

Bill Blackstock

Bill Blackstock resident of Hazelton. I was born here.

What type of housing was available?

Well the house that I lived was across from the police station the old police station you know. It was a house. Most of the people had houses generally. They weren't exactly as they are now, but they were houses. No log houses or anything like that that I remember.

What was the cost of renting a house, do you know?

Five dollars a month or something like that. I don't remember anybody having to rent at that time because most of the people lived here you know. There was no people moving in or out or anything like that. Any people that moved in were here to stay you know. They either bought a piece of land or just moved in to a piece of land. Not that I know of anyway.

Were there a lot of people?

There were people coming and going all the time you know. About what it's like now, that I remember of anyway. There was never very many moving in at any time or anything like that I remember of. It was pretty well a stable community. There was no need for tourist accommodations. Had one little hotel.

Has Hazelton grown much?

Well not really, no. There's no place for it to grow. I mean it has grown some. Especially on the lower part. The original buildings have all been done away with you know. Age I guess, torn down, rebuilt again, replaced. I would say it has grown a lot. The reserve has grown. You know the people living up there. In the white community most of them moved away. You know, after finishing school or soon afterwards anyway. Like the marshalls. Their children have moved away. Alice is the only one that's still here. Phil and Toby, they've all moved out you see. Same with our family. I'm about the only one that's still here. David moved away. Delvin he's in Prince George. My sister she's down in the States. Actually there was never much here to attract.

How long have you been here?

I was born here. But I was away for a number of years. I was in the army for a number of years. When I came back, I couldn't find any work. You know anything that I could do anything I wanted to do. I moved out. I was away for fifteen years. I was a miner. I followed the mining trade pretty well. No I don't know. I didn't find anything I wanted here. I moved out, found work elsewhere. That was about the size of it. After I finished work I decided I better move home I like it up here. At that time anyway right after coming out of the army, coming back here. There was just no work period. Decided I had to go out and look for work.

Do you know when they got electricity in Hazelton?

Electricity. The main town pretty well all had electricity I can't remember when the power house was built down there. Power house used to be, I believe it's still in the same building where ...about across from Bob Blackstocks' place down there. Bob and Dick. Is that building still up? That white?

The one that used to be the laundromat?

Yeah. That's the original power house. That's where B. C. telegraph has it now I believe. You know where the B. C. Hydro office is? That old building beside it or the other side of it. That's where the power moved up to then. But it just served the businesses and some of the residents from what I can remember. We lived down town there; we lived across from the Police Station and we didn't have no power.

Do you know if it was Bill Sargent that owned it?

Dick Sargent actually. In them days it was old Dick. I guess Bill was part an' partial, but the old was the original mover

Do you know when Hazelton was incorporated?

No I don't think I would. Like I said I was away for a number of years. All together I was away for about twenty years.

You were overseas when you were in the army? Where were you stationed?

Well mostly in England. I went over to North Africa. They sent over a division of...brigade of Canadians over to North Africa an' was one of those. Then we went over Italy.. Italy right up to Europe.

Did you see any action?

Oh yeah lots of it.

Did you take part in it?

Well I guess you'd say I was part of it, yeah. I didn't actually get as far as killing or anything like that. But I was part an' partial of it yeah.

Did you have to pick up any foreign language?

You learn as you go along. I was quite fluent in Italian. Later I moved up in the main part of Europe. I was stationed in Holland and Germany. I never did learn the Dutch language. I can't say that I was fluent, but I could make myslef understood any-way.

Was Hazelton any different when you got back?

The difference that I found when I first came was that I got off at the wrong station there. I got off at South Town, wasn't a bloody soul over there. I forgot about, I'd heard about the trip

bridge across the Bulkley down there. Came back here from overseas came back on holidays leave. Insead of getting off in New Town I got on South Town. That was about the only real change I guess. S Sargents' Store was still the same I believe. That was the old store you know.

Do you know who the first mayor was?

Again I was away. There was never any offical mayor. Alice was the first one that I heard of that was mayor. There was never any title holder of that description that I remember anyway.

