

# **Reflections**

**By Lloyd Mackey**

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## Reflections

### Introduction

I began writing this during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. My wife, Edna, and I are at this point in good health –within context. On March 31, 2020 I received a defibrillator-pacemaker as part of my cardiologists’ efforts to check the effects of an increasingly inefficient heart. In 2019, Edna and I enjoyed several events where we marked “50-80” – our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, both of which took place in December, 1969.

The suggestion that I write some sort of memoir was advanced back in 2014-15, when I was completing my Doctor of Ministry studies through Tyndale Seminary (the theological school at Tyndale University) in Toronto.

Among the tools utilized during those doctoral studies was a time line, used to help organize the sectors of my life, touching on both the challenges and high points. The time line noted, implicitly, that religion and faith (there are overlaps and differences between the two) have played a strong part in my life. Critics would suggest that it has been obsessive, at times, and I would agree.

I grew up in a loving and strict fundamentalist/evangelical home. The particular denominational stream of the church I attended in boyhood was Plymouth Brethren of a conservative but open variety. By nature, I was at times a “pleaser”, wanting to win the favor of my parents and the elders of the church I attended, and at other times, an “adventurer” wanting to go my own way, satisfy my curiosity.

I never did learn the whole story, but I do recall, at about age eight or nine, taking the midnight *Princess Charlotte* ship from Victoria to Vancouver, with my father, to visit a medical specialist. My parents were finding me quite a handful. I apparently often was switching erratically from the “pleaser” side to the “adventurer” focus without any rhyme or reason. All I can recall of the Vancouver trips results was my parents’ telling me I was “impulsive”.

Probably, the first time I was aware of these trends was when I was about five. I liked to hop on public transit from Oak Bay, where we lived, and head off in various directions – downtown Victoria, Beacon Hill Park, Esquimalt, Colwood or Mt. Tolmie, to name a few locations. My parents took to pinning a note to the back of my sweater, worded “Please do not let this little boy onto buses and streetcars.”

*Reflections* will take the reader, hopefully, through four life stages that touch on:

- Birth to early adulthood.
- The move in 1967 into community newspaper journalism and my marriage to Edna.
- The period beginning in 1982 that lead to my involvement in Christian newspaper development.
- The time from 1998 to the present, including journalism focusing on the faith-political interfaces in Canada. (The professional highlight of that period was my 2005-6 authorship of *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper: The Case for Collaborative Governance*.)<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the best way to summarize that sense of early conflict between being a “pleaser” and an “adventurer” was the note under my grad bio in the 1957 Oak Bay High School yearbook. It suggested I was destined to be either “an evangelist or a TV broadcast engineer.” As it was, I ended up neither but an interest in the way people communicate – with each other and with God – did become a lifelong quest.

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<sup>1</sup> The Leadership Timeline on which these above four points are based and which was used as part of those DMin studies is attached to this file as a PDF.

## Chapter 1

### In the Beginning

I was born on December 11, 1939 to Stephen Henry Mackey and Phyllis Mary Mackey (nee Swetnam). The place of birth was the Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria where, 12 years later, I was to work a *Victoria Times* newspaper route selling copies of the daily newspaper to patients and staff members.<sup>2</sup>

But I am getting ahead of myself. Before I return to the beginning, though, let me note that my mother had a sharp pencil. She kept the family books and passed on lots of advice (dictums?) about income and expense, profit and loss.

When I was about seven years old, she sent me for a haircut to a barber shop over on Oak Bay Avenue, with 25 cents clutched in my fist. When I got there, the barber pointed out that the price had increased to 75 cents. For a while, she cut my hair at home, until the economy righted itself and my father's earnings as a firefighter had caught up with the barber's seeming avarice.

When I was born, my parents were living on Monterey Avenue across the street from the Oak Bay Fire Hall, where my dad had begun his firefighting career, not long after they married in September, 1938. My birth was a few months after the beginning of World War II. Thousands of Canadian men fought in that war, including my father's brother, Harry. But Dad was held back because firefighting was a domestic essential service.

On May 10, 1943, my brother, Barry was born. In 1946, my mother had some illness which, I believe, was a miscarriage. (No one was ever clear about that.) After that, I can recall that, when we would have our after-supper Bible reading and prayer, Barry would regularly pray for a baby sister. To my surprise, Mary Beatrice Mackey was born on March 9, 1949, giving some evidence to the effectiveness of my younger brother's prayers. My recall is that even though I did not pray so enthusiastically, I was just as pleased as Barry to have a little sister.

Ours was a loving and, at the same time, persistently devout home. For my mother, this was an inherited faith which she made her own at an early age. Her father, William Swetnam was a British immigrant who established a dairy farm on Edgeware Road in the then semi-rural Oaklands district of Victoria. He was of Plymouth Brethren stock and was one of the founding elders of Oaklands Gospel Hall, two blocks south of his farm. My mother, born January 3, 1917, was the youngest of six children; the others were Bill, Sam, Harry, Pat and Doris.

Dad came from more nominal Christian roots. His parents, too, were British immigrants. My paternal grandfather, Charles Mackey, was a Boer war vet who died a few months before I was born. His roots were Irish. His parents had transplanted to the seaside English city of Brighton by the time he enlisted in the British army. After that war, in due course, he met a Cockney lass, Maude Beatrice. After marriage, they moved to Regina, Saskatchewan, where he became a house painter. My father was the oldest, born on April 14, 1911. Harry followed in 1914 and another brother, Charles, came along somewhere in there, but died of a childhood disease, as I understand it. (Yes, there were Uncle Harrys on both sides of my family tree. Dad's brother was tall and took the nickname of "Slim": Mum's brother, Harry, was short and pudgy, possessed of a hearty laugh as I recall.)

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<sup>2</sup> It was a pretty good gig. I would buy the papers for four cents apiece from the *Times* circulation office and resell them for seven cents. More often than not, the buyers would give me a dime and tell me to keep the change, so I had a 60 per cent markup!

In the mid-to-late 1930s, both my dad and his brother decided to go west from Regina, to Victoria, having barely survived the combined effect of great depression and prairie drought, which was a definite impairment to the development of Saskatchewan.

Harry went first, riding a bicycle to the coast. It was before the completion of the trans-Canada highway, so he rode through Washington State. Dad followed a year later on a motorcycle. I can recall him talking about the hairpin road that climbed down to the Wenatchee Valley from the plains of the “Inland Empire” whose hub was Spokane. It was apparently quite a thrill to come down that road on a motorbike.<sup>3</sup>

My paternal grandfather and grandmother headed from Regina to Victoria not long after my father and uncle, having learned from them that both the climate and the work opportunities were favorable. My Grandpa Charles continued his house painting in Victoria. He died a few months before I was born, in 1939 at age 62, so I never got to know him. More regrettably, from his perspective, he did not get to live long in “lotus land”.

My grandmother had a long and active widowhood. She lived to be a few months over 100 and would have lasted much longer, had she not fallen in her room in the Oak Bay Lodge and broken her hip. She sometimes admitted to believing that her longevity related to her daily ration of a toddy of rum. She was feisty. Years later, as a young journalist, I met and interviewed the infamous “Ma” Murray of the *Bridge River Lillooet News*. That interview helped form my unsupported opinion that Grandma and “Ma” were twins separated at birth. Grandma’s perennial answer to the world’s problems was: “The gum’mit should step in!”

Saturday mornings were always an exciting time in our family. It was when Barry, Mary and I would head for Grandma’s house for lunch. She made the best chips in olde British style, often with hamburgers or other treats not often available at home. She had a cottage-style house at 1776 St. Ann Street, about a block from the Oak Bay fire hall where Dad worked as a fire-fighter/mechanic. It had a big front lawn. Barry and I took turns cutting it with a hand mower, each earning fifty cents a cut. I remember working barefoot one day and catching my left big toe on the edge of the mower blade. It never did grow in right and I have that malformed toenail to this day, some 70 years later.

The way in which Mum and Dad met and got to know each other helped set the course for the way in which a fundamentalist form of the Christian faith would play such a strong role in the lives of all three of us Mackey children. As I indicated, Dad’s faith roots were pretty nominal by Swetnam standards. My paternal grandmother attended Metropolitan United Church and had great admiration for its immediate post-war minister, Dr. A. E. Whitehouse, a fine orator and encourager of following Jesus’ model of “going about doing good.”

Dad, moving past his mid-20s and looking toward settling down, had been introduced by a pal to a good-looker named Phyllis Swetnam. The pal was John Kellerman who, as it happened was, with his girlfriend, Mildred, a part of a large and popular youth group associated with Oaklands Gospel Hall. Steve asked Phyllis for a date. She invited him to a beach party at Mount Douglas Park, sponsored by the Oaklands youth group. He liked it, including the fellowship, the singing and the ever-present warm proclamation of the gospel. To wit: We are all sinners. Jesus died for our sins. If we hope to go to heaven, we need to be “born again” by accepting Jesus as our Savior. And not only will a place in heaven be granted, but a promise of a very happy life here on earth. Dad responded to the gospel quite simply. He was a straightforward guy and liked the idea of a straightforward Jesus. And he really liked Phyllis Swetnam.

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<sup>3</sup> On a vacation, years later, Dad showed us the remains of what looked more like a wagon train trail, which had been replaced by a safer, more modern two lane highway. Today, of course, the I-90 has left all that in the dust.

Mind you, he still smoked and enjoyed a cold beer as well as more chocolate bars than he could really afford. Phyllis had to work with him for quite a while to get him to give up activities that were not considered quite Christian in the “Brethren assemblies.” Her argument was that one’s body is the “temple of the Holy Spirit” and should be treated as such.

At the time they met, Dad, with a grade eight education, was delivering for Henry’s Grocery on Oak Bay Avenue (across the street from the barber shop where I later learned a bit about hair cut economics.) A few months later, he signed on as a firefighter for Oak Bay. He did not go to war like his brother, Harry (Slim). Harry fought in the Netherlands as part of the Canadian Army (Princess Pats, I believe). Harry and Peggy had married in the late 30s, as had my parents. A daughter Jacqueline (Jackie) was born in 1940, before he headed off overseas. But the marriage did not last. By the time he returned, Peggy had another man and had moved to Powell River. Jackie was raised by Grandma and Uncle Harry during school months and would head to Powell River for summers with her mother.

My father was relatively shy and quiet of speech, compared to Uncle Harry. My mother was more articulate and, was it not for the confines of a Plymouth Brethren teaching that women should be “silent in the church”, might have become an evangelist or Bible teacher.

Two highlights about Slim and Jackie;

After the war, my Uncle Harry went to work for Shawnigan Lumber, a major supplier in Victoria. Always a good verbal communicator, he eventually developed a radio open line program in which he answered wide-ranging questions about home renovations and building matters. This was before the days of such institutions as Home Depot and Shell Bussey.

Jackie, too, after a career in fashion design and marketing, the role of a spouse to an architect, gained some fame as a supporting actor. One of her roles was that of the secretary to the president of the United States, in a made-for-TV movie.

I do have a few earlier recollections of pre-school life in Oak Bay. My first memory was looking up at my mother from a baby buggy, so I must have been less than two years old. When I asked her about it a few years later, she said she often wheeled me from our house on Monterey to the “Avenue” (today known as Oak Bay Village).

Another recollection was sitting at breakfast at the kitchen table, looking at my reflection in a new chrome-plated toaster. The side of the toaster was configured in a way that reflected my face as a double image. I had great fun nodding up and down and pretending to be a team of two horses. What I saw was triggered by having seen up close the Tally-Ho horses that that pulled the carriages transporting tourists from the Princess ships around the scenic high points of Victoria – a little bit of Olde England.

Still another recall was being tied on a leash to a long line running from the garage door to a rocky ledge by the street. I was showing those early signs of wanderlust. That, combined with the fact that Bowker Creek ran by our house, created bad dreams for my parents that I would one day fall into the creek and drown. My Auntie Doris, Mom’s older sister, was apparently quite horrified that my parents should treat me like a dog on a leash. She later indicated that she did not understand how much of an impulsive and adventuresome nature Phyllis and Steve’s eldest son exhibited. Although their house permitted Dad to walk across the street to the fire hall for work, my parents eventually realized that their eldest son’s proclivities for wandering required a residence that was not near any creeks. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Oddly enough, the place where we lived from my grade three year until high school graduation was only about 700 feet from the same creek, but by that time, they figured that their children would be a little more careful at play. As well, the high school backed onto the same Bowker Creek.

After Dad became a serious Christian believer, he and Mom worked very hard at trying to bring Grandma, Uncle Harry and Jackie to faith. The approach to Grandma was pretty direct – personal witness. Feisty as she was, she quite seriously maintained that the kind of Christianity practiced at Metropolitan United Church was just a little more Christian and a little less harsh than that practiced at Oaklands Gospel Hall.<sup>5</sup>

Dad's efforts with Uncle Harry focused on invitations to the local Christian Businessmen's dinners. Uncle Harry enjoyed the dinners and relished, just as much, sparring with Dad about whether he, himself, really needed to be born again.<sup>6</sup>

I should mention one other person that played an interesting role in the early years of my parents' marriage.

In those years, there were times when my folks could not afford a car and, indeed, Dad's firefighting work was right across the street from my parent's first home on Monterey Avenue. Instead of going to church at Oaklands, which would have been a three mile hike, we attended Bethesda Gospel Hall on Oak Bay Avenue (today known as Oak Bay Gospel Assembly). It had been established in the 30s by group of Brethren businessmen headed by Hubert Munday who, with his brother, Edmund, had founded the Munday chain of five shoe stores in Victoria.

One of the members of Bethesda was Sir Ernest Petter who, along with Lady Angela Emma Petter, had migrated from Great Britain during World War II. Sir Ernest was a distinguished retired engineer who, in the late 1800s, helped to invent a British version of the horseless carriage, a decade before Henry Ford came on the American scene.

In retirement, and as an impulse of their Christian faith, Sir Ernest and Lady Petter came to Canada and acquired a number of commodious homes on Vancouver Island where they could bring young wives of British soldiers who were engaged in the European battle theatre. The idea was to provide a peaceful place to raise the children for the duration of the war.

Mom and Dad got to know Sir Ernest and Lady Petter through their common "fellowship" at Bethesda. As it happened, Sir Ernest needed a chauffeur to drive him to various meetings, including church. And my folks needed a car. So, Dad "moonlit" as Sir Ernest's driver. As a small boy, I was intrigued by this wise and successful elderly gentleman with the full head of white hair and the long ear trumpet which helped him overcome his aging and declining hearing.

But I digress. The point to be made is that the Petter family, over three generations, represented to me, the ways in which science and learning, on one hand, and faith, on the other, could be integrated for the general benefit of society.

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<sup>5</sup> Ironically, in my pre-journalism years, I tried my hand at pastoring after a pretty good Bible college education. (More about that later.) In that role, I served at Parkdale Evangelical Free Church in Victoria for a couple of years. Grandma determined to attend at worship there and was both publicly and personally supportive of both the church and my ministry – and later in my journalism career. She was just a great grandmother!

<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, I think, with Uncle Harry, it was more of a question of language than action. I can recall having coffee with him during the heretofore mentioned pastoral stint at Parkdale Church. He asked me how I had come to return to the city of my birth to work. I innocently told him that the church had "extended a call" for me to be their pastor. He laughed at that quaint phrase. I suddenly realized that we had a language issue. The means by which many churches hired a pastor was to "extend a call" To me, "call" was the term used to offer me a job as a pastor. To Uncle Harry, it was just a tad grandiose and worthy of a little joshing of his young nephew.

Sir Ernest had a son named Gordon, who for some years, operated the Clock Shop on what was known as Antique Row on Fort Street, on the eastern edge of downtown Victoria, heading toward Oak Bay. Gordon did not stay in the Brethren Assemblies. He became a Quaker and could be found, most Sundays, attending the Quiet Meeting at the Society of Friends meeting house on Fern Street, just behind St Margaret's girls' school. He was a committed and thoughtful pacifist who, in a sense, lived out some of his father's values, reflected in those homes for "war-widowed" British mothers and children.

He married Elizabeth – a ballerina from London whom he met during his Oxford studies. During their marriage, she attended the high Anglican St. Barnabas Church, two blocks over from the Quaker meeting house.

In BC's interior, in Nelson, at the foot of one leg of Kootenay Lake, high on the hillside, an institution known as Notre Dame University had become quite well-established in the 1940-70 era. Gordon wanted a change from "serving time" at the clock shop. So he became a professor at Notre Dame, where he taught history and ethics, especially growing out of his Christian Quaker perspective.

Growing up in this Quaker/Anglo-Catholic/Catholic milieu was Andrew Petter who eventually made his mark, first of all as a highly-ethical cabinet minister in a rather left-leaning pragmatic provincial government headed by Glen Clark. Post-politics, Petter became dean of the law school at University of Victoria and finally, for over a decade, was president of Simon Fraser University (my MBA alma mater). He retired in August, 2020 from the latter post.

In my interviews with Andrew Petter, over the years, I learned of the ethical, faith and educational values that his father and grandfather had communicated. There are many ways in which he helped to inculcate those values in his political and educational roles.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sometimes, in talks and writing I did about the role of SFU in our own neighborhood of City Centre, Surrey, I invoked the Petter name as an example of the blending of faith and science/learning in the quest for making the world a better place. Briefly put, my thesis was that Sir Ernest Petter, a man of applied science, was one of the inventors of the horseless carriage, which led to the cleanup from the residue of horse-filled city streets. His faith led him to provide away-from-the-war homes for wives and children of British soldiers. Gordon Petter was a man of learning and taught in a faith-based university. His Quaker faith led to his serious pacifism. And, while I only ever queried Petter about the influences of faith on his life, choosing not to press him more closely about his own belief system, I noted certain initiatives worth reporting. As a man of science, learning and the law, he led the development of a Surrey SFU initiative known as Sustainable Energy Engineering (SEE). When the \$100 million SEE building was officially opened, Edna and I attended. One of the student demonstration exhibits was of clean-energy electric-powered go-cart. So, 120 years after Sir Ernest produced a manure-free-vehicle for travel on city streets, students in an Andrew Petter initiative were working on an electric vehicle which could help take the quest for a clean vehicular environment one step further.

## Chapter 2

### The High School years

I have noted that the religious/spiritual influences in our home were evangelical, fundamentalist and, indeed, somewhat separatist, in that my parents believed that the Plymouth Brethren (Christian Brethren assemblies was their preferred term) were the closest thing to the true church. I should note, parenthetically, that many groups claim similar exclusivity – Latter Day Saints, Independent Fundamental Baptists and some kinds of Mennonites and Pentecostal groups – and, for that matter, Roman Catholics. Not to mention, certain Jewish and Islamic groups outside the Christian spectrum make similarly exclusive claims.

One of the heavy emphases at Oaklands Gospel Hall and in many other Brethren assemblies was the need for the children in the assembly to receive Jesus as their Savior. Indeed, that emphasis was endemic to the weekly order of services in the assembly. Every Sunday night, there was a Gospel meeting at Oaklands. “Outsiders” were invited and everyone attending heard the same message in some form or another: We are all sinners in need of a Savior and God sent his son, Jesus, to be that Savior. The favorite Bible verse was John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

A whole theological system was built around that verse and, in due course, many aspects of that system will be woven into this narrative.

On April 27, 1947, Mom talked to me a little about this subject and I let her know that I had, indeed, in my simple childlike way, believed and now knew I had everlasting life. Of course, the corollary of that belief in everlasting life was the idea of everlasting fire or damnation to the unbeliever.

Certain steps followed for young believers. They would be encouraged to be baptised by immersion and brought into the fellowship of the local assembly. That fellowship would include the right to participate in the weekly worship meeting centred on the bread and wine, reminders of the body and blood of Jesus, broken and shed for our sins. That service was called the Breaking of Bread, the Remembrance Meeting or the Lord’s Supper. It was roughly equivalent to what is known in other Christian circles as Communion, the Eucharist or the Mass. There are major differences among various strands of Christendom over the exact nature of this event. Suffice to say, Brethren did not believe they were partaking of the actual body and blood of Christ, as did Catholics, but were simply remembering what Jesus had done for them on the Cross, 2,000 years ago.

I was aged seven when I received Jesus as my Savior. I was being nurtured in my faith by my parents, with their nightly post-supper Bible readings (often using Scripture Union notes as their guide) and weekly attendance at Sunday school, held at 3 pm each “Lord’s Day”. I also sat in the back row of the Remembrance Meeting along with other unbaptized children of assembly families and attended the Gospel Meeting each Sunday evening. I usually piled into my parents station wagon, along with brother Barry and some neighborhood children, for Tuesday night Treasure Time, where 150 or more kids would practice “Sword Drill” (looking up Bible verses in exchange for prizes), singing choruses (like *Wide Wide as the Ocean is my Savior’s Love*) and watching Bible stories illustrated by Lantern Slides.

At about the age of 10, I became interested in being baptised and becoming part of the fellowship. The elders of the church advised that I wait, because they realized my parents were trying to cope with my impulsive wavering between pleasing them and heading off on my own adventures. Two years later, they were ready to accept me into fellowship and I was baptized in the tank accessed by lifting a lid which was part of the floor of the Oaklands speaker’s platform.



Having painted a somewhat austere picture of Oaklands Gospel Hall's fundamentalist leanings, and before launching into other influences – both secular and religious – in my teenage years, permit me to talk about some things constructive about the Oaklands milieu. They were personified in two names – Charles Ellington and Mel Smith. And both came back to help shape some of the events in my life during our Ottawa years.

During the 1930s and early 40s, some of the elders and Sunday school leaders at Oaklands established contact with the nearby Protestant Orphanage, which had been established by an Anglican (and later Reformed Episcopal) cleric, Bishop Edward Cridge, in the 1890s. The orphanage was housed in a handsome brick mansion atop a craggy hill less than block from Oaklands. The elders wondered if the orphans might benefit from attending at the afternoon Sunday School.

The then-supervisor, Ada Barner, herself a former orphan and a good Baptist, liked the idea. In addition the spiritual value of the exercise, the attendance of the 50 or more residents would give their caregivers a break on Sunday afternoon.

One of the “orphans” was Charles Ellington, who attended regularly and, in due course, embraced the gospel as presented in the Sunday school. Later, he became part of the church's leadership and served as Sunday school superintendent during the 1950s, when the gospel hall was sold and a new church built a block away – and a block closer to the orphanage.

Charles married Kay Aitken, daughter of an Oaklands elder, and embarked on a career as a notary public. He assumed many Christian leadership positions in Victoria and eventually became the board chair of the orphanage which, on his watch, was transformed into the Bishop Cridge Centre for the Family. Today, it flourishes under a broad-ranging mandate of providing family services to many ages and formations, some of it with considerable government financial help and blessing.

You can find more detail on Charles at:

[http://www.convivium.ca/voices/104\\_charles\\_ellington/](http://www.convivium.ca/voices/104_charles_ellington/)

He passed away in 2018, at age 89.

Mel Smith was one of the students at Oaklands Sunday school during the time Charles Ellington was superintendent. So was I. Mel was a big guy in the back row; I was a few rows forward in one of the younger classes. And even further forward was Beverley Hill, who later became Mel's wife.

Mel wanted to go into law. Some of the elders were thoroughly opposed. Law was not a profession for a good Christian. Better to be a doctor or business entrepreneur. Mel persisted, went to UBC and earned his law degree. He never practiced privately but was quickly picked up by the legal powers-that-be in the provincial legislative buildings. He spent his entire career there, advancing into director and deputy minister level appointments, always with “constitutional and administrative law” within his professional title. During the 1982 constitutional talks resulting in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Mel wrote most of the background material for the British Columbia position on constitutional matters that were carried forward by the premier of the day, Bill Bennett.

Less known was the fact that Mel, with his Christian perspective, had a keen sense of, not only the law, but of God's grace. With many of the materials provided by then-prominent Presbyterian theologian-pastor Donald Grey Barnhouse, he made a close study of the roles of law and grace as enunciated by St Paul in the early chapters of the biblical book of Romans. Often, he taught these concepts as a guest teacher in Bible studies and classes at various churches, and later, as an adjunct professor at Trinity Western University.

Mel passed away in 2000.

I will have more on the influence of Charles and Mel in chapter 11.

Now into my teens, I became aware of the fact that I lived in two worlds – that of the evangelical Christian community and that of the wider sphere which was considered by my parents and church elders as an impairment to my spiritual development.

There were influences that helped me navigate this period:

- The Inter-School Christian Fellowship (ISCF) clubs at Oak Bay Junior High and Oak Bay High School where I completed my secondary education in 1957.
- My newspaper route, first in the neighborhood and later at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, a couple of blocks from our home on Foul Bay Road.
- Sunday afternoon listening to my radio, where I could plug into the wider world listening both to popular comedic and mystery radio shows and some of the prominent evangelical leaders who were extending their influence through the ether waves.
- A little hut across the street from our home, which belonged to the Victoria Short Wave Club (VSWC). It was there that amateur radio operators (radio hams) would gather regularly in pursuit of their hobby of talking to other hams around the world and, admirably, being able to provide communication help in emergencies like floods or fires. There, my interest in radio extended to the exciting realms of electronic theory and two-way communication.

ISCF was a way for Christian young people from a variety of denominations to meet weekly at noon hours in a school classroom. Each high school in the area had a club and the executives of the clubs would meet regularly in an area council, where we got to exchange ideas about sharing faith in school settings. And, annually, we would have a conference where 200 or so from all over Vancouver Island could be challenged to deeper faith commitment and/or means to share the faith. The motto: *To Know Christ and to make Him known* was our guide. The development of Pioneer Pacific camp on Thetis Island became a centre for ISCF fellowship as well as its sister organization Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

Two incidents come to mind.

ISCF had a much more progressive view of women in ministry than did the Brethren assemblies. One of the most effective Bible teachers I ever encountered was Cathy Nicholl, a key leader with IV and the Pioneer Camp organizations.

Her lieutenant on Vancouver Island was Verne Scott, who, likewise, was both an effective organizer and Bible teacher. She was good at sharing with us ways of making Christ known in a school setting, where many students might be uncomfortable about faith-related activities.

She shared with us during one study session, about reading a book on Christian witnessing, drawing on Jesus' teaching to his fisher disciples. He was urging them to adapt their ideas about fishing for fish, so that they could carry out their witness by becoming "fishers of men."

Verne told us that she had taken a book about this subject on board a plane for a trip east from BC. A single woman with no wedding ring, she was met by interesting stares from some of the male passengers around her, when they saw the title of the book she was reading: *Catching Men Alive*.

The second incident was a little more life-altering. ISCF laid much emphasis on total commitment to Christ, not just – or even – as a “fire escape from hell” but as a guide and empowerment into totally committed Christian living, on behavioral, moral, ethical and compassionate bases.

I recall one of these annual conferences, whose speaker was William Sloan, a Victoria native who ended up pastoring large Baptist churches respectively in Everett (Washington), Vancouver (BC) and Yucaipa (California).

Sloan stuck to the aforementioned theme and made the kind of emotional impact – at least on yours truly – that for a while, at least, I deepened my own commitment to serious Christian living.

The second point of influence was my paper route. It was in that work that I learned about simple business and customer service best practice as well as early lessons in sales and marketing.

As noted in the previous chapter, the business concept sharpened through the paper route experience was the idea that the carriers bought papers from the Victoria Times for a wholesale rate and resold to our customers at a retail price. The difference was our profit.

Further, we learned about sales and marketing. We attended weekly sales meetings where we would spend an hour calling on non-subscriber homes in our areas, hoping to persuade their residents to try the *Times*. We were well rewarded for these efforts, with trips, teen-type consumer goods and trophies to mark our sales prowess.<sup>8</sup>

And we learned about customer relations. That sometimes came hard. One of my customers would get several months behind in paying her subscription. I finally grew impatient and one day, when it was raining heavily, dropped her newspaper in a puddle in front of her house before depositing it on her front porch. She saw the whole thing from her living room window and subsequently complained to my district manager. While he sympathized with my frustration over her non-payment, he said that was not the way to handle it. Fortunately, he let me know of some other means to handle recalcitrant customers and, in fact, sometimes those better ways helped to turn foes into friends. Not always, but often enough to make it worthwhile.

I was always interested in communication. Preaching rhetoric was a pretty powerful tool. I remember being very impressed by Victoria newspaper stories about a 14-year-old female Pentecostal evangelist who was stirring some revival activity at the local Glad Tidings Church.

And, as teenager, my folks helped me acquire, from my newspaper earnings, a radio which had a couple of short wave bands on it, as well as the standard AM 550-1600 khz frequencies. (I will get to the short wave bands, amateur radio and two-way communication in just a moment.)

There were many interesting programs to listen to on the weekends. Some featured comedians Jack Benny and Edgar Bergen (with his puppet, Charlie McCarthy), and crime mysteries like *The Shadow* and *FBI*.

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<sup>8</sup> I should note, for younger readers, that the afternoon *Victoria Daily Times* and its morning counterpart, the *Daily Colonist*, the latter founded December 11, 1858, were still pretty competitive. Later, the two papers merged, and the competition became a thing of the past. The *Colonist* had been founded by Amor de Cosmos – roughly translated “Lover of the World” – who later became BC’s second premier, in 1872-4.

My parents wanted to ensure that I did not miss on the faith-teaching opportunities that came from my radio listening. There were three big name preachers in evangelical radio who, at the time, were being carried on radio stations in nearby Vancouver and Seattle.

Those “big names” were Ernest Manning, Alberta’s premier at the time, who had *Canada’s National Bible Hour*, Billy Graham on *Hour of Decision* and Charles E. Fuller, with the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour*.

The Manning and Fuller broadcasts had live audiences from Calgary, Alberta and Long Beach, California, respectively. Both were evangelistic and prophetic in their themes, emphasizing, often, the need for the Christian to read his or her newspaper and Bible alongside each other. And both were effective speakers, balancing emotion and reason in their presentations. They were each one hour long with choral, instrumental and congregational music for the first half and a sermon to wind up. Both Manning’s and Fuller’s wives had roles to play. I always remember: “And now, here is Mrs. Fuller with the letters. Go right ahead, Honey.” She would then (obediently?) read a selection of letters received from listeners during the previous week.

Billy Graham’s program was one-half hour and a studio production, with singing by George Beverley Shea, some clips from current crusade choir singing from places like Seattle, Los Angeles, Minneapolis and, later, London, England and New York City. There were crusade reports by Jerry Bevan and a 10 minute rapid fire and carefully-scripted gospel sermon from the evangelist himself, or occasionally from his brother-in-law and associate evangelist, Canadian-reared Leighton Ford.

My parents wanted to teach me the importance of Christian “tithing” – contributing 10 per cent of one’s income to “the Lord” to wit: Christian ministry. As part of this instruction, they encouraged me, on one occasion, to send a portion of my newspaper earnings to these three programs. Since I was earning about \$36 per month from my *Victoria Times* hospital paper route, we determined that \$1.23 each, to Manning, Graham and Fuller would be appropriate amounts. I sent letters to each of the three with the money, withdrawn from my BMO Oak Bay branch savings account, and hoped for the best that the envelopes would be well secured. I received warm personal responses from all three. Manning, particularly, took note of the biblical passage which suggests: “cast your bread upon the waters and you will receive it after many days.”

I had no way of knowing how that bread might be returned, but, indeed, it did, both directly, with Manning and Graham, and indirectly, with Fuller. I will tell those stories in chapters 8 and 9

In the latter years of high school, I became president of the Oak Bay High ISCF club. I also applied for membership in Hi-Y, which was a high school version of the YM-YWCA (Young Men’s-Young Women’s Christian Association). That movement, of course, had been started by such as the famous late-1800s evangelist Dwight L. Moody. It had drifted away from its evangelical moorings and become much more inclined to a relatively ecumenical-liberal brand of Christianity. Some of its chapters were inclined toward sexual mores which were much freer and easier than would be acceptable in evangelical circles. Indeed, there appeared, at times, to be influences around some – but not all – Ys that would be described today as 2SLGBTQIA+-related.

My parents were quite opposed to my applying for Hi-Y membership, on the aforementioned basis, even though I wanted to be more accepted by some of my mainstream high school peers. Mum and Dad pointed to the fact that, when I had taken swimming lessons at the Victoria YMCA pool a few years before, the all-boy lesson group was expected to be “in the buff” when in and around the pool. To my parents, that was an unnecessary rule, which left them uncomfortable. And while they let me finish my lessons, so that I could get my swimming proficiency badge, they really did not want me to go any further

with Y-related activities. I don't know if they made contact with the Y powers-that-be, but, in due time, my application was rejected and the issue became moot.

Not long after that I received a little booklet in the mail, entitled *Keeping Yourself Pure*. The envelope had no return address. The booklet itself provided some teaching about being sexually abstinent until marriage, tying in some interpretations of biblical passages on the matter.

My parents were not very pleased with someone unknown to them sending out the booklet. We subsequently learned that many of the young people attending Oaklands Gospel Hall (by that time occupying a new church up the hill from its 1913-vintage home and renamed Oaklands Chapel) had received the same booklet.

In due course, we came to some conclusion as to the reason for this booklet distribution, if not the actual source.

There had been quite a rash of single Brethren young people "having to get married" as a result of unplanned pregnancies engendered by unprotected sex. There was some alarm among church elders that young people were not being adequately taught about these things.

I was at an age where I was just starting to learn about the "birds and the bees". My father had a couple of talks with me about the subject of boy-girl relationships and saving sex for marriage. I understood theoretically what he was talking about but had no idea of the emotional side of the subject. Recall that I tended to be both a pleaser and an adventurer, I was trying to keep a balance.

Please bear with me for the next few paragraphs as I try to bring in the ham radio influence and how it tended to help me ricochet from one interest to the other during the last of my high school years and into my early 20s.

That fourth influence grew out of the presence across the street from me, of the Victoria Short Wave Club, the local meeting place for amateur (ham) radio operators in Victoria.

