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Who and what was here when you arrived?

Well when I first came into Hazelton, the first people I met were Polly and Dick Sargent, Isabelle and Harry Webster. As far as what there was down town; there was the up-to-date store, the Shanghi, the B.C., Triangle motors, Hudson Bay, Lee Chong's not too much else. The people that I got to know right away, were probably the people that I worked with. That is the teaching staff, at the amalgamated school. When I first got into town I came in on a Saturday. I spent all day Sunday out at the Kispiox Rodeo. I met probably everybody in the area out there. But, I'll be darned if I can remember all their names.

What year did you come?

September, 1960.

Why did you come to Hazelton?

I applied for training as an Industrial Arts teacher, and was told that there was no openings in the training centre. So I was out working in the logging camp on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Then I received a phone call from the principal of the Amalgamated school asking if I would go to Vancouver for an interview. I was hired because of my experience, right then. I hadn't had any training, and I hadn't had any teaching experience, but they thought I could handle the job.

Who was the principal then?

Ray Zackarias was the principal, and also who I had the interview with.

Can you tell me some of the changes in Hazelton since you've been here?

I think the biggest change was when we got paved roads. Because previous to that, all the roads were gravel, mud, and in the summer time; Dust. That, and the enlargement of the area, the number of houses. How the area has grown in terms of people living here, and services and facilities. I really think that we're one of the more fortunate little towns, as far as services that we have, the people we have to live with.

What was the economic base when you came?

Mostly logging. It has always been. A large number of people went to the coast for fishing. But it was mostly logging with the Hazelton Sawmill.

Was it the only sawmill that was here at that time?

There were a lot of those small outfits. But no other large ones.

Do you know who owned the small ones?

Oh let's see. Neil Sterrit had a logging camp, but I don't think he had a sawmill. ~~Eric~~ Simpson had a sawmill right back here. Off-hand I can't remember any more. There were others.

How were the winters?

Cold and Dry. I think we didn't seem to get as much snowfall as we do now. The snow was lot more powdery than it is now. And I think cooler, the weather was cooler.

Where did you live when you first came?

I spent the first year boarding with Harry and Isabelle Webster. Then I went away for a years training. It was during that period that Anne and I got married. We came back and lived in a teacherage downtown, on Teacherage Row.

What street were the teacherages on?

River road. When I got here. ~~The~~ teacherages used to be behind the high school. Where the cafeteria area is now.

How many teachers stayed there?

I really don't know.

What activities took place in the community hall?

There was a community hall down in old town that is still there. That's where the theater is now. But most of the activities took place in the school gym. There was badminton, basketball, volleyball.

Open to anybody?

Evenings, yes.

What kind of education did you receive?

The first three or four years I went to an Indian Residential on Cooper Island. Then I transfered from there to a public day school in Balger and went to grade seven. I finished high school in Vancouver. My teacher training was at U.B.C.

What effects did the churches have in the community?

I think they were a very uniting influence on the people, and particularly in the villages.

Were a lot of the activities "Church Organized?"

Not necessarily, no. The community did most of its own organizing. There was a lot of organizing through the church, but on about the the same basis as it is now.

What kind of health services were available?

The hospital was there. Not the new one, the old one. The one with the elevator. The services were really good. I don't remember how many doctors there were, but the services were good.

Do you remember the doctors names?

The only one I really remember is Dr. Whiting. He was our family doctor.

How big was the school in terms of students?

When I came in 1960, it was then called Hazelton Amalgamated Elementary and Senior Secondary. There were 314 students. 209 were elementary and 105 were senior secondary.

What can you tell us about Sargent's store? What sort of things did they sell?

It was a general store. It had everything. Groceries, hardware, clothes. Pretty well anything you needed they had. A good general store.

How were the prices?

Comparing them with what I had experienced before. I thought their prices were fairly reasonable considering the distance they had to be shipped.

Was the old store where the bank is, or the new store?

The new store where it is now. I never saw the old building.

What about the Myros-Smith building? Do you know anything about that?

It was there. It was the store and the post office. But apart from that, I don't know. I can't remember.

How about the R.C.M.P.?

They were where the craft centre is right now. Pretty well it's the same building. That's still standing.

Can you tell us anything about the railroad? About changes in the railroad?

A lot more traffic, that's about it.

What kinds of entertainment was available?

Well there were shows at the community hall. There was no theater at that time. There used to be the odd show at the high school, but most of them were at the hall.

How about sports? A baseball team?

There were local baseball teams. It was pretty popular. I was mostly involved with the sports at the school. There was hockey. There was an outdoor hockey rink in all the little towns.

Did you have a T.V. when you first got here?

No, those didn't come in for quite a while. It was great not to have them. We used to do a lot more family things, a lot more community things. When T.V came in, then a lot of that thing died down.

How long ago did T.V. come in?

I wouldn't even hazard a guess.

How much was your salary when you started here?

I was making \$4400.00 a year. That was before deductions.

What do you think was the overall effect when the public school and the Indian school was amalgamated?

It was amalgamated before I got here. The things that I really noticed and appreciated was how the two communities got along so well together. Coming from down south, this type of thing didn't happen. I could go into the stores here, and there were native people working. This was very uncommon down south. I think it had to do with the fact that the two groups being educated and raised together. I think it was fantastic.

Is it true that it was the first amalgamated school in Canada? Or is it just B.C.?

I'm not sure. I think it was just B.C. If not the first in Canada, it was one of the first.

Can you say roughly how many people were here when you came? Around the area.

No. I have no idea.

What year was John Field built?

1965, I think.

Did you start teaching there immediately after it was built?

No, I was at the high school until 1975.

Was there one facet of the past that you find really interesting about Hazelton?