Did you attend school?

Oh yeah. I started of in Indian Day School down by St. Peters Church there you know. Then I was enrolled in Public School. Where Smokey's house is here. That's where the Public School used to be. Oh I went to school Kispiox for awhile. I lived with my grandparents. Went up there, moved up with my grandparents for one winter there.

Who were your grandparents?

Timothy and Maggie Harris. I used to go up and stay with them once in a while.

Did you notice A difference between the schools?

Not then, no. I didn't pay much attention actually, I went to school in Edmonton for a while. That was when they used to just take a bunch of kids down town there, ship them off to Edmonton or Le Jac like, you know. I got caught in the round up, went to school in Edmonton for a couple of years, I guess. Then again education was, as far as school was concerned, I don't think I ever learned anything in those days. Except A,B,C,1,2,3 and stuff like that. That's our, but that's far from what you guys are getting now. Oh man, I'm telling you anything that I learned I didn't learn in school. You know something that I learned after growing up and living. You know, you more or less had to try and better yourself in more better ways. As far as formal education is concerned I don't know how I managed to get as far as I did. But, I only went to grade ten. My dad died. I took over his bread and butter duties. You know like I had to go to work, I quit school. I'd like to h ve continued in school, but I didn't. I don't know I've gotten by I suppose I could've got by a lot better if I'd had a better education. I try to talk to my young relatives about that. You don't know how fortunate children are today. Actually having something to learn. In my day there was nothing. Like I say there was an Indian Day School then the Public School. Then it was quite a while later that they had, what we call the High School. But forget what year that would be...but...I suppose it was a place to learn to read and write. Anyone with a better education those days or wanted a better education had to pretty well leave town.

(Q) Do you know when the Public School and the Indian Day were amalgamated?

No, I think it was while I was away, I wasn't around here then. It was...the present facilities weren't even up when I was here, you know before I left. I was only a youngster, I don't know I can't tell you.

I know the hospital has changed an awful lot since my day. Old Wrinch Memorial the original one. I don't know how many beds there were in there. There weren't too many. That's one of the major improvements that I've found around here, is the hospital facilities. What we have here now is compared to a you know smaller scale of course. I imagine the only thing right now, we only had the one doctor in those days, Dr. Wrinch. When he was gone one of the boys, Leonard Wrinch he took over. It must have been a family affair, I guess. Kept it in the family for years. But I suppose it was adequate. He was a good doctor. It was for like, at that time.

But the population has doubled I guess. Especially in the rural areas, Kispiox Valley and out there. There was only one or two families, maybe three or four more living out there in them days. There was the Love's and Heavener's, George Burns, There wasn't too many families.

(Q) Do you know anything about the School of Nursing?

School of nursing? Nothing. That's another thing that's just started in the last few years I guess. Like I say lot of these things I...that's quite a span of time while I was away. That Hazelton didn't go in that direction. It didn't grow any bigger or anything like that. But the ideas and the things that are happening here has just been over a period of time. They've added these things, nothing that I know of anyway, no, no school of nursing, like they have now. All these student nurses come up here. I don't think they had anything like that in my day.

(Q) What types of businesses were there? Dad

Businesses? Well, mostly grocery stores, Sargent's Grocery Store, Hudson Bay, Myros-Smith. They were the three grocery and dry goods outlets. They handled just about everything. Then there was another little store there, Bud Dawson, he dealt mostly in confectionaries and he kept all kinds of odds and ends.

(Q) Were there policemen?

Oh yah, we had the Provincial Police then and the Mounties mostly it was controoled by one policeman. I believe, originally. That's as far back as I can remember. I believe the Mounties came in, I can't say just when the Mounties first came. But I was just a kid then, there was no mounties then.

(Q) You don't remember his name?

Dutch Kline. I just barely remember him. I was quite young, Dutch, I believe he left just shortly afterwards. They transferred him out of here. The next one I remember was Wyman. He was the guy that was involved with the shooting they had down here. He was shot by I believe it was Moses Wilson and William Greene one of the two. He wasn't killed or anything but they had quite an altercation apparently. I believe some of the other guys might remember more about it. I just barely remember that.