In due course, I discovered that there was more to radio than the programs one could listen to on the household – or personal – radio set. I discovered was that something called "skip" allowed me to listen to far away radio stations at night. The idea was that radio waves from certain powerful stations bounced up into something called the ionosphere, rather than going along the ground and petering out in 100 miles or so. The waves from those stations then bounced down hundreds or even thousands of miles away from the transmitter sites.<sup>9</sup>

Then, I started exploring the short wave bands. There, I found Voice of America, Radio Moscow and other stations coming from various parts of the world. One of them was evangelical – HCJB (Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings) from Quito, Ecuador. I found many political, religious and national perspectives coming from these various stations.

Then, something even more exciting: The amateur radio bands, where *two-way communication* took place across continents. As I explored those bands, I began to hear local Victoria people. Some of them, I

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<sup>9</sup> One such was KGO, San Francisco, one of the earliest open line talk stations. Its star was Ira Blue, who was on every evening, leading discussion on all sorts of political, cultural and educational subjects. I listened with rapt interest many nights, after finishing my homework, of course. There were many other interesting radio stations around, of course. The furthest ever, on the standard broadcast band of my Rogers-Majestic, was KDKA, Pittsburgh.

learned, by visiting the Victoria Short Wave clubhouse across the street, the meeting place for local ham radio operators. I also learned that young people could get a ham radio licence at age 15. A driver's licence would not happen until age 16. It was a no brainer. Study up and become an amateur radio operator.

Co-incidentally, there was an opportunity to take a couple of elective high school correspondence courses to fill out my credit list. So I took two: Radio and Wireless 30 and (no surprise) Bible Literature 30. The radio and wireless course provided the theory I needed to take the Canadian radio amateur exam. At the same time, I took some instruction and practice through the VSWC in Morse code, with group classes held across the street in the club house. I had to be able to send and receive 10 words or more per minute. That would give me a limited licence, where I could use voice on some bands and code on others.<sup>10</sup> Another exam, a year later, required 13 words a minute, and gave me voice privileges on all "ham" bands.

Passing the first exam successfully, I received the call letters VE7AHE. All Canadian call letters, at the time began VE and the 7 represented British Columbia. Later, after operation hiatuses, I received a VE7AKD, then, during an Ontario sojourn, decades later, VE3CLM. The latter, of course, used my name, Charles Lloyd Mackey, as the last three letters. Hams often used words to make clear the phonics of their call letters. I used "Another Hungry Elephant" and "Another Knowledgeable Donkey" to clarify the last three letters of my various call letters.<sup>11</sup>

It was an exciting epoch in my life and presented one career option which, for a time, I pursued. (Recall, my 1957 Oak Bay High graduation yearbook suggesting I wanted to be either an evangelist or a television broadcast engineer. CHEK-TV, Victoria's television station had been established in 1956 and had captured some interest in my technically-wandering mind.)

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<sup>10</sup> The actual term for the code was CW – for Continuous Wave – a different form of code that that then in use for railroad telegraph, which was a set of clicks, rather than a tone to depict dots and dashes. Both forms functioned with a "key", a little finger-operated instrument by which the operator could rap out the letters.

<sup>11</sup> Many "hams" operated high powered transmitters, built their own equipment, talked to people in 150 or more countries or participated in emergency practice "field days" The American Radio Relay League had a very informative magazine call *QST* and a manual for constructing one's own equipment and antennae, called the *Radio Amateur's Handbook*, revised annually. Large manufacturers, some of whose genesis came in building communication equipment during World War II, manufactured ready-to-use receivers and transmitters. Names like Hallicrafters, Hammerland, National, Eddystone and Collins were favorites among ham operators. Later, many, including myself, assembled transceiver kits manufactured by Heathkit.

## Chapter 3

### The move to Vancouver

This chapter and the next are the most difficult for me to write, because they represent a coming to maturity over a period of 13 years, from high school graduation to my 1969 marriage to Edna.

My father was supportive of my radio and electronic interests. Like many young men at the time, he had completed grade eight before leaving school and had considerable mechanical skills but not much opportunity to pursue the academic. During his firefighting career, he took several technical courses and used them to become the Oak Bay Fire Department's mechanic. As such, he supervised the choosing and testing of new fire trucks and the maintenance of the stock. As a family, along with his many friends, we were proud of him. And, he in turn, was very happy when Canadian Telephones and Supplies (CT&S), the installation subsidiary of BC Telephone (known today as Telus), was advertising for apprentices to work at the dozens of new automatic phone exchanges being built throughout British Columbia. I applied and was offered an apprenticeship and, the Monday after finishing high school in June, 1957, moved to Vancouver to take up work at CT&S.

In fact, I was taking a bit of a chance. Despite my wandering mind, I had done well enough in high school to get "recommended" in all subjects but mathematics. (That meant not having to write final exams in the "recommended" subjects.)

My parents, recognizing my still maturing status, found me a place to board with a good elderly Brethren couple, Mr. and Mrs. Steele, who attended Knight Road Gospel Hall. My folks felt that would be a "safe place" to stay.

In turn, Mrs. Steele introduced me to Howard Cuddeford, an engineer and math whiz. He helped me prep for the math exam that I had to write, in Vancouver, to complete my high school graduation requirements. His efforts took: I received 55 per cent on the test!

I can recall reporting for work at the CT&S telephone assembly plant at 1920 Wylie Street, near the south end of the Cambie Street Bridge, next to Bissinger's reduction plant which often sent quite an animal waste stench into my workplace's assembly area.<sup>12</sup>

There were a number of arcs in that curve, during the CT&S experience. In effect, the apprenticeship program was a way for BC Tel to get a plentiful supply of union-affiliated installers at relatively cheap wages for the massive switchover of the province's telephone system from manual to automatic. The manual system meant that people using phones would lift the receiver, wait for the operator, then tell her (operators were almost all women) the desired number and wait to be connected. The BC Tel buildings where the operators were located had floors of huge switchboards with the operators seated in front of them. An operator would lift a cord-and-plug arrangement from the desk in front of her, then plug it into the right receptacle to make the connection.

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<sup>12</sup> This was June, 1957, I had no idea, of course, that almost 30 years later, the office of what eventually became *BC Christian News*, would be located around the corner. And each day in 1986, I would walk from the office to the east entrance of Expo '86, through the expo grounds and out the north entrance, taking notes of the various pavilions. From the north entrance, I would cross south on the Cambie Street Bridge back to the newspaper office. Then, each evening, I would fetch Edna from Carey Hall, the Baptist centre at University of British Columbia, where she worked as executive assistant to the principal, successively Drs. Roy Bell and Phil Collins. We would go back to Expo '86, use our season's passes and visit an exhibit or two. But, in 1957, that was still far in the future. However, transportation and communication was pretty much at the core of my learning curve, even right out of high school.

Gradually, all these operator positions were replaced by banks of electronic switches and cables and the connections could be made through electric impulses created by the rotary dials on the telephones scattered across the province. The move to automatic was facilitated by these hundreds of apprentices.

The work, for the most part, was fascinating. We were transferred through various programs during the apprenticeship, which was expected to run four years. The fellows (they were almost all men) were measured in progress with the hope that the best of them would have life-long careers in this burgeoning world of electronics. My ham radio experience even awoke me to the eventual emergence of microwave, by which phone signals and voices would fly through the ether, rather than being transported on wires. Of course, all this was leading to computerization, replacement of analog by digital, internet and wi-fi which would take almost to the turn of the century to come into its own.

All this was still ahead of me when I walked down 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Vancouver to a bus loop at 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Cambie Street. Everything westward beyond Cambie to Oak Street was bushland. There would generally be two people on the bus at the end of the line, myself and a mail sorter who took the bus to the main post office, just across the Connaught (Cambie Street) Bridge. A few more would hop on as we headed north. But the bushland continued for several more blocks past 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue. It was a few months after I began my daily bus ride that construction began on the Woodward's store which would become the heart of the Oakridge Centre, one of several major shopping malls that would develop in communities in various parts of what we now know as Metro Vancouver.

Today, the old bus loop is long gone. 49<sup>th</sup> and Cambie became the Langara golf course and, in due course, the Langara campus of Vancouver Community College.<sup>13</sup> And Cambie Street became the route of Canada Line, the mostly-underground part of the SkyTrain rapid transit network from downtown Vancouver to Richmond and the Vancouver International Airport.

It was during this time that I began taking some forks in the road which, in retrospect, required later correction, sometimes with considerable pain to others and myself.

I earlier mentioned Cathie Nicholl, a formidable and gracious leader in ISCF and IVCF. She lived at various times in Calgary and New Westminster and led western Canada's IS-IV and Pioneer Camp initiatives from there. Not long after I moved to Vancouver, I received a communication from Cathie. I had been recommended to spend a weekend being a resource person at an ISCF conference to be held at The Firs conference centre near Bellingham. Dozens of Fraser Valley high school students who were part of ISCF would be in attendance. The sense, as I understood it, was that this movement helped guide me into a constructive and positive faith experience during my high school years. It was time to give back.

I accepted Ms. Nicholl's invitation and was both intrigued and nervous about this experience. I was aware that ISCF clubs in Fraser Valley high schools were pretty strong, in part because of the many Mennonites and Christian Reformed people who had settled in communities like Abbotsford and Chilliwack.

But something else came up and I never made it to The Firs. Furthermore, I did not give Ms. Nicholls much notice. She was disappointed and let me know, politely. In retrospect, I was aware that this event was an example of an impulsiveness – a swinging between pleasing and adventuring – that needed to be understood and brought into check.

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<sup>13</sup> VCC, as it happens, became the site of an excellent journalism program. Occasionally, during my years at *The Chilliwack Progress*, the journalism teacher, Nick Russell, would invite me to talk to the students about community newspaper coverage of municipal politics.



Not so co-incidentally, when Edna and I were getting to know each other, almost a decade later, we discovered that Edna, then a grade 10 student at Chilliwack High School, had been at that conference.

While working at CT&S and staying at the Steeles, I attended Knight Road Gospel Hall, a long-established working-class Brethren assembly. About a year later, I began boarding with another Brethren family, who attended another assembly, a newly-established group. I will not name it, only to say it was one of about a dozen Brethren assemblies and an equal or greater number of fundamentalist-leaning churches east of Main Street. These assemblies and churches, in contrast to those on the west side of town, could be described as “working class”, holding more legalistic or narrow views than the west siders. There was a large contingent of high school and college age young people at this assembly and I became involved in assisting the leaders planning some of the social and Bible study programs.

It was a pretty “alive” group but one which also had roots in a more fundamentalist (“we have the truth”) milieu than I had been used to in Victoria and in my ISCF experience.

Meanwhile, at CT&S, I was becoming less comfortable, experiencing questions about where the job was leading, and having some conflicts relating to my faith and my involvement in the union – in this case, in the Federation of Telephone Workers.

Back in high school, in both church and home, there was a sense of ambivalence and perhaps nominal antipathy, about activities that could be described as left wing – including the union movement.

The general consensus among Christian business people was that working people could benefit from workers’ associations or unions – that unions, indeed, were a necessity in the earlier parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when lumber, mining and railroad barons were developing the nations’ infrastructures. But, in the context of the 40s and 50s, populist parties like the Social Credit and the Co-operative Commonwealth Confederation (the predecessor to the NDP) were rising on the right and left respectively. From the left, the emphasis on class struggle and class warfare, coming out of communism, was something that, in my home and church, would be opposed to the Christian concept of reconciliation.<sup>14</sup>

My father, as a firefighter, was a member of a firefighters’ union. But, because his occupation was an “essential service”, his union was not permitted by law to strike. In the milieu in which I was raised, strike action was a playing out of the concept of class struggle. It was generally considered that it was better for union and management to work out their differences, with mediation help as necessary.

Admittedly, this is a simplistic approach to a complex issue. But for purposes of this narrative, it lays out the basic “conciliation” concepts rooted in my understanding of the Christian faith, which I have tried to apply in business, educational, family, communication and religion, throughout my life.

In attending union meetings, only a few months removed from my rather sheltered home, church and school life, I experienced some shock as I heard colorfully-phrased hatred toward management expressed by many members, even leaders. I started to form, in my own mind, the sense that union structure was, in a manner of speaking, a “religion substitute”. The most obvious surface indication was that, as I had

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<sup>14</sup> Many years later, when I got to know Preston Manning and did a fair amount of writing about his political activities, I noted that, in my view, he provided an even-handed comparison of his father’s Alberta politics and those of Tommy Douglas, the then-premier of neighboring Saskatchewan. Both men, Ernest Manning and Tommy Douglas were Baptists and undoubtedly serious Christian believers, but came at politics from divergent viewpoints. My parents, listeners to Manning’s Christian broadcast, viewed Douglas as being almost communistic. I begged to differ, somehow and, later, when as a journalist, I interviewed Douglas, I innocently asked him if he was, indeed a Christian. His reply (paraphrased but true to the spirit of the reply): “Of course I am. I was converted at the age of 14. But there is much more to life, and that is why I am in politics.”

experienced in Brethren assemblies, union people referred to their fellow members as “brother” and “sister” and managers and owners in less friendly terms.

Another labour-management issue that emerged in my young mind and short attention span was the nature of the things that the union and management did agree on.

As I moved along in my working experience and training, I found myself doing well on the “brain” stuff – the understanding of telephone and electronic concepts for example – but rather poorly on mechanical or manual activities – like the soldering of wires to the terminal blocks connected to the electronic switches. I was good at knowing what wire was to be connected to which block pin and, over 60 years later, can still remember the color code used to identify the wires – blue, orange, green, brown and slate.

I have never been manually dextrous, but such dexterity was obviously a necessity in the completion of these huge exchange projects. The men who were better and faster at the manual tasks tended, in my view, to be assigned to busy construction jobs where speed and good solder joints were essential.

The result, for me, was that shop stewards and supervisors had me consigned to long hours in the cable racks near the ceilings and out of sight where I could not do any dexterity-deprived damage. It also protected my job security for the time being, at least. In effect, in a pragmatic way, management and the union were operating in concert in the spirit of the agreement to provide large numbers of workers for these big projects.

As the months passed, I was becoming aware that many manually-proficient guys were getting transferred to other places in the province where they could work independently and, at the same time, experience life on BC’s frontiers.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, I was increasingly wondering if I should have taken a different path educationally. I knew my father was proud of my working on a big, stable, long term phone exchange project and was using the interest engendered by my ham radio pursuits. I think he wondered whether, by some circuitous route, I could eventually become that television broadcast engineer that my yearbook predicted might be in the cards.

But, as I got involved in youth work at the assembly referred to above, I wondered about furthering my education. Although I had successfully completed the university entrance program at Oak Bay High School, I did not think I had the attention span to buckle down to university studies. The assembly elders thought that if I chose any school, it should be the Brethren-connected Emmaus Bible School, then located in Oak Park, a Chicago suburb. (Later, my brother and sister would both become Emmaus alumni.) I could not afford that. However, there was a school in the South Granville area of Vancouver that had been started by the son of J. Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission (later Overseas Missionary Fellowship). In the late 50s, it had been taken over by the Baptist General Conference (BGC),

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<sup>15</sup> June 17, 1958 was a day for a memory parenthesis in my CT&S experience. At that time, we were working on the new exchange in the Farrell Building, then the BC Tel headquarters before they built “The Boot” at Boundary and Kingsway. News spread quickly: Two spans of the then-under-construction Second Narrows Bridge had collapsed, killing an undetermined number of construction workers. We raced to the roof of the Farrell Building, located on Seymour Street just south of Georgia, where, across the city to the east, we could clearly see the two broken spans, angling off at 45 degrees from the pillars. We learned that the miscalculations of two engineers who had tragically died in the collapse, along with another 16 people, had led to the accident. While it is still informally known to many as Second Narrows after the body of water it crosses, its official moniker is Ironworkers Memorial Bridge. Union members of all stripes are particularly steadfast in using that name.

a Swedish-rooted group which was doing quite a bit of church-planting in Vancouver and needed a local-based school for the training, particularly, of lay church workers.<sup>16</sup>

The school was Vancouver Bible Institute (VBI). And, while it was Baptist, there were some Brethren people involved in teaching and leadership roles. Further, from a practical standpoint, its schedule was organized to permit attending classes in the morning and working at a job in the afternoon. And the tuition was only \$50 a semester, a sum I could manage nicely.

Not many weeks after that bridge collapse date, I – perhaps impulsively – decided to test the waters. I wrote a letter to the personnel department at CT&S, asking if I could be transferred to a project where I could be more productively employed. If something like that was not available, I indicated that I felt I needed to leave the apprenticeship program. To me, at the time, it was like Gideon putting out the fleece (in the Bible, in Judges, 6: 36-40). If CT&S saw me as a good long term prospect, they would keep me. If not, it might be time to further my education, still making use of my electronic interests.

The CT&S reply was polite but firm. The kind of posting I was looking for was not available to me and I was free to leave the apprenticeship program if I wished, with no obligation on the part of either employer or employee.

So, in September, 1958, I enrolled at VBI. I found the program of studies stimulating, both intellectually and spiritually. And I obtained work right away, in two nearby places. One was across the street at the Vancouver School Board, servicing and repairing electronic and audio-visual equipment. The other, with similar responsibilities, was at Associated Visual Services, which also, as it happened, was the Vancouver distributor for the Moody Institute of Science films, an outreach of Moody Bible Institute.

In due course, I learned that VBI (later known as Vancouver Bible College, and, today, Canadian Baptist Seminary, a part of the theological consortium at Trinity Western University) was a buried academic treasure. It was officially unaccredited but had a principal, LeRoy Gager and registrar, Robert Lilly, who were well skilled at designing programs of study that could be transferred to Bethel College (today Bethel University) a BGC-affiliated institution in Swede-rich Minnesota. (More about this academic treasure and how it helped shape my academic future, in Chapter 7.)

I thrived on the studies and even ended up becoming the pianist for a quartet that travelled across the prairies the following summer, presenting VBI in Baptist churches large and small. While my dexterity remained an issue, Rowland Hill, the music prof at VBI saw some hope of getting me to practice in a way that would get me through three weeks of accompanying the quartet. It worked and that was fairly good for my self-confidence. And I also got some extensive driving experience, taking VBI's early 50s era station wagon across four provinces and into a fifth, as well as four American states adjacent to the Canadian border.

Then came the five year crash.

I have written about that period of my life in a therapeutic exercise and shared it with Edna. For purposes of *Reflections*, and to protect the privacy of people involved, both still living and not, I will summarize that period, from 1962 to 1967, in one paragraph.

There was an ill-advised and difficult marriage which began and ended in that period. And linked to it was three short periods of pastoral work in North Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Victoria.

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<sup>16</sup> In connection with my assembly youth work, one bit of activity turned out to have a long time positive effect. One of the elders asked me one day to visit a young fellow who was new to the neighborhood but had some previous Brethren connections out in the Fraser Valley. I made the call and invited him to attend. He was there the following Sunday. He stayed long beyond my time there and became the assembly's co-pastor, a tenure that lasted 37 years.

Two children were born of that marriage. They have proved, over the years, to have been good coming out of an otherwise difficult period.

My daughter is warm and compassionate and has had considerable success in a marketing career, as well as, in earlier years, being a supportive military spouse. She has persisted at working on a post-secondary education on the side, and recently earned an associate of arts at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. She and her husband, a retired naval aircraft mechanic, have two children, a son who works for a social agency and a daughter married to a musician and high school teacher. The daughter, herself, is a communication specialist. They have two daughters, now ten and six.

My son has a strong work ethic and a keen “cut through the crap” mind. He has worked assiduously as a running and fitness coach and has, himself, run in many marathons – including the famous New York event. He has three adult children, all so far unmarried. He is currently working in an environmentally-oriented recycling business and hoping to get his Class 4 power engineering papers.

The Prince Rupert experience introduced me to some emerging indigenous issues which later provided helpful insights at an early stage in my journalism experience. Those insights centred on matters like the “60s scoop” and the tensions between “settler” religion and indigenous spirituality.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> When I was a reporter for *The Chilliwack Progress*, a decade later, I was taking some photos on a reserve along a rural Chilliwack road. I spied a large structure under construction. It was a longhouse, whose presence was part of the reality of an insurgent restoration of indigenous spirituality practices. The photo I took showed a graveyard in the foreground. The gravestones were topped with Christian crosses. The question was obvious: Was the particular indigenous group or nation in the area moving from acquiescence to “white man’s religion” to a restoration of indigenous spirituality? Confidentialities prevent going further in describing those insights. The accompanying story outlined in some detail, the then emerging “native” spirituality occurring in many of what we call the First Nations today. All that 50 years before much of what Canadians are learning today about the reconciliation process.

## Chapter 4

### New Life

The beginning of the transition to a new life took place on the first working day of 1967 – January 4.

That morning, I met with Cliff Hacker, the publisher of what was then the *Abbotsford, Sumas & Matsqui News*, one of three newspapers that were part of the Hacker Press group owed at the time by *Liverpool Daily Post & Echo*. The third person in the meeting was Frances Pengelly (later Wilson). Frances was the newspaper's business manager and a veteran of the community newspaper industry in British Columbia.

Cliff and Frances were looking for someone to manage and market the circulation side of the *News* with hints that I might want to do similar work for Hacker's other two papers, in Chilliwack and Mission.

I sensed, when offered the Abbotsford circulation job, that I was getting a new start. I was managing the circulation and distribution process in the urban areas during the day and, in the early evenings, would go out into the rural areas to renew mail subscriptions which were the backbone of the circulation revenue base.<sup>18</sup>

Soon into my Abbotsford tenure, I was encouraged to do some advertising sales. If circulation provided a substantial source of revenue for a newspaper, it was dwarfed by that provided through advertising. I enjoyed meeting customers, designing advertising campaigns and gaining a close look at the economic side of newspaper publishing. Some of the in-service training offered through the newspaper group included an emphasis on the axiom that marketing and advertising represented the concept of "the truth well told." Later, that concept proved basic for me, as well, in good journalism.

In due course, I met Cliff Hacker's older brother, Cecil (Cec), who was publisher of *The Chilliwack Progress* and the president of Hacker Press. The company had a large newspaper press in Abbotsford, which was used to print up to ten community newspapers in the Fraser Valley as well as a number of shopping fliers, many of which were inserted in those newspapers.

Cec held a history degree from the University of British Columbia and, as it happened, was the son of a United Church minister who had been a leader in his denomination, during the depression, on poverty and what we would, today, call "social justice" issues.

Cec picked up from Cliff in orienting me to newspapering. I learned, in due course, that he, like Canadian newspaper magnate Roy Thomson, held firmly to the belief that a potentially good community newspaper journalist benefits from spending time selling advertising first, in order to understand what makes newspapers tick economically.

He also showed that he understood my faith background – both its strengths and pitfalls. And he took time to mentor me in finding ways of using my Bible institute education to understand the community in which I was living. Those courses in English, psychology and church history all represented ways of understanding how people communicated with and understood each other. And my Christian education

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<sup>18</sup> There, I got a close look at the dairy, poultry and berry operations, many of the being carried on by successive waves of immigrant farmers – British, Mennonite, Dutch and later, south Asian. I got to know Sumas Prairie like the back of my hand and learned of the "miracle" draining of the Sumas Lake in the 1920s, turning the lakebed into some of the most fertile farmland in Canada. It was only much later that I also learned that First Nations people in the Sumas area believed their livelihood and culture had been decimated by the drainage. Among other things, their diet depended on the fish taken from the lake. My understanding of that history gave me a unique perspective during the devastating 2021 flooding of Sumas Prairie.

and homiletic courses helped me digest the dynamics of community organizations, city councils and the court system, among other things – as well as the role of rhetoric in public communication.

While I was engaged in ad sales, Cec introduced me to Brian McCristall, the *Progress* editor, a fiery redhead of Irish Catholic extraction who was a couple of years younger than me. (I had Irish in my way-back background, too, only of orange nature, not green. He was every bit as devout a Catholic as I was an evangelical. But he had some simple advice. “Lloyd,” he said, “you need to become better-rounded. You need to get into sports. It will take you off a totally-religious focus.”

Well, I was rather clumsy at sports, personally, and was very mildly a spectator. But I did have my ham radio hobby and it helped divert attention away from any religious obsession – real or imagined.

Brian started encouraging me to spend my evenings covering various community events and writing stories about them for publication in the next issue of *The Progress*. The first one, as I recall, was the annual meeting of the Chilliwack chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

I found the meeting quite fascinating. The SPCA operated a shelter for orphaned and abandoned animals. They also kept an eye on agriculture activities in the Chilliwack area, ferreting out acts of cruelty perpetrated against farm animals.

I turned in a story that ran to about 20 column inches of copy and got my byline on it. I was off to the races!

Within a couple of months, Cec and Brian called me down from the advertising department one afternoon. A reporter had suddenly resigned and there was a vacancy. I was pleasantly asked to turn over my advertising accounts and be prepared to begin work as a full time reporter. And that I did for the next five years, working from a desk in the newsroom. And I learned to take photos, too, and to develop them in the darkroom. As well, CHWK radio station, across the street, invited me to do a weekly one hour talk show. We called it “Stop Gap” because there was, at the time, a great recognition of the communication gap between adults and young people. I was an early version of the “multi-media journalist”!<sup>19</sup>

Both Cec and Brian saw strength in my faith background in reporting religion in this Bible belt. I was able to do it with the sense of detachment that objective journalism required, they believed. So, in addition to covering police, courts, school board and one of the local municipal councils, I was constantly on the lookout for feature stories, many of which had faith undercurrents to which my particular journalistic antenna was sensitive.

Often, Cec would assign me to lunch at the Chilliwack Rotary Club, where speakers from far and near would have something significant to say about, say, science, mental health, politics, the military, history, immigration, indigenous relations ... and, sometimes, religion. Often, to get the story right, I needed to be a quick study, picking up on the major underlying themes, and, at the same time, writing with clarity and, if necessary, attention-getting style.

One basic rule in telling stories, journalism style, was the “five W’s and the order of descending importance.” In the opening paragraph, the “who, what, where, when and why” would be told. Then, the rest of the story would be arranged in short paragraphs, with those 5-W information bits being expanded

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<sup>19</sup> One of the people I interviewed on the show was a young indigenous man who, at the time, was vice-president of the student council at Sardis Secondary School. The indigenous young people in the community attended public or Catholic schools, not those connected with the by-then discredited residential system. This particular young man was Stephen Point, who later became successively, a lawyer, the lieutenant-governor of BC and, recently, the chancellor of the University of British Columbia.

on and arranged in order of descending importance. That latter activity required some judgement calls and a sense of detachment. Would I, for example, make the faith angle more important than it was, in context?

There was a practical side to this arrangement, as well. If the story was 20 column inches long, and the editor determined that there were only 15 column inches available, then the story could be “chopped” from the bottom, minimizing the risk of losing the major facts.

Cec, in his bearishly friendly way encouraged me to work at integrating faith and community – to broaden my perspective without rejecting out of hand the values that I had long held.

One example: Cec was sometimes bluntly critical of fundamentalist Christians who insisted that they had the truth and spoke loudly of the need of others accept that truth as they presented it. My desk was just outside his office, in the *Progress*’ then office in downtown Chilliwack. One Friday, just before noon, the commissioner (senior officer for Canada) of the Salvation Army came in to see Cec. They both were heading to the Rotary luncheon where the commissioner was to be speaker. They talked for a few minutes in voices clearly audible around the office. Then, the commissioner put his hand on Cec’s shoulder and began to pray enthusiastically. He prayed for Cec, that he would be a recipient of God’s blessing. He prayed that the newspaper would serve the community well and be a witness to the goodness of God to its readers. He prayed that Cec would find fulfilment in his service to the community and in family and business relationships.

After lunch, when Cec returned to the office, I asked if he had been embarrassed by the commissioner’s boisterous prayer. His reply: “He is an officer of the Salvation Army. He has earned the right.”

At the time, the Salvation Army motto was: “serving with hand to man(kind) and with heart to God.”

As I was emerging from the disintegration of my marriage, I was feeling unsettled about my faith, believing that God, or at least my belief in God, was to blame for much of what had happened to me. Trying to read the Bible and talk with other Christians to get a fresh perspective was helpful, at times. And the writings of Christian philosopher C. S. Lewis were most helpful.

Two examples of Lewis were meaningful to me. One was that, even when a person is wandering from God, the “hound of heaven” was ever available to draw him or her back. The “hound of heaven” was not original to Lewis. It began, as far as I can tell with Psalm 139 which reads, in part:

You have searched me, LORD,  
and you know me.

<sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

<sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup> Before a word is on my tongue  
you, LORD, know it completely.

<sup>5</sup> You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.

The concept was later amplified by poet Francis Thompson in a poem of that name, penned in 1917.

Lewis’ promptings tended to reinforce, in my heart, the concept of “irresistible grace”, an emphasis coming from the Calvinistic side of Christendom. We will get to it later, but it can be noted, now, that through the years Baptist, Mennonite and Presbyterian thinking has guided Edna and me. And part of

Presbyterianism is the concept of irresistible grace – the idea that God’s grace is irresistible to the one who is subjected to it.

In that period of spiritual rediscovery coinciding with the beginning of my journalistic career and my meeting Edna, I experienced what I believed – and still believe – to be God chasing me like a bloodhound, his grace pursuing me in such a way that I could not resist it. And in accepting it, I came to a place of spiritual peace.

I also recall another Lewis statement:

“We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think if you look at the present state of the world it is pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistakes. We’re on the wrong road. And if that is so we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on.”

There was a caveat to that, of course. One could only take the right fork of the road if it was possible to return to the fork.

Once I was settled in Chilliwack, boarding with a devout Catholic family, I wondered what to do about professional development, social life and church.

I did what many young men working in business did – joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees). They had an excellent leadership development program and operated with the following objectives:

We believe:

- That faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life.
- That the brotherhood of man transcends the sovereignty of nations.
- That economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise.
- That governments shall be of laws rather than of men.
- That earth's great treasure lies in human personality.
- That service to humanity is the great work of life.

The development of social life was something I undertook carefully, cognizant of my own vulnerability. The community was welcoming to me as a young man, newly single and trying to see where the new fork in the road would take me.

Through a series of community contacts, I began attending Cooke’s Presbyterian Church, whose minister at the time was the late William Perry. It had a good young adult group and presented an appealing presence to people wanting to blend a serious personal faith with concerns for community service and social action.

As I became involved at Cooke’s, a newsletter committee was formed. Two of the people who were appointed to the committee were one Edna Dosso, an elementary school teacher and yours truly, a newspaper person.



Edna had Mennonite roots. Her parents, William and Helena Dosso (nee Doerksen) came from the Soviet Union in 1926, escaping from the Marxist regime of Joseph Stalin. They settled first in Saskatchewan then, in 1946, moved to Chilliwack, where William ran a small mixed farm and picked hops. In Russia, he had been a teacher. In Chilliwack, he was able to parley that teaching experience, on a voluntary basis, to lead Bible classes in Eden Mennonite Church, where the Dosso family worshipped.

Edna was the youngest of a family of seven siblings, two brothers and five sisters. Only her brother, Harry, who is 10 years older, is still alive. He is a retired physics professor whose career spanned several decades at the University of Victoria (UVic).

After completing the teacher education program at Victoria College (later UVic), Edna taught, mostly grade 2 and 3, in Chilliwack, Dawson Creek and Coquitlam. She also took a year out to study at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg (now Canadian Mennonite University).

That heretofore mentioned church newsletter committee meeting took place during Edna's second Chilliwack teaching stint. While she was strong in her faith, she sensed a need to find a different worship home and chose to attend Cooke's Church. Quite separately, both Edna and I were appreciating Bill Perry's intellectually-stimulating biblical preaching. He was also a good counsellor as we individually worked through our spiritual and social issues.

Edna and I had a couple of dates. We got along well but were pretty cautious about advancing our relationship. A few months went by and she "disappeared". I learned from friends at the church that she had moved to New Westminster and was teaching in Coquitlam.

She was happy to reconnect and we found we had a lot in common, both with respect to life objectives, which were complementary, and faith issues. And there was chemistry there, both emotional and spiritual, that I had never experienced before. It could best be described as "love."

Further, and this was significant to me in terms of the "fork in the road" (courtesy C. S. Lewis) that had become part of my internal deliberations. As Edna and I explored our history, we discovered that the weekend ISCF conference in 1957, out of which I had impulsively dropped, was one she attended. She was a grade 10 student at Chilliwack High School at the time and a member of the school's large ISCF club.

I am not naïve enough to believe that we would necessarily have personally met, let alone connected, at that conference. But the fact that I could have, should have, been there made a definite impression a decade later.

Over the months, we made plans to marry. Edna accepted my proposal and ring on February 7, 1969, (I could not wait until Valentine's Day). We planned to marry on July 5 at Cooke's Presbyterian Church, but postponed when Edna, ever the responsible organizer, concluded that my financial affairs needed some work to get in order. We sorted that out and rescheduled the wedding for December 20, 1969. It was a beautiful and moving ceremony. Interestingly, the Rev. Perry managed to work in some quotes from

Khalil Gibran as well as the usual biblical passages about marriage, giving us a few extra philosophical paths down which to wander in our new life together.<sup>20</sup>

The ceremony was followed by a reception in the church hall which included some 120 guests. There was much laughter, some good and at times noisy music and a little harmless trickery on the part of our respective attendants.

The one sad element was that Edna's father passed away about six weeks before the wedding. It was hard for her mother to go through those weeks. Indeed, there were tears shed at the wedding as Edna's brother, Harry, "gave her away." One aside: Helena Dosso seemed appreciative, during the groom's toast to the bride's mother, that there was a real and almost successful attempt to frame the words in Plautdietsch (low German). Her mother's pastor, Henry Wiens, allowed that he had understood the words!

There was more than symbolism in that expression. True, Edna and I had mutually found comfort and challenge in Cooke's Church. Indeed, we saw it as a "city of refuge" as, separately and together, we struggled with the elements of fundamentalism that poked its holes through our religious backgrounds. And that faith structure, broadly speaking, has continued through our 52 years (so far) of marriage. We have always attended churches that were evangelically leaning but broadly inclusive. We have never been comfortable in settings where the faith leaders declared that they had a "corner on the truth", tried to regiment the behavior of their younger members or made a belief in hell a requirement of faith.<sup>21</sup>

Issues aside, we both knew from where we had come. Edna was from Mennonite roots with an emphasis on piety, peace-making and consensus decision making, I, from the Plymouth Brethren with its stress on gospel preaching, frequent celebrations of the Lord's Supper and a training of the laity in biblical literacy. And there were also many points of commonality between Mennonites and the Brethren assemblies, although their ethnic differences tended to mean that they seldom had much contact with each other.<sup>22</sup>

The similarities – at that time – included the emphasis on training lay leaders biblically, a complementarianism that placed men in charge of the church and women responsible for keeping the home in place and an insistence that spiritual authority and religious freedom be allowed to flourish *sans* state interference. I would be remiss to note that the darker side of complementarianism is its arguably unreasonable repression of female leadership in the church.