I think the thing that impressed me the most was that it was unique in the way that the community life was because of the influence of the native and white communities reacting together, which I have al-

ways found as being very good. The two communities seemed to get along very well.

How was the crime rate dealt with? How did they deal with crime?

The R.C.M.P pretty well took care of everything. I think that most of the crime in this area has been very minor.

Can you think of any trouble that you got into that you now find humorous?

As a teacher, yes. I wasn't what you call the ideal student when I went to school. I did a lot of things that I see kids doing today, and I find it quite humorous. We thought we putting something over on the teacher, and the kids now think they're putting something over on us.

What was your first impression of Hazelton?

When I drove down into Old Town and turned the corner into town, I said to myself "My God, What am I doing here?" I had come up here one year. 25 years have gone by and I'm still here.

What made you stay?

I like the community, and I liked my job.

When you came, what kind of housing was available? Were there lots of houses available?

No there wasn't. That's why the school board had provided teacher-ridges for the teachers coming in. Because houses were so hard to get. A lot of teachers were boarding with people. This situation has improved to the point that there are no more teacher-ridges.

When did you move up here? (New Town)

1972-73, something like that. When I first got here, this was all bush, this has all developed since I've been here.

Was tourism very big when you got here?

No, as matter of fact, anybody who was crazy enough to drive into this country was really stretching his luck. When I first came here. It took me twelve hours to drive from Prince George. The road was so bad that I thought I had lost the highway at times, because I had to wait for cows to get off the road and it was muddy.

What kind of car did you have?

I had a little red Frontenac.

What kind of car is that?

It was a small, chevy, I think.

Was unemployment a problem here when you came?

No, not at that time. There was a lot of work around.

Did you have any vagrants?

No, not that I can remember.

Where did all the kids hang out? Like they hang around downtown now?

Well there wasn't all that much of what you call "hanging around." There were activities at the school. There were community activities such as skating and softball. I don't recall places that they hung out like they do now.

Did most of the kids go to school or did they start young and quit later?

The dropout rate was fairly high at the high school around grade 10 there was a high dropout rate.

What were their reasons for dropping out? To go to work?

Yes, in a lot of cases, to go to work.

Did you ever go fishing down on the coast?

Not since I came up here. Before I became a teacher, I was a professional fisherman. Off and on for a period of 12-15 years. That, and logging was what I did. When I got out of school I pretty well went into logging. I was out of school from the time I was 20 until I went into teaching when I was 34.

Was there sewer in Hazelton when you got here?

No there wasn't. I can recall when they put in the sewer system. Quite a while after I got here. It was after we bought our place downtown that they decided to put the sewer system.

Did you travel by train anywhere when you lived up here?

No, I didn't. If I was going anywhere I drove.

How long would it have taken you to get to Smithers?

Oh probably an hour. The road between here and Smithers wasn't that bad. Mud Creek was probably the worst place.

Has this place always been called Hazelton?

As far as I know.

Why do you think they named it Hazelton?

Someone told me it was because of the Hazel nuts.

Were you ever a patient in the old hospital?

Yes. I was in the old Hospital a couple of times.

Did you like it?

Yes. Well the facilities there were probably a little bit old, but they were good. The staff at the hospital was very nice.

How was the food?

I spent 2 and a half years in the hospital. In St. Pauls, In Vancouver. I had my legs crushed. Comparing the food, I would say that the food here was as good or better than the food at St. Pauls.

How much was your room at that time? In the hospital for a day?

When I was in Hazelton? I don't know, because I was under a medical plan, and I didn't see the bills at all.

What did you think when you first went across the Hagwilget bridge?

It was high. I think that was my first experience driving across a suspension bridge of that type. I had of course been across the one in Vancouver. I was impressed with the height, and the fact that at that time it was just planked. I think on my first time driving across once I got started it was okay

What do you like most about Hazelton?

The quietness, the friendliness, and the fact that you have lots of room. Also, there's so many things to do. If you like the outdoors you can go hiking, camping, fishing, snowmobiling, skiing, swimming. There's a big variety.

At one point people thought that Hazelton would eventually be as big as Chicago is now. Do you think that it has potential now to become that large?

Not much bigger. No, I think we will always be more or less a small town. I don't think our resources are big enough. Certainly there's quite a bit of logging, but you can almost see that coming to an end.

What do you think people will do when the logging quits? Do you think everybody will move away?

I don't think so. I think we'll always find something to do.

Were there any dress codes in schools when you came here?

No, nothing that we were too concerned with. I think we have more or less gone with fashion. Vogue. There's been nothing that I have seen too outlandish.

Did they have a volunteer fire department when you came?

No.

What did they do in case of a fire?

Turn the garden hose on, keep your fingers crossed and hope that you got a lot of help from the neighbours. That's usually what happened.

Were many houses lost because of that?

Not particularly. I don't think so.

How about the incorporation of Hazelton?

I didn't follow what was going on too much. So really, I don't know.

Can you tell us anything about the mines?

No they were pretty well folded when I got here.

How about the Marshall Brothers?

Yes, they were going strong, as a matter of fact, they were quite a busy enterprise at that time.

How about the Kispiox Valley? Were there a lot of people living up there?

Not an awful lot. The old timers, the older group who had plans pretty well established. It really hadn't started to grow the extent that it is now.

Can you name a few people?

Yes. There were the Campbells and the Loves, to name a few.

How about an assayers office? Was there one downtown?

I don't remember. That was before I moved here.

What about the Bay?

Not too much. It was downtown.

Was it as big as it is now?

Pretty well.

And the same person ran it?

Hancroft was running it when I came.

Was the Bank down in old town?

Yes it was. Under the Inlander Hotel.

How often did salesman come to these parts?

None that I recall