Our house was right across from the police station. The biggest crime around here was getting drunk I guess and beating your old lady. They had two or three cells in the police station. But there was never anything around here, you know, like it was a tame old town.

Of course nobody had cars then. There was only two or three around then, that was in the early days.

(Q) What types of entertainment were there?

You more or less, I don't...I can't recall anybody having radio's around here. There were no t.v.'s, t.v.'s were non-existent then. I don't think any of B.C. had t.v. then. But radios yes battery radios. We had one over at the house.

The entertainment part, we made our own. In the winter time we used to have a skating rink down where Bob Ma's store is there, in that general area. Well right across from the powerhouse, that's where we got our water, the used to pump the water for us and flood the rink. Otherwise we used the river or Hospital Lake.

(Q) Was there a hockey team?

No, not as such. Any hockey we played, you had to go out in the bush and cut up your own hockey sticks and pick up horse turds, we used for pucks. You know go out on the road there, there was lots of horses around. You'd always find a puck.

You know we pretty well made our own past times. There was always lots of dances. Usually a dance up there in the old Kitanmaax Hall. It seemed to be a weekly affair. Especially during the winter months when everybody was back from the coast.

Used to be at one time here fishing was the, one of the summer time jobs of everybody around here. Around about April or May the reserve would empty right off, except for a few old people that stayed behind. In those days it was just... everybody on the train and down to the coast for the summer. The reserve was just...there was no reserve for the summer. That was the only industry going in the summer time. In the fall there was mostly pole camps and trapping.

I was involved in a lot of sports down here when I was growing up. I played baseball, football and aside from that like I say there was nothing really organized. Summer time was mostly ball and it was all up on the hill. They used to play Old Tom, that was our ball game. Our main past time was as far as kids were concerned then was group sports. It's not so much a sport as it is a past time. You know playing I scream everybody screams, whatever you call it. It used to be a hide-and-seek, that's what it was. You done this in teams, two teams. One team was the searchers the other team was the hidiers. Of course this was an after dark sport God only knows what went on when you were hiding.

No, we didn't have that much to do. There were dances which were usually sponsored by just whoever felt like it. They were pretty well a weekly affair. If the orchestra felt like going up the hill or down to the hall and playing some music for all the young guys or young people. Some were more organized dances, they were good I mean we, the ladies would bring something to eat. We would have unches there. Always something like that, somebody would bring sandwiches somebody would bring cake. But then they used to...I remember we used to dance till all hours of the night right until morning. We'd stagger home at breakfast time. There was never any drinking involved. At one time there if you were drinking they wouldn't let you in the hall. The admission was 10¢ or 15¢. Sometimes no admission at all. There was never any problem with drinking. It was an older peoples game then. It used to be a big deal after I quit school to even get a hold of beer, 5 or 6 of us would get into a case of beer. After the first couple of bottles of course we'd be out. But that's the way it was. Liquor wasn't any...it wasn't included in anything we done, going to dances or anything like that. Like I say some of the older people would probably get into it. You couldn't get it, you could but no one had the money for it, put it that way.

Even if there was cars available then, there were cars available then in the 20's and 30's, but nobody had the money. Any money you could make usually went for clothing and general living like, you know.

There was no welfare, such as it today. They had what they call relief. I was just a kid then, I remember cause we lived right across from the station. That's where they used to give out this relief money, usually about ten dollars a month. If you were crippled, or you were...just couldn't work or anything...Then if you could go to work they used to put you to work on the Public Works. They put you to work on there for a couple of days a week, shovelling gravel, the road.

(Q) Was 10 dollars sufficient?

I don't know how much it amounted to, I wouldn't put a dollar figure on it.

(Q) Do you know when the steam boats quit coming??

No, that was before my time. I remember reading about it. just don't remember ever seeing it that's all.

(Q) What about the building of the railway?

No, I was born in twenty-two and the railway came through about the time of WW II.

(Q) Do you know anything about the Community Hall?