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<sup>20</sup> Edna's nephew, Stan Dosso, later a long time professor and former head of the Ocean Sciences department at University of Victoria and a precise mathematician in that capacity, recalled recently that he checked his watch to confirm when Edna and I actually became husband and wife. It was 7:47 pm.

<sup>21</sup> I recall a conference in Victoria Gospel Hall, one of five Brethren assemblies in BC's capital, when I was about 12 years old. The preacher, a missionary to the Dominican Republic, home on furlough, delivered a sermon on the Ephesians 6 text which talks about "Children obey your parents." Surprisingly, he went on to the next phrase: "parents provoke not your children to wrath." There was some consternation among many of the parents and a few of the elders in the various assemblies, over his emphasis. They argued that children needed discipline and to be obedient and that parental provocation was quite in order, up to but not quite including child abuse. "Spare the rod and spoil the child," was their watchword.

<sup>22</sup> In my doctoral thesis, in 2015, I noted the similarities between the big urban Brethren assemblies in Victoria, where there were almost no Mennonites, and the big rural and small city Mennonite churches in the Fraser Valley, where Brethren assemblies were few and far between.

Much has altered over the years. The Brethren, for example, were behind the efforts to develop Regent College at the University of British Columbia. Defined as a “graduate lay school of theology” it drew its strength from the Brethren contention that an ordained order of clergy tended to mute lay people from become clear spokespersons and spiritual leaders.

Meanwhile, with the Mennonites, there was a continuing emphasis on the gospel’s responsibility for social agency, poverty relief and community development. Always cognizant of their role as the “quiet in the land”, they worked calmly at development through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Remembering their own oft status as refugees and persecuted immigrants, they empathized with oppressed and distressed people groups and worked widely to meet needs in Jesus name.

Remember my reference to Cec Hacker and the Salvation Army commissioner? In many ways, the Mennonites – through the MCC – have been like the Salvation Army, although, philosophically, they would eschew the militaristic terminology inherent in the SA structure.

During those years with *The Progress*, I was able to develop some free-lance writing opportunities which took Edna and me into new opportunities and experiences. Although there was never any temptation to revert, on my part, to pastoral ministry, my development as a journalist and Edna’s gradual shift from elementary school teaching into executive assistant responsibilities brought new ways of blending faith, communication, community service and even modest business opportunities.

In Chilliwack, we bought our first home, a two-bedroom, almost new, white stucco cathedral entrance house with a finished above-ground basement and a fabulous view of snow-capped rocky-cragged 7,000 foot Mt. Cheam, which towered over the farm fields east of town. They were good times there. Edna taught school at McCammon Elementary on the western edge of town. It was an interesting mixture of students, some immigrant-descended Mennonite or Dutch kids, others from old Brit-rooted Chilliwack families and others, still with indigenous roots.<sup>23</sup>

For my part, I thrived on the weekly process of covering meetings, interviewing leaders and ordinary people, watching for good faith-based stories that other reporters might miss and remaining involved for a while in Jaycees. We made friends not only in Cooke’s Church but through other churches and organizations in which we were involved. Often, we would go to social events arranged through the school or the Chilliwack District Teachers’ Association. Most of Edna’s teaching compatriots were open and accepting of me. Some were a bit careful, being that I was a journalist and was covering school board. A few had experienced situations where the quotes they had given reporters were misunderstood by readers, including parents.

We were moderately involved in Cooke’s Church. I became an elder and was appreciative, as well, of the open-minded counsel offered by the minister, Bill Perry. He was pretty involved in the community, later

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<sup>23</sup> McCammon School was on the edge of the city, with a couple of “Indian” reserves nearby. It had for some time been the practice on the nearby reserves for children to be enrolled in the public or Catholic school systems rather than being in residential schools.

serving as a township council member. His wife, at the time, had come from a more evangelical church background and had actually come to faith through the ministry of Charles Templeton.<sup>24</sup>

In 1972, as noted previously, I took leave of full time work with *The Progress* and began writing a provincial affairs column for about 30 community newspapers across British Columbia. I also reported from Victoria for the *Columbian*, a long time New Westminster daily. I will go into more detail about this era in Chapter 6 (To Toronto: The First Time). First, though, I would like to describe the changing provincial political setting in which I found myself, as a young journalist.

One of my first forays was to link up with a cabinet tour of northern and central BC led by W. A. C. Bennett, who had, by then, been the Social Credit premier for 20 years. The NDP, led by Dave Barrett, a social worker who had been fired from his job in a Haney correctional facility, was stirring up a storm and the cabinet tour was intended to shore up Socred support in rural ridings,

I joined the tour by flying into Prince Rupert. It was my first foray into the city since my brief pastoral experience a decade before. Each morning, a dozen or so cars would be lined up, half carrying cabinet ministers and the rest, reporters. I only knew one minister, Ken Kiernan, an amiable former bike repair person of great integrity, who had been Bennett's cabinet "trouble-shooter" for 20 years. He represented Chilliwack in the provincial legislature.

During that time, Bennett was talking about giving an industrial boost to the province by initiating the British Columbia Development Corporation, which would loan low interest money to companies wanting to develop new economic activity in the manufacturing or resource development areas. I will write more about that in a few minutes.

There were rallies or meetings with seniors groups or civic leaders in the cities along the route, places like Terrace, Smithers, Vanderhoof and Prince George.

I was quickly learning something about the cleavage between media and governing politicians during that tour. I shared a car with reporters for the *Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*. At that point, I was both writing a provincial affairs column for the community newspapers, some of whom were on the route I was travelling and working as a reporter for the aforementioned *Columbian* of New Westminster. But I was not yet a member of the Vancouver-New Westminster Newspaper Guild, the union to which reporters of the larger papers belonged.

It was a bit surprising, then, to find that some of the reporters, particularly the one from *The Province*, were very quick to berate the Bennett cabinet and its record and to openly advocate for regime change to the only alternative – the Barrett New Democrats.

One of the tactics of the reporter from *The Province* was to wander into the crowd of cabinet greeters and watchers and say something like: "Isn't this the most hated government in BC's history?" then wait for the answer. And the answer, if it agreed with the reporter's question, helped to provide interesting fodder for soon-to-follow news stories or columns.

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<sup>24</sup> A widely-renowned Toronto pastor who became an early evangelist contemporary with Billy Graham, Templeton eventually became spiritually skeptical, turning to Liberal politics and, in due course, radio commentating and book-writing.

I learned that the Guild social structure was good breeding ground for “working journalist” political perspectives. I am not saying that the Guild itself was politically-biased toward the NDP but I don’t think it would be an overstatement to suggest that many of the reporters carried such biases – at times openly and at others, somewhat camouflaged. Of course, such reporters would contend that they were only redressing the balance – that the newspaper owners were biased toward conservative or liberal politicians.<sup>25</sup>

Two subsequent events in the run up to the 1972 election and one, shortly after Dave Barrett and the NDP won that election, help to bolster my line of pro-bias reasoning.

I left the Bennett cabinet tour in Prince George, needing to get back to the Lower Mainland, ahead of time. So I missed the cabinet visit to the Royal Towers Hotel in New Westminster. But it was there that the agriculture minister, Cyril Shelford, was attacked by a two-by-four wielding alleged union member. The minister sustained a dislocated shoulder. It was fairly widely-believed, at the time that that Shelford was a victim of labour-based anti-management thuggery.

A few weeks later, I joined a tour of the Okanagan and Kootenay areas led by Barrett. It was three weeks before the August 30, 1972 election which saw the Bennett government defeated by the Barrett NDPers. A particularly interesting experience was a Barrett rally in a mining union hall in Trail attended by about 200 people. I would guess they were mostly workers in the city’s main industry, the giant smelter which overlooked downtown Trail and the Columbia River, or from the mines which fed the smelter.

At one point, reaching the crescendo of his speech, Barrett, who was a resounding orator when he was on a roll, began railing at the press barons of the province who, he maintained, had so much sway. He maintained that they used that sway to support the pro-business Bennett government and the mining and lumber barons.

Then he turned dramatically to the press table (where I was sitting, along with a half dozen other reporters) and, to thunderous audience applause, shouted “but I know you people are not on the press barons’ side – you are on our side, the people’s side!”<sup>26</sup>

The third incident took place a few months into the new Barrett government’s tenure. Dennis Cocke has been elected an MLA from New Westminster. By that time, I was on the reporting staff of *The Columbian* and had taken out membership in the Newspaper Guild – required of all full time reporters. Edna and I were living in Surrey, in a townhouse we had bought near Guildford Town Centre. I would go over to Victoria for several days every two weeks to cover the legislature and watch the new cabinet in action. Many of the cabinet ministers, Cocke, Barrett, Ernie Hall, Jim Lorimer and Eileen Dailly, served ridings within the *Columbian* circulation area.

One Friday, heading back to the mainland on the ferry, Cocke and I passed the time in a brief conversation. To my surprise, he laid out a brief proposal for a new BC Development Corporation. I said something like: “Isn’t that what W.A.C. Bennett was going to do?” His response: Yes, only the NDP would capitalize it twice as heavily, otherwise it would not be enough.

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<sup>25</sup> More recently, with many media unions aligning with Unifor (the private sector “superunion”, under the leadership, until his recent health and ethical breach problems, of Gerry Dias), the perspective has become more blatantly “anything but conservative”, in my modest view.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that this is a recollection and as such, a paraphrase, but I will attest that, the words I put in quotes are an accurate account of the message that Barrett carried.

But here was the clincher: If a contingent of reporters wanted to buy *The Columbian* from the Taylor family, which had owned it for decades, the government would bankroll it. “Then you would have a peoples’ paper.”

My reply, as I recall: “What would that do to the concept of an independent press – a separation between a free press and government”.

Cocke congenially declined to reply. And he never raised the subject again in my presence.

At this point, it is worth noting that the NDP of the day had its own divisions and conflicts, and some of them were faith-based, so I was able, with some accuracy, to detect them.

Cocke was not a union member let alone activist. He was an insurance salesman and broker and was very good at his work. He was an unapologetic member of Queen’s Avenue United Church, an historic congregation whose commodious sanctuary was next door to New Westminster City Hall. He and his wife, Yvonne, were among the recruits the New Democrats had been successful in attracting from the followers of “social justice” Christianity. They were, in a word, Tommy Douglas social democrats.

So was MLA Peter Rolston, a United Church minister from Mission who tried very hard to blend elements of the social gospel with various evangelism initiatives. He had taken evangelism training from Campus Crusade for Christ, which was in its heyday at the time.

MLA Hartley Dent, a Anglican minister who was part of the charismatic/pentecostal movement, from the Terrace area, was another social gospeller. And so was Barrett. Raised in a liberally Jewish and Marxian-oriented household, he knew all about the Marxian views on “class struggle” and “the opiate-like influences of religion”. But his social work education was in two American Jesuitical universities – Seattle and St. Louis (the latter where he earned his master’s degree.)

The “union” side of the NDP drew its strength from people who saw “class warfare” as an important part of how unions influenced a wider society. The idea of a “peoples’ paper”, in my modest observation, fit into that concept.<sup>27</sup>

With respect to Barrett himself, I recall him very movingly addressing a student group at a Mennonite institution in Clearbrook, the heart of the Fraser Valley Bible belt. I cannot recall whether it was at Mennonite Educational Institute or Columbia Bible College, but I do very clearly recall his warm identification with Mennonite conflict resolution and peace-building. He cited his love for the song “let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.”

Of course, Barrett’s almost inflammatory Trail union hall statements about press barons, during the run up to the 1972 election, would not completely fade from memory in considering his talk to the Mennonites. But both events were illustrative of the kinds of conflicts implicit in the emerging NDP narrative.

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<sup>27</sup> So do the current federal government’s proposals for government attempts to revive and protect journalism and journalists. True, those approaches are a little more finessed than the idea of bald-facedly “replacing a free press with a peoples’ press.” And, not to be too conspiratorial, I cannot help but note that Gerry Dias, until recently, the head of Unifor, which has a division representing many print and electronic newsrooms and journalists, is very clear that that he would never support the federal Conservatives or their provincial counterparts. In fairness, I should note that in December, 2021, the current Conservative premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, co-opted Dias to help him lobby American leaders to on their “buy America” policies that were threatening Canadian auto industry jobs.

Before moving on to the next chapter – my faith-based freelance journalism and subsequent move to Toronto to work for the *United Church Observer* – let me recall one little Victoria-Abbotsford travel story that had nothing to do with politics.

During the early stages of my free-lancing, I would sometimes drive from Chilliwack to the Abbotsford airport and catch a flight on a small amphibious plane to Victoria. It was your usual Cessna 150 single engine plane with floats attached. And imbedded in the floats were retractable wheels. The wheels would be used to take off from Abbotsford. Then they would be retracted into the bodies of the floats, which would be used to “land” on the water in Victoria, almost in front of the legislative buildings.

One day, after working at the “ledge” all day, I hopped on the Cessna for the trip back to Abbotsford. All went well until we were approaching the runway. The pilot said he could not get the wheels down. Something about the air temperature maybe causing some ice buildup around the wheels.

No problem, he said, turning the plane southward to tiny Judson Lake which straddles the Canada-US boundary a mile or so south of the airport. He brought the plane down on the lake’s surface, hopped out onto the floats and jiggled a screwdriver around the wheel retraction mechanism. Then we took off, crossing into the US and ascending what seemed like a very few feet above the lakeside brush before banking left and heading back to the Abbotsford airport. The wheels, fortunately, did come down and we made a safe runway landing.

## Chapter 5

### Faith and community

While reporting on, and sometimes analyzing, Chilliwack and BC politics, I was increasingly receiving opportunities to write news and feature stories for a range of faith-based publications.

It began with some Mennonite newspapers and magazines – and particularly with research work commissioned by the late Frank H. Epp, a Mennonite pastor, journalist and historian. Epp wanted me to go into the bound and/or microfiche copies of the Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Mission newspapers to find references to Mennonite activity in the Fraser Valley from 1935 to the mid-1950s. Particularly, he was interested in Mennonite peace-building activity during World War II.

It was an interesting exercise for me as I was getting to know both Edna and her Mennonite background and developing an appreciation for peace-building and faith-based conflict resolution and management.

It was there that I uncovered an aspect of Mennonite life that caused some perhaps inadvertent conflict between Mennonites and other “settlers” in the Abbotsford area. It related to the enforced moving of Japanese Canadians from the coast to camps in eastern BC and southern Alberta, not long after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, in 1941-42. A number of the Japanese who were moved east were farmers in Bradner, a fertile area between Abbotsford and Aldergrove. They lost their property because it was placed into government hands.

In due course, when the properties were put up for sale to cover taxes, some of the buyers were Mennonites impacted by the war in a different way. Those Mennonites were conscientious objectors who declined to bear arms because of their peace beliefs. Many of them served in medical corps or engaged in tree-planting and, when the former Japanese-held lands were put up for sale, they were in a position to be able to buy them and restore them to use – and, not so co-incidentally, to pay municipal taxes on them.

I wrote quite a few stories for *Canadian Mennonite*, *Mennonite Reporter* and *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. Some were about the Block brothers, Henry and Arthur, who built an extensive real estate empire in Western Canada and, in the process, gave employment and business opportunities to Mennonite and other Christian residential builders. Large tracts of valley and Vancouver land, including landfills in south Vancouver, became what are today, nicely aging middle class residential areas.

Other stories included coverage of Mennonite Central Committee Canada board meetings, where I learned much about the social justice being carried out quietly in many nations I had never even heard of.

At least two continuing issues became subjects for some of the news stories I did for Mennonite publications – the increasing emphasis on evangelism and the wish to attract non-Mennonite or, as they called them, “the English” into their churches. The most direct way to do so was to invite friends and neighbors to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, then encouraging them into the fellowship of the church.

The Mennonite Brethren churches became very good at this and in time, some of their congregations (Willingdon in Burnaby and Northview in Abbotsford, for example) grew into megachurches of several thousand, in some measure, as a result of these efforts.

Of course, it was to be expected that some churches and branches of the Mennonite community would see the need for evangelism. They had sustained considerable losses during and after World War II as other



denominations offered enthusiastic worship, dramatic preaching and great music. Groups like the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Pentecostals, the Evangelical Free and some Baptists provided well-choreographed Sunday night services which attracted among others, hundreds of Mennonite young people – some of whom felt a little uncomfortable and even unpatriotic about their forbears' emphasis on pacifism. In due course, as they married and had children, these young people aligned with the churches that they had so enjoyed on Sunday nights.

So the move to evangelism was a natural counter to what had happened a few years earlier. But it tended to buck the inert need for many Mennonites to continue being the “quiet in the land” (*die stille im lande*). The evangelical types would refer to these people as “cultural” Mennonites who really needed to be “born again” so that they could experience the fullness of a personal relationship with God.

Culture, unity in the community and the sense of family and belonging were important to those Mennonites who wanted to keep to the old paths. Indeed, many of the younger people who wanted to keep conflict studies, peace-building and consensus as a vibrant part of their church and spiritual lives were the ones who leaned toward social justice and turned such as the Mennonite Central Committee into a real outreach vehicle.

The other Mennonite stories that I had opportunity to cover related to the charismatic movement – which had grown out of the desire of many Christians to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were prevalent in the early churches. It proved at times to be divisive in some churches as cessation-leaning people – who believed that those gifts were necessary before the canon of Scripture was established, but not later – bridled at what they saw to be a charismatic desire to force the gifts on all people. A “them” versus “us” tendency developed.

I was able to do a number of stories about how churches were managing this tension which, it seemed at the time, needed to bring a little understanding and communication to both sides. So there was a sense of fulfilment in that.

Besides Frank H. Epp, Larry Kehler, editor of *The Canadian Mennonite* and later *The Mennonite Reporter* kept me busy free-lancing stories, as did Harold Jantz, who was editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. (Harold was later founding editor of *ChristianWeek*, a national evangelical newspaper. More about that in Chapter 9.)

I was appreciative of being accepted by these editors and many of the people I interviewed. I was not a Mennonite but I was now married to one. Those facts helped me to understand the Mennonite community in BC from slightly less than arms-length, but also to maintain some objectivity, so as to avoid coming down heavily on one side or another. Peace-building and consensus, you know!

Because we were part of Cooke's Presbyterian Church, there were soon opportunities to write for the *Presbyterian Record*, whose editor was then DeCourcy Rayner. He arranged for me to attend a major Presbyterian conclave at the University of Guelph in 1971. Getting there, in itself, proved interesting, because I flew one of the first Air Canada 747 daily flights between Vancouver and Toronto.

As I boarded the plane, I wondered how such a big bird could ever get off the ground. Soon, we were trundling down the runway but, before we could take off, came to a full stop. The pilot reported that an indicator light was showing possible engine trouble. We went back to the terminal and after an hour or so, the pilot again reported. The fault had been in the indicator light, not in an engine. Off we went. The 747 got us to Toronto without incident.

I wrote a fulsome report on the conference (dubbed the Crux of the Matter) for *The Record*. Much of the emphasis was on introducing new worship styles, encouraging spiritual innovation while keeping in mind the great traditions of Presbyterianism, the gospel and all sorts of other good things.

The charismatic movement had its impact on Presbyterians, as well and, later, within the United, Catholic and Anglican churches. In fact, the charismatic movement within mainstream Christianity had some of its North American genesis with Father Dennis Bennett at Seattle's St. Luke's Episcopal (Anglican) Church in Seattle.

In BC, that impact was felt at First Presbyterian Church in New Westminster, pastored at the time by Calvin H. Chambers. A very effective preacher and organizer, he built the congregation to around 600 during the early part of his tenure. (His middle name, Haddon, apparently reflected a parental wish that he grow up to reflect the stylings of the great Baptist orator, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. It is said by some that he did not disappoint.) When the effects of his charismatic approach began to cause controversy within the congregation, the Presbyterian powers-that-be delinked him from First Church.<sup>28</sup>

There was a good story that came out of the Calvin Chambers period at First Presbyterian and that should be noted, as well. Cal was very involved in the M2-W2 movement which sought to encourage Christian lay people to establish rapports with inmates in both provincial and federal prison systems. One of the people at First, Ed Nadort, responded to Cal's encouragement. I was able to do a story for one of the take-home adult Sunday School papers, *Power for Living*, published by Gospel Light Press.

These friendships were intended to help lead inmates to friendship with Jesus and to prepare them for release – ensuring them that they would not be alone, or tempted to form associations with people who had led to their incarcerations in the first place.

It was similar to other stories that I had written about M2-W2, both for community newspapers and faith-based publications. I would usually lead with a provocative paragraph declaring that “Last month, 15 men from \_\_\_\_\_ Church went to prison...”

Two of the free-lance opportunities that I cherished were with American publications which had substantial Canadian readerships – *Christianity Today* and *Decision*. Despite my location on the West Coast, at the time, I was expected to chase up stories from various parts of Canada for *CT*. And my first assignment with *Decision* came in doing a retrospect on Billy Graham's brother-in-law, Leighton Ford, and their mini-crusade in Vancouver in 1965. The context was that something was brewing for Ford in the mid-70s and some background coverage was in order.

My *CT* experience lasted close to two decades. Some years, I might file as many as 10 or 12 stories, others, only two or three. They touched on church politics, church-community interactions, social action, prayer breakfasts, the charismatic movement, evangelicalism in mainstream denominations and Catholicism, evangelism and the then embryonic development of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. One story, I recall, was about the late Terry Winter, who, like me, had come from Brethren assemblies' background. He was widely regarded as a “thinking person's evangelist”, hosting a weekly television show that featured many of the evangelical thought-leaders of the day – among them John Stott, Rebecca

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<sup>28</sup> Later, the denomination withdrew his credentials on the basis of division and heresy. For some years, he pastored in the Reformed Episcopal and other small denominations and led a mission ministry in Ottawa. Ultimately his Presbyterian clergy credentials were restored and his funeral took place in 2014 in Haney Presbyterian Church.

Manley Pippert, Roy Bell and James Houston. *CT* actually used the thinking person's reference in the story headline about Terry. I wondered if it would sound elitist but the editor's thought it was appropriate.

I would be remiss to end this chapter without talking about one of the finest opportunities I had during my first stint at *The Progress* to blend community service and faith perspective.

It was around the time of the centennials that marked BC history – 1958, 1966, 1967 and 1971. The first, 1958, marked 100 years since the establishment of the Crown Colony of British Columbia. In 1966, the occasion was the union of the Vancouver Island and British Columbia colonies.

The centennial of Canadian Confederation soon followed in 1967. And finally, in 1971, the celebration was to mark BC's entry into that Confederation. The latter two were both celebrated with appropriate fervor, the first initiated on the federal level and highlighted by Expo '67 in Montreal and the 1971 event, on a provincial level, it proved to be W. A. C Bennett's last kick at the can as well, not long before leading his 20 year Social Credit government into the election that would terminate it.

Centennial Committees in 1971 were organized in cities across British Columbia and matching funds from senior governments were available for capital projects to mark the occasion and take the Centennial legacy into the future memories of the grateful citizenry. The provincial chair was a fellow named Lawrence J. (Lawrie) Wallace who, in fact, had been given the moniker "Mr. Centennial" because he chaired the British Columbia celebrations in all four years.

As it happened, Lawrie Wallace and Cec Hacker were good friends and Cec had been involved locally in previous Centennial events. When they went casting about for some young blood to spearhead the Chilliwack celebrations, somehow, my name came to the fore.

We did some community surveying as to what kind of project would fit. Some cities had relatively small projects – public washrooms – while others were going for major expenditures – like hockey rinks or stadia. With some controversy from both sides, we chose to build and equip a museum concentrating on Chilliwack history dating from later First Nations (then called native) times to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. As a relative newcomer to Chilliwack, I could see the value in a museum because it was a community that was most cognizant of its history – particularly the waves of people groups that had shaped it over not only during BC's entry into Confederation but before and since.

We did encounter some bumpy roads on the project, in part due to reluctance on the part of Chilliwack township (the pre-merger rural municipality then surrounding the city of Chilliwack) to pony up its share of the funds. At that point, my tendency toward a short attention span caused me to get a bit impatient and resign as Centennial chair. The politics were a bit much: I wanted to get back to "objective journalism".

An interesting twist to my Centennial involvement was the suggestion that I resurrect some of my now dormant (apparently not yet extinct) pulpit skills, with a view to preparing sermons with a Centennial theme for delivery at various area churches. The idea was to try motivating the faithful to do their parts for the celebration. I think the idea came from Cooke's minister, Bill Perry. Cec Hacker and Brian McCristall, my publisher and editor were cautiously supportive.

But what to talk about? Well, how about the Year of Jubilee, taken from Leviticus 25:8–13:

You shall count off seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven years; and there shall be to you the days of seven Sabbaths of years, even forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. You shall make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee to you; and each of you shall return to his own

property, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee to you. In it you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself, nor gather from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat of its increase out of the field. In this Year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property. (World English Bible).

That proved to be an acceptable choice. Bill Perry asked me to deliver it, first, at Cooke's Church and invitations from another 10 or so churches followed – United, Mennonite and Alliance to name some. While I did not get to deliver it as a homily in a Catholic church, I was inveigled to chair a panel discussion on the subject in the gym of St. Mary's Catholic School on a Sunday night. It drew about 400 people from across the Christian spectrum – many of whom would not likely have much to do with each other on a usual Sunday, but probably worked or went to school together on weekdays.

It was the beginning of what I found to be an interesting challenge – to be fluently “bilingual” in a way that would help me to communicate effectively with Christians of a broad range of theological or practice perspectives.

But let's move on to the next step.

## Chapter 6

### To Toronto: The First Time

As I indicated earlier, during my five years, spent mostly as a reporter for *The Chilliwack Progress*, an increasing number of queries came to hand from Christian faith-based publications, asking me to freelance stories for them. The publications included *The Canadian Mennonite*, *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, *Presbyterian Record*, *The United Church Observer*, *Decision Magazine* and *Christianity Today*.

At the same time, seemingly little incidents popped up, offering possible clues to what the future might hold. I remember one morning heading for a coffee shop across the street from *The Progress* office, with some people I was interviewing. One of them recognized a journalist friend in another booth – someone who, as it turned out, had worked for one of the large Toronto newspapers for a few years. The journalist had returned to BC to edit a community newspaper – on Vancouver Island, as I recall. He had a bit of unsolicited advice: A move to the “centre of Canada” to work on a publication that has some national influence, can be a useful career move. He added that, of course, in the long term, a westerner will always want to return west when the time is ripe. I kept that in the back of my mind and have reminded myself of that story every few years, as Edna and I moved from west to east and back again, not once but three times.

Meanwhile, Brian McCristall and Cec Hacker, had observed my interest in matters political and encouraged me to go over to Victoria frequently in quest of legislative stories of local Chilliwack interest. In fairly short order, I was able to develop a column which appeared not only in *The Progress* but in about 30 other community newspapers throughout British Columbia. The reason for the interest was that the political reign of W. A. C. Bennett as Social Credit premier was coming up to 20 years. To some observers, change was in the wind.

The new track for me was made easier by an offer from *The Columbian*, the long-established New Westminster daily newspaper. My job as a reporter was to join with three others to cover a specific city council and take turns crossing the water to Victoria, to cover the provincial legislature. My mainland assignment was covering Burnaby council.<sup>29</sup>

During our *Columbian* time, Edna and I attended First Presbyterian Church in New Westminster. It had recovered from the charismatic tensions, interestingly, with the help of the minister who succeeded Calvin Chambers. Ken Wheaton was a former Pentecostal cleric who had moved over into Presbyterian denomination and successfully pastored a church in the Toronto suburb of Scarborough. He was comfortable both in the warmth of Pentecostal worship and the more structured and classic ways of Presbyterianism.

It was a good experience for us to worship in a church that had come through both good and not so good times, still to be providing a spiritual presence in and service to its community.

A most interesting assignment came during this time of provincial legislative coverage combined with faith-based reporting. It came from *The United Church Observer*. Jim Taylor, previously a radio journalist from British Columbia had gone to the *Observer* as managing editor. At the time, it had a

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<sup>29</sup> As it happened, I also had a short term assignment covering the opening of Surrey Place Shopping Centre. Little did I know that Edna and I would return to the Surrey Place neighborhood half a century later, in retirement, to watch the “south of Fraser” metropolis emerged around Surrey’s SkyTrain presence and City Centre, which included a greatly enlarged shopping centre, City Hall, Central Library Civic Plaza, Simon Fraser and Kwantlen University campuses – and much more to come!

300,000 circulation and was an energetic and authentic presence on the Canadian media scene, under the editorship of A. C. Forrest.

Taylor had heard something about the Jesus People – groups of evangelical young people who were successfully reaching out to hippies and introducing them to Jesus as the preferred option to a drug-induced haze. He assigned me to the story and I particularly tracked a group called the Jesus Peoples' Army (JPA), led by a clean-cut Pentecostal minister name Russ Griggs.

One Sunday afternoon, Edna and I headed for Vancouver from Chilliwack, where we were still living, to attend a JPA immersion baptism at English Bay near Stanley Park. There were around 200 young people present, giving noisy singing and "praise the Lord" support to the new inductees. It was a bit chilly – an early February date, as I recall. Edna and I talked to quite a few people afterward, listening to their enthusiastic expressions of faith and responding with respect to their desire to make sure that we, too, were real Spirit-filled Christians. One bouncy young woman asked me when I had been born again and I said, 1947. With wide eyes and wonder, she replied: "That's cool! That's longer than I have been alive!"

Talk about feeling old, at just over 30.

That was a cover story in the *Observer*. The next assignment was to catch a bus to Nelson, then grab the mail truck to Argenta, up Kootenay Lake, around the bend and down the other side. Argenta was home to a Quaker (Society of Friends) community, led by Norm and Betty Polster. Norm had been a physics prof in California and Betty, a peace and social justice activist. In objection to American militarism, they had moved to Canada with 10 other families in 1952. They tried subsistence living and formed friendships with many of the summer residents of Argenta, including Phillip Hewitt, a Unitarian minister from Vancouver.

A number of draft resisters, some fleeing involvement in the Vietnam War were attracted, over the years, to the community and to the peace-building approach of the Quakers – not unlike those of the Mennonites but with a more refined form of pacifism. For the families' education, Friends School served the purpose.

I spent several days at Argenta, attended a silent meeting on Sunday, picked blueberries from the bushes out behind the main house, watched a surprisingly competitive softball game and inspected the ski lift that they had built on a grassy field high above the town, for winter activity. And on the way back to Nelson, I stopped off to see the doctor that served the community. Without betraying any confidences, he indicated that while the community's ethical and work standards were outstanding, there were social problems that periodically needed attention, as drug-based influences attempted to penetrate the remote settlement.

There was one more *Observer* assignment. I was able to tie it in with the aforementioned Bennett cabinet tour, going to Prince Rupert a few days ahead and from there, flying in on a float plane to Port Simpson, to an indigenous fishing village of about 2,000 people with long time United Church ties. I stayed in the local "hotel" which was more like a bunkhouse with a handful of private rooms and a common washroom down the hall. Port Simpson had a beautiful setting – lots of berthed fishing boats, mostly gillnetters as I recall, and a few seiners. Looking across the strait about 15 miles north, one could see the snow-capped peaks of the Alaska panhandle. I knew that tucked around the corner was Ketchikan, the southernmost Alaskan city and home of an even larger fishing fleet.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Port Simpson is known, today, as Lax-Kw'alaams derives from *Laxlgu'alaams*, also formerly spelled *Lach Goo Alams*, which means "place of the wild roses." Its involvement with the United Church and its Methodist predecessor dated back to 1874, and the outreach efforts of Thomas Crosby. (Earlier Anglican initiatives resulted in a community rupture, with the Anglican priest of the day moving about 800 of the community south to Metlakatla, just north of Prince Rupert.)

It was an interesting few days. I was the only “white” person in town at the time, but I was told about a provincial agent who had lived there the previous year. He was not very well regarded because he was trying to change their culture by encouraging the planting of gardens and reducing their reliance on fishing.

I watched baseball games, inspected smokehouses and generally was made to feel not quite at home but not outcast, either. As I flew back into Prince Rupert, I found myself noting that its street system, downtown core and burgeoning port made it a virtual metropolis in this forested wonderland dotted with dozens more little villages like Port Simpson.

I guess we did not realize it at the time, but, with these assignments, I was being surreptitiously tested. The following year, Jim indicated that the *Observer* would be paying my way to the annual meeting of the Canadian Church Press (CCP), with hints being offered that more might be at stake.

The CCP meeting took place in an old hotel on Jarvis Street, in the middle of the red light district and half a block from historic Jarvis Street Baptist Church, scene of many fundamentalist forays against the early 20<sup>th</sup> century encroachments of United and liberal Baptist “modernism.”

I received a tour of the United Church headquarters, then located a few blocks south on St. Clair Avenue East, and met A. C. (Al) Forrest. He was deeply spiritual, theologically informed and politically astute. He was a great story teller and, by the way, a persuasive preacher.

Long story short: A few months later I received a firm offer. Edna and I sold our condo in Guildford Mews, Surrey. We had moved there from Chilliwack, only five months before, at the peak of my work with the *Cumbian*.<sup>31</sup>

Edna, of course, had a well-established elementary school teaching career in BC, so it was a bit of a surprise to her that getting a similar job in Toronto was next to impossible for a westerner not educated in the Ontario system. It did not take long to move to plan B. It became a harbinger for her future, in executive assistant work with a number of excellent Canadian, mostly faith-based, leaders and 15 years in a similar post with a federal parliamentarian.

Edna became the assistant to John Ambrose, head of worship resources in the United Church’s Division of Mission in Canada. She was on the seventh floor of the United Church headquarters, or “seventh heaven” as it was irreverently described by some. I was on the fifth floor, with a great view to the south. My time at the *Observer* coincided with construction of the CN Tower, down on the lakeshore. I watched it rise about the treeline of a park to the south of us, over a period of months. We left and returned west before the tower was completed, however.

At the time, the *Observer*, based on the calculation of three readers to every copy, was being eyeballed by close to one million people.

Al Forrest made it clear that one of my strengths in being added to the *Observer* team was my evangelical background and ethos. There were many evangelicals in the United Church and their stories needed to be

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<sup>31</sup> In effect, the *Cumbian* quietly arranged to smooth the move by getting me a “freebie” trip to Toronto to visit the Mosport track east of Oshawa, along with a cluster of auto journalists, to observe some test runs on new Audi cars. The trip allowed face time with Jim Taylor, *Observer* associate editor Patricia Clarke, production editor Muriel Duncan and Dr. Forrest, to double-check plans for our move, less than a month later.

told. But I also needed to get acquainted with the denomination's many other streams – both official and informal. So I functioned as news editor with responsibility to chase up all the good stories about congregations, presbyteries, conferences and General Council, the church's highest "court". Much time was spent on the phone, checking leads and interviewing story subjects. And I got to go to a number of key United Church meetings in different parts of Canada – every part, in fact, except Atlantic Canada and the north.

A few months into my work, that "news editor" title created a bit of embarrassment. I received a phone call, one day from a reporter at the *Toronto Sun*. I can't recall the question but whatever my answer, it appeared in a short story the following day. The quote was fine but some typographical gremlin caused the story to identify me as the "new editor" (no "s" at the end of "news"). Being at the bottom of the editorial totem pole, I did not want anyone to get the impression that I wanted the top job – nor was I equipped for it, in any case. No one ever commented on it and undoubtedly the story was far enough back in the newspaper that the 24-hour daily news (not new) cycle would thoroughly bury the typographical slip.

My first feature assignment was to go into the eastern townships of Quebec to meet Burn Purdon, who was the minister of three mainly English-speaking United Churches, in Sutton, Farnham and Dunham. The story "hook" was that Purdon had grown up in a traditional small town Ontario setting with no real contact with French-speaking Quebec a few hundred kilometres to the east. He had been challenged by the pastor of an Eglise Unie (French-speaking United Church) in Montreal to try to traverse the "two solitudes" at the time the subject of some of novelist Hugh MacLennan's writing. Purdon responded to the challenge by learning French, immersing himself in Quebecois culture and, ultimately, serving churches in Quebec's then Francophone-dominated but moderately bilingual Eastern Townships.

Edna and I took the train from Toronto to Montreal and boarded a bus for the winding trip to Sutton, near the United States border south of the future prime minister Jean Chretien's Shawinigan bailiwick.<sup>32</sup>

Almost the first thing that Burn said as he and his wife, Margaret, warmly welcomed us to their home was "What on earth was the *Observer* thinking, sending someone from British Columbia who could not speak French, to do this story?"

I think both Burn and I both knew the answer to that question. I was a journalist who was expected to be able to immerse myself into another culture, albeit equally-Canadian, different to what had been my previous limited experience. And it was good to see some beautiful countryside and experience a few dozen warm-hearted people living in the small towns dotting that countryside.

I took many photos. One of them was of Burn, wearing a black French beret and playing a harmonica, looking every bit the part of a habitant artiste. We did it for a lark. But, back in Toronto, my fellow editors chose it for the cover photo for the story. Today, they would be severely criticized for "appropriation" – the taking on of a cultural identity of another. Then, it was part of the practice of slightly edgy journalism. Al Forrest was insistent that the *Observer* maintain some editorial independence from the United Church. And that edginess certainly made it possible for the magazine to be read well outside the confines of what was then Canada's largest denomination.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sutton was also noted for its adjacency to a popular ski resort, right up against the American border.

<sup>33</sup> Burn Purdon died in 2017, at age 77, in the Eastern Townships. His obituary noted: "He lived life with passion for music, social justice and the Earth, and always with compassion, laughter and dignity."



The high point in my *Observer* learning curve was that storytelling – rather than sermonizing – was essential to helping readers understand the underlying issues that the stories were illustrating. For Jim, Patricia and Al, it was always important to tell the story keeping in mind a reader profile that was what it was, not necessarily what they wanted it to be.

A few months later, Jim proposed that I do a story on the role of newsletters in United Church congregations. As usual, I would scan the whole nation, find a few good examples and do brief summaries of various newsletter projects, one from each of several church and regional demographics.

Then, we would choose one particular project that had enough strength to get reader interest across the country. The choice, in this case was Theresa Flower, the then editor of the newsletter at Emmanuel United Church in the east end of Ottawa. There were several checkmarks that made it an obvious story with wide potential interest – some more obvious than others.

- Emmanuel was in Ottawa, the national capital – not Toronto or Montreal so as to deflect interest in some other places like Halifax, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver or Yellowknife. Everybody, sooner or later, wants to link arms with Ottawa, or at least try to connect with the capital – if only to criticize it for ignoring them.
- The minister of Emmanuel United, at the time, was the Right Rev. Wilbur Howard, who, as it happened, was the first black United Church moderator (1974-77) – and the first black person to be ordained in the denomination (1941). Because the UC was informally segregated – despite its ample liberality – Howard was not able to obtain a pastorate until about 30 years after his ordination. In the meantime, he worked with the YMCA and, later, served at United Church headquarters, “toiling” for some years on Christian education curriculum development. Once in pastoral ministry, he was associate minister at Dominion-Chalmers United, a large downtown congregation. The folk at Emmanuel, a growing suburban church, liked what they saw and “drafted” him. He stayed there until 1981.
- The editor of the newsletter was not only diligent, competent and imaginative, but she had worked at some interesting day jobs. She was long time executive assistant to a famous person. He was John Diefenbaker, who had served as Canada’s prime minister from 1958 to 1963, part of which time he led a massive majority of 208 seats for the ruling Conservatives. (He also had impeccable Baptist credentials and was publicly supportive of the Baptist World Alliance. As such, he fit into the evangelical spectrum.)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Memory can play interesting tricks in the assembling of reflections. This piece about Theresa Flower appeared in the August, 1974 issue of *The Observer*. I wanted to ensure the accuracy of my recall, so, in 2021, I e-mailed United Church Archives, where bound back copies up to 1980 were stored. Elizabeth Matthew kindly responded with a PDF of the piece. To my present day surprise, I had reported that Theresa’s “day job” was publicity director for the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (USCC). In retrospect, I am not sure whether Theresa had two “day jobs”, one for the former prime minister and the other for USCC, a well-respected, Ottawa-headquartered, ultra-liberally-

Once I had interviewed Theresa, I shyly indicated my interest in meeting Diefenbaker who, at that time was ensconced in a small but comfortable suite of offices on the back side of Centre Block. It was my first visit to Ottawa. Little did I realize that later, Edna and I would live in the capital for 15 years and I would have my own desk in the Press Gallery office, a couple of floors below the Diefenbaker enclave.

Introduced by Theresa to the great one, I was greeted by those shaking jowls and a growl. "I don't agree with your editor's stand on the Middle East," he intoned. My response: "That may be," I replied brightly, "but you and he have similar stands on abortion." (Both men, as I was well aware, were moderately pro-life, a stand that was quite acceptable among centrist Liberals and red Tories at the time.)

To my surprise, upon reporting back to Dr. Forrest, when I returned to Toronto, he expressed an interest in exchanging some correspondence with Diefenbaker on matters of both conflict and common interest. My understanding was that they kept in touch until Forrest's death in 1978.

Forrest was at his combative best in his pro-Palestinian stance, which culminated in his book *The Unholy Land*. And he was at his journalistic best telling the stories of both Palestinian leaders and many of the people, often portrayed as being deeply oppressed by Israeli policies. Within the United Church, his views were seen as divisive; in the Jewish community, as anti-Semitic. But he prevailed.

In that sense, Jim Taylor was well-able to emulate some of Forrest's attributes and did so in some of his coverage of social justice in South and Central America, often led by radical Catholic priests – chief among them Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated in 1980 in El Salvador for his activism with respect to liberation theology.

That theological stream was gathering strength at the time. Briefly stated, it insisted that Jesus came to save, not just individuals, but society. And such salvation could best be accomplished through what I understood, in my evangelically-shaped mind, to be a form of Christian Marxism.

As I was completing my second year at the *Observer*, I was appreciating what I was experiencing in story-telling, writing incisively and confronting the great issues of faith and community. But I also sensed that my long wrestle with the idea that journalism could be collaborative, conciliatory and conflict-resolving needed to continue. A major test, in my view, came in the opportunity to do a major piece for the magazine on evangelicals and evangelicalism both inside the United Church and in many groupings across Canada.

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positioned relief and development agency. Or, conversely, had she recently changed jobs? With the long deadlines that prevailed, at the time, for monthly magazines, facts were sometimes subjected to editing before publication.

We focused, for the major human interest story, on a church in Whitby, east of Toronto and just west of Oshawa. Edna and I lived in Whitby for a few months during my *Observer* stint. Whitby Bible Church was pastored by Paul Cornish, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, one of evangelicalism's leading schools and one which emphasized a "dispensational" approach to theology. It was a new congregation but it was housed in an old building which had previously been home to a Presbyterian group. One of the church members referenced was Kirk Dupre, a police officer who, as a young man, been brought to faith through a United Church, in which he remained active for some years.

During my time at the *Observer*, many of my stories touched on evangelical leaders within the denomination, some of whom were doctrinaire – like Berkley Reynolds, then at West Ellesmere United Church in Scarborough. Others were what might be described as liberal evangelicals. They encouraged their congregations to practice evangelism, both personally and corporately. They would support Billy Graham, for example. And they would build strong neighborhood-based Christian education programs which challenged both children adults to personalize their faith and work it out in everyday life.

The particular story in question attempted, through some of the story telling, to explain evangelicals – both within and outside the United Church, to the average "person in the pew" in the United Church.

One interesting outcome was that the story was picked up a few months later and republished with permission in the December, 1975 Ontario Bible College (OBC) *Evangelical Recorder*.<sup>35</sup>

The point to be made: I was happy that the collaborative approach to journalism caused me to be able to write in language that could be read and understood in both a mainstream and an evangelical publication.

That said, I credit two people for helping shape this milieu for me. The most obvious one was Doug Percy, the communication director at OBC and editor of the *Recorder*, who found the story, then sought and received permission to republish it.

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<sup>35</sup> OBC was founded in 1894 at Toronto Bible Training School and today, it occupies a commodious campus formerly the motherhouse of the Sisters' of St. Joseph and a Catholic high school. It is known as Tyndale University and incorporates, at some 900 students, the largest standalone theological seminary in Canada, where – full disclosure – I earned my doctor of ministry in 2015 at age 75. (I use the term "standalone" because Toronto School of Theology, a University of Toronto consortium, incorporating Anglican, Catholic United and Presbyterian schools, enrolls around 1,200.) Also, OBC is one of my brother, Barry's alma maters. At about the time I was writing the article that was picked up by the *Recorder*, Barry was earning his BA at OBC, while on furlough from Christian relief and development work in India. He later parleyed that degree into an MA in cross-cultural communication from Wheaton College – often referred to as the Harvard of evangelicalism.

But another person lurking in the background was Leslie K. Tarr. A Winnipeg Fellowship Baptist pastor with a thriving congregation based in part on a lot of neighborhood door-knocking, Les fell to spinal meningitis. It left him paraplegic with limited use of his arms, as well.

He and Kathryn were not prepared to give up on life. They moved to Toronto for treatment. They bought a car with hand controls. Les turned to journalism and began to write regularly for the *Toronto Star* religion page. He was a favorite, as well, at the *Observer*. Al Forrest turned to him often for advice on how to “cover” evangelicals.

Les also encouraged other Christians to get into journalism, creative writing, and book authoring, as a means to share their faith. He spearheaded the entry into Canada of the Decision School of Christian Writing, sponsored by Billy Graham’s then two million circulation magazine, *Decision*. (Side note: The magazine took its name from the fact that Billy Graham liked to preach for a “decision”.)

Les was a mentor to me both during my *Observer* time and when Edna and I returned to Toronto in 1988 for three years. And, in 1994, when Jim Taylor, by that time busy co-founding Wood Lake Books in BC’s Okanagan Valley, encouraged me to write a book about evangelicals, I tripped off to Toronto to promote the book – entitled *These Evangelical Churches of Ours*. My intention was to show it to Les and hopefully get his blessing. That week, he passed away and I ended up attending his funeral, in Forward Baptist Church.

Meanwhile, returning to my *Observer* years: In “seventh heaven”, Edna was thoroughly enjoying her executive assistant’s work with John Ambrose. In many ways, there was a tight little community there. Ambrose, an enthusiast for blending arts and worship and paying attention to the human yen for liturgy, was very good at helping us to understand the inner spiritual workings of the United Church. And his wife, Kathy, who had a strong Evangelical United Brethren background, helped us both to be cognizant of the evangelical spectrum in mainstream Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

John had been Jim’s and Joan’s pastor at Parkwoods United Church before he accepted the worship resource position at UC headquarters.

One New Year’s Eve, we had an extraordinary experience. We went to a church dance at Parkwoods. We had broadened our evangelical ethos enough, in previous years, to recognize that dancing was not the unpardonable sin. In fact, it was not really a sin. (Remember the jokes about evangelicals: Why do evangelicals oppose sex standing up? Because it might lead to dancing!)

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<sup>36</sup> The churches of the EUB denomination based in central Canada were absorbed into the United Church in 1968. Its western Canada-based churches stayed out of the merger, forming the Evangelical Church of Canada (ECC). In 1987, the ECC merged with the Missionary Church to become the Evangelical Missionary Church. Its largest congregation is Centre Street Church in Calgary, with around 7,000 members and adherents.

Klutz that I am, Edna and I managed to get through the evening. We welcomed in the New Year and, in the process, met a good many great United Church Christians and a number of their neighbors, who they absorbed into their fellowship – through a dance.

While in Toronto during our *Observer*/United Church stint, we received a call from my “baby” sister, Mary – the one that Barry had prayed for. A grown woman, now, she had become a registered nurse at Royal Jubilee Hospital, a few blocks from home in Victoria. Following that, she enrolled in Emmaus Bible School (EBS) in Oak Park, Illinois, a Chicago suburb.<sup>37</sup>

During a summer break, Mary headed off to a Brethren Bible camp in New Hampshire where she did duty as the camp nurse. There, she met Phil Parsons, a high school teacher who came originally from Buffalo (Yea, Sabres!)

There was chemistry there which developed over the months, and now, this phone call was to set up a meeting in Niagara Falls – a good mid-point – to allow us to get to know Phil. We met them in a rotating restaurant overlooking the falls, lit up at night, that particular evening, to display brilliant rainbow hues.

Phil passed muster and, a few months later, on a trip west to visit family and scout out possibilities of moving “home”, we attended at Mary and Phil’s wedding in Oaklands Chapel.<sup>38</sup>

Mary kept her Canadian citizenship, so their three children can be dual citizens if they wish. For many years, they lived in North Andover, Massachusetts. Phil taught nearby in the public school system and was an elder at North Andover Gospel Chapel. Then, in the late 70s, they responded to a need for a high school teacher/principal at Faith Academy in Cainta, a suburb of Manila, in the Philippines. It was a large K-12 complex mainly serving missionary kids and other American ex-pats living in Southeast Asia. That meant many of the students boarded there during school semesters. Mary was the school nurse. Barry and I had a chance to see their new milieu close-up, in 1989, when we attended Lausanne II, the second world evangelization conference, held in Manila.

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<sup>37</sup> Today, EBS is Emmaus Bible College, located in a former monastery in Dubuque, Iowa. Emmaus was and remains an integral part of the Brethren assembly movement.

<sup>38</sup> The chapel was the 1957 successor to Oaklands Gospel Hall, begun in 1913, with William Swetnam, our maternal grandfather as one of the founding elders. The officiant at Mary and Phil’s wedding was Huron Sheppard, the long-time director of Camp Imadene, near Duncan, where Barry, Mary and I, at different junctures had been campers and counsellors.

But back to Niagara Falls and that dinner, to meet Phil: Edna recalls that she placed her purse on the shelf beside our table. Halfway through the evening, she reached over for it, but it was gone. Phil soon figured things out, like the problem-solver that he proved to be in ensuing years. We were sitting in a revolving restaurant. The floor revolved and the outer shell, including the shelf where the purse had been placed, stayed still. The purse had not moved – we had.

## Chapter 7

### Back “home”

In early 1975, Edna and I began to discuss what our future might be beyond the *Observer*. We were not totally comfortable at the magazine and in the United Church, although we were appreciative of the fact that we had been able to gain experience in a national faith-based setting. Al Forrest and my editorial colleagues, Jim Taylor, Patricia Clarke and Muriel Duncan, all provided valued input, not wanting us to too quickly negate our move east, but freeing us, as well, to take another “next step.” Although I did not realize it at the time, I was beginning to sense that my best vocational contribution in the long term (a lifetime) might be to commit deeply to shorter term projects (3-5 years) and leave the continuation to someone else. Sub-related to that was the idea that a good way to encourage that continuum was to mentor others a half or whole generation behind me – people who might be able to do what I could not.

All those things were going through our minds as we tried to sort out what might happen. As well, the one house-buying experience we had, in Whitby, just east of Toronto, had not worked well. We bought in a new sub-division but found out a few months later that we could not get a proper deed to the property. Apparently some of the corruption that crept into certain housing developments in Ontario at the time had infected this particular situation.

We were able to extract ourselves from the deal and lived the last few months in Ontario in a rather nice apartment a few blocks walk from the United Church headquarters. And we enjoyed good preaching and understanding pastoral care at nearby Glebe Road United Church.

We wondered about my getting an editorial job at a small daily newspaper in one of the cities surrounding Toronto. Possibly we could do that while Edna continued to work with John Ambrose.

One day, I was reading a story in the *Toronto Star*, about some event which had taken place on Yonge Street, the historic artery that cuts north and south through Toronto and well to the north into the exurbs heading toward Barrie and Muskoka. My mind was somewhere else – probably Chilliwack – as I read the story. I recall saying to myself and perhaps half-out-loud to Edna, “I don’t remember that part of Young Street.”

A bit of explanation: Young Street in Chilliwack is also a north-south thoroughfare cutting through the heart of the city. And that is no typo: it is spelled “Young”, not “Yonge”, as is its Toronto namesake. And

Chilliwack, as it happens, contains a number of street names that also appear in Toronto – Spadina and Wellington, to name two.

So here I was, in Toronto, thinking about Chilliwack.

What followed was a phone chat with Brian McCristall and Cec Hacker, back at *The Chilliwack Progress*. And Edna, likewise, had some conversations with former teaching colleagues in Chilliwack. Both sets of conversations proved fruitful. At that particular juncture, there were openings for both of us. For me, Cec was prepared to appoint me senior reporter, with the implicit prospect of an editorial position at one of the Hacker Press newspapers or its printing clients in relatively short order. For Edna, take her pick: There were a number of primary teaching spots available.

So back we went, driving the 1962 Chevy that Edna had taken over from her father. And we took the “long road” – the all-Canadian route north of Lake Superior, rather than the time-saving dip into the United States, through Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota. It seemed the patriotic thing to do, and we got to see the locks at Sault Ste. Marie, the “twin cities” at Thunder Bay and the Wawa goose. We were able to experience the rugged lake and forest scenery of the Canadian Shield. It was a marked contrast to busy and sophisticated Toronto. It took us three days to get out of Ontario and, equally, three more days to drive across the prairies and through the mountains to our old/new home in Chilliwack. It caused us to sense, for the first time, the great spaces that seemed to create chasms of miscommunication between central and western Canada.

It rained and thundered through the last leg of Ontario. And, as we approached the Manitoba border, the sun came out. For the next five months, we experienced no rain. Was it a sign?

Back in Chilliwack, I settled in quickly to *The Progress*. During our absence, the newspaper had moved into new premises, close to City Hall, after having been next to the post office in the heart of downtown Chilliwack, its location since its founding in 1891.

The new offices were in a building that had housed a carpet sales outlet. It suited the expanding advertising, editorial, production, job printing, distribution and accounting staff. Brian McCristall had set up a bright and attractive newsroom where the reporters – by that time a group of seven including part timers – could write, interview, research and collaborate.

One of the intriguing parts of fitting in to the *Progress* and Hacker Press was adapting to an emerging ownership structure which was part of the changing community newspaper scene. In the 60s, Trinity Holdings had acquired the Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Mission newspapers and the Hacker Press plant. They also picked up a daily in central Alberta, the *Red Deer Advocate*. Trinity was a British firm: Its main “holding” was the *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo* in the United Kingdom,

Their objective was to continue acquiring newspapers and printing plants. But they were stymied by the federal formation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA). The intention of one part of the FIRA’s role was to block the expansion of American media interests in Canada. Many pundits saw it as a means to protect *Maclean’s*, a historic Canadian newsmagazine icon, from foreign competitors such as the Canadian edition of *Time* magazine. The collateral damage for Hacker Press, its newspapers and newspaper clients, was that Liverpool (Trinity Holdings) could not expand its Canadian operation under FIRA rules.

For me, however, the whole subject of group newspapering was fascinating and I was later able to help shape parts of the Christian newspapering field in a way that encouraged collaborative publication, as an alternative to potential cutthroat competition.



One of the objectives in group newspapering – particularly in the community newspapering field – was to enable long time newspaper publishers to retire comfortably by buying out their publications and/or their press plants. With regional strategies in place, the economies of scale could be enacted to enable and even enhance the journalistic, institutional and business benefits of newspapers to their communities.

Detractors of the group concept often suggested that, conversely, groups would take over newspapers to cut staffs, close down operations and eliminate competition. While that could be and sometimes was true, it was seldom the case in best practice scenarios.

Meanwhile, Edna caught her breath and prepared to teach at Kipp Primary School, whose principal was Helena Braun – a mentor to her earlier in her career. Helena was long regarded in the Chilliwack school district as being a strongly capable leader in primary education. In addition, she was good at cautiously bringing Christian and traditional educational values into the public educational sphere. (Helena passed away in early 2022, having remained relatively active into her 90s.).

And we settled, once again, into home ownership. Bill Perry, by that time taking a pause from active Presbyterian ministry, was working in real estate and serving on city council. He found us a very nice bungalow on Magnolia Avenue. It had a big back yard and gave Edna a chance, for the first time since McNaught Road, to plant a vegetable garden.

Before getting into the Magnolia house, we stayed a few weeks in an apartment belonging to Tamiko (Tam) Nakamura, a Presbyterian deaconess who had taken a few years off from ministry to teach high school in Chilliwack.<sup>39</sup>

With the pastoral change at Cooke's Church, we decided to take on a new church experience, across town at Broadway Mennonite Brethren Church, a 500-strong congregation at the time. We thought it would be good to enrich the Anabaptist/Mennonite aspect of our faith. We found it interesting to note that many of Edna's teaching colleagues were Broadway church members. We quipped, at one point, that we should change our surnames to "McKlassen".

In the months following our move back to Chilliwack, we had visits from both our Toronto "bosses". Al Forrest was in the Fraser Valley speaking on behalf of the *Observer* and taking on some guest preaching assignments. We appreciated being able to link up Al and Cec Hacker because of their common United Church connections. In fact, one of Al's speaking engagements was at a Fraser Presbytery UC meeting in Trinity Memorial United Church in Abbotsford, where Cec was a member.

Not long after, John and Kathy Ambrose and their two pre-teen children dropped by Chilliwack. Their visit included a Sunday so we took them to Broadway Church for the morning worship. As we approached the church, the Ambrose daughter asked where the horses were parked. Not to be outdone, the son wanted to know how come the cars did not have black bumpers.

The presence of a relatively-well-integrated, albeit mildly conservative, Mennonite congregation was an eye-opener to them. Things were not quite that way in a lot of small towns in Ontario, where Old Order Mennonites and Amish groups sometimes – but not always – held sway.

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<sup>39</sup> Tam later married Don Corbett, a Presbyterian minister and educator. In 1996, she served as moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada general assembly. She passed away in early 2019.



Later, we were able to get a bigger bungalow with a semi-finished basement on Coote Street. It had an attractive eight per cent mortgage that we were able to take over (The going rate at the time was around 14 per cent. Remember, Pierre Trudeau was in power and it was affecting a lot of things economically in areas such as mortgages and media ownership. Just sayin'.)

We lived in that house for four years – a record length to that point. Edna had received a few funds from a family legacy and asked me whether I wanted to get a piano for my birthday, or a ham radio set. I chose the latter. We picked up a Heathkit DX-100 transceiver kit. I proceeded to put it together and hung a 20-metre inverted-V dipole antenna to a pole in our backyard. I chose to operate on the 20 metre (14 mhz.) band because it was the favorite long distance venue for amateur radio operators and I had the objective of talking to as many “hams” in different countries as I could. (As previously noted, the technology of distance was that the waves would bounce up from the antenna into something called the ionosphere, rather than just crawling along the ground.)

One evening, I was able to prove the efficacy of the 20-metre band to John Newman and Bill Veer, respectively Chilliwack High School principal and geography teacher – and both Broadway Church members. We went down to the radio room (informally known as the “ham shack”) and I sent out a “CQ” (Calling all hams). Within seconds, I got a reply from a “ham” in downtown Tokyo. John and Bill were impressed!

Altogether, I received confirmation cards (QSLs) from amateur radio operators in 26 countries, including the then Soviet Union. A couple of years ago, Edna put them all into a scrapbook. She figured that the money spent on the Heathkit transceiver had been a pretty good investment.

Another pleasant surprise on Coote Street was that our next door neighbors, Roy and Barb Stark (she, a teaching colleague) decided to put in a back yard pool, completely landscaped including tiki torches. A real tropical treat, in summer at least. And they wanted to know whether we would be agreeable to take care of the pool when they went away, if they put a gate into the fence between our two properties. “Of course”, we replied, appreciatively. One highlight of that period was Edna’s mother’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Siblings, inlaws, nieces and nephews frolicked on land and water on each of the respective properties, with gate propped open, on that Sunday afternoon.

Within a few months, Brian McCristall, my editor, was appointed to the same post down the valley at the *Abbotsford, Sumas & Matsqui News*. Abbotsford was the valley’s growth centre at the time. Brian served there several years, then went back east to Ontario where he had started in newspapering.<sup>40</sup>

I became news editor of *The Progress*, then, in a few months, editor. My staff included, at various times, Barb Schmidt (married to Arnie Schmidt, the broadcast engineer at Radio CHWK), Bill Lillicrap, Lou Fuchs (a crack photographer), Diane Jacob and Frances Pollard (both lifestyle editors with delightfully contrasting views on how to cover weddings) Tony Sevcik (a whiz in the darkroom) and Ed Hamel (who later did a social action teaching stint in Japan and brought back a Japanese bride). Debra Fieguth, who became one of Canada’s best faith-based print journalists and married an Anglican minister, got her reportorial start at *The Progress*, after graduating from the Langara College journalism program. She died too young at 62. Mike Doyle had the makings of an excellent investigative reporter. And Ron Gray (who later became the leader of the Christian Heritage Party.) included *The Progress* in his journalistic and university communications resume. I think I have remembered everybody. The editorial staff, it should be kept in mind, made up only about one-quarter of the total operation. Altogether close to 100 full timers

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<sup>40</sup> Eventually, he returned to what was, by that time, Black Press, as one of the area vice-presidents, working out of Coquitlam. Before retiring, he served a stint as president of the Canadian Community Newspaper Association, a tribute to his widely-respected leadership in the industry.

called *The Progress* their place of work and another 25 or 30 were employed at least a few hours a week. And then there were the newspaper carriers. Today, with technology as the driver, the paper would employ fewer than 20.

In the community, two issues prevailed during my tenure as editor – farmland preservation and the amalgamation of the city of Chilliwack and township of Chilliwack. The first, farmland preservation, got province-wide exposure as a range of left-leaning political and environmental groups targeted Chilliwack as a regressive community whose leaders were hell-bent on building houses and factories on every acre of agricultural land.

The genesis of the campaign actually developed during our time in Toronto, when the Dave Barrett NDPers were in power. One of Barrett's first acts, with the able assistance of then agriculture minister Dave Stupich, was to set up the BC Land Commission, later known as the BC Agricultural Land Commission. The ethical premise was that land for food self-sufficiency was in short supply and mountain-locked BC needed to save every acre it could. Further, the government of the day insisted, the NDP was committed to stop the big developers and speculators from diverting farmland into urban use. The purpose of the land commission, they maintained, was to designate all the farmland in BC in perpetuity to agricultural use or let it lie fallow. Nothing was to be paved over.

Chilliwack was a particular target because it had about 50,000 acres in its agricultural land use inventory. And its planners were working on an urban corridor concept which would see a band of land about a mile wide, running north and south from the Fraser River to the Vedder River, retained for urban use. The thought was that Chilliwack could eventually be home to 150,000 people, most of them living and working in that corridor. (At that time, the population was 35,000. Today, it is 101,000. And, most, indeed, live in that corridor and in the hills at the south end of the city.)

The civic premise was that virtually all of the 50,000 acres in question would remain preserved for agricultural use. In question was about 400 acres at the centre of the designated urban corridor, bordering Highway 1 and traversed by Vedder Road. The farmland preservation campaign aimed to suggest that big developers were aiming to buy off the township political leaders with a view to getting their way.

One entry into the campaign was the former Province reporter who I had met during the Bennett cabinet tour in 1972 – the one who would wander into a crowd of politician-watchers and say something like; “Isn't this the worst government this province has ever seen?”

In the mid-70s, he became an editor at a new provincial newspaper that, among other things, took direct aim at *The Progress*, suggesting it was in cahoots with the aforementioned Chilliwack developers.

Fresh off my *Observer* experience, I was intrigued with Stupich's role as agriculture minister. He was a part of the NDP that aligned with Tommy Douglas' Christian social democratic values – along with others, like Dennis Cocke, Hartley Dent and Peter Rolston. To Stupich, farmland preservation was a Christian value. He saw Christians who wanted to develop housing, economic value and employment as being on the wrong side of the issue.

At times, I would get quite exercised (to use an old Brethren assembly expression) at the preservationists. Indeed, some of them became personally threatening. One such, Alan Crawshaw, was very active in the local NDP and at times picketed various Chilliwack institutions, including *The Progress*.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> A few years later, after we had, again, moved from Chilliwack, Crawshaw was convicted of shooting to death a manager at a local food processing plant. The manager was in the unfortunate position of being on the other side of

However, I mostly kept my cool. With Cec Hacker's encouragement, I was able to keep the focus of my staff and myself on covering the community, telling stories about people in its various sectors – military, agriculture, merchant, educational, religious, indigenous, labour and political, to name a few. The advertising department did its job in expanding the “news hole” so that we had plenty of room for these stories – and photos, of course. We tried to take an editorial position that got people working together rather than at cross purposes.

One of the spinoffs of the farmland controversy was that Chilliwack people became increasingly interested in amalgamation. The city of Chilliwack, a two-mile square downtown-plus-housing had been carved out of a portion of the much larger township of Chilliwack, founded at the beginning of the “settler” era in 1873. By the 1970s, during my editorial tenure, the popular desire seemed to be to bring the two municipalities back together. (Punsters dubbed the amalgamation campaign as an effort to “knock the ‘h’ out of Chilliwack – a reference to the fact that the township government, alone, had kept using the second ‘h’ in its descriptive. Nobody else did, in any level of government or the private sector.)

The amalgamation took place in 1980. I was happy to have had a small part in its success.

A number of things evolved as I moved through the almost six years in my second iteration at *The Progress*. It was a long-standing custom for the editor to be a member of the Chilliwack Rotary Club. Cec proposed me for membership and I was accepted. Thereafter, I would attend the weekly Rotary luncheon at the old Tudor-style Empress Hotel on Fridays, often coming back to the office with a good story idea gleaned from whatever subject the speaker of the day had addressed.

On the day that I was inducted into Rotary membership, I was presented with a plaque on which was inscribed the Rotary Four-Way Test. It read:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

I was quite humbly proud of being associated with Rotary. Its motto, Service about Self, represented, for Edna and I, something endemic, not only to the Christian faith, but to the many institutions of goodwill and fellowship that exist within a civil society.

So, I was happy, on my return to the office after my induction, to place the plaque on my desk, so that anyone passing by my office could see it.

I headed off into another part of the building for a meeting and returned, a while later, to find that someone had typed out a fifth test and attached it to the bottom of the plaque.

It read:

5. Will it sell newspapers?

I was never able to get to the bottom of which staff member had been so irreverent. But I strongly suspected it was a joint effort of Ron Grey and Ed Hamel, who were equally adept at a quick turn of phrase. Both, at different times, served as sports editor for *The Progress*.

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union negotiations and Crawshaw was one of the union leaders. News accounts of his arrest, at the time, told of his shouting to onlookers on the way into the courthouse for his arraignment: “Workers of the world, unite.”

Another interesting time at the newspaper, if discomfiting, came when, what was then known as the International Typographical Union (ITU), began efforts to organize the newsroom.

As indicated earlier, my own experience with unions was that, valuable as they could be in raising the employment standards of their members, they were based, to a greater or lesser extent, on the concept of class struggle or, in more radical settings, class warfare. My attempts to develop conciliatory or collaborative approaches to journalism did not meld easily with the class struggle concept.

A second factor, I found intriguing: One day, passing me in the corridor from the newsroom to the back shop was an old friend from the late 50s, when I was working part time at *The Province* while taking courses at Vancouver Bible Institute (VBI). The old friend was Jim Young, who had been a circulation district advisor at *The Province* at that earlier time. He had been a great NDP enthusiast and admirer of Tommy Douglas. He made that clear to me in recognition of my studies at VBI, a Baptist institution.

At the time of my *Progress* hallway encounter with Jim, he had become a business agent for the BC section of the American Newspaper Guild (ANG), the union that generally was involved in organizing newsrooms. In effect, there was a little union rivalry going on, between the ITU and the ANG.

I quietly let Roy Lind (advertising manager and later publisher at *The Progress*) and Cec Hacker know about the ANG development. I wondered, if we had to have a union, could we have the ANG because it might be a little less radical than the ITU. The ANG, after all, gave lip service, at least, to objectivity in journalism.

Roy and Cec advised me to keep cool. Roy, a very market-oriented and straight-talking guy, reminded me, occasionally: “Lloyd, you can be pretty competitive at times.” It was an insight which had never occurred to me. Was I trying to be more conciliatory than the union crowd – competitively conciliatory, if that was possible?

I declined to be part of the newsroom union bargaining unit, maintaining that would be a conflict of interest, because I was responsible to manage the editorial expenditure budget. And, as it ended up, when the ITU became certified and the opening contract negotiations began, I was not needed at the table. For that, I was thankful, because I did not have to face the same people across the table who I was trying to develop into outstanding future editorialists.

From 1978, for a couple of years, I began to hear from people who thought I should give some consideration to moving into political activity. Some thought the mayoralty of an amalgamated Chilliwack would be an option. And there were some federal suggestions, first from the Liberals, then the Conservatives. Interestingly, there were no provincial nibbles – and none from the NDP.

One day at a breakfast whose purpose I cannot recall, I was seated beside an Ontario Liberal MP who was visiting Chilliwack. It turns out he was a Mennonite and his name was Bill Andres. (There was a Liberal cabinet minister at the time, Bill Andras. This was not the same person. Andres was a parliamentary secretary for multiculturalism.) Bill Andres had a way of eliciting information about political interest and I was naïve enough to indicate that, as a journalist and a Christ follower, I had more than a passing interest in the subject.

Not long after, I detected some nibbles from the Liberals. Coming back from a Rotary meeting one Friday, I found there, in Roy Lind’s office, Ray Perrault, who, after stints as BC Liberal leader and a federal MP (who had at one point, defeated the legendary Tommy Douglas by 138 votes) had become a Liberal senator.

He began a little small talk, in which he identified religiously as a Catholic charismatic, and hinted that Liberal research showed that the incumbent Sacred MP, Alec Paterson, could be defeated by someone like a local newspaper editor.

Later, a chat with federal cabinet minister Ron Basford confirmed that if I wanted to take a little tutoring and do some organizing, I might have the makings of a candidate for Chilliwack (or Fraser Valley East as the riding was known.)

But I was not particularly comfortable in the Liberal milieu. And soon, unbidden by me, came some nibbles from the Conservative side. But they had the same theme as the Liberal overtures: Alec Paterson was getting long in the tooth and needed to get back to being a Nazarene church minister. The main difference: there was no hint that Paterson intended to retire.<sup>42</sup>

I should note that it became a constant during my journalistic career, to seek out opportunities to improve my three years, almost-BA in religious education obtained years before at Vancouver Bible Institute. At various times I took English, math, sociology, psychology and history courses at the university level, sometimes commuting evenings into Surrey to one of the emerging community colleges where I could get what I was looking for.

The farmland preservation controversy left me befuddled and struggling to understand and to articulate editorially a lot of the economic issues presented by the anti-development advocates. I learned well enough that they were employing what could best be described as “Marxian analysis” to bolster their arguments.

So, I enrolled in two succeeding courses at Fraser Valley College, which was now coming into its own in Chilliwack and Abbotsford. (Today, it is 15,000-strong University of the Fraser Valley, with major campuses in Chilliwack and Abbotsford, plus learning centres in Mission, Agassiz and Hope.)<sup>43</sup>

The two courses were micro and macroeconomics. Micro dealt with the economic interactions of individuals, firms, banks, and on the edge of things, governments. Macro tracked national and international interactions, including trade, monetary systems and national fiscal policies. Diane McLean capably taught the course. Then she announced one evening that she was holding some special non-credit sessions, co-hosted by an economist who was considered an expert in areas where she did not feel qualified. Naturally curious, I signed up for the extra sessions and soon discovered that they would focus on applying “Marxian analysis” to the traditional micro and macroeconomic concepts I had been studying – things like supply and demand, fixed and variable costs and so on.

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<sup>42</sup> Years later, I would learn of people who, during the course of their careers, would serve the interests of either the Liberals or Conservatives at various times. Unbeknown to me at the time was a high school student in Chilliwack whose father, John Barton, was an Anglican minister. The student was quite a fan of Alex Paterson, the Conservative MP, who sometimes attended his father’s church. In September, 2019, now a seasoned diplomat and international business leader, he was appointed Canadian ambassador to China, by Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. His name is Dominic Barton and he served in that post during the detention of the “two Michaels” by China. It was widely assumed in Canadian diplomatic circles that China detained Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, in apparent retaliation to Canada’s holding of Meng Wanzhou to face trial in the United States on 5G technological allegations. It was shortly after the simultaneous release of all three that Barton retired from his ambassador’s role.

<sup>43</sup> The college had been advocated editorially by *The Progress* during my first stint there. I can recall Donald Brothers, then the education minister, being publicly chastised by some Rotarians at a meeting in which he promised Chilliwack a vocational school. That was not good enough, his critics maintained. Chilliwack needed to become a university city. Brothers, to his credit, picked up on that and slowly initiated the process that led to the college-cum-university development of what is now University of the Fraser Valley.

Diane took pains to stress that these sessions were not intended to force Marxism on us – only to provide an alternative view based, in part at least, on the ideology of Karl Marx, considered the “father” of various communistic and socialistic economic and governmental systems;

I was grateful for those sessions, for they helped me in learning to articulate my “half-baked” ideas in support of free markets and personal initiative, absented as far as possible from the conflicts endemic to class struggle. I was able to feel confidence in “fully baking” my ideas and honing my own analytic skills in addressing where the Marxian analysts were coming from and trying to understand them in the broader context, rather than accepting everything they said as gospel truth.

The experience did one more thing: It caused me to consider the possibility that, at the age of 40, I might want to return to school, while still working in the field of journalism. Edna and I talked a fair amount about where the future might take us next. She had experienced health problems that required three different surgeries over a decade, one of which caused us to know that we would not have any children naturally. (We subsequently, after long consideration, decided not to pursue adoption. Our nieces and nephews and my rapidly-maturing two children by my first marriage, would have to be our progeny, so to speak.)

After some thought, I checked out the Executive MBA (Masters in Business Administration) at Simon Fraser University. It had gained a stellar reputation and was strongly supported by a number of major BC corporate entities whose leaders were looking for ways to development their middle managers. I made preliminary inquiries, cognizant of my previous education at the unaccredited Vancouver Bible Institute (VBI). To my surprise, the SFU EMBA people knew all about VBI. They even referred to Robert Lilly, a Baptist pastor who had served as VBI’s registrar for some years.

Lilly, they reported, in cahoots with principal LeRoy Gager, was an excellent curriculum builder and transcript writer. They needed to be: Quite a few VBI alumni wanted to transfer to Bethel College (now Bethel University) in St. Paul, Minnesota, affiliated with the same Baptist General Conference to which VBI was linked. Because of the Bethel link, VBI leaders did not see the need to formally affiliate with University of British Columbia.<sup>44</sup>

Eventually VBI became Vancouver Bible College (VBC) and built a campus in the historic Sullivan Station area of Surrey. VBC went dormant in 1977 and subsequently turned its campus over to what, today, is Pacific Life Bible College, educating young people from two streams of Pentecostalism – Apostolic and Foursquare.<sup>45</sup>

In any case, the SFU people evaluated my VBC transcript, plus the records of the other half-dozen or so university level courses I had taken through the years, and said I was just about good to go. They asked that I take a university math course that would introduce me to trigonometry and advanced algebraic

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<sup>44</sup> Later, Principal Gager revealed plans to move the mid-town VBI campus (whose tall, thin, classroom building was nicknamed “the Ark”) to a small lake on the side of Burnaby Mountain, just down the hill from where SFU was soon to be built. His thought was to rename the school “Galilee College”, reminiscent of the lake around and on which Jesus educated and developed his disciples. BGC officials thought that Gager was getting a tad too spiritually elitist and put a stop to it. After his retirement, Gager and his wife lived in a high rise at the foot of Burnaby Mountain, a short distance southeast of the little lake.

<sup>45</sup> As noted elsewhere, the Conference Baptists kept the VBC articles of incorporation and re-established the school under the name of Canadian Baptist Seminary, which became part of the theological consortium at Trinity Western University known as Associated Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS). And the VBC library was incorporated into the ACTS collection. ACTS currently enrolls around 300, about 100 from the CBS component.

concepts, because there would be a lot of math in the MBA program. And they required all entering students to take a speed-reading course, because there was much reading in the program. Even today, that course helps in relaxation reading. I can flip my way through a 300-page novel, if not all its nuances, in a couple of days.

Oh, and there was the GMAT: Graduate Management Admissions Test. I settled into some reading and workshops that would help me with that. As I tell lawyers, loftily, these days, GMAT was like LSAT (Law School Admissions Test). It contains all the language stuff with a fair dollop of math that lawyers need never worry about, except to work out their billing charges.

I was all set to go in to UBC with Edna one Saturday morning for the GMAT and was looking forward to an early night sleep in preparation. Then came an assignment/social evening I could not pass up. Chilliwack MLA Harv Schroeder was hosting a late evening dinner for then-premier Bill Bennett and Edna and I, plus the mayors of Chilliwack and Chilliwack were included. It was a memorable evening with lots of political/journalistic/faith crosstalk. We wrapped up the evening at close to 1 am and went home to catch some sleep before a 5 am start to get to UBC. Everything went fine. The GMAT took close to four hours and Edna and I set off to return to Chilliwack. Just after crossing the Port Mann Bridge, I did something I had never done before: I asked Edna to take the wheel because I could not stay awake another minute. She got us safely home while I pushed the passenger seat back on the Rambler and recalled nothing for the next 90 minutes.

As it turned out, the GMAT results put me in the 91 percentile which was, apparently, okay. And the MBA studies would lead, in due course, into Christian newspapering, an opportunity for faith/political/interface journalism, an involvement in a major Billy Graham mission, some world travels for Edna and I and, ultimately, a 15-year stint in Ottawa.

A late 70s trip Edna and I took to Edmonton offered some hints as to how these varied items might work. We began the trip by heading south toward Seattle, then turning east for a stop in Ellensburg, home of Eastern Washington University and Stuart Anderson's Black Angus Ranch.

The interest in the university was that it was home to an institute specializing in research on the role of small cities in the larger society. I was interested in the economic, communication, sociological, faith and demographic factors as might be applied to understanding Chilliwack, particularly as it related to its urban-rural nature. Some of my interest had been prompted by a book that had been published in 1958 and often revised since, *Small Town in a Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community*, by Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman. While Chilliwack was a little larger than the community profiles it offered, including Ellensburg, many of the assumptions were relative.

And the Black Angus ranch was an important part of the Ellensburg scenery. It was the home of Stuart Anderson, who founded and ran the Black Angus steak houses so popular in western Canada and America in the 1970s and 80s. We met with Anderson and his spouse, Helen, in the kitchen of the commodious log ranch house, intending to take in a barn dance they were hosting later in the evening.

Then Mt. St. Helen's blew.

That was on July 22, 1989. It was actually one of a series of explosions that occurred after the mountain volcanically erupted on May 18, killing an estimated 57 people. This July 22 eruption scattered volcanic ash northeast in Washington covering places like Ellensburg and the Black Angus ranch with an inch or so of light gray ash. It was a bit scary.

While we completed the interview with Stuart and Helen, we left the barn dance early and headed back to our hotel. We left early the next day for Edmonton, the main reason for the trip.

There were actually three reasons for visiting Edmonton. One was that *The Progress* had won several editorial and reporting awards that year, in the Canadian Community Newspaper Association competitions. The second was to meet with Ernest Manning, his wife, Muriel and son Preston. At the time, Preston was in partnership with his father in Manning Consultants Ltd, considerably involved in oil company-indigenous conciliation and community building in Slave Lake, Alberta. And the third reason was to attend the Billy Graham Edmonton mission, to write a story for *Christianity Today*.

We will get to the Mannings and Graham in a minute. But the awards night proved interesting, even apart from the honors garnered by the newspaper I had been editing for half a decade.

The banquet speaker was then-premier of Alberta premier Peter Lougheed. He gave a rousing speech about protecting Alberta's ability to maintain and grow an energy industry in the face of seeming federal attempts to undermine those efforts, by then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

The National Energy Policy, formulated by the Trudeau Liberals, was the subject of Lougheed's critique. One particular sentence in his speech to the newspaper editors and publishers – who came from across Canada, it should be noted – warned that if Trudeau took certain further action “we will consider it a declaration of war” against Alberta.

I turned to Edna, whispering “Watch tomorrow's newspapers. Their headlines will say that Lougheed has declared war against Trudeau.” I was right. The newspapers, in effect, reversed what Lougheed had actually stated. He said Alberta would consider Trudeau's actions a declaration of war. The papers managed to have Alberta starting or declaring the war.

Oh, the politics of conflict.

During the following eight days, we attended the Billy Graham mission and actually had an opportunity to meet with Dr. Graham. It became implicitly obvious that something was in the wind. The next summer, Billy was in Calgary. The following summer, he headed southwest to Spokane. The trail was winding its way toward Vancouver – in 1983 the evangelist was in Tacoma. There, an invitation committee from Vancouver met with him and some of his key staff to ask him to do a mission in the Canadian city at the new BC Place stadium, in the fall of 1984.

It was an interesting process to follow, and it was a highlight of our lives to be peripherally involved. A part of my very simple faith was that evangelists were engaged in honorable work – introducing people to the opportunity to give their lives to Christ. And the Graham approach – involving the Christian community in a city to work together to make that invitation public – gave the Christian gospel a whole week to be shared with the city or even the province.

As we sat at the press table, in Edmonton, Edna and I talked about the seeming reluctance of Canadians to respond to gospel invitations in the way that Americans might. “What if nobody comes,” Edna asked, as Graham wound up his first sermon in the Northlands Coliseum, where Wayne Gretzky held sway for several years.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Joining us at the press table were Cliff Hacker and his wife, Lillian, who were at the CCNA convention and were very curious about Billy's plans for Canada. Cliff, younger brother of Cec, *The Chilliwack Progress* publisher, was himself, publisher of the *Abbotsford News* and the first person involved in hiring me into newspapering, in 1967.



But come they did. And we knew in our hearts that if things were handled properly, it could happen in Vancouver, in due course.<sup>47</sup> We returned to Vancouver and I wound up my half decade at the editor's desk in Chilliwack, looking forward to what would come next.

## Chapter 8

### Back to school and on to Christian newspapering

Getting into MBA studies ultimately required a gradual wind-down from editing *The Progress*. Cec Hacker, Roy Lind and Rex Cadwalladr, who had moved from Liverpool to administer Trinity Holdings' Canadian operations, all encouraged me in seeking the MBA opportunity. So it was with some regret that I left *The Progress* and we moved first to Abbotsford for a few months, then to Burnaby and eventually to the Kitsilano area of Vancouver. In all cases, we sold the house or townhouse we were living in and bought the next one. At first, I did some free-lance writing work, mostly for faith-based publications like *Christianity Today (CT)*.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, Terry Winter, the “thinking person’s evangelist” that I had written about for *CT*, was in some demand in various parts of Canada to conduct eight-day “Alive” missions in small cities – similar to what Billy Graham was doing in larger venues. I became involved at the committee level for a Chilliwack Alive event, which took place over eight days during the summer of 1980. And Terry asked Edna to start putting together a manual which would bring together a lot of the information from his own files, as well as from Billy Graham and his associates, that would help committees in cities to organize missions. In many ways, such plans were like icebergs. The evening mission meetings were on the surface but the months of plans, training, prayer and organizing represented the other 90 per cent below the surface.

The Chilliwack *Alive* brought out about 1,500 people a night to the old Chilliwack Coliseum, with a 3,000 full house on the closing Sunday. Some 200 people responded to the invitation to Christian commitment during the week. All bills were paid through ahead-of-time donations, so that the only offering, taken on the closing Sunday, was contributed to Terry’s by now very popular and moderately expensive television program.

Edna’s Terry Winter manual-writing led to an introduction to Roy Bell, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Vancouver, who was now the principal of Carey Hall/Theological College (CH/CTC) at UBC.

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<sup>47</sup> The Manning/Graham connection is worth touching on. Ernest Manning, as former long-time Alberta premier and then a sitting federal Senator, had accepted the invitation to be honorary chair of the Edmonton Graham mission. After we talked about the writing I had been doing about both him and Graham, I asked Manning if he would let me help him write a book. His answer: It was too soon – he wanted to wait until he was too old to do anything else, he noted cryptically. That opportunity did come 17 years later, after he died. At that time, Preston told me that the University of Alberta had extensive tape transcripts that might help get me going, and that was how *Like Father, Like Son: Ernest Manning and Preston Manning* (ECW Press, 1998) came to be.

<sup>48</sup> Having now been out of teaching for a couple of years because of health concerns, Edna began looking at executive assistant opportunities, similar to what she had successfully pursued at United Church headquarters in Toronto.

Roy needed an executive assistant in the office of what was a growing Baptist theological education and residence activity that worked in close cooperation in some areas with Regent College, also on the UBC campus.<sup>49</sup>

We got to know the Bells well and appreciated them. Roy, at the time, was a vice-president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and found ways to encourage me to do press work at two assemblies, in Seoul, Korea in 1990 and Melbourne, Australia in 2000.<sup>50</sup>

The Bells (Roy and Elizabeth) had five young adult children. One of them, at the time a UBC student, was Gillian, who subsequently married a dentist and lives in Duncan.

One day, soon after Edna started at Carey, I was dropping her off and walking back from her office to the parking lot. Along came Gillian. “Good morning, Dr. Mackey,” she genially greeted me. “You just made my day, Gillian,” I replied. “I am just barely into my master’s studies.”<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, as we transitioned residences from Chilliwack, to Abbotsford to Burnaby to Vancouver and kept up the study regime, an opening occurred in the *Columbian* organization, for a publisher/editor at *Burnaby Today* one of five suburban free-circulation weeklies published by the group, in addition to their historic daily, *The Columbian*. At one time, the newspaper’s title had been *The British Columbian*. The Taylor family which owned it had long-unrealized circulation ambitions, likely kept at bay by the nearby Vancouver papers, the *Sun* and *Province* and their national ownership groups.

The family’s scion, Rikk Taylor welcomed me aboard and kindly made available some research material from the American Newspaper Publishers Association, which focused on publishing economic issues as explored by the Gannett group, publishers of *USA Today*. Gannett, at the time was the owner of dozens of daily and community newspapers across the United States.

I was able to take elements of that research to form my MBA research project (thesis), making it potentially applicable to both the *Columbian* group and to the other newsgroup I had somewhat regrettably left behind, Hacker Press/Trinity Holdings. The title of the project was *A study of the economic feasibility of increasing the frequency of publication of a Burnaby community newspaper*.

The format for the classes was to attend at the SFU Burnaby mountain campus each Tuesday and Thursday evening. We would meet for a buffet supper at 5 pm, with the three cohorts (or years) clustered together and broken down into sub-groups of six or eight. Our years were defined by entry. I was in the class of 1980.

Our classes were scattered in the handsome four-sided building surrounding the quadrangle which, in itself was famous for the pathway which graduates would follow down to the Convocation site next to the

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<sup>49</sup>St Andrew’s College (Presbyterian) and St. Mark’s and Corpus Christi colleges (both Catholic), Carey Hall and Vancouver School of Theology (Anglican and United) were arranged around a quadrangle to form UBC’s official theological complex. Ironically, the iconic towered VST Iona building around which the theological complex was arranged, was sold to UBC in 2014, and renamed Vancouver School of Economics. The funding enabled VST to restructure both its academic and residential activities to accommodate a substantial renewal of theological activities.

<sup>50</sup> For the latter event, Edna went with me and we spent a month down under, including welcoming the new millennium by watching kangaroo feeding on the grass on a golf course in a small city along the Great Ocean Road. The trip marked our 30th anniversary (December 20, 1999).

<sup>51</sup> I was able to tell her, at her father’s funeral almost three decades later, that she could now legitimately call me “Dr. Mackey”, since, a couple of years before, I had earned my doctorate in ministry at Tyndale Seminary – just as her father had, at Fuller Seminary, not long after Gillian pre-promoted me.

W. A. C. Bennett library. Each cohort brought together an interesting balance of people and we were encouraged by various means to get to understand each other so that, in effect, our professors were not our only teachers. So were our fellow-students. After supper, we went to classes where we would stay usually until close to 10 pm. We often also had classes on Saturday mornings to cover material that the weekday time slots would not permit. In addition, following the Harvard Business School case study method, we would organize into groups to explore and discuss “cases” – loosely organized stories from businesses and corporations. Our groups’ roles were to analyze the stories, identify the business, financial, sociological or human resources issues and propose, together, some solutions. The case study groups – usually five to seven people, would meet at different times apart from the classroom study. There were a number of good pubs in the area that, at various times, would receive our business. It could be argued that the liquidity of our meals, maintained in moderation, helped stimulate the creative juices and brought about better solutions. Our individualized reading and study could be expected to run to 20 hours a week or more. And all of us were working full time in variously demanding management roles.

To get into the Executive MBA program, one was required to be in some active management role. Some of us were in small businesses but most came from some of the larger employers in British Columbia. In fact, some of the largest companies were financial supporters of the program, which meant that tuition fees were relatively manageable. Simply-stated, our 1980 class of 42 students came from three categories of management: finance, engineering and “the rest of us.” I was in the “rest of us” category: I understood that my print media editorial and religious education background both brought strength to the cohort. But, among us were, for example, a doctor who was a partner in a large medical clinic, an assistant controller for a large airline and the president of a non-profit organization working with visually-impaired people.

There was a fair amount of variety in the cohort, with regard to ethnicity, undergrad education, sexual orientation and age. (I was in my early 40s – which was about the median level.) The male-female split was about even.

It did not take too long to identify my thesis topic, given the fact that frequency of publication was a major issue in the newspaper industry at the time. My supervisor was my marketing prof, Dr. Stan Shapiro, who later headed up the EMBA program for several years. Irene Gordon, an accounting prof, was my assistant supervisor, particularly reviewing my budgeting, cash flow and five year projections for the subject newspaper.

Keep in mind that the early 80s predated the development of Excel programs on laptops by about 15 years. There was a computer room at the university, through which students who had budgets and cash flow projections to work out could get the automation they needed. But it connected to a phone line that, in turn allowed the raw data to be transmitted to a mainframe called MTS – Michigan Technical Systems – located on one of the campuses at the University of Michigan.

For the first couple of years, all went well with the classes, studies and my work as publisher/editor of *Burnaby Today*. I usually wrote a column each week called *Burnaview*. During a marketing class, one evening, Dr. Shapiro announced that he and his wife (a lawyer and former Bell Canada vice-president) had named their house after my column. He produced a photo of a split log, hanging over the front door, with *Burnaview* clearly carved into it, nicely varnished and stained. The house itself was in a hillside tract at the foot of Burnaby Mountain, facing across Burrard Inlet and Indian Arm to the snow-capped peaks behind them. Pretty good marketing – and a good product – I thought.

Burnaby, at the time, was on a significant growth spurt. The business strip along Kingsway from Boundary Road to Edmonds was quite auto-oriented. The two main buildings on the south side of Kingsway were the Sears store and a Ford distribution centre which was built with the idea of eventually being an auto assembly plant. Those plans never materialized. The newspaper was down the hill on Royal

Oak Avenue, in a commercial strip at the bottom of a four storey apartment complex. A space became available on the north side of Kingsway, across from the Sears store, at a very small rent increase. It made sense for two reasons: It permitted us to put our sign in large lit letters on the front of the building so it was clearly visible to anyone exiting the Sears store to the parking lot or bus stop. And it meant that our sales staff could check in and have easy access to many of the advertisers on whom they would be calling.

Our advertising manager was a woman named Liala Graham who was married to Neil Graham, then the managing editor of the *Columbian*. Neil was a Brit who had done a stint in Kenya as an editor of the *Daily Nation*, a Nairobi newspaper owned by the Aga Khan, the leader of the Ismaili branch of Islam.

Liala, herself, was an active and devout Ismaili. And, for my part, I was an admirer of the group, particularly appreciating the Aga Khan's leadership, through the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), in relief and development projects throughout the world. There were times when, in the interest of faith-based harmony, Christian organizations like World Vision and otherwise affiliated groups like the AKF were favorably compared to each other as examples of faith-based compassion and economic problem-solving.

During my tenure at the Burnaby paper, the Aga Khan came to town on July 26, 1982. He drew a huge crowd to a big tent on Canada Way to turn the sod for the construction of an Ismaili Centre – one of six such worldwide and designed by prominent Vancouver architect Bruno Freschi. The then prime minister, Brian Mulroney, officially opened the centre almost three years later.

At the time, there was a fair amount of sniping about the proposed centre (called a jamatkhana) and the plans for it – some of it borderline racist. When the Aga Khan delivered his speech, he calmly outlined Ismaili values and the hopes that Ismaili leaders had for providing a worthy worship space and community service facilities for the area.

Some of the criticism of the Ismaili jamatkhana came from what I might describe as being militantly-non-faith people – the same kind who would have expressed opposition a few years earlier, to the development of the equally sizeable facility housing the 5,000-strong Willingdon Church, down the street and around the corner. In *Burnaview*, I wrote that, while many Burnaby Christians might differ from Ismailis on the exact size and shape of God and the religious community, they would find common ground with the Khan's followers on many concepts relating to family and community service.

Liala had been very involved in the organizing of the Aga Khan's visit. In fact, she asked for a couple of days off from advertising sales to be free for her volunteer work.

The day she returned to work – after reading my comments on the opening of the Ismaili Centre – she put her head around the corner of my office door and said: "Thanks for that column. If I was not already an Ismaili, you could have convinced me to become a Christian." She made my day.

My MBA thesis essentially developed the theme that, by testing the markets, advertisers could determine when, during a one week cycle, advertisers were most likely to want to reach out to particular customers. By developing data on that level, then projecting revenue and costs, it would be possible to determine if it would be feasible economically to increase the frequency of publication of a weekly newspaper to twice or three times a week or, even, perhaps, to daily circulation. It was based on the increasingly common practice of making community newspapers free-circulation, rather than charging a subscription price. The increased number of "eyeballs" coming from every-home delivery would make it possible to commensurately increase advertising rates and revenue – based on the increased return of revenue to the advertisers achieved by a broadened potential customer base.

Some *Columbian* survey work had shown, in fact, that people who received an editorially-credible community newspaper, freely delivered, would read that paper and the fliers contained within it just as thoroughly and believably as if they had paid for it.

While I was mid-way through my thesis preparation, the *Columbian* was showing signs of economic stress. There were rumors that it would go into receivership, soon. It was hard to know, even as a semi-insider, whether this was real and terminal stress or whether it was a certain amount of position-staking on the part of the publisher Rikk Taylot and the Newspaper Guild – headed locally at the time by *Columbian* public affairs columnist Terry Glavin.<sup>52</sup>

Be that as it may, my own position was becoming dicey and I had my ear to the ground as to what to do. I wanted to preserve the MBA studies and the community newspaper publication frequency research that was coming out of it. But I knew I might need to get another job, too.

About that time, I was invited to a meeting of an ad hoc group. It was led by John Howat, then the western Canada director of World Vision and Sam Taetz, who headed the Canadian operation for Haven of Rest (later known as Haven), a popular California-based Christian music and comment program with a nautical theme.<sup>53</sup>

John and Sam were talking about the need for some kind of communication vehicle that could connect various parts of the Christian community. They had come across Christian INFO in Calgary, run by Lois Bromley, a Christian missions enthusiast whose brother, Blake, was a prominent charities lawyer.

When they asked me what I might be able to contribute to the conversation, I replied: “All I know is newspapers. Do you want a newspaper?”

To truncate two hours of discussion into a couple of sentences: the group decided to explore the newspaper idea. At the same time, they would draw on some of Lois’ success as the operator of a storefront information centre and library. So we called the project *Christian Info* and got Calgary’s permission to use the name in British Columbia. Lawyer Doug Sauer incorporated us under provincial legislation as Christian Info (BC) Society. Our first permanent board chair was Geoff Still, former vice-president of A. E. LePage, a large real estate conglomerate.

That was late summer. By October, 1982, the first newspaper, a four-pager, was off the press. It had a front page photo of Clyde Dougans, an auctioneer at the Mennonite Central Committee annual sale, in full form. Inside was a shot of the unfinished concrete superstructure of the Sevenoaks Alliance Church’s new 2,000 seat sanctuary, replacing an overcrowded 700 seat facility.

We incorporated another small publishing effort that Edna and I had initiated, called *People ... With a Reason* into the new project. *People...* was a tabloid newspaper that churches could distribute into their neighborhoods. The stories were about people who had a “reason for the faith that was within them” to put it in biblical parlance. A few congregations picked up on the idea, including Willingdon Church. The pastor at the time, Herb Neufeld, suggested that I interview a fellow named Ken Sewell who, with his

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<sup>52</sup> In retrospect, I found it interesting that Glavin, at that time, was quite articulate in advocating for the class struggle kind of thinking that was endemic in some parts of the union movement. Today, Glavin is a highly-regarded foreign affairs analyst, whose penetrating work capably critiques all parts of the political spectrum, including that put forward by Marxist-led dictatorships, wherever they are.

<sup>53</sup> Old timers will remember that First Mate Bob of the crew of the *Good Ship Grace* would come on with the peeling of eight bells, signifying that “all’s well”. Then, a gospel quartet would break into song with “I’ve anchored my soul in the Haven of Rest. I’ll sail the wide seas no more ... In Jesus I’m safe evermore.”

now late wife, had begun attending the church. They had a nominal faith background and had been watching *Hour of Power* pastor Robert Schuller on television, making their faith commitment serious as a result. They wanted to find a church that was similar to Schuller's California mega-congregation and found it, in Willingdon.<sup>54</sup>

Happily, my MBA thesis did not gather dust on a shelf. While the *Columbian* group went out of business, some of the weeklies survived and were later taken over by CanWest, which then ran the *Sun* and *Province*. And my old group employer, Hacker Press, gave me to understand that the research was useful to them, particularly after it became part of the Black Press group (Headed by David Black – or mini-Black as we nicknamed him – not Conrad Black).

And, for *Christian Info*, the marketing and advertising information, including things like advertising-to-editorial-ratios, became important. We published twice a month in the run up to the 1984 Billy Graham mission, then cut back to monthly, where it stayed for the duration of its 30 year run. There were always six factors to include in the budgeting for each issue – printing, production, editorial, advertising, distribution and administration. Advertising produced the revenue. All categories – including advertising – were cost centres. As a basis for cost control, we recommended certain percentages for each of the cost centres, with advertising revenue representing 100 per cent. Editorial costs were calculated, generally, at 15 to 20 per cent. The rest, we can save for another time.

We also recommended setting advertising-to-editorial space ratios – usually between 55 and 70 per cent for advertising. That meant we could calculate when to go up or down four pages, thus determining how much it would cost and what revenue would be required to make those four pages economically feasible. (Okay – profitable! But remember, the objective by which most of my publishing compatriots operated called for profit-satisficing, not profit-maximization, as the class-warriors often charge.)

Once we were into the publishing cycle for *Christian Info* and we started to hear positive things from the Billy Graham invitation committee (headed by Edna's employer, Roy Bell), the pressure started to mount. After a fire in the Smith-Fir building gutted several offices including those of the newspaper we found space in the former headquarters of Dominion Construction. The Smith-Fir building was near the south foot of the Granville Bridge and just a block away from Pacific Press (home of the *Sun* and *Province*). And the former Dominion office, too, was in a media-savvy area – across from CKVU-TV. As it turned out, it was also a stone's throw from the Expo '86 site, which made the sun-drenched summer of the Expo year very exciting.

With the pressure building, I talked with Dr. Shapiro about how to find a balance between MBA studies, completion of my thesis, emerging Billy Graham committee responsibilities and keeping *Christian Info* afloat. His advice: Keep cool. Then he added: "the Billy Graham involvement is a wonderful business opportunity!" He said that with a mischievous glint in his eye. He knew, instinctively, that my interest in being part of a group bringing Billy to Vancouver was wrapped up in a desire to see other people come to faith in Jesus Christ. But the fact was, as well, that business acumen and financial resources are inevitably important factors in the success of any venture, faith-based or otherwise. Dr. Shapiro also added that my thesis was well in hand. I did accept his decision to stretch out the writing of my thesis for a year, to make sure all the "i's" were dotted and "t's" crossed. I walked down the SFU quadrangle and across the convocation stage in the spring of 1984 to receive my MBA. Geoff and Beverley Still were there and,

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<sup>54</sup> I lost track of Ken. His first wife passed away and he remarried a widow friend. They moved from Burnaby to Surrey and looked for a new, closer, church. They found St. Andrew's Newton Presbyterian. As it happened, so had we. Ken and I renewed acquaintance and Edna and I have enjoyed our latter day friendship with him and Brenda. Together, we help lead a home Bible study connected with St. Andrew's Newton.

after the ceremony, gave me a copy of Quaker spiritual formation guru Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*.

Geoff Still was a larger-than-life presence in the development of both *Christian Info* (which later became *BC Christian News*) and the BC Billy Graham mission. I relied on him heavily for wise decision-making on the business side of the newspaper. At significant junctures, he was chair both of the Christian Info Society board and the executive committee for the Billy Graham mission.

He had held senior executive positions in both Sears and, later, A. E. LePage after, in earlier life, working with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. He was equally comfortable in business and ministry leadership. After his Billy Graham mission work (which was voluntary) he became president of Focus on the Family Canada.

He also was capable of cutting through the nonsense and helped me not to be too naïve about other people's sense of goodwill. We were talking about fund-raising one day and he very pointedly told me: "Always remember, Lloyd: To be a successful fund-raiser, you need to have either an enemy or an emergency or, preferably, both."

That was not my natural bent. As *Reflections* will show, periodically, I longed for collaboration and conflict resolution and really believed that these concepts were biblically-based. So I needed occasionally to get a dollop of reality from people like Geoff to keep my feet on the ground.

Conversely, I can recall helping him, at one point, to make a clear decision when there was fork in the road. It was a few months before the 1984 Billy Graham mission. Geoff was getting some pretty heavy overtures from a particular federal political party, to run in the next election. If the party formed the government, there was a fair chance that he would get a cabinet post. Geoff and I were at some Christian ministry dinner, seated at a table with his wife, Beverley and my wife, Edna. He talked with some ambivalence about the political overture and added that he needed to make a decision pretty soon. I don't know what prompted me, but I suddenly became quite forthright, myself. "Geoff," I said. "If you declare politically, you will have to resign as chair of the Billy Graham committee. Otherwise, you are in conflict." He instantly agreed and Beverley squeezed his hand supportively.

It was the week before the Mission that Geoff learned he had cancer. He was operated on successfully and went on to have another dozen or so years – including his Focus presidency, until his cancer returned and he passed at 67.

Flyn Ritchie, who most capably edited *BC Christian News* for many years, and who now runs a website called Church for Vancouver, dug up a copy of a photo of the Billy Graham committee in 2018, when Dr. Graham died. He asked me if I could identify the people in the photo. I captured about 90 per cent of the names.<sup>55</sup>

The mission, itself, set off a string of Christian developments that took many years to mature, in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. Aggregate attendance over the eight days, was 240,000 and 11,000 or

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<sup>55</sup> Here they are: Carl Armerding, Harry Robinson, Elwyn Cutler (mission director), Ed Goerzen, Ruth Oliver, Robert Thompson, Calvin Chambers, Robert Birch, Geoff Still, Margaret Roller, John Grady, Bill Stanley, Ken Smith, Neil Snider, Tim Toronchuk, Gordon Fowler, Bruce Milne, John Sun, Rex Werts, Stan Fryer, Terry Winter, Tom Oshiro, Bill Goetz. At least a dozen of them are now in heaven, likely helping the evangelist prepare for a mission on a different level. ☺

so went forward at the evangelist's invitation, were counselled and registered their Christian commitments.<sup>56</sup>

In October, on the cusp of the Graham mission, *Christian Info* produced a Billy Graham special that ran to 48 pages and we had an enlarged distribution of 40,000. It contained many stories backgrounding Billy Graham and many of his associates – including Cliff Barrows, Bev Shea and Elwyn Cutler. Also profiled was Roger Palms, editor of *Decision* magazine, whose wife, Andrea and he had become good and encouraging friends to Edna and I. We also tried to highlight Canadian influences on Graham's work.

The special Graham issue also contained a good deal of advertising from various churches, Christian ministries and others interested in being a part of the Billy-Graham-in-Vancouver story.

A major editorial and ministry goal was to provide readers – especially new believers and the people who brought them to the mission – with some good ideas for getting involved in fellowship, education, service, community outreach and family support, now that they were a part of the Christian scene. And, as a common sense twist with Stan Shapiro's suggestion that the Graham visit was a "business opportunity" we ensured that the advertising revenue exceeded expenses to the extent that it would contribute to the future of Christian newspaper development in BC.

One particularly heartening report regarding the Billy Graham issue came from Christian Blind Mission (CBM), one of the major evangelical relief and development agencies. Art Brooker, who was the Canadian president of CBM at the time, commenting on the fact that they had inserted a flier or brochure into the special issue, said the results were so strong that they were able to open a regional office in BC. It was just one example of the way in which Christian newspapers could be used to connect people who came to faith with the agencies and other groups of Christians, to meet human needs – medical, poverty, health, and so on – on a global scale.

One of the business decisions that Geoff helped us with was getting office space for both *Christian Info* (after the fire in the Smith-Fir building) and for the Billy Graham mission (that was a one-year lease). Both were accommodated in a building owned by the Bentall family and had been the headquarters for the Bentall-owned Dominion Construction. The Benthalls were one of Canada's best known Christian philanthropic families. The clan's founder, Charles Bentall and his three sons, Clark, Robert and Howard all took their Baptist faith pretty seriously. It was often said, that Howard, the minister who had pastored two of Canada's largest Baptist congregations, was the glue that held the family together spiritually.

So, Geoff worked out an arrangement with the Benthalls that installed *Christian Info* in one set of offices in the two-storey building on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue just east of Cambie Street. Then, once the arrangements were firm for the Billy Graham visit, the mission project occupied offices in the other end of the building. At the point where I was feeling the aforementioned pressure of studies, newspaper and Graham activities, I received permission to install an electric typewriter in the Graham mission office – still a few weeks from occupancy. That way, I could flee the phones in the *Christian Info* office a few hours at a time to get more thesis pages written.

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<sup>56</sup> One, about whom I learned 20 years later, was *Calgary Herald* columnist Licia Corbella. Out of her faith commitment, she has covered some excellent world class stories about Christian action on many levels. At the time of the mission, Licia and her boyfriend, Stephen – now her long time husband – had just moved to Vancouver. Their landlady, a Christian believer, invited them to a Tuesday night mission meeting at BC Place. Moved by Billy's sermon, they went forward. When a counsellor talked to them, Licia hesitated, noting: "Should we be doing this? We are living in sin." The counsellor checked with the head counsellor whose biblically-based advice was "Now is the accepted time..."



Eventually, the *Columbian* went into receivership. The *Sun* and the *Province* picked up a fair number of the group's journalists, including Neil Graham, who had been the *Columbian* managing editor, and Douglas Todd, who eventually made his mark as one of Canada's most diligent faith/ethics journalists. (I like to think that some of my journalistic approach rubbed off on him and he ended up far surpassing me.)<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Edna was thriving over at Carey Hall (today, Carey Centre). Because she was executive assistant to Roy Bell, she got to know, at various times, the three Bentall brothers. So, between us, we were grateful for those contacts. Roy encouraged me to become part of a monthly Bible study with Clark and some of his friends. He thought we could be good for each other.

This was also the time that we were approaching Expo '86, which set up shop just down the street from the *Christian Info* office, on Vancouver's False Creek.

While editing and publishing *Christian Info*, I became involved in the Vancouver Rotary Club, which met weekly at the Hotel Vancouver. At the time, the club had about 200 members and was gradually moving to including women on the rolls. I became voluntary editor of the *Rotor*, the club's weekly bulletin. One of the perks of that role was a steel desk on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of the hotel, in Rotary's suite of offices. To there I would repair each Tuesday afternoon after the Rotary luncheon to edit an in-basket full of information into format for the printers to produce next week's bulletin. There were a fair number of clearly Christian people in the club, often motivated to live out their faith in service, in a non-sectarian sort of way. One such was Reg Rose, who was a deacon at First Baptist Church where we were worshipping at the time. He was retired from a leadership career in the YMCA and latterly, the Vancouver Board of Trade. He lived to 103 (He was in his 80s and 90s when we knew him. His wife, Jean, was a fan of the James Kennedy Operation Explosion program, a personal evangelism format which she used to great effect to introduce many of her friends to Jesus.)

Another friend from Rotary was Dean Miller. He was a public relations specialist who did much of his work for the "Love Boats" of television fame. One day, as we sat together at Rotary, he asked me if Edna and I might like to go to the Holy Land over Christmas. I said I would check with Edna and called her at Carey Hall. She said she was too busy for jokes. Later, over dinner, I said it was no joke, that Dean was offering a travel writing opportunity which required a journalist who knew something about either religion or archeology.

It was not quite all free. If Edna and I could get to London and back, Swan-Hellenic Tours, a spinoff of P&O Lines would carry the rest, plus six nights of hotel in London. We did get a great fare. As it turned out, 1984 was the beginning of several opportunities for visiting a range of countries, over half the time with Edna, and mostly writing or editing on faith and, often, foreign affairs issues.

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<sup>57</sup> The staff publishers of some of the weeklies (for example, *Surrey Today*) set up independently, with new titles (like *Surrey Now*). In some cases, they were in competition with Hacker Press, the group I had regrettably left at the beginning of my MBA studies. By the time David Black took over Hacker as part of Black Press, the horse-trading, mergers and reorganization of community newspapers in western Canada and Washington State was in full flight. The *Now* papers were picked up for a while by CanWest, which owned the *Sun* and *Province*. In due course, a group operating under the name of Glacier was formed and took on those titles. One of the people quietly involved in Glacier was David Radler, who had worked closely with Conrad Black for many years and who fell out with him when they both encountered legal difficulties with the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. (Black, after serving some time in a Florida prison, told his side of the story eloquently in a tome entitled *A Matter of Principle*.)

The summer before the Christmas-in-the-Holy-Land foray, I had travelled to London, Paris, Central African Republic and Congo (then known as Zaire). There were two reasons for that trip. The London leg was to provide coverage for Canadian Christian media for a Luis Palau mission at the legendary QPR (Queens Park Ranger) soccer stadium. Then I was to fly to Bangui, Central African Republic, en route to two stops in Northwest Zaire to visit and write about Canadian-organized Christian health and agriculture projects.

The London leg gave me opportunity to watch and write about an evangelist who many saw as one of Billy Graham successors. Argentinian born, Palau had come to faith in a Plymouth Brethren – aka Brethren assembly – setting. (Argentina has one of the largest per capita Plymouth Brethren populations globally.) He and wife Pat moved to Portland in the 1960 to study at Multnomah School of the Bible (now Multnomah University). They also wanted to see if they could extend their mainly South American ministry to the whole western hemisphere. I always found Palau a congenial and easy interview. Whenever we met, he called me “Shorty” – I am 6 foot 5 inches.

He was well-liked around Portland where Pat still lives and two of his four sons, Kevin and Andrew, carry on his ministry. He passed away in March, 2021. He was an elder at Cedar Mills Bible Church, closely linked to the “progressive” side of the Brethren assemblies’ movement.

The Zaire leg of the trip was mainly to Imeloko, the site of the Paul Carlson Medical Centre, run by some Chicago doctors connected with the Evangelical Covenant Church (Scandinavian-rooted and closely related to the Evangelical Free Church). Carlson had been a Covenant church doctor at the time of the 1971 Zairian uprising against Belgian colonialism. He was killed in the crossfire, but the Chicago doctors were continuing his work.

Getting from London to Imeloko was an interesting experience for someone who, at the age of 44, was engaging in his first overseas travel. The flight bookers advised me that there would be a plane change in Paris, on my trip from London to Bangui, Central African Republic – the jumping off point into northwest Zaire. I wondered if I could wait until the next day’s plane south, so I could nip in to Paris to look around the city. Fortunately, that was possible. So, in less than two days, I went from the heart of the British Commonwealth to one of the world’s cultural capitals to a seriously underdeveloped African dictatorship.

There was an excellent bus tour of Paris available and it did not disappoint. That said, the quick trip meant that I saw only the outside of places like the Opera House, the Louvre and Notre Dame Cathedral. The Eiffel Tower was towering and the Avenue des Champs-Élysées was w-i-i-i-de, as were its many-restaurant-lined sidewalk boulevards. My Paris stop occurred on the day of Grandma Mackey’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. I tried sending her a telegram from the hotel where I was staying but, somehow, it never got through.

The Paris-to-Bangui Union de Transports Aériens (UTA) jumbo jet touched down briefly in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. We were told in French and broken English to stay in our seats, tightly belted. I wondered why and found a cabin attendant who could speak English. She was quite emotional. “Do you see that burned out jet engine out there, at the side of the runway?” she asked. “That belonged to a plane just like this one (a UTA Boeing 747). It was supposed to explode in the air between Bangui and N'Djamena. Somehow, the timing was wrong. It blew up on the ramp. One of my best friends, another attendant, lost both her legs.” I am not sure I was glad I asked. But, a few years later, I told Douglas Todd at the *Vancouver Sun* about it, because he had been reporting on some of the militant Islamist tensions in the region – including the downing of UTA 772 over the Tenere desert in Niger on September 1989, 1989. I expect my note is still in his file somewhere.

In Bangui, an interesting sidelight was a visit to the Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST), a French-speaking seminary serving the continent’s heavily francophone regions, where future pastors for

the then burgeoning evangelical movement could receive pastoral education in their own language – and country. Often, when such aspiring pastors went to Europe to study, they never returned home.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance have played large roles in BEST's development. When I visited the campus it was a bit overgrown and its two and four storey buildings (four of them as I recall) were in need of a paint job. Yet the leaders on the ground were obviously proud of what was being accomplished with the two dozen or so students.

From Bangui, I took a single-engine five-passenger Missionary Aviation Fellowship plane to Imeloko. At a stopover in Gemena, two more young passengers came on board. They were heading to the same hospital to visit someone who, I was told, was a cousin to the Zairian president.

The chief Canadian-based reason to be in Imeloko was to write about and take photos of agricultural and fish-farming work being done by Zairians, with advice from on-the-ground Canadians associated with Hope International Development Agency, a New Westminster-based charity. Its founder, David MacKenzie, had been a good mentor in helping me understand the emerging world of Christian relief and development work.

It was good for me to have been on the ground there, and helped shape, for the rest of my life, the fact that the gospel starts with helping people to know Christ and to make him known, but continues almost endlessly, with those people finding ways to address hunger, poverty, educational, environmental and other very earthy issues in Jesus' name.

The two particular projects that I observed were on the soil and in the water. The Sahara Desert had, in effect, extended itself south over the decades because the plant life sapped the soil dry and made it impossible for food-growing. The resolution was to clear out the reed-like coarse grasses, replacing them with trees which would grow fast. Then, in the shade of those trees, food-bearing plants would be grown providing the disease-fighting nutrition that was unavailable previously to the local population.

The other project was fish-ponding. It was based on the concept that if you give someone a fish, you feed him/her for a day, but if you teach that person to fish, he/she is set for life. Streams were dammed, forming ponds in which high protein, low fat, fish could be farmed. The ponds were actually small lakes – some as much as 300-400 feet wide.

It was hard work, requiring close attention, but if it worked, it was good for people. They could rely on locally-produced food. At the time I was there, the Canadians and Zairians were working at resolving a problem: Some predatory fish had been introduced – perhaps by someone who did not like what was happening. Those fish were not good to eat and were, themselves, eating the food fish.

There was a story bonus in the Imeloko visit for me. A large well-drilling truck had pulled into the hospital village the first day of my stay. It was part of a European non-profit's project to travel to hundreds of villages in that part of Africa, substituting unclean and disease-ridden surface water, with clean replacement from dozens of metres into the ground. It was with a sense of wonder that I stood on the edge of the crowd of about 300 villagers who broke into cheers, applause and singing as the first clean water broke the ground and surged into the air.

Then they did a pick up soccer game on a nearby field, to wrap up the celebration.

After the Billy Graham mission and the overseas travel, going into 1985, there were a number of faith-community interfaces and issues that Edna and I were able to observe from a ringside seat, as Expo '86 unfolded on *Christian Info's* office doorstep. And some of those issues were tied to my life long but

sometimes flagging efforts to encourage the study, management and resolution, if possible, of conflicts, particularly in the areas of faith, labour-management relations and governance.

At the time, an American Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul had written a book entitled *Stronger than Steel: The Wayne Alderson Story*. It told about Alderson, a vice-president at Pittron Steel, and his successful quest to replace its company's "intimidation and hostility" styles with positive labor-management relations, developing Christian trust and responsiveness among workers and executives. Part of the strategy was for steel executives to meet with workers on the foundry floor and work with them in a conciliatory fashion. Labour reaction was suspicious, at first, but over time, collaboration became the order of the day.

Alderson's story spread through a number of Christian leadership groups, some of them in British Columbia, where there were threats of a general strike over deteriorating labour-management relations. Some of the labour tensions were spilling over into plans for Expo '86. As various pavilion sponsors struggled with decisions as to whether to employ union or non-union construction workers, tensions heated up.

Several things happened, not necessarily in the order I will enumerate them:

- Leadership and educational groups, some of them Christian, started circulating Sproul's book and other material about Alderson – getting the information into the hands of both labor and management leaders..
- Shirley Carr, then the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, was invited to address the annual BC Leadership Prayer Breakfast, about the potential for labor-management conciliation. Robert Bentall introduced her to the crowd as "my sister in Christ." (The Bentalls, it should be noted, had a long held reputation for good union-management relations. Some other Christian-headed firms were less comfortable with such rapport, often being fearful of being dubbed "the enemy" by union leaders.)
- Tough-talking Jack Munro, then head of the International Woodworkers of America BC Division, was known to have met with some of the Christian leaders, to talk about conciliation possibilities.
- With a general strike threatening, and heavily criticized by many of his fellow union leaders, Munro accepted an invitation from Premier Bill Bennett to meet at Bennett's Okanagan home to see if they could work together. They reached an agreement that ultimately held, thus ending the general strike threat.
- Industrialist Jim Pattison, known for his interest in encouraging Christian outreach and practice, became volunteer chair of Expo '86. Under his leadership, arrangements were worked out to allow the presence on the Expo site of both union and non-union construction firms. The rumors, apparently true, told of dozens of union and non-union workers sitting on fences between their respective work sites, eating lunch together and even, in some cases, becoming friends,

When Expo '86 got underway, Edna and I received gifts of season's passes from Edna's sister and brother-in-law, Anne and Grant Caseby. I would take a noon hour power walk through the fair. Then at the end of the work day, I would drive out to Carey Hall and pick up Edna so we could have supper at the fair, then look through two or three pavilions.

At Expo, there were some tensions between an interfaith group and the evangelical television ministry, 100 Huntley Street, headed by David Mainse. Called the Pavilion of Promise, the Huntley project was a simple, strong high tech presentation of the Christian gospel, admittedly pretty verbally aggressive. Both the evangelical and interfaith group wanted their own pavilion. The interfaith people seemed fearful that Gordon McDonald, chair of Expo's faith relations committee and himself a Christian broadcaster and

pastor, would give the nod to the Mainse proposal. Ultimately, both groups got what they were looking for, with the interfaith group coming up with a very fine social justice theme featuring faith-based projects around the world.<sup>58</sup>

But, at the point when tensions were high, some television reporter – perhaps from the Mainse organization – asked a softball question about the proposed Pavilion of Promise. The question was directed to me as editor of a Christian newspaper. I guess I gave a softball answer, saying that the Promise proposal looked pretty good. I don't think I was asked about the interfaith pavilion idea.

The next day, after my quote appeared on television, another reporter asked an interfaith representative about the tension. He replied with words to the effect that it seemed like the Promise people had me acting like a “Mackey truck” in order to get their pavilion accepted. (The term was a play on the “Mack truck” phrase often used to describe forceful behavior.)

Mainse and I were friends through the years, although we did not see each other very often. We had some good conversations over the years. We could compare notes on the different styles that made print and television communication both complementary and mutually unique.<sup>59</sup>

It rained the first day of Expo '86. But it was bright and sunny for the rest of its five months plus duration. So Edna and I enjoyed the summer thoroughly.

And *Christian Info* was coming along well, with Debra Fieguth and Flyn Ritchie emerging nicely on the editorial side and Dale Riemer and Angela Steenson doing well in advertising sales. One day in the fall of 1986, shortly after Expo closed, I received a phone call from Ted Byfield, publisher of *Alberta Report*, a conservative and Christian-faith tilted Time-style newsmagazine published in Edmonton. There was an opening for a journalist who could cover the western Canadian provincial governments, with some skills in religion journalism. I needed to earn more than I could get in Christian newspapering, if only in the short term, so Edna and I decided to let me go to Edmonton for six weeks, for a trial run.

We were on our way east, returning to Toronto, with, as it turned out, a four-month stop in Alberta's capital.

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<sup>58</sup> McDonald's “day job” at the time was senior pastor at Calvary Christian Church (now Calvary Church), a major presence in Burnaby, later moving to Surrey, near Highway 1. It was close by Fraser Academy, the Pentecostal school closely associated with industrialist Jim Pattison's family. Later, McDonald became bishop of the Pentecostal Holiness Church of Canada, with which Calvary is affiliated. He pastored for 40 years and was bishop for 23, with some overlap time. He passed away in June, 2020 at age 76.

<sup>59</sup> A decade and a half later, I was a few days from having triple bypass surgery. The phone rang and on the other end was David Mainse. He said he had heard about my upcoming operation and wanted to wish me well and pray for me. He had experienced the same operation a few years before. I asked him what it was like when he woke up. “Like a Mack truck hit me,” he replied. A few months later, I was at a luncheon where he was speaking, in Ottawa. He asked me how I felt coming out of surgery. “You had said ‘like a Mack truck hit you,’” I replied. “I guess mine felt more like a Smart Car.”

## Chapter 9

### Heading east, again

The four months with *Alberta Report*, brief as they were, had considerable significance for us in the longer term. There were things to learn and do there which we could not have done, either in Vancouver or Toronto – and indeed would lay groundwork for our 15-year stint in Ottawa, from 1998 to 2013.

I embarked alone for the six week “trial run” in Edmonton, while Edna continued her work at Carey Hall, at UBC. She came for a visit midway for a few days, so we could evaluate together, how things were going.

I had arranged the timing of the trip so that I could stop in at Banff, for a couple of days, for the annual conference of the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations (AERDO) – a North America wide group with about 150 member non-government organizations, today known as Accord. I had become aware of AERDO through my contacts with Hope International Development Agency, the New Westminster group whose work had taken me to Africa two years before.<sup>60</sup>

I was at Banff with press credentials from *Alberta Report* so was able to deliver some in-depth copy of the kind that suited *AR*’s readership within hours of arriving in Edmonton.

The reporting and writing style at *AR* was based on Time Magazine’s long established approach. It differed from traditional newspaper reporting, particularly in the lede – the first paragraph. In newspaper reporting, the opening paragraph contained the “who, what, where, when and why.” But, at *AR*, that brief collection of facts was woven into a longer paragraph that provided some sort of tightly-written historic background or broader context – or perhaps even more.

A lede might, for example, read something like this:

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<sup>60</sup> At the time of my 1984 Africa trip, the organization was known as Food for the Hungry Canada. With some restructuring within Christian relief and development field, it took on the Hope International name in the 90s and a separate FH Canada organization developed under other leadership.

Almost 150 years ago, J. Hudson Taylor of England found himself newly settled in a Chinese village, clad in traditional Chinese garb, as one way of relating to the people he was trying to reach with the Christian Gospel. His work became China Inland Mission which, at its peak, had over 1,000 missionaries in the sprawling nation. The 1949 Communist Revolution sent CIM underground and eventually drove it into other Asian nations. Later, it was renamed Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF), but it retained the values Taylor developed for nurturing the gospel in Asian cultures. Then last week.... (At this point came the “who, what, where, when and why.”)

Just as, at the *United Church Observer*, I had learned the fine points about covering faith or social issues by telling the stories of the people who were involved in those issues, now, I was learning more about getting context into a story early on, rather than simply recounting the immediate events or action.

AR had an excellent clipping library from all major Canadian publications so, when I was ready to tackle a current story, I would go to the clippings and get all the background available. Only then, for example, would I start calling contacts for currently relevant interviews.

I also learned to get to the point of the conflict in a story, even though, in the final analysis, I was still committed to the idea of conciliatory journalism.

AR was just getting into a primitive form of a computerized newsroom. We had Commodore 64 terminals on our desks, linked together with the editor's machine. So we would send our copy, including the headline to the editorial desk.

One afternoon, I had just sent a story about research being done in the Beaufort Sea, in the Canadian Arctic. There were two bodies of research, one on the narwhal whales that were native to the area – those mammals with the long spear-like noses. The other was on the oil reserves in the area and the work that was being done to find out just how extensive they were.

The headline style at AR was to make the major head as short as possible, no more than three or four words, followed by a much smaller (in type size) sub-head. For this story, I wrote a head that simply said: “Oil and whales”.

Almost as soon as I sent the story to Ted Byfield's computer screen, he called me over. (He was managing the editorial desk himself that day.) While I watched, he deleted “and” from the head and replaced it with “vs.”, so the new head read “Oil vs. whales”.

“You always have to get the conflict into the story. Every story has conflict,” he growled.

A few weeks into the trial run, I had lunch with Preston Manning, renewing acquaintance and reminiscing about the Edmonton Billy Graham mission. We had kept touch a bit after that and, in fact, he had gently approached me in a phone call in 1984, asking if I might want to edit a Slave Lake newspaper. At that time, he was doing oil company-indigenous community conciliation work under the aegis of Manning Consultants. He thought my type of journalism would work in that milieu. Nothing much came of that conversation.

Another time, Edna and I met with Preston and Sandra in Vancouver. They were in the city for the summer, together with their five children, so that the two of them could take some summer courses at Regent College, the evangelical graduate school at UBC. Preston was ever cognizant of the need to try relating thoughtful Christian faith to the real world. Life-long learning was part of his quest.

Now, over lunch in a West Edmonton hotel, he produced a document, outlining the concept of a “Western Reform Party.” My eyebrows lifted, a little. He described the plan, which, at that stage, was pretty embryonic. I asked him if I could tell Ted Byfield about it, perhaps with a view to doing a story. He gave clearance for that.

That afternoon, I shared the information with Ted. His eyebrows shot up. Should we do a story, I wondered?

Ted said he had heard from other *AR* contacts about something involving Preston and had been checking out those leads. He asked me if I could propose to Preston that he and Sandra be invited to an “editorial board” meeting to explore what he had in mind. They agreed and a date was set, fortuitously, during the time when Edna was visiting from Vancouver, so she was able to sit in on the session.

Newspapers and newsmagazines were more frequently utilizing “editorial board” meetings with significant leaders in various sectors, as a means to question them closely and discuss great ideas with them. And they often included the whole editorial staff and – in this case – spouses or partners, to give everyone broad exposure to the guest’s perspective. Various specialty editors and reporters could, in front of the whole crowd, put forward questions or comments based their own fields of interest – economics, environment, faith, provincial or civic affairs, the law, foreign affairs and so on.

The session, plus a few further meetings allowed Ted to form the conclusion that *AR* would do well to cover Preston and the emerging Reform Party of Canada. The “western” reference was soon dropped, although the slogan “the West wants in” continued as a periodic rallying cry.<sup>61</sup>

Edna’s visit, coming as it did, coinciding with the Manning meeting, led us to conclude that the six week trial should turn into an actual move to Edmonton. Edna wrapped up her work at Carey Hall. We sold our Kitsilano condo and moved to a rental apartment in downtown Edmonton. For Christmas dinner, we had bologna sandwiches. A big event three days later at the commodious Byfield home on a bluff overlooking the North Saskatchewan River, helped to make up for the lonely Christmas day. On that occasion, the Boar’s Head was carried in to the song-festing of 100 or so *AR* family and friends.

It was a new tradition for us. And I have to say that the Byfield form of Christianity was different. G. K. Chesterton was greatly appreciated, as was J. R. R. Tolkien. C. S. Lewis was okay. But these Anglo-Catholics had little communication with such evangelical stalwarts as Kenneth Kantzer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Charles and Daniel Fuller of the Old Fashioned Revival Hour/Fuller Seminary circuit. Dispensationalists like H. A. Ironside would have been outside the pale.

Just as we had, at the *Observer*, we were experiencing different kinds of Christianity than we did in our evangelical homeland – but just as authentic in their own ways.

I was able to produce some interesting *AR* stories, on faith, provincial and civic issues. And Byfield was hard at work, at the time, as well, to build readership for the magazine in the four western provinces. To that end, a companion publication, *Western Report*, was brought into being

Many issues were breaking at that time, placing Alberta in the eyes of some interesting storms. The Mulroney Conservatives had been in power in Ottawa for a few years and, in the beginning, westerners were allegedly expressing relief over being delivered from the tyranny of the Pierre Trudeau era. But, at

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<sup>61</sup> Later, when Ontario and Quebec people became more interested in Reform but could not be candidates because the original party constitution prevented it, there was a new rallying cry: “the east wants in.”



the time I was at AR, there was the strong sense that Mulroney, with his Quebec roots, was not much friendlier to the west than Trudeau. Some of the Tory efforts at constitutional reform, coming in the wake of the Trudeau 1982 Charter of Rights, were not offering much comfort to Alberta people.

There was a faith side to all this. Mulroney had been successful at getting a large swath of Conservatives elected from the western provinces – including around 30 who had clearly evangelical Christian ties. The prime minister, himself a reasonably devout Catholic, jocularly referred to them as his “God squad.”

The titular head of the God Squad was Jake Epp, the health minister. He was a devout Mennonite Brethren member and an active supporter of Trinity Western College (now Trinity Western University). During his health portfolio tenure, he took a lot of heat in the process of trying to get an abortion bill through parliament. Both pro-abortionists and anti-abortionists (euphemistically called Pro-choice and Pro-life in their own respective parlances) disliked the bill because it did not go far enough to please anyone. It became Epp’s Waterloo, so to speak. Mulroney gave him the relatively easy-to-handle energy portfolio to get him off the hook.<sup>62</sup>

While in Edmonton, Edna and I acted on a previous assignment to go to Pine Mountain, Georgia. There the executive of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization was meeting, to plan for Lausanne II, set for Manila in 1989.<sup>63</sup>

Led by evangelist Leighton Ford, Billy Graham’s brother-in-law, Lausanne was becoming a major influence in global evangelicalism, as it sought to encourage the blending of evangelism, social action and educational pursuits.

I took back some good story ideas and also talked with several key Lausanne people about doing a book about the movement which would include chapters on the Lausanne philosophy written by Leighton interspersed with stories about many of the Lausanne people and accomplishments. I completed a manuscript about 18 months later, and passed it on to Leighton, when he was visiting in Toronto. Things changed and Lausanne never acted to get the document published. However, I was offered a consolation prize – being part of the Manila press room at Lausanne II. More on that later.

Meanwhile, shortly after getting back from Pine Mountain, I received a letter from Stan Izon, with a “come over and help us” plea. Stan, a Toronto resident, had recently retired as Leighton Ford’s executive assistant. He had worked with Leighton and others in the Billy Graham organization, after a season of spiritual renewal caused him to leave the vice-presidency of a major advertising agency.

Stan understood communication, marketing and advertising and the practical relationship between all three. He had learned of *Christian Info* in Vancouver and its rapport with the Graham BC mission in 1984. And he was working at the development of a Mission Ontario organization which he hoped would

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<sup>62</sup> In talking about the abortion issue, it is worth noting that Pro-life people are currently often associated with social conservatism, along with people who are Pro-family and supporters of traditional male-female marriage. But, at the time I was at AR, social conservatism had a different nuance. Social conservatives were informally defined by their observers as being people who recognized the issues being raised by socialists and social democrats and sought conservative solutions to those issues. By that definition, those solutions could involve economics and fiscal policy and not just life or family issues.

<sup>63</sup> Lausanne I had taken place in 1974 in, you guessed it, Lausanne, Switzerland. Billy Graham, himself, led that conclave. I was editor of *The Chilliwack Progress* at the time and the then-pastor of Broadway Mennonite Brethren Church, Henry Warkentin had attended in Switzerland. *The Progress* wrote up his account of the ground-breaking event.

bring Graham and a number of his associates to Ontario over a several year period, for missions in a number of the province's key cities.

As in western Canada a few years before, a circular route of Graham missions seemed to be taking ultimate aim at Toronto. The pathway, this time, appeared to target Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo in New York state and Hamilton and Toronto in the province of Ontario. If it all worked out, Mission Ontario would take it from there.

Stan wondered if Edna and I would be willing to move to Toronto to get a newspaper started. He would be the publisher and, I, the editor and general manager and we would try to get it set up under a charity, just like in Vancouver. He thought there would be seed funding available from the Billy Graham organization and there were already tentative plans for a Billy Graham mission in Hamilton, into which we could tie.

It sounded good but we needed to know more. So we learned that \$15,000 in BG funding was, indeed, available. We made our move and arrived in Ontario on March 13, 1987. We lived in a suite at the Christian Blind Mission residence in Stouffville, north of Toronto for a few weeks, until we were able to purchase a condo in the east end of Scarborough. (We learned that it was for sale from a notice on a bulletin board in a supermarket at the foot of the building where we bought. It turned out to be one of our best purchase-and-sale real estate transactions.)

We called the newspaper *Christian News Toronto* and set out to establish a charity. We made temporary arrangements to tax receipt through Christian Info in Calgary. But getting a charity registered in Ontario proved virtually impossible, for reasons that we were never quite able to understand.

We put together a board and set a budget on the basis of the Graham grant and the advertising we started to develop. Andy Thomson, who had previous advertising sales experience in a non-Christian setting and had a desire to set up a Christian newspaper, came on board. So did Karen Homer, a Carleton journalism grad and part time student at Ontario Bible College (now Tyndale University). She left her post as communication director for Yonge Street Mission to take up the editorial reins at *Christian News Toronto*.

Both people were excellent in their fields and things were moving ahead well. And I was enjoying building goodwill with many leaders in various parts of the Christian community. We got good board members and added another two or three freelancers to the operation.

We obtained good office space at a fair rate on the second floor of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in Markham. It helped to have Brian Stiller, the EFC president close at hand. He was an oft encourager, able to explain many of the Ontario evangelical nuances.

A low point occurred about three months in, when we learned about a major American evangelical leader who was called out as an adulterer. *Christianity Today* carried the story. The leader resigned from his position as president of a very well-regarded evangelical educational organization. The Toronto angle to the story was that the leader was going to be speaking in the city at a major conference. His booking was cancelled. He entered into a counselling program and stayed out of ministry for many months. In due course, he returned to ministry, gave excellent leadership and his marriage survived. But, at the time of the adultery disclosure, we did a story, running it on the front page. Karen did an excellent job of writing the piece. It was factual and not sensational. We believed the place for the story was on the front page, given the stature of the leader and the relevance to Toronto in the cancellation of his speaking engagement in the city.

The mud hit the fan. A major donor resigned from the board and thoroughly chastised Karen and I. I tried to handle the fallout but there were some leaders in the Christian community who felt we had overstepped the mark. On the other hand, some of our supporters felt that the board member who resigned was engaged in a power play that we ought not to take too seriously.

We were able to recover and learn some lessons about balancing truth and sensitivity. For my own part, if I had not had the *AR* experience, with its emphasis on highlighting conflict, I might have placed the story inside the paper. Indeed, we did that a few months later, when another American evangelical leader was caught consorting with a prostitute.

Some of the tensions among various parts of the evangelical community came when we looked at the possibility of running movie or film reviews, as was done regularly in *Christianity Today*. Karen was in favor, Andy was adamantly opposed. To him, movie-going was sinful and unbiblical, unless it was a clearly Christian film, being shown in a church or under church sponsorship.

The in-house discussion continued for some weeks, but we did not run film reviews until after Andy left *Christian News* to work for Christian Horizons, an agency working with physically and mentally challenged young adults.

Bonnie Neil came on and took our advertising to new highs. A very happy and talented person married to a Presbyterian-cum-Baptist minister, she proved to be an excellent prospector and ethically persuasive sales person. The high point came with the publishing of the Billy Graham Hamilton special which, as in Vancouver, served to introduce the exciting options in the Christian community to new believers and the people who brought them to the Copps Coliseum mission.

And it produced enough of a surplus to considerably reduce the negative cash flow which needed to be whittled away.

A couple of months after the mission, the board members were growing nervous. There was tension among Stan, Karen and I that I could not quite decipher. At the same time, two people requested me to meet with them to talk about Christian newspapering in Canada. One was Don Posterski, a Christian leadership consultant and teacher. The other was Linda Cannell, a Christian education professor at Providence College (now Providence University). She was a member of the board of Fellowship for Print Witness, publisher of *ChristianWeek*, the Winnipeg-based national Christian newspaper founded by Harold Jantz.

They wondered if I would be interested in the idea of closing the newspaper and throwing my support to *ChristianWeek*. My response was to try to explain the concepts of national and local newspapering, noting that Harold Jantz had done a fine job of developing a national paper, while I had been engaged, in BC and, now, Ontario, in developing local newspapers. In the mainstream world, I noted, the *National Post* and local or regional papers like *Vancouver Sun*, *Calgary Herald*, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* and *Ottawa Citizen* worked together to enhance each of their roles, applying the economies of scale and a spirit of collaboration to make it work.

Did they think Harold might be interested in such an arrangement, I asked.

During that particular tension, I met Winston Ling who took quite an interest in the newspaper and what its people were trying to do. Winston was, at the time vice-president of finance for Crown Life, which had, in its portfolio, Extendicare, a well-regarded seniors' residence group. He was also an elder in the Toronto Chinese Presbyterian Church. His wife, Stephanie, was a professor in York University's

education faculty. Later, he was to become Brian Stiller's right hand person in raising the \$80 million to acquire Tyndale University's present campus.

Winston asked me if there was anything he could do to help save *Christian News Toronto*.

I was on the horns of a two-question dilemma: Close it down or let someone save it?

As it turned out, the board decided to close down the paper. There was no need for me to answer either question.

But what to do for a job? At the time, Ontario Bible College/Ontario Theological Seminary (OBC/OTS – now known as Tyndale University) was looking for a campaign co-ordinator. They wanted to build an extension to their campus to accommodate their rapidly growing seminary, led by Presbyterian pastor/historian Ian Rennie.<sup>64</sup>

As it happened, Edna was already working at OBC/OTS. She had provided some interim help at *Christian News Toronto* as an administrator/bookkeeper/receptionist. The OBC/OTS work had some happy unintended consequences: Lou Eizenga, then development vice-president at the schools, needed an executive assistant. She filled the bill. Soon, Lou left to do some Christian education curriculum publishing work. So the president, Dr. William McRae added development director to his job description.

So, I came in as campaign co-ordinator, pulling together a \$3 million objective and strategy with the help of some excellent development consultants from Texas.

That meant both Edna and I were reporting to Dr. McRae. It was a congenial arrangement and we worked well together. We tried to be careful not to be nepotistic in our relationships to other staff.<sup>65</sup>

After a few months, despite the interesting work, we concluded that the reason we came to Toronto had come to an end. We were provided an opportunity to take over some agribusiness and business publications in Vancouver, as well provide some "founder" support for *Christian Info*, by then, *BC Christian News*.

We wrapped up our work at OBC/OTS. It was, in a sense, providential that we both had the opportunity to work with Bill McRae. He was a fine president for his time – of Plymouth Brethren background, he had been educated and taught at Dallas Theological Seminary. And he had been chaplain to the NFL's Dallas Cowboys!

One of my last acts as OBC/OTS campaign co-ordinator was to make a presentation to the campaign committee on progress to date. David Pavey, then the OBC/OTS finance vice-president, helped me to prepare an overhead transparency (this was before PowerPoint) showing how much had been raised. When I placed the transparency for projection, I managed to get it upside down, so everything looked very negative. But it certainly got the committee members' attention.

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<sup>64</sup> Within a few years, it would become the largest stand-alone seminary in Canada, with close to 900 students. Only Toronto School of Theology, a conglomerate of several seminaries, most connected with the University of Toronto, is larger. Those several schools enrol around 1,200 students.

<sup>65</sup> One morning, we were part of a development department prayer session – something we did weekly. I came into the meeting just before its start, finding there was no chair for me to sit on. One of the other attenders suggested that Edna could sit on my knee. Edna mischievously responded: "You know about the separation of church and state? Well, we practice separation of home and work."

It was a three-year campaign, designed to raise \$3 million for the seminary addition. I took it through the first seven months and was able, with a diverse and competent team and many good contacts, to take it to just over \$1 million. It was a good fund-raising experience which built my confidence in being able, if necessary, to handle that role. Evangelical fund-raising can be a little dicey at times. There are a substantial number of wealthy evangelical Christians, many of whom have arranged their affairs into family foundations. They believe that God has prospered them in their businesses – retail, communications, construction and development, for example. And they want to give back to organizations, churches or ministries that do things in ways they approve, to accomplish various tasks which they believe to be God’s work.

In many ways, evangelical ministries are structured a little like some Roman Catholic orders. And if they organize properly, they are able to provide charitable tax receipts to donors under Revenue Canada provisions. These ministries, sometimes organized under denominational structures but, as often as not, operating independently. They would “come alongside” the churches or denominations, provide services like, schools and colleges, prayer and Bible study, evangelism and outreach, overseas or domestic relief and development and public policy counselling for people in public office.<sup>66</sup>

The unintended tension that developed in evangelical fund-raising was that dozens of worthwhile organizations would line up, figuratively speaking, to present to these family foundations. And, sometimes the answer had to be “no”. One example in my own experience: A family foundation was approached by one of my OBC/OTS campaign team members. The family had been known to support the schools in the past. This time, the answer was a firm “no”. But we did not know why. In due course, it came out that Wycliffe College, a highly-regarded evangelical Anglican seminary associated with the University of Toronto, had made an excellent presentation to the same family foundation. And, it could be argued, the presenters chosen by Wycliffe were more clearly in the heart of what I would call “evangelicals in mainstream denominations” than were those from OBC/OTS.

So, during my time at OBC/OTS, I was able to observe fairly closely many of the nuances of the evangelical movement in Canada. Later, in 1995, I wrote *These Evangelical Churches of Ours* (Wood Lake Books). The book was one of a series by journalists who were part of specific faith groups, and had been proposed to me by Jim Taylor, with whom I worked at the *United Church Observer*, and his Wood Lake Books co-founder, Ralph Milton. The other books in the series covered United, Anglican, Lutheran and Presbyterian denominations.

In *These Evangelicals...*, I categorized evangelicalism into 12 sectors. (Full disclosure: It was my own work and research but it drew from many other lists developed by various church historians.)

In the list, there were eight theological sectors and four, sociological. The latter might fit into some of the theological sectors but are shaped, also, by ethnic, indigenous, cultural and ideological factors.

The theological sectors are:

- Mainstream evangelical – historic evangelical denominations that have been around half-a-century or more.
- Pentecostal.
- Charismatic (including Catholic charismatics.)

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<sup>66</sup> Later, during our Ottawa years, we were able to observe, at close hand, some 35 such organizations all providing public policy counsel to various federal government or parliamentary bodies.

- Evangelicals in mainline denominations. (Anglican, United, Presbyterian, Lutheran, some Baptists.
- Fundamentalists.
- Reformed.
- Holiness.
- Anabaptist/Mennonite.

The sociological sectors are:

- Ethnic evangelical.
- Aboriginal evangelical.
- Francophone evangelical.
- Evangelical socialists.

Today, I would likely nuance things a little differently, but not much. And I would caution that, whether one is talking about faith groups or political organizations, I take as wise the advice offered by Preston Manning in his latest book, *Do Something! 365 Ways You Can Strengthen Canada* (Sutherland House, 2020). In it, he recognized that political and faith groups, among others, are often “silos” whose members have very little contact with or understanding of other groups outside their boundaries. People who want to be effective in helping shape Canada, he suggested, would want to form relationships, friendships and lines of communication with people in other groups, from which they would normally be isolated. (I have paraphrased Preston on this. His full rationale can be found in 3.4 – Navigate the Faith/political interface wisely and graciously. It appears on pp 252-4, under the sub-topic of Conflict Resolution.)

Edna had served in administrative or executive assistant roles for five substantive Christian leaders at that point: Dr. John Ambrose at the United Church Worship Resources, Drs. Roy Bell and Phil Collins at Carey Hall (UBC) and Lou Eizenga and Dr. Bill McRae at OBC/OTS. Two more were to come, Dr. Guy Saffold, then executive vice-president at Trinity Western University and Dr. Maurice Vellacott, Member of Parliament.

But her next role was to take her into an administrator role, in her own right, at DoMac Publications Ltd. in Vancouver. That was the company we set up to handle the agribusiness publications and directories we were taking over. The name was drawn from her maiden name, Dosso (pronounced Daw-so) and our last name, Mackey (with emphasis on the first syllable.) However, we pronounced the Do of the company name “Doe”

## Chapter 10

### Back to the West Coast

We returned to Vancouver in June, 1989. A few weeks later, I headed for Manila, for two weeks, for Lausanne II. (There has, since then, been a third Lausanne, in 2010 In Cape Town, South Africa. Flyn Ritchie, who had so capably led *BC Christian News* for over a decade until its closure in 2011, was able to attend that event.)

Put together by a team led by David Wang (pronounced Wong), then the executive director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the event was a kaleidoscope of plenaries and workshops. The plenaries were co-chaired by notable television chefs Graham and Treena Kerr. Overseeing the sessions was Leighton Ford. Trademarked as “The Galloping Gourmets”, Graham, and Treena, had previously undergone a serious Christian conversion. At the time of Lausanne II, they were re-building their gourmet presence in a faith-based context in Tacoma, Washington, at a Youth with a Mission (YWAM) Discipleship Training Center.

A Manila Manifesto was hammered out by a committee led by John Stott, the evangelical Anglican cleric from London who had been involved with various Billy Graham and Lausanne initiatives since the evangelist’s first London mission in 1954.

The Kerr presence gave a bit of a charismatic bent to the event.

Indeed, there were three themes which struck me as indicative of Lausanne’s ability to relate to various sectors of the Christian sociological spectrum. Those elements were:

- The charismatic movement.
- The communicating of indigenous groups from many countries with each other.
- And the difficulty many people from certain countries had, in getting to the conclave.

The Manila visit provided an interesting family opportunity. My brother, Barry, who has had a distinguished career in relief and development, as well as in cross-cultural communication, was at the conference as a delegate. He was vice-president of World Relief Canada at the time.

He and I would check with each other once a day, then I would disappear into the press room to get some assignments and he would go off to the sessions that dealt with his fields of specialty.

My sister, Mary Parsons, her husband, Phil and their three children had moved to Manila a few months before, from the Boston area, so Phil could assume the middle school principal post at Faith Academy. So they became “tour guides” to Barry and I. We visited, among other things, the presidential palace, where Imelda Marcos’ 3,000 pairs of shoes were on display. By that time Corazon Aquino, widow of assassinated presidential critic Benigno Aquino, was, herself in the president’s chair. Imelda had been Ferdinand Marcos wife when he was president and Benigno was assassinated under Marcos watch in August, 1983.

Upon my return to Vancouver, we went full-tilt into DoMac activity, as well as getting involved with a team that was taking *BC Christian News* forward. And there was another activity which helped pave the way to our 15-year sojourn to Ottawa nine years later. Preston Manning needed someone to edit *The Reformer*, the bi-monthly newspaper of the then burgeoning Reform Party of Canada. DoMac took on the contract and it was edited from Vancouver.

DoMac took over office space that had been occupied by Freyvogel-Preiswerck (F-P), the publishers of the agribusiness publications that we acquired from them. (We added some business directories, the *BC Christian News* consultancy and the *Reformer* work to the package of activity.) Our office was on the seventh floor of the Dominion Building, an historic structure on the edge of Gastown. At the time of construction in 1910, it was arguably the tallest building in the British Empire<sup>67</sup>.

The Dominion Building office commanded a great northwest view of the BC Trade and Convention Centre with its soaring “sails” and cruise ship terminal. Toward the northeast were the giant orange loading cranes at one of the harbour’s container ports. Directly north was North Vancouver, with its towers and homes climbing up the side of Grouse Mountain.

For a fair amount of the time at the Dominion Building, Edna was ably assisted by Stephanie Hawes (later Cunningham), a Trinity Western University business and communication graduate. For Stephanie, there was an interesting historic connection. Her maternal grandfather, John Bennett, was the founder of Bennett and White Construction, which had been involved in the construction of the Dominion Building. Bennett’s name was also on the articles of incorporation for Regent College. (He was another of the numerous business leaders who were affiliated with the Brethren assemblies.) Stephanie’s father, Barry Hawes, John Bennett’s son-in-law, was very involved in Regent board work over the years.<sup>68</sup>

In a sense, Stephanie’s Trinity-Regent connection was symbolic of the Vancouver-Fraser Valley evangelical spectrum. Trinity drew much of its strength from the valley’s rural and small city Bible Belt, representing often a pietistic approach to faith. Mennonite, Alliance, Evangelical Free, Christian Reformed and Pentecostal denominations are major influencers. Regent – on the Point Grey UBC tip, drew from a more sophisticated urban kind of evangelical – evangelical Anglican, Baptist and the most “open” wing of the Plymouth Brethren, for example. With our background from both the Valley and Vancouver, we, once again, tried to be evangelically bilingual.

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<sup>67</sup> Francois and Nina Freyvogel were long-time friends we had met through community newspapering. They lived in West Vancouver and had a second home in Ryder Lake, in the hills above Chilliwack. They had an antique pump organ that I had a chance to play once a year, at New Years, when they would gather a group of friends around to vigorously sing classic party songs, both secular and sacred. Nina passed away in late 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Stephanie married Mike Cunningham and they moved to Victoria, where, for several years, he was a political assistant to then BC Liberal premier, Gordon Campbell. Stephanie earned a masters’ in publishing at Simon Fraser and she and Mike formed a Victoria-based “boutique” communications and governance consulting firm. They have raised three children and are part of a progressive Christian Reformed Church in the provincial capital.



Our home, a rental unit across the downtown from the Dominion Building was on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, looking down, across a parking lot, to where we attended church at then 2,000-strong First Baptist. We were the closest members to the church and almost always arrived on time for the second Sunday service at 11 am. We thoroughly appreciated the preaching of Dr. Bruce Milne, who had served Baptist missions in Kenya and, later, taught at Spurgeon's College in London, England. Bruce had a droll sense of humor. Responding to the question "Why does a Scot love the gospel?" he would roll out his answer: "Because it is frrrree!"

I was on the board of First Baptist for a while, when some of the very first thinking was occurring about redevelopment of its property. It took time. That is happening now, with construction of the 55-storey Butterfly condo tower, social housing and church building extension and earthquake reinforcement.

We stayed in the downtown area for a couple of years, later moving both home and office to the 'burbs. Cost management was a concern and so was the opportunity to work with *BC Christian News*, which was now located in Langley City.

The year 1994 proved interesting as a couple of short forays into the United States occurred.

The first came when I received a call one day from John Fortmeyer in Portland, Oregon. He was a journalist who had worked on the reporting and editorial level at two community daily newspapers, both of which were part of large chains. One was in Anacortes, a port city north of Seattle, in Washington. The other was in Astoria, Oregon, at the mouth of the Columbia River. Later, he was employed by a northwest newspaper attempting to cover issues from a conservative perspective – both religiously and politically. When it did not succeed, he did a little research and learned about *BC Christian News*.

Soon, he made contact with *BCCN* and since all staffers were busy keeping the paper moving forward, I agreed to make the five-hour drive south to see how we Canadians might be able to help. That drive turned into a month of visits with the view to helping John set up *Christian News Northwest* (CNNW). He had administrative help available from Dan Wollam, who had been a senior executive at Western Evangelical Seminary in Portland. And, while there was no Billy Graham connection, he had encouragement from evangelist Luis Palau, who made his home in Portland. There was also Carl Townsend, who did "spiritual mapping", a practice developed by US Center for World Mission leader Ralph Winter. Carl took an interest in the project and loaned out a commodious family room in his home in upscale Lake Oswego for the paper's first office.

I did no writing or editing for John, concentrating, instead on prospecting for advertisers. One of my contacts was a marketing person in the World Vision (WV) US office. He responded enthusiastically with a several-months contract and asked me to let him know of any other local or regional Christian newspapers being developed in the United States. Such papers were very important to WV's marketing and communications strategy, he noted. In my own mind, I understood what he was saying because over the years I heard the same thing from WV Canada leaders.

When my Portland visits extended into the weekend, I would make it a point to worship at two churches in the morning and one in the evening. In each church, I would make contact with the senior pastor or an appropriate staffer, telling them about the plans for *CNNW*. One Sunday morning, I went to Sunset Presbyterian and Beaverton Foursquare churches, then took lunch at a Sizzler steak house. At the restaurant reception desk, a sign stated that people attending church that Sunday could get a discount. I told the manager that I would be in three churches before the day ended. He grinned and took my statement under advisement. When I finished eating, he came over and asked why I would go to church three times. I verbally sketched the Christian newspaper plan.

His name was Eric Lee Stiller. He was the manager of that particular Sizzler and had years of marketing, advertising and restaurant experience. And he had recently come to faith through Promise Keepers, a ministry to men which, at the time was filling stadia across the US (and hockey rinks in Canada). Consequently, he was looking for a new opportunity to use his skills and serve the Christian community.

Eric and John (with my nudging) met and, as a result, Eric became CNNW's ad sales person and, eventually advertising sales manager, a post he held until his untimely death of a heart attack, in January, 2016, at age 65. If that meeting with Eric did anything, it helped confirm my sense that sometimes coincidences can be God-incidences.

It also meant that I could go home to Surrey, to Edna, my job in Portland complete. But John and Sandy have kept in touch through the years. And he became quite a sparkplug for the Christian newspaper movement in the United States. Others involved at various times have included Doug Trouten (Minnesota), Lamar Keener (California) and Warren C. Smith (North Carolina). Those four and a few others developed and kept alive the Christian Newspaper Association (CNA) and today, still, it provides a linking device to several dozen such papers. During 2020, CNA members have been engaged in supportive discussions about adapting print and online news activity to the current pandemic.<sup>69</sup>

For some years, I kept a little non-incorporated structure in place, called The Institute for Christian Newspapering. Occasionally, I used the institute to provide research and write reports on the "who, what where, when and why" of Christian newspapers for publishers and editors of both existing and proposed papers. If my count was accurate, I related formally or informally to such people in Edmonton, Calgary, Victoria, Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, Ottawa, Belleville, Montreal, Chicago, Minneapolis and Seattle.

I would be remiss not to mention two other American names as part of the Christian newspapering story – Richard Ostling and Marvin Olasky.

Ostling, a few months younger than me, made his mark as a senior editor of *Christianity Today* and later as a senior correspondent, specializing in religion, for *Time* magazine. An evangelical himself, he was respected across many faith boundaries. He was the keynote speaker at a joint conference of the Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association convention in 1988 in Indianapolis – a meeting I attended when the *Christian News Toronto* board was wrestling with whether to keep the paper open.

I had met him a decade before when I was editor of *The Chilliwack Progress* and he did a journalism workshop at Regent College. I inveigled several Hacker Press journalists – faith-based or otherwise – to join me at the workshop. It turned out to be a good session in professional development for all the Fraser Valley folk.

Then, in 1988, as I entered an elevator at the Indianapolis conference site, Ostling came in beside me. I greeted him, giving him my name. He replied: "Yes, I remember you, from 'Killiwack'. That almost made my day. And he responded graciously when I corrected his pronunciation.

More significantly, in his speech, Ostling talked about Christian newspapering specifically as a part of the whole faith-based journalism scene. And he quoted extensively from *Prodigal Press: Confronting the Anti-Christian Bias of the American News Media*, by Marvin Olasky – particularly a reference to *Twin Cities Christian* (later *Minnesota Christian Chronicle*) as an antidote to the aforesaid bias.

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<sup>69</sup> With John Fortmeyer's 2021 retirement from Christian newspapering, the spearheading of CNA has fallen to Fazal Karim, the longtime publisher of the *Christian Herald* in Toronto.

Olasky, in turn, made his mark as a distinguished journalism professor at University of Texas, Austin, a premier American journalism school (where Ottawa public affairs journalist John Robson got his PhD.) Later Marvin founded *World Magazine* a conservative Christian publication and became an incisive exponent of compassionate conservatism.

I only wished at that time that I could have persuaded my Toronto board that what we were doing was not a little hidden thing in the corner, but was part of a North American wide movement. However, I think, the die was cast.

But let us get back to 1994. Besides the Portland foray, I had opportunity to work in the press room for the North American Conference for Itinerant Evangelists (NACIE) in Louisville Kentucky. It basically followed the Billy Graham strategy of encouraging independent evangelists to carry on the work his association had done for so long. Always, when asked about succession, Graham would refer to itinerant evangelists around the world, suggesting “these are my successors.” True, Graham’s oldest son, Franklin, did succeed him as president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. But even he would admit, if pressed, that these thousands of others, are every bit as worthy to be called his father’s spiritual progeny.

Two other things were highlights for me at NACIE. Firstly, it was the first time I saw and heard the Gaither Vocal Band, which was beginning a successful collaborative effort in the popularization of southern gospel music. That genre never fails to move me, just as, for many indigenous people, the drums and the creator-directed prayers are a source of spiritual help.

The second thing was a special evening, put on by black evangelists and pastors. Their point was to explore both the similarities with and contrast of black gospel, evangelism and worship styles. It was my first brief glimpse into the issue of “appropriation”. The black evangelists were gently asking their white counterparts not to try to emulate them but, instead, to see the authenticity of the black style. In more recent years, in Canada, I have been an observer of indigenous leaders who, likewise, do not want the rest of society to “appropriate” indigenous values and adopt them as their own. That said, I tend to be wary. I wonder, for example, if European-rooted “settler” churches tried to Christianize indigenous people and, in the process, attempted to kill their creator/land values, should the “newcomers” or “settlers” be required to kill their own Christian values and replace them with an indigenous approach? I would be inclined to urge a collaborative approach, recognizing each group’s deeply held values.

Meanwhile, back from Portland, the focus turned to DoMac/BCCN collaboration. DoMac moved into the same suite of offices as *BC Christian News* in downtown Langley City. It was a “rent-helper” for BCCN.

Not long after, Edna became executive assistant to the then executive vice-president of Trinity Western, Dr. Guy Saffold, a position she held for four years until we moved to Ottawa, in 1998. And I took time out of the office, periodically, working at our dining room table in our Surrey condo, writing *These Evangelical Churches of Ours* (1995) and *Like Father, Like Son: Ernest Manning and Preston Manning* (1997).

I should note that, while we did become aligned with the Reform Party of Canada and, later, the Conservative Party of Canada, we always held to the idea of collaborative governance and co-operation between political parties. On the provincial level, we favored the way in which centre and right – and even a little bit of the left, at times – were able to work together in the BC Liberal Party. And we thought that it was a stroke of compassionate genius when industrialist (and Christian) Jim Pattison brought former NDP premier and labour lawyer Glen Clark into the Pattison Group’s senior leadership.

I recognize that religious, political, family and legal systems are set up on an adversarial basis and, in a manner of speaking, media benefits from as much conflict as possible in those four areas. But I always live in hope that someday, because enough people want it, collaboration, conflict management and conciliation might be the order of the day.

That collaboration theme has always lurked slightly below the surface in both my journalism and book writing. When some Conservative God Squad people chewed me out (somewhat congenially) for consorting with Preston and editing the *Reformer*, I responded on two levels. One was to point out what I understood to be Preston's underlying understanding of Jesus' conciliatory model. Jesus, he said, was prepared to step aside, sacrificing his own potential power position, if it would help to bring reconciliation of conflicting interests. The other was to boldly predict that someday, sooner or later, the Conservatives and the Reformers would conciliate.<sup>70</sup>

During those years of splitting time between DoMac, *BCCN* and (on Edna's part) Trinity Western, we tried a couple of partnership opportunities that did not work for us. One involved franchises, the other, taking a private company public through share offerings.

In the first instance, we were given the opportunity to acquire a community magazine franchise. It looked good on paper but the dynamics of the various business relationships involved many tensions. In the second instance, some potential partners wanted to take our agri and business publications public through a share offering. Again, the concept looked good and did work for many people, but not for us.

As a result of the complexities of the deal, we decided to let DoMac go to two of the proposed share offering partners because they saw "tax loss" potential in it which would help their balance sheet. In turn, we were given another company with no assets or liabilities and were able to use it for some of our contract publishing – including that undertaken later when we did *Christian News Ottawa*, in the national capital.

But, letting DoMac go was difficult, emotionally, especially for Edna, because, as a married couple, we were also business partners and the name, incorporating the first two letters of her maiden name, had some significance. We commiserated with each other for a while, on that one. And, although we were able to use the other company for contract publishing, Edna did not want to become a partner, so I was the sole owner. She did the bookkeeping for it, however, and when we wound up that company, a decade later, we were satisfied that the "real" partnership had continued.

Another involvement that proved to be a means to pass on a ministry vision, under a federally incorporated charity involved Christian Info Canada (CIC). Incorporated in the 1970s in Calgary, CIC reflected the vision of Lois Bromley (now Lois Hammond). Then federal parliamentarian, Robert N. Thompson, one of the founders of Trinity Western, helped set up CIC as a federally incorporated charity operating under Industry Canada – a very complex process but helpful for any ministry that might want ultimately to have a national vision. Lois operated CIC, with a small but capable team, for a couple of decades, as a Christian information centre, missions library and general clearinghouse for a lot of Christian communication in Alberta.

In 1982, recognizing the Christian Info branding strength, the people in BC that got me started in what became *Christian Info-cum-BC Christian News* newspaper, obtained permission from Lois and her board

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<sup>70</sup> Years later, after the Harper Conservatives completed almost a decade of governance, I reminded (very congenially) some of my chewer-outers of the conciliation/collaboration prediction.

to use the Christian Info name in the developing of a provincially-incorporated charity. It became Christian Info (BC) Society and later, Christian Info Society.

One day, after Lois had wound down CIC and had moved to BC to work for the Evangelical Free Church of Canada, she, Edna and I had a conversation about what was going to happen to it. Her board had not reported to Revenue Canada and Industry Canada for a couple of years and its charter was about to lapse.

It had no assets or liabilities at that point. We asked if it might be possible for a new board to take it over and establish all the necessary communications with Ottawa, then see what might open up as a new field of information ministry.

To make a long story short, I established communication with Revenue Canada and learned that the charitable status was just days from lapsing. We put together a board of directors, paid the reporting fees from the previous two years and presented our plan to Revenue Canada. Charities accountants and lawyers said we were on very shaky ground and stood a good chance of failure to get the charity reinvigorated.

The Revenue Canada inspector handling our case promised to look at our plan and get back to us soon, one way or another. When she did, she said that our proposal was being accepted and that we could proceed. As we wound down our conversation, she became quite informal and inquired about what we hoped to do with CIC. I answered cautiously, not knowing for sure why she wanted to know. She then revealed that she was leaving Revenue Canada soon because she, too, was hoping to “go into ministry”. She was about to graduate from a Bible College and had some specific Christian mission plans.

I asked her how long before she would be leaving Revenue Canada. Her reply, as I recall: “I will be around for long enough to see that your charter is all in order.”

Meanwhile, Edna and I had a brief work/pleasure break in 1995, to help Linda and David Haist, the publishers of a new Burlington, Ontario, Christian newspaper, *The Endeavour*. After the successful completion of the Hamilton Billy Graham mission in 1988, it took another seven years for a repeat in Toronto. And the Haists graciously invited us to help them tailor an issue of their paper for the Toronto mission. As with the others – and several more that we had advised on through the heretofore-mentioned little project called the Institute of Christian Newspapering – it resulted in lots of news and information which would be particularly helpful to people who became believers at a mission event. And it earned enough in surplus to take *The Endeavour* forward financially, with some modest stability.

The Toronto mission, itself, took an interesting turn. It was planned as a five-day event in the 65,000 seat SkyDome. One day before the event, Billy Graham took sick and was sidelined. It was too late to cancel and tentative plans were made to bring in son Franklin to preach the first two or three nights as necessary. The Toronto mission committee, headed by a skilled banker and Presbyterian lay person, Jack Charleson, communicated another option to the BG people. Much as they respected Franklin, they suggested that the right substitute in Canada’s largest city might be a Canadian, associate evangelist Ralph Bell. Not so coincidentally, Bell was a very grace-filled and polished communicator – and happened to be black. That latter fact would leave a good impression in very multi-ethnic southern Ontario.

So Bell preached to great effect. One could hear a pin drop and he presented the Christian gospel in the highly reasoned and emotionally-shaped fashion that would be well-received only a few blocks away from the sprawling University of Toronto campus. Billy was back for Saturday and Sunday, preaching to overflow crowds both days. And he adapted well to the background organizers’ efforts to turn the mosh pit used for the music fans earlier in the services, into the place where 5,000 or so people would come forward to give their lives to Christ.

The Toronto Graham mission became, for Edna and I, an opportunity to help tie off some of the loose ends that came of our 1988-9 Toronto sojourn. As well, it marked the beginning of another possible transition to Ontario – this time, to the national capital.

## Chapter 11

### Cooling our heels – then onto third time east

A few months after the 1995 Toronto Billy Graham mission, Wood Lake Books, the publishers of my first sole-authored book, *These Evangelical Churches of Ours*, arranged an Ontario author's tour. Much of the work involved visiting bookstores and offering to sign copies of the book so that purchasers could feel some direct connection with the author. There were media interviews as well. Then, it was on to Queen's University, where I had arranged press credentials to attend a landmark religious historian's conference. It was organized by Queen's history department head George Rawlyk, a left-leaning evangelical Baptist who once wrote press releases for NDP founder and fellow Baptist cleric Tommy Douglas. Pew Charitable Foundation bankrolled the conclave. Its many papers were summarized in a Rawlyk-edited tome entitled *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*.<sup>71</sup>

Ian Rennie, then dean of Ontario Theological Seminary, delivered the banquet keynote address, claiming he was an "imposter". While it was true he had a University of Toronto history PhD, he claimed only to be a simple minister of the gospel. Nobody quite bought his "imposter" label. His recounting of fascinating stories about a range of evangelical leaders from across Canada tended to contradict his genial contention.

At the same dinner, Rawlyk enjoyed a slightly spirited repartee with three Queen's alumni – all of them history PhDs in their own right. They were John Stackhouse Jr., Darrel Reid and Paul Wilson. Both Darrel and Paul distinguished themselves in due course, in bringing some intellectual heft to the faith/political interface – on the centre-right side of the spectrum. John was a little more politically neutral but nevertheless, well capable of adding balance to George's leftist tilt.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> While I was only a journalist sitting on the edges of the Queen's conclave, I was exposed to some pretty heady thinking from such as: Phyllis D. Airhart, Alwyn J. Austin, David W. Bebbington, Edith L. Blumhofer, Robert K. Burkinshaw, Sharon Anne Cook, Nancy Christie, P. Lorraine Coops, Duff Crerar, Michael Gauvreau, Daniel C. Goodwin, Andrew S. Grenville, Bruce L. Guenther, Bryan V. Hillis, D. Bruce Hindmarsh, Mark Hutchinson, William H. Katerberg, Kevin Kee, Ronald A.N. Kydd, Barry Mack, Mark A. Noll, David Plaxton, Darrel R. Reid, John G. Stackhouse, Jr, Marguerite Van Die, Richard W. Vaudry, and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley.

<sup>72</sup> Tragically, Rawlyk died as the result of a car accident five months after the Queen's event. *Aspects ...* was published posthumously in 1997 by McGill-Queen's.

After the Queen's University event, I headed for Ottawa because, conveniently, the National Prayer Breakfast was to take place later in the week.

At one of the breakfast's events, I sat beside David Farrell, a lawyer who had worked for years for Revenue Canada and Industry Canada. He was a Catholic who had been shaped spiritually by the Cursillo movement. And he was tied in with a number of the public service Bible Studies in and around the Hill.<sup>73</sup> David asked a few questions about where I came from and what I was doing in Ottawa. I told him about Christian newspapers, my book and the prayer breakfast back in Vancouver of which I was a part.

David off-handedly suggested that there was a need for a similar paper in Ottawa – and that there might be a way of doing it that would be interesting for both Protestant and Catholic readers. While still in Ottawa, I checked with two other people, Wilf Wight, then head of the Canadian Bible Society bookstore and office in the capital and Allen Churchill, senior minister at influential Dominion-Chalmers United Church.

Both men, having become aware of some of my activity on the edges of Billy Graham's missions, hinted that a number of Christian leaders were trying to get Graham to have a mission there. Intriguingly, one of those leaders was Archbishop Marcel Gervais, head of the Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa. So there were obviously some Catholic-Protestant connections lurking around the edges which might turn interesting communication and evangelism dreams into realities.

Allen suggested that I keep my eye on Ottawa but that I cool my heels, as well. If there was something worth exploring, God would work out the plan.

I returned to Vancouver and shared the things I had learned about Ottawa with Edna. She, too, suggested that I cool my heels.

Things were working well with *BC Christian News*. Debra Fieguth, who had capably edited the paper for several years, "went national" by accepting an editorial spot at *ChristianWeek*. She established an excellent reputation as an evangelical/social justice writer and handled indigenous issues very well. A substantial number of journalistic awards went her way.

Debra bought a house in Winnipeg. Then, one day, across the back yard fence, she met neighbor Ian Ritchie. Ian was teaching at the time at Concord College, a Mennonite Brethren school which later became part of Canadian Mennonite University. Debra and Ian connected and soon married, with Ian taking up residence in Debra's house. Edna and I stayed the night at their place on our way to Ottawa in 1998.

But, again, I digress.

Flyn Ritchie had taken over from Debra as editor of *BCCN* when she moved east. He had been with the newspaper since its beginning. Educated to be a lawyer, he had come to Christian faith while travelling in Africa and Europe. He became grounded in his faith at L'Abri, the Swiss retreat centre founded by Francis Schaeffer. That is also where he met his wife, Margaret, daughter of Lutheran missionaries to Japan.

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<sup>73</sup> A little before that time, with the encouragement of such as Don Page, those studies attracted to up to 3,000 a week on federal office campuses throughout the National Capital Region. Page eventually became vice-president of Trinity Western and initiator of its Master of Arts in Administrative Leadership [MAAL].

Flyn gradually became increasingly involved in *BCCN*, starting as a distributor, in its early years before the mid-80s. Soon it became evident that he had journalistic and spiritual skills that needed to be applied. Margaret taught high school, mostly in Burnaby and, in due course they had five children.

Now, in the mid-90s, Flyn became editor and I worked along with him. And, Peter Dueck took over as volunteer publisher and advertising sales person. Peter, and Ken Smith, a developer, business person and one of the founders of Regent College, became co-chairs of Christian Info Society board.<sup>74</sup>

We had good experience with volunteer publishers, particularly with Rex Werts, a public relations consultant and dour Presbyterian who soon whipped the original *CI* into shape. Now, Peter was ready to do the same thing. (It seemed to be a renewal ritual, necessary every few years for a dynamic faith-based newspaper.)

Peter and I worked together on the editorial and business development of *BCCN*, in tandem with Flyn actually managing the editorial side. Peter and I had a deal: He almost never interfered in the editorial side and I almost never interfered on the business side. That worked very well.

Meanwhile, we began hearing a little more about what was happening in Ottawa. Then, one evening in 1996, as we watched the national news, we learned that Ernest Manning had died of congestive heart failure at the age of 87. Edna immediately recalled that I had approached the former Alberta premier and senator about helping him write a book back when we met with him in Edmonton a decade and a half before. He had said, then, that he would not write an auto-biography until he was too old or sick to do anything else.

What to do now? He is gone. I called Preston who encouraged me to explore some possibilities. There was a premiers' archive at the provincial legislature and a University of Alberta history student had done a series of extensive interviews with Mr. Manning in the early 90s. Because the Reform-Conservative pilgrimage was now well underway, Edna and I concluded that a book about the father-son duo of Ernest and Preston Manning might be in order. I talked to Don Bastian, a Toronto publishing consultant who had done extensive work with Christian publisher John Irwin and later, McLelland and Stewart. He recommended I approach Jack David at ECW Press. ECW means Essays in Canadian Writing and it had started out doing academic work, moving later into more public Canadian material. Most of its political works were left-leaning but Don assured me that Jack liked to get some more "conservative" material into its stable from time to time.

So, *Like Father, Like Son: Ernest Manning and Preston Manning* came out in late spring, 1997. And Jack informed me that the formidable Peter C. Newman (of *The Canadian Establishment* fame) had asked for a review copy. I was petrified. This guy could rip people apart piece by piece, on paper. And, as former editor of *Maclean's* he commanded great influence.

On the day that the review was to appear, I nipped over to a nearby newsstand in Langley, around the corner from the *BCCN* office, and picked up a copy of *Maclean's*.

Here is what the review said:

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Dueck was a Fraser Valley Mennonite. He had built a chain of building supply stores that eventually were sold to the Revelstoke group, later taken over by Rona. And he had set up Campus Crusade for Christ operations in Canada. He had taken an interest in the newspaper in the early years and sat on Crusade's Canadian board, as well as those of Regent College and Briercrest Schools in Saskatchewan. And, for years, he and Lena lived in a downtown condo and became very active in First Baptist Church. A lot of the First Baptist redevelopment plans that are now coming to fruition were glints in his eye at the time.



A few columns ago, I questioned and criticized Preston Manning's religious beliefs. Many readers wrote to me and the magazine, objecting to my comments, emphatically complaining that I was inaccurate, irresponsible, and generally a bounder.

I was wrong to criticize the Reform leader on those grounds, and apologize to him and those readers who were offended. Religion is a personal matter and should remain so. Few people realize, for example, that we have had Catholic prime ministers in this country (except for the 101 days of Kim Campbell) ever since 1968 with Pierre Trudeau, Joe Clark, John Turner, Brian Mulroney and Jean Chretien. The reason most Canadians aren't aware of that 30-year run is that none of the PMs allowed religious beliefs to determine their actions or policies.

With Manning moving into new job as leader of Canada's alternative government, we have a right to demand the same theologically neutral standard.

My thoughts and concerns on the issue were crystallized by reading a new book on the Mannings, senior and junior, *Like Father, Like Son*, by Lloyd Mackey, a family confidant. To his credit, Mackey doesn't pretend to be objective. He's such a convert to the Manning gospel that when he was growing up in Victoria, he contributed a tithe of \$1.23 per week from his newspaper route earnings to Ernest Manning's *Back to the Bible Hour*, a popular weekly gospel radio show that Preston's father broadcast even while he was premier of Alberta. Mackey first met Preston at an Edmonton Billy Graham evangelical crusade in 1979, and it was a case of mutual admiration at first sight. "I trust," Mackey writes "that this exploration of the Mannings will help Canadians to understand the many ways in which faith and political experience interplay." It does. *Like Father, Like Son* (ECW Press, \$16.95) is an authoritative guide to Preston's amazingly personal relationship with God, both as a man and as a politician. It will either warm up your respect for the Reform leader, or chill your bones.

I had just one tiny quibble with Newman's critique. He misread the information about my \$1.23 tithe. It was not weekly, but a onetime occurrence. When I told him that, in an e-mail, I said that if it had been weekly, I would soon have gone broke! As to the rest, it is a matter of perspective. I respected and learned from reading Newman's viewpoint.

So, while the Manning book was being written, published and marketed, the move to Ottawa grew closer. Once Christian Info Canada was in hand, it appeared to be increasingly feasible that it could be the faith-based charity and structure under which an Ottawa newspaper could be developed. With virtually no effort on our parts (Edna's and mine) donations started accumulating for the project. By the time plans for the 1998 Ottawa Billy Graham mission were in place, CIS had enough in the coffers to seed fund the first three issues of *Christian News Ottawa*. While Edna continued working at Trinity Western, I took three one month trips to Ottawa to get those issues out. We were able to get temporary office space at CHRI-FM, a Christian radio station that had been developed by Rob DuBroy, a serious Catholic and former CBC announcer.

On February 15, 1998, I arrived in Ottawa after a red-eye flight from Vancouver. Just a few weeks after a massive ice storm had tied up Ottawa and Montreal, it was a snowy, cold and bleak morning. David Farrell picked me up at the airport and took me to an early morning mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church, a parish of several thousand whose clergy were strong supporters of the Billy Graham mission, set for late June. Those clergy were part of Companions of the Cross order, founded by Father Bob Bedard, a part of the Catholic charismatic movement. So they moved easily with evangelicals – while always stressing that they were still Catholics. They were natural allies and bridges between Protestants and Catholics, for purposes of both the mission and the proposed Christian newspaper.

The homily delivered at the St. Mary's mass made strong connections with the Billy Graham mission. The priest urged parishioners to enrol in the mission's Christian Life and Witness classes, held weekly for two months in Protestant and Catholic churches throughout the National Capital Region. And he also encouraged them to make an Operation Andrew list. Operation Andrew was a popular part of mission preparation, based on the biblical account of Andrew, a rather quiet disciple, who brought Simon Peter to Jesus. Peter, of course, became one of early Christianity's chief spokespersons and, in Catholic tradition, became the first pope.

So that was my introduction. The Catholic side of things was important to absorb, if we were able to do the newspaper thing right in Ottawa. That was confirmed a few weeks later, when Bob Harvey, the faith/ethics writer for the *Ottawa Citizen* wrote about the plans for *Christian News Ottawa*. An evangelical himself, he stressed the need for Catholic-Protestant co-operation.

We were able to pay all costs and develop a little nest egg with the combined funds from the donors who supported the Ottawa exploration and the advertising revenue from the first three issues, including the Billy Graham special. In addition to being delivered to the churches, as had been the first two, 15,000 copies of the special were placed at the doors of the dozens of yellow buses used each evening to take groups of people to the mission. Those buses assisted the Operation Andrew strategy. As in previous BG specials, the newspapers served to introduce new believers to the dozens or hundreds of options for Christian fellowship, service and learning in the vicinity of the mission.

Edna continued her work at Trinity Western and made a four day visit to Ottawa during my first session there. She had a way of being able to realistically see what would work or not. And she got to meet some of the key people we would be working and forming friendships with, if we decided to move east again.

The mission itself filled what is now Canadian Tire Place, home of the NHL's Ottawa Senators, for five nights. Once the papers were distributed to the buses, I would get into the pre-meeting lineup, so I could be at the press table to rub shoulders with other media types.

One evening, in the lineup, I heard a call across a barrier. It was coming from Terry Winter, the Vancouver-based "thinking person's evangelist". When I went over to Terry, he asked if he could get in – having arrived late for previous arrangements because of traffic jams. So I took him in as part of the press contingent and he was able to take it from there.<sup>75</sup>

It was interesting to see who among the federal leaders attended the mission – not to make a public appearance but to sit, quietly, listening. One such was John Manley, who held four senior ministries in Jean Chretien's Liberal cabinet at various times, industry, finance, foreign affairs and deputy prime minister.

Manley worshipped, as a lad, at Metropolitan Bible Church (congenially nicknamed The Met), which today, has a weekly attendance of around 2,500. Some have suggested that he learned leadership in The Met and came to personal faith through the Anglican Cursillo movement. He and his wife, Judith, ended up Presbyterians. But Manley also identified with the weekly parliamentary prayer breakfast, attended by 30 or so MPs and senators – even when he was in senior cabinet posts.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Six months later, tragically Terry died of a brain aneurism, at age 56. Wikipedia reports that: "Winter took an intellectual approach to faith. He taught that Christianity is a simple faith, not a simplistic one, and that if one decides to become a Christian, one does not need to leave one's mind at the door."

<sup>76</sup> Over the years, Manley became a favored speaker for many the provincial and American state annual prayer breakfasts. He was one good reason why some people think you do not need to be a conservative to be a Christian.

As soon as the Graham mission finished, I flew back to Vancouver – to Surrey, precisely, where we had bought a condo close to the city centre in 1992. We took three weeks or so to pack up and head east. Edna was hoping, of course, to be able to get interesting executive assistant work in Ottawa. She sent out resumes to a selection of 18 MPs, in Liberal, Conservative and Reform parties. She had been very happy in her Trinity Western work and appreciated having a ringside seat as the university faced legal challenges over the accreditation of its teacher education program. Executive VP Guy Saffold, who was her employer, was managing communication strategy on that issue, along with lawyer Robert Kuhn, who eventually successfully defended the university at the Supreme Court of Canada, over the issue. The opposition had come from the BC Teachers' College, the accrediting arm of the BC Teachers Federation, which took issue with the school's values statement in favor of marriage "between a man and a woman."

We tried selling our condo before leaving for Ottawa, but it was in a declining market due to the difficulty the city of Surrey was having in building a vibrant city centre. It took a later mayoralty change to make it happen. So we unwillingly became absentee landlords for the next couple of decades.

We drove our Dodge Dart across the country. (I had driven the Chevette inherited from my mother, during the second of my three preliminary trips to Ottawa. It was used for a couple years for newspaper deliveries to churches. My father would have been proud!) We did an "Englisch" version of "Mennoniting" our way across the country, staying in Calgary with the mother of the man looking after our Surrey condo, then at Ian Ritchie's and Debra Fieguth's home in Winnipeg and with by-then-retired *Decision* magazine editor Roger Palms and Andrea in Minneapolis. When we got to Burlington, Linda and David Haist of *The Endeavour* newspaper had arranged for us to spend a few days in a friend's vacant and furnished waterfront 17<sup>th</sup> floor condo overlooking Lake Ontario.

Arriving in Ottawa, we started to look for a condo – hoping we could afford to handle a mortgage without selling the Surrey place. A fellow named Glen Floyd, recommended by several friends, found us a 1,300 square foot upper split two storey unit that became home for the next 15 years, almost to the day. Interest rates were low so we managed. I soon set up the *Christian News Ottawa* office – in a historic Sparks Street location called "Bible House", across the street from the D'Arcy McGee's pub,<sup>77</sup>

One of the ideas of the Sparks Street location was to see if other Christian agencies might want to share office space with us. That never happened, but we were close to several. The Mennonite Central Committee was in the same building: The Salvation Army was across the street. On the next street over, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and Focus on the Family occupied space. And there were many more – close to 40 – in the surrounding blocks.

Meanwhile, Edna set out to line up work. Shortly, she received two part-time offers for the kind of executive assistant position to which she had become accustomed. The first was for One Way Ministries and the second – which became full time within a few months – was with Dr. Maurice Vellacott, Reform MP for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin.

One Way Ministries, is a multi-faceted non-profit which supported a variety of Christian projects in the Ottawa area. It was co-founded by footballers Larry Brune and Gerry Organ. Brune was California-born

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Conversely, his faith may have helped him to become a "blue liberal" able to communicate effectively with people to his right, politically, as well as to his left. After leaving politics, he served effectively from 2010 to 2018 as president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada.

<sup>77</sup> It was on the site of that pub, in 1868, that McGee, one of Confederation's pioneers was assassinated. We only stayed a short time with CHRI-FM, but continued to do a number of media things together, even after we moved downtown to the Sparks Street location.

Texas-reared defensive back who played successively in the 1970s and 80s for CFLs Hamilton Tiger-Cats and Ottawa Rough Riders, as well as for the NFLs Minnesota Vikings. Organ, a place kicker and punter, played 13 seasons with the Rough Riders, including two when the team won the Grey Cup.

In addition to being a well-regarded player, Organ was a committed Christian who liked to persuasively share his faith. One of the many players who responded to his witness was Brune.<sup>78</sup>

One Way was both spiritually and practically supportive for both Edna and I and for the new newspaper. Besides providing her employment, the foundation side of One Way paid for the kind of computer equipment and software necessary to paginate the paper in preparation for printing. Tim Bloedow used the equipment to do our production work. He had tried developing a politically-conservative paper with Christian leanings, the *Ottawa Times (OT)*. It went for a few issues but could not quite find its niche. Tim had the computer pagination experience we needed. (One thing that Tim was able to do at *OT* was break the story that Stephen Harper, who later became prime minister, was a committed Christian and a Christian and Missionary Alliance church adherent. That information helped, later, when it came time to write a book about Harper that would be informative for the Christian faith-based community – and annoying for some who preferred less of a faith/political interface.

But, for now, the business at hand was to develop the newspaper. The faith/political interface would come later.

In fact, the 15 year stay in Ottawa fell into two parts, divided one from the other by the time I spent having triple bypass surgery in August, 2006. Before then, the main task was to enable the newspaper to survive and built relationships that would permit the development of a group of newspapers. Then, the opportunity to concentrate on the interface issue began to ramp up in the years leading up to that “dividing” point.

The paper grew steadily in both distribution and advertising sales and we were able to break some interesting stories, as well as feature several major faith-based events. One such was a prayer rally attended by 7,000 that almost filled one side of the Riders’ stadium. Another reported on attempts to bring together indigenous and evangelical Christian groups. Some alienation had run deep. Christian practices that outlawed use for the drums, for example, were hard on Christian-indigenous relationships. Charismatic Christians had no compunctions about drum use. They claimed only to want to introduce Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the First Nations – to add to their already strong acceptance of The Creator – God, in Christian language.

There were a few First Nations names, at various times, who brought an evangelical Christian faith perspective to their task, among them Kenny Blacksmith, Matthew Coon Come and Sean Atleo, the latter two serving as chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations at different times. Looking back, I have to say that both Coon Come and Atleo had difficult tenures because of their allegedly colonial-inspired faith. That faith, implicitly or explicitly, made them too conciliatory for the more radical elements in the indigenous movement. Coon Come was a charismatic Christian who tied in theologically to what could be called the prophetic movement, which saw the biblical reference to God “having dominion from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth” as being specifically meant for Canada. Atleo was much more cautious in his faith perspective, but he was an alumnus of Trinity Western University before completing his degree work in Australia. He studied at Trinity at the time when a number of potential indigenous leaders

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<sup>78</sup> After his retirement from football in the 80s, Brune, and another Rider, offensive guard Val Belcher, co-founded the Lone Star Café franchise group, which proved very profitable. Between Organ and Brune, the foundation aspect of One Way provided a funding pool for numerous Christian ministries.

were there. One of the school's lesser known aspects is the outsize influence it had on indigenous leadership development among First Nations.

The *CNO* coverage of The Hill tended to be non-partisan. One of our good friends was David Kilgour, who had served in the Mulroney government before breaking with the prime minister over tax issues. He became a Liberal and, some pundits sometimes suggested that he ran half the world, because he served in Jean Chretien's cabinet successively as Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) (1997–2002), and Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) (2002–2003). He was, incidentally, brother-in-law to short term Liberal prime minister John Turner, who followed Pierre Trudeau into the role and was soon defeated by the Brian Mulroney Conservatives in 1984.

Like John and Judith Manley, Kilgour and his wife, Gilles, were serious Presbyterians. And he, too, was active in the weekly parliamentary prayer breakfast. He would often comment that those MPs who attended the breakfast on Wednesday mornings were much more civil than the rest of the crowd, in that afternoon's question period. Not just wishful thinking, I would suggest.<sup>79</sup>

Another good on-the-Hill friend to the newspaper was Diane Scharf. I sometimes called her the “den mother” for many of the younger Christian Hill staffers. She was often at the Friday noon Bible studies in the Sean O'Sullivan room, at the bottom of a corner tower in the East Block. Diane served for a time as the interim executive assistant to Senator Mike Duffy and her testimony at Duffy's trial on fraud charges likely had a fair amount to do with his getting thoroughly cleared. This Christie Blatchford piece nails Diane's congenial feistiness. <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/christie-blatchford-mike-duffy-trial-told-pre-signed-expense-claims-such-a-common-practice>.<sup>80</sup>

As Liberal MP Dennis Mills' assistant, earlier on, Diane handled much of the detail for government relations with the organizers of the Pope John Paul II visit to Toronto in 2002, for the World Youth Day Festival. And, as an evangelical Protestant (she worshipped at The Met), she found Catholic terminology a bit challenging at times. “They worship a different God,” she exasperated at me one day, when talking about some of the tension-filled arrangement meetings. Nevertheless, as a good diplomat, she soldiered on and proved to be the support that Mills needed.

Diane and I would have some congenial but interesting discussions, sometimes, about God things. She said similar things about Muslims as she did about Catholics – that they seemed to “worship a different God.” I responded that what she was saying did not make sense if one believes in one God. And Christians, Jews and Muslims and, as far as I know, Sikhs, are monotheists – believers in one God, albeit of a different size and shape depending on the tradition.

Her response: “I understand what you are getting at and I see your point. I am just saying that that is not the way I see it.”

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<sup>79</sup> Kilgour passed away in April, 2022, at age 81, just a few months after receiving the Leslie K. Tarr award for lifetime achievement, from The Word Guild. I was grateful to have known him and found him a principled mentor in navigating the faith/political interface. I had been a recipient of the Tarr award in 2006. In retrospect, he should have been recognized then or sooner.

<sup>80</sup> Not caught in Blatchford's analysis is the fact that Diane's faith was wide in its influence and deep in its content. In the evangelical culture, she had long-standing credentials – she was a cousin to George Beverley Shea's first wife, Erma Scharfe, who died in 1976. (Shea was the baritone soloist whose renditions preceded Billy Graham's sermons for decades. A native of Winchester, Ontario, a few miles south of Ottawa, he passed away at 104 in April, 2013.)

Diane was also encouraging to Edna, who was concerned what would happen as she approached age 65 and we were still not in a position to retire. Diane told her of several instances of parliamentary assistants working for many years well beyond normal retirement age. One, she recalled, had worked until age 93. There were two bits of practicality in Diane's observation. One was that parliamentary assistants, unlike public service employees, were not subject to the same retirement rules. And the pension was based, not only on length of service, but on the five best years of pay.

The progress of the newspaper from 1998 to 2005 was steady. We were able to bring on an experienced bookkeeper/administrator, Susanne Lo, who had worked among others, with the Catholic School Board. Swiss born and reared, she worshipped variously in Pentecostal and Wesleyan churches and, when she learned about our need for someone like her, she sensed a "call".<sup>81</sup>

We had various advertising people over the years, some of whom were able to develop collaborative sales and marketing efforts with both CHRI-FM and a range of Christian business directories. Some worked well, others had glitches.

Being in a downtown location, we were able to have a ringside seat, as well, on Trinity Western University's (TWU) entry into the Ottawa scene, with the establishment of the Laurentian Leadership Centre (LLC).

Ron Kuehl, at the time development vice-president of TWU, was looking for sites for an Ottawa place where third year students could live and study for a semester. The idea was that they would take public policy and international business courses, among others, while serving internships in various political offices, often including those of the prime minister.

Kuehl fixed on a mansion a few blocks from the hill which, at one time, had been the home of lumber baron John R. Booth.<sup>82</sup> The mansion was in the hands of the Laurentian Club, a business luncheon group which was looking for a way to scale down. A deal was reached that satisfied both parties and TWU took possession, named it the Laurentian Leadership Centre (LLC) and began renovations in 2000.

Every day, I took a heart-pumping walk around the downtown area, exploring as often as possible, many of the area's architectural wonders. One day as I was approaching the still-under-renovation LLC, I could see the front of the building behind yellow police tape and a small mob of people with loud hailer shouting at the building across the street. The cluster belonged to the Iranian Socialist Party and its members were decrying the alleged lack of democracy in that country. The building their shouts were targeting was the Iranian Embassy.

Within the hour, I had e-mailed Ron, at the TWU main Langley campus, with word that the Centre was already serving the purpose of international political influence – and that it was apparently undamaged in the melee.

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<sup>81</sup> Edna got along well with Susanne and we have continued to be good friends with her and her husband, Francis Lo, who has a range of construction contracts connected with renovations to major Hill buildings, including Centre Block. The need for Edna and Susanne to work together grew out of Edna's managing of the contract between Principal Press and Publishing Ltd., the little company we got as a consolation prize in some of our more complex Vancouver publishing arrangements and Christian Info Canada, the publisher of CNO. Edna was managing the Principal activity, of course, while working full tilt as MP Vellacott's administrative assistant.

<sup>82</sup> Some of the wood logged from Booth's operations panel the Parliamentary Library at Centre Block.

Entering into about the fifth year of *CNO*, we started connecting with Gus and Beryl Henne, who we had known as Christian communication specialists in British Columbia. They had moved to Belleville, Ontario, halfway between Ottawa and Toronto, to work with David Vissers, who was running Essence Publishers.<sup>83</sup>

Gus had some thoughts about trying to develop a Christian newspapering group setup and, knowing that I had been a proponent of the idea years before, touched base. At the same time Dave's company, with good technical counsel from Dave Botting, who knew the Goss press world, found a good five-unit press at a fair price in Texas. It was bought, shipped to Belleville in pieces and re-assembled.

Dave Vissers was able to win the printing contract for *ChristianWeek* (CWk), the Winnipeg-based national Christian paper, at the time edited by Doug Koop. Doug, along with others like Debra Fieguth and Kelly Henschel Rempel, had been mentored by the newspaper's founder, Harold Jantz.<sup>84</sup>

In short order, Dave became the publisher of CWk and, from my perspective, things were beginning to happen. West of Toronto, Robert White and his wife, Pam, moved to Guelph which, along with Kitchener/Waterloo and Cambridge, formed the "Golden Triangle" region. Robert was a seasoned journalist with solid Sun News experience, along with considerable background in writing for Salvation Army and several Christian publications. (Robert, a gifted thespian as well a journalist, died in March, 2021, after battling several heart-related issues. He was a too-young 61.)

Gus and Dave suggested that the *CNO* name be changed to *ChristianCurrent Ottawa* and that Robert White be retained to form *ChristianCurrent Golden Triangle*. Further, Essence was proposed to operate *ChristianCurrent* in the Quinte region – Kingston to Port Coburg.

Here is the wording of the *ChristianWeek* press release of March 1, 2002, announcing the new setup

### **ChristianCurrent flows into Ontario**

By CAROL LOWES | March 19, 2002

TORONTO, ON—A new initiative launched by *ChristianWeek* will bring national flavour and local content into a close working relationship.

*ChristianCurrent*, a group of regional newspapers combining national content with regional and local stories, was launched March 1 at a press conference in the Crowne Plaza Toronto Centre.

The first two editions are based in Ontario's Golden Triangle (Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge) and Ottawa. A third launch in the Kingston-Greater Quinte area in south eastern Ontario is planned for May.

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<sup>83</sup> David had a pretty big vision which included Christian subsidy book publishing (sort of cross between self and royalty publishing), Christian newspaper publishing and community newspaper printing. His father, John, as it happened, was pastor of the large and growing Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Belleville. Maranatha had a charismatic healing bent and as a result, for a few years, had a rocky relationship with its denominational leaders, which eventually was resolved.

<sup>84</sup> Full disclosure: I mentored Debra at both *The Chilliwack Progress* and *BC Christian News* before she "went national". And she worked with Edna at Carey Hall, while earning her BA at UBC. Debra passed away at age 62, in 2016.

"We want to foster Christian community, increase effective Christian communication and positively affect our society," says *ChristianCurrent* executive publisher David Visser, who also serves as publisher of *ChristianWeek* and operations manager of the Belleville-based Essence Communications Group.

One way to do that, he says, is to "lift up and expose faithful followers of Jesus" to share their stories and to present the issues the Christian community faces so all can be informed and inspired to excellence.

Veteran Christian journalist Lloyd Mackey serves as *ChristianCurrent's* affiliate publisher in the nation's capital, while Robert White, whose writing has often appeared in *ChristianWeek*, heads the enterprise in the Golden Triangle.

For Mackey the launch of *ChristianCurrent* is the fulfilment of a long-time dream. Five years ago he started *Christian News Ottawa*, which is being replaced by the new newspaper. And nearly 20 years ago he was founding editor of *Christian Info News* in B.C., an operation that has continued to grow and thrive in the greater Vancouver area and beyond.

All the while he has longed to see a chain of community-based newspapers established across the country.

"Sometimes Christian leaders in one part of a community are completely unaware of a spiritual movement happening in another nearby place," he says. "Community papers inform everyone at the local level, as *ChristianWeek* continues to inform them nationally."

Asked about the long-term vision for *ChristianCurrent*, marketing director Gus Henne replies that as many as 15 Canadian centres may one day have their own edition of the newspaper. While the plan does call for a presence in Toronto, Visser indicated at the press conference that a Toronto launch is not imminent.

And David Visser insists, *ChristianCurrent* won't "cannibalise" *ChristianWeek's* subscriber-based readership.

"I fully expect this initiative to strengthen our infrastructure and extend the reach of *ChristianWeek*," adds *CW* editorial director Doug Koop.

"It means we can offer our national advertisers access to a larger portion of the Christian community, and that the news and views we currently publish will become available to many more readers."

As free-distribution papers, *ChristianCurrent* aims to build local readership for Christian news, explains Henne. Fifteen thousand copies of the inaugural editions are being distributed in churches and other Christian venues in each area.

"We have had a lot of positive feedback about *ChristianWeek's* new design and fresh editorial content," he adds.

"Now it's time to broaden that vision. *ChristianCurrent* is our attempt to reach the people in the pews with local stories that are relevant to them."



Not too long, afterward, the *ChristianCurrent* name was dropped in favor of naming all the regional editions *ChristianWeek* \_\_\_\_\_ (name of region). It was a matter of branding simplicity.

The group never developed a Toronto edition, likely in recognition of the fact that there were two Christian papers well established there, The *Christian Herald*, published and edited by Fazal Karim, is still going strong. And *Maranatha News*, edited by Martha Robinson, served a mainly Afro-Caribbean Canadian Christian readership for several years.

The *ChristianWeek* group continued for another few years and attempted to build a rapport with *BC Christian News* and some prairie publications. Personalities, slightly different objectives and, later, the decline of print media in favor of on-line news, prevented the full flowering of the group Christian newspapering model.

Meanwhile, *ChristianWeek* and *BC Christian News* together provided some public recognition of the fact that I was approaching 65 and put together events in Ottawa and Vancouver to give shape to that recognition. In Ottawa, the event took place in Dominion-Chalmers United Church where we had our offices after vacating the more expensive Sparks Street location. On the coast, a few weeks later, Edna and I were feted at Olivet Baptist Church in New Westminster, where we had attended for two years just before our Ottawa move.

Flyn Ritchie and Doug Koop co-managed the events and John Irwin, the retired educational and religious book publisher who was chairing the board of Christian Info Canada, brought the Toronto “heft” that made the event a broadly happy one for us.

Doug and Flyn also arranged a special advertising deal with Canada Christian College (CCC) and its president, Charles McVety. They offered him free advertising in one of the issues of each of the papers if Charles would book Edna and I without cost into a tour of the Holy Land that he was arranging. Charles was accommodating and we thoroughly enjoyed the trip. I particularly recall our travelling by bus north in the Jordan River Valley from the Dead Sea, and looking over to the east, to a city on the hillside dominated by five mosques. The city was across the border in Jordan, of course, and I asked Edna what they must be saying on the other side, about Israel. (We were certainly getting the pro-Israel perspective from our CCC tour guides.)

McVety and CCC tended to be Canadian evangelicalism’s “loyal opposition” to Brian Stiller and the Evangelical Fellowship. And Charles was certainly quoted often by mainstream media who relished his slightly “comedic” image. But he and his family are good people. We enjoyed a great time with them.<sup>85 86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> In prep for the trip, we were told that the airline we were booked on from Toronto to Tel Aviv was to make a stop in Milan, Italy. I was quite excited. Milan is the same part of Italy where some Swiss Mennonites had crossed over for a few decades in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and picked up a smattering of Italian converts. They included Edna’s father’s forebears – Dosso by name. I e-mailed Doug and asked hopefully if they could let us spend the day in and around Milan to check out Edna’s roots, rather than just having a stopover for an hour or so. It was not to be, unfortunately, because the booking got changed to another airline which would fly directly from Canada to Israel.

<sup>86</sup> I can recall chatting informally with Charles not long after being accepted into the DMin program at Tyndale. I had explained to him that, in order for me to be cognizant of contemporary evangelical theology, the seminary transcript evaluators had asked me to do some systematic theology reading, based on Donald Bloesch’s *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. I told him that Bloesch extensively traced the various streams of evangelical thinking as expressed by such luminaries as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Simons, Barth, Brunner, and many more. With a mischievous glint in his eye, Charles suggested that his school – Canada Christian College – conducted the same streaming process. “But after we do that, we let (the students) know which one is right.” I

Through our years in Ottawa, it was interesting to observe the numbers of groups who sensed a “call” to Ottawa, based on the inclusion of “he shall have dominion from sea to sea” among the scriptures engraved on the Peace Tower. It was sort of a charismatic theocratic approach that, at times, was quite dramatic and movingly presented.

Around 2000 – the millennial time – David Damian, a physician who developed a ministry called Watchman for the Nations, would gather a few thousand people on the parliamentary lawn and enact Joshua’s biblical tearing down of the walls of Jericho. It was not meant, of course, to make the walls of Centre Block fall down – but rather to encourage people to penetrate the political structures with God’s Dominion.<sup>87</sup>

Later, Faytene Kryskow (now Grasseschi) led Hill demonstrations and, as well, quietly trained many young parliamentary assistants in strategies that she hoped, as well, might bring in God’s Dominion. (Those who were not quite comfortable with the assistants’ spiritual enthusiasm sometimes nicknamed them “Faytene-ites.”)

Then there was the National House of Prayer, developed by a charismatic Baptist couple from BC, Rob and Fran Parker. They acquired a Catholic monastery building east of the Hill and set up a bed-and-breakfast program for people who would come from all over Canada to pray for the parliamentarians. As I sat in the parliamentary press gallery in the House of Commons, I would often see Fran and Rob with at least a dozen or so people around them – praying with their eyes wide open. They would latter meet with some of the MPs and, with their permission, would lay hands on them and pray for them.

In the meeting hall at the House of Prayer, there was a painting on the wall depicting the Centre Block, with the Peace Tower bent over in apparent obeisance to a Christ figure and throng of disciples on the lawns below – another symbolic reference to God’s Dominion.

While my “conciliatory/collaborative” approach did not put me entirely in line with these “dominionists” I had to admire their tenacity and commitment to the Triune God and his purposes. They were a significant part of the spiritual scene in Ottawa at the time.<sup>88</sup>

Once the newspaper was into the hands of *ChristianWeek*, we closed the office at Dominion-Chalmers and I set up my desk full time in the Parliamentary Press Gallery office in Centre Block, accessed from a corridor between the House of Commons and Senate Chambers.

I made some good friends there. Alex Binkley, a former Canadian Press reporter who developed an agribusiness specialty was kind and encouraging. He liked to kid me about my faith and often would ask questions like: “What do you ‘vangelicals’ think about so-and-so.” One day, he asked me how I would define faith and I immediately replied that it is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” He gave me a “thumbs up”. (As I recall, I backed up my definition by pulling my little red

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agreed that his school had every right to take that approach, but that I was much more comfortable with the idea that students be encouraged how to think, rather than what to think about some of these big questions.

<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, the Jericho March was a tactic used in the Truck Convoy activities on Parliament Hill in February, 2022.

<sup>88</sup> In 2019, with a shift in some of the ministry emphases, the Parkers and their board decided to sell the House of Prayer building back to the Catholics, who wanted to use it for an education and fellowship centre for the adjacent St. Anne’s Church

Amsterdam 86 NIV Bible out of my top desk drawer and showing him the definition, as found in Hebrews 11:1.)

The press gallery staffers were equally engaging. These were the people responsible to see that the Gallery