlour to obtain some formaldehyde to replace the rye whiskey the doctor had used to preserve the pig. There was a write up in the Arrow Lakes News on the 25th of April 1930 praising Grampa's museum which had been open for many years and was still open until he passed away in 1946.

Grampa Gene and Gramma Evalina (Vina) were musical – Gramma played the piano and Grampa the cornet. The children all received a few lessons to become musicians as well. Gene played the cornet, Eric the drums, Mom (Della) the piano and Alice the violin. They always had to perform for guests and became quite accomplished musicians. Gene was about 14 when he started writing music and plays and established the KKK Klub (Kill Kare Klub) He made his siblings and any friends he could talk into it perform the plays for the public. These plays were written up on his small printer which he used all his life.

Mom had 6 months of piano lessons and taught herself to play very well for any occasion and especially for sing-songs around the piano. She gave piano lessons to almost all the young people in Nakusp. At their home many teas, anniversary parties and even one wedding was held there. She was an active member in many organizations over the years. She was a life member of the Pythian Sisters and became the Grand Chief in 1956 and travelled to all the other groups in the province. This was quite an accomplishment for someone from such a small town.

Mom and Dad married in 1926 and soon started their family of 4. Leonard the oldest was an excellent student. He stayed with family in Kimberley to obtain his Grade 13 which gave him his first year of University at UBC where he achieved his Bachelor's degree in Engineering Physics. He moved to the east where he obtained his Master's degree in Engineering Physics with a minor in Meteorology. Milton thought his brother was a genius and was so disappointed that he wasn't working in a lab producing cures!

Four years later, Doreen was born. She also was an excellent student and when she graduated, she could have gone to university but when she went to Vancouver she took business courses instead. When she returned to Nakusp she worked for several companies in town. The last was BC Hydro and she was there when Hydro was buying up and clearing property to ready the lakes into a reservoir. One day, some young Hydro workers who had been sent to Nakusp to help with this work said to Doreen "Don't you have a museum here? There are so many items being hauled away, destroyed or burned that belong in a museum" Doreen went to the next Kinette meeting and suggested that they start a museum. They approached the Village who gave them the use of the basement of the Centennial Building and opened in 1968!

Three years later, Milton was born. I will come back to Milton after I talk about the youngest in the family Judy.

Judy was born 9 years after Milton. She could never say Milton so called him Bin and that nickname stuck. She became a nun in a Dominican Order in Wisconsin and then took a nursing

degree and worked in many hospitals in the area. She also has helped family members for several years when needed so that they could stay in their homes instead of going into facilities.

Back to Milton, Mom realized that he was musical because he was always singing on key so she put him into his first Talent Show at 5 years of age singing a war time favorite, 'Kiss Me Good Night Sargent Major.' She taught him to read music and to play the piano. When his brother Len joined the bugle band and brought home a bugle, Milton picked it up and taught himself how to play. He had to wait until he was 10 years old to become eligible to join. When Milton went to school, he was put into Grade 2 for reading because he could already read but he was just an average student, never failed anything but his highest marks were in Music!

When Milton was 14, a new priest came to town. He found out that the priest had a tape recorder and went to see him and asked him how it worked. He was allowed to take it home and try it out.

When he was 15, he and one of his school friends, Tom Fulkco, got work at the Big Bend Lumber Mill on the green-chain. He made enough money to buy a trumpet and then stepped up to play in the Brass Band with the seniors. About this same time, he started to come to our house to see my mother! My parents were also musical. Dad played an incredible banjo and Mom could play the piano and the accordion and knew all about the chord system. He needed to know this so he could write music for a dance band which he led for several years. He was only about 16 and the others were much older and in most cases adults.

When Milton graduated in 1952, he went to Vancouver to attend university to study music. He boarded with his brother Len and family and Len leased a piano for him. He was convinced that Milton was a genius in music! For the first time, he heard a concerto which Len had on a record and Milton sat down and wrote one. Unfortunately, it was written in 5 sharps and no one could play it! Years later he put it into a program on the computer and it really is a very fine tune. However, going to university to learn music just wasn't in the cards for Milton. He only wanted to take music courses but you could not just take the courses you wanted to like you can now. He was not interested in a degree; he just wanted to learn more about music. So after a few months he dropped out and took individual theory lessons. By this time, I had moved to the coast so we could be together and we got married and moved into a little apartment. While there we bought Milton's first reel to reel tape recorder. For 15 years he used this for his music and dance bands that he played with.

He was always interested in the history of our area and his Mom always talked history with him, when he was young for example travelling on the Minto, she would point out where Comaplix had been, where she had lived and gone to school for a few years, The story of the fire intrigued him. A very good friend, Bessie Vaughan, who had lived in Nakusp in her early years, had moved to the coast to work. People from Nakusp always went to Bessie's to visit, even those who had moved to other towns. Bessie always called Milton and told him they were coming so he could visit with them. He started bringing his tape recorder to her house and this started when he was about 37. When he saw their photos and heard them explain about the occasion of the photo, the date, the names of the people, he asked our son Milt who was taking photography at school to ask his teacher how to build a dark room. There is an advantage of being under 5'2" because he built the room under the stairs. When he interviewed people he set up a small easel

on the table with a heavy piece of glass to hold the picture in place. After he took the photo he wrote up in a large book all the info that was to be included with the photo. He took over 10,000 photos and taped 500 hours of interviews.

The piece de resistance came though when our neighbor told us of a friend who had an aunt who had lived at Comaplix when the mill and town burned to the ground! We made a date to interview the aunt and took Mom with us because they had attended school days there together. Mom also had photos that her Dad had taken of the mill, town and school days. They had a great reunion and then she told us the story of the fires.

In 1914, they were awakened one night with men shouting to get out of their houses because the mill was on fire. However, the men used hoses and carried buckets of water to put out the fire! A year later in 1915, again they were awakened to men shouting to get out of their houses because the mill was on fire. This time, she ran to the window and looked out and counted 7 fires burning at the mill and this time, when the men went to get the hoses, they had been cut. The SS Revelstoke was docked at the wharf and it also burned. Why you may ask did they do this? It was possibly because the company who owned the mill was in England and the money being made at the mill could not be sent to them because of the war. They decided to burn the mill for the insurance. They did receive some money from each of the fires, but all knew it was arson.

In 1984, we moved back to Nakusp after 30 years away. We had kept in touch with family and friends over the years and had a subscription to the Arrow Lakes News so we were up to date with what was happening here. Milton had read that a group was going to start a historical society and he decided to join. At the first meeting, he was made the President and with persuasion from Barb MacPherson who was secretary/treasurer, she convinced me to join to help them out. In December of that year we registered as the Arrow Lakes Historical Society.

First we had to get the museum up and running again. The Kinsmen were so busy with big projects such as building the arena/auditorium – not once but twice after the first burned to the ground. Barb suggested that we write a cook book and we approached Denis Stanley, editor of the Arrow Lakes News, to print the book for us which sold well. Over the next few years, several other small books were printed and with this money we spent about \$10,000 to completely update the museum; we repaired showcases and put them on wheels to make them easier to move and so they didn't break again. With Harry Mayson and Bob Swigart's help we made the big showcases using wood and windows from Milton's uncle's house, with permission from his cousin. The town kids kept breaking in and Milton's relatives didn't come back often enough to rescue it.

One of the funny things that happened!! When we first started work in the museum, Milton realized that the pig was missing. He thought that Bill Robison probably had it at the school to show it to the kids in science class. This is where it was and he brought it home. The formaldehyde had deteriorated badly and Milton asked me if I would clean the pig!! He would go to the undertaker and get new formaldehyde and he would clean the jar. I of course agreed to help out. I cleaned the pig which was in great shape; even the little eyelashes were perfect. I dropped the pig into the cleaned jar and Milton poured in the new formaldehyde and put the lid on. We watched in horror as the liquid settled, so did about 2 inches of a white salt at the bottom

which covered the pig's feet. Milton said that while I was at work the next day, he would siphon off the salt from the remaining formaldehyde, and we could redo the process. When he took off the lid, we almost passed out from the smell. The old formaldehyde had almost no odor and the new was not too bad, but after all night in the new formaldehyde the process had started to work!

During the fall when the museum was closed, we met at our house around a large table in the basement where we worked on copies of the Arrow Lakes News. We borrowed the papers from Denis Stanley, the editor, and copied pertinent portions which we then dated and cut out and pasted into the proper categories. This system works incredibly well. For example, one day a lady came in and said "I don't suppose you know my parents and grandparents, the Parkinsons?" I said "yes we do have quite a bit of info on the family and Milton wrote about them in our book Port of Nakusp" She burst into tears and when she had her emotions in check, bought a book and copied some other info that we had. She in turn sent us info that helped us with that family's information. We quite often receive more info after people come in to see what we have. It becomes a two way street. The Arrow Lakes News is not on line and we only have a few of the papers. Milton wanted one day to write books using his interviews and photos but needed another source to confirm the information. There was never any room for an archive at the museum and the photos and interviews belonged to Milton not the Society; however his photos and interviews were used daily. Denis often wanted information and photos to go with his stories in the newspapers. We gave them to him in place of free ads all these years. We do the same with the new owners.

In 1988, we were successful in obtaining a grant from New Horizons to write our first book. We did not have a computer at that time and neither did Denis Stanley at the newspaper office. He taught Milton how to arrange items on the pages. Barb and I typed the text and Milton added the photos. Barb and Milton wrote half of the text each. Linda McGinnis, Denis' employee, entered the text into a compugraphic machine which she could manipulate the text to fit the pages along with the photos. It was a tremendous amount of work!

We took the book pages to Wayside Press in Vernon and we were astonished with how well it turned out! We had to have people pre-pay to help pay the publishing costs and had bubblepacks all addressed and ready to go; it was sent out by mid November of 1989. I got a phone call from Mary Daem, who had helped write the little book on Renata. She told me to get the book in for an award. I asked her what award? She went on to explain about the BC Historical Federation and gave me the names and addresses of the 3 judges to send them to. Because it was so late in the year, it had to be done immediately. Imagine our surprise when we received a letter from Naomi Miller telling us we had received an award for our book! We were to come to Grand Forks the next year at the yearly conference to receive the award. The biggest surprise also was when Naomi put on a PS at the bottom of the page that said, "My husband Peter had lived in Nakusp and had gone to UBC with Milton's brother Len!" Of course we couldn't wait to meet them and have been members of the Federation ever since. 1990

In 1998, we decided that the museum and archives should separate because we had different goals. In 1999 BC Hydro decided to close all small Customer Service offices in the province which included the Nakusp office. I was the last one working there and the manager decided that he would move the line crew into the office space and then rent out where the crew had been in

the add-on of an old motel from down the lake. I said ‘Please rent it to us for the Archives so we can move downtown.’ He said he would be happy to and thought the lease would be \$800 per year! I said we can’t afford that! So he said how about \$400? I said I’ll take it. Then I thought how can we afford computers, telephone, internet, insurance. In a panic, I called Milton’s brother Len who was treasurer for several non profits over the years, he suggested I write to BC Gaming. They are the only grant people who will pay for operating costs but you must be open year round which we are 2 days a week. In 2000 we received our first BC Gaming grant and have been receiving money every year. Without it we would have to close

We worked at the BC Hydro rental for almost 15 years. During that time, Milton wrote 6 more books. He won the Lieutenant Governor’s award for Historical Writing for his book Circle of Silver in 2001 of which he was very proud as were all of our members.

Our office was getting very crowded and one night in 2009, Milton told me that he thought we should ask the Village if we could build an addition onto the back of the Centennial Building behind the Museum and Library! My answer was, “Are you crazy? Do you have any idea how much that would cost?” However, I mulled it over for a few days and realized that we needed more space and we should find out if this could be possible. The Village agreed to the plan and then we decided to ask Lynda Lafleur at Columbia Basin Trust for advice. She thought the addition was a wonderful idea and that she would ask the Board members for their opinion. We got a phone call to say that we were to receive a \$100,000 Development Grant from them! So we started a Raise the Roof campaign and wrote for other grants – we received over the next few years 3 \$30,000 grants from the CBT Initiatives grants that are available every year. The Library and the Museum also received a \$30,000 CBT grant each toward the addition which would benefit them as well.

We finally had enough money to start building and were almost half way done when Milton was not feeling well. One morning I took him to the hospital where a blood test confirmed he was having a heart attack. The doctor called Kelowna to make arrangements with a heart specialist and a helicopter came to take him there. Unfortunately while on the flight over Milton had a severe stroke. He passed away a day later with me and our 4 children and 9 grandchildren at his side. After making arrangements for a service and so on, I had to try to figure out what to do to keep the archives going and get the building completed.

I decided that Earl Frerichs and Ken Williams who were the Building Committee and very dedicated, would make sure the building would get finished; we also had almost enough money to complete it. I also realized that we had new members working at the archives who were very competent and knowledgeable and they couldn’t wait to have more space to work in at the new building. But...what was I going to do about the photos? Milton had not shown anyone how to do this work and I was completely stumped.

Suddenly I remembered when we first moved back to Nakusp in 1984, I worked part time at BC Hydro but sometimes worked an afternoon shift at the hospital – I am an LPN. One afternoon I worked with Debbie Curle and at our break she said “I don’t know what to do about Kyle. All he does is sit around and read!” I said “Surely that is a good thing?” She said “He is 3 years old!” He had been reading for a year, no one had taught him, he just figured it out himself. I thought he

has probably obtained a Masters degree in something and is working in a big city at a big company... but being desperate I called his house. Kyle was at home and agreed to come and see if he could work Milton's system. It turned out that he had been visiting Milton to obtain history info for his radio show!

Kyle decided that he could do it but it had to be done his way because Milton's was too complicated and it needed to be able to fit together. He has set up a marvelous system and can easily bring up whatever is needed in seconds!

One day Kyle came flying out of his room to say he had found Milton's laptop and on it was a slide show called Our Coloured Past that Milton had been making! Kyle said he could put many more photos onto it and we could put on slide shows and have a donation jar. We obtained a grant to pay Kyle's wages for the extra work of making up several more slide shows. When people asked if they could get copies, I was lucky to find another grant to pay him to make up DVDs. I had been worrying about Milton's taped interviews because I knew that tapes deteriorate. Kyle suggested a machine to do the work for which we obtained another grant for his wages and when done, he suggested that we put them on our website. People might like to hear their parents and grandparents who were long deceased.

Marilyn found a Federal grant Canada150 and we decided that we could put some of our photos on line with this grant and asked Kyle how we could do this. He said he had a friend, Stefan Klopp, who could help us so we applied and got the funding. Stefan grew up in Fauquier and is our official photographer this weekend. We now have over 15,000 photos on line! Stefan also set up a PayPal system for us which works well!

With Kyle's help, he has upgraded our little archives to a much better place because of his technical skills. He is so patient with us as we attempt to learn how to do some of the things that we need to do to keep our archives updated.

That is the story of how the archives was started and where we are now! Milton would be very proud of our work and that his work is being saved and used for the future. Thanks!