They had the first community here and that was the old Kitanmaax Hall it was near the St. Peter's you know up the first bench, I think that was the only hall for dances or anything like that.

(Q) Which churches were involved with the community?

Pretty well the same, well we had one more church, that was the Church Army an affiliate of England. Used to be up on the hill on the reserve, by Arthur Mowatts. (Mentions the catholic church, never panned out.) Used to be down on the corner where Steve's is. (Mountain View)

(Q) What were the events surrounding a wedding?

They usually had a, it all depends on who was getting married. A man of influence, he would have a party in the Hall. Usually a dance, party and a dance afterwards. You had your wedding dance that night, if you could afford it.

The Kitanmaax Hall was always busy, with a basket social or a dance. They were quite a lively affair, those basket socials. The idea behind was that all the women brought lunches, you weren't supposed to know whose supper you were bidding on. They'd auction them off, you'd bid and whoever, say you brought a basket and I won the bid, you were my girl for the evening. It was lots of fun, something different.

(We had a badminton club down town, in the lower hall down where the theatre is now. We'd play badminton down there two or three times a week. That was our only other winter sport besides skating.

We always had baseball, softball, the girls had a softball team down here.

(Q) Did you have names for your teams??

No, we didn't not as far as I know. Smithers had names for their teams.

they'd march back to their respective halls and have their services. There was two churches on the hill, they had their own band. For the community band, well they joined forces. All in all they had a pretty good; at least for those days they were good.

(Q) Did you know Cataline? Or did you know anything about Cataline?

No a little before my time I guess.

(Q) Why do they call it Smith hill?

Oh because Myros and Smith you know where the house where they have the offices? That was Smiths' house right below Smith hill. The Smiths' lived down here and Smiths' lived on top of the hill. Charlie and his family lived there. And the other hill that goes up behind the reserve there that's Mowatts' hill. Sara Mowatt used to live right there.

(Q) You know anything about the telegraph line?

Telegraph line yeah. Well mostly what I read and my dad was line foreman for the government telegraph. They did have a line running right from here to Russia as far as I know. My dad was a foreman more or less a line foreman. They had cabins twenty or thirty miles apart. They had a station at each cabin. Each family was responsible for twenty or thirty miles or something like that. My dad used to walk from here right up in the Yukon. Twice a year we done that.

(Q) Did they use pack trains?

Well he didn't. They had pack trains to take supplies into the line men you know. My dad, he never went with the pack trains. But twice a year he'd be gone. He'd walk right from here into Whitehorse I believe was as far as he went. Then he'd steamboat back. He went up in the spring before spring break up. I don't know what a line foreman did.

(Q) Do you know how China Grade got its name?

Because it was so steep. You couldn't drive up the damn thing. Cars would have an awfull time, getting up China Grade. Somebody just put it on there I guess. They figure you're going straight down you're going through to China.

(Q) Were there Chinese living here when you were a little boy?

Oh yeah as far as I remember I guess they came through with the railway hey. They had lots of Chinese labour when the railway went through. So whenever the railway came through. So whenever the railway came through that was went the first Chinaman came here. We had one old coloured guy here one time, you probably heard of him, old Dave Wiggins.

(Q) Where did the girls practise their softball?

At the ball field. They always played ball up there. It was one of the big spring time deals, of course everybody was involved. We had a good soccer team.

(Q) There were sports days in the spring? Every spring? Who all came? All the villages?

New Hazelton used to have the 24th of May for sports. They had a ball diamond between Hagwilget and New Town. They had sports all in May before everyone went fishing. They used to have a good brass band, Native brass band. They always played at the sports days. They used to march up to the ball field from down town. Once a year they made a big deal out of it. They were part of the sports. Play for half an hour, rest for half an hour and play some more. At the sports days itself, they used to have a lean-to shelter, restaurants you know. They'd cook you up a steak. Different organizations, church organizations used to have restaurants. They always had confectionary booths there. All in all it was a once a year deal. Everybody put...nobody was really behind it. I don't remember a boss or anything like that. You know, it was a community effort. Whatever existing organization we had they were all behind it. They were only a two day affair usually. There'd be teams coming in from all the villages. They'd do the same when there was sports in Kispiox, everybody took part.

(Q) Do you remember the name of the band that played the marches?

Just Hazelton Band. There was only one band as far as I know. I don't think there was ever any name to them. There might have been for all I know. Arthur Mowatt and some of those guys, they were part of it. He'd probably remember if they had a name or not. As far as I know Gitanmaax Band or something like that, you know.

(Q) Do you know anything of the Wildwood Orchestra?

Roy Wilson and Chris Harris they were the originators you might say. Old Moses Morrison he was part of it and Jonthan Johnson. They were quite good as a matter of fact. They had a damn good orchestra. They had two orchestras in Kispiox. There was the Wildwood and forget the name of the other one.

(Q) It be the Northernlights?

Nothernlights yeah. People seemed to go in for music in those days. I mean they all went in for it hey. Band would be practising up in the hall. All they used it for was band practise. And the churches, Salvation Army had their own band. Church Army had their own band. Usually on a Saturday night or Sunday, I forget which it is, usually Saturday night and Sunday maybe, they'd have open air service; right on top of the hill there Smith hill. You could hear the band all over town like, you know. They'd have a short service, then

He used to be with the pack train; Old Cataline. That's all I remember of the pack train was old Dave Wiggins. He was the first whiteman in Hazelton. That's what he used to say all the time. He'd get drunk and we'd all be sitting there listening to him talk you know. I guess he must have come through with one of the first pack trains you know. There used to be alot of old bachelors down in Hazelton. I guess they were railroad construction men originally and they just settled down there you know. We even had a real estate office here at one time. We had a mining engineer working out of Hazelton. The mining office used to be down... about where about where Mrs. Webster lives now. There was only one hotel that I remember and that was the Omenica Hotel. It was big building. It housed a beer parlor. Gambling was legal too I believe. They had card games in there. A confectionary store on the ground floor, store, rooms were up stairs. Like I say that's right where Alice Marshalls'extended right down to, damn near to where Scottie Smith lives there. I don't know how long it was, but when I was a kid it was a long building anyway. Wheather it burnt down or what, I don't know. We had a livery system here livery stables. It was down where the old police station is, on the left hand side. Big buliding there where they kept the horses, pack trains. Al falkner had the first trucking outfit around Hazelton. Horse drawn trucking outfit. I remember he had up front there Al Falkners' Livery Stable or something. Another big event would be the trappers going out in the fall. They all left about the same time. They'd all get outfitted down at The Bay or Sargents. See them heading out. They waited for the snow or usually after New Years beaver trappers you know. They'd be heading up the river dog sleighs you know, seven or eight dogs, dragging the toboggan away they go up the river. Boy it was really something to see them go. Well it was a big thing here trapping in the winter time.

(Q) You ever have dog sled racing?

Not that I remember no. Like I say I don't remember anything.

(Q) Do you know anything about the ferry that when across the river to the Kitwanga back road?

Yeah. There was quit a few people had, like I say there was lotta horses in them days. They had to get there hay some place. There was a lot of hay fields out there. There was some of them that didn't go down the coast. They lived out th over there in the summer months hey. Hauling hay an' put in gardens an' do there fishing. They had smoke houses there. Some people had smoke houses down in Hagwilget Canyon. On both sides of the river. Hazelton crew used to fish this side of the canyon. Hagwilget people would be on the far side. Quite afew smoke houses down there at one time. Two or three big smoke houses on Hazelton side. Three or four down on Hagwilget side right down next to the river. I had a picture of the original bridge I wouldn't be caught crossing that damn thing. Did you ever see a picture of it? The original bridge that went across

that Hagwilget Canyon. Boy that was something to see. I saw a picture of it recently but I forget where. That was even before my time. All it was made of was telegraph wire I guess.

(Q) Do you know who built it?

The indians I guess. I just saw pictures I don't really know who built it. I imagine the indians put it across. It might have been a joint effort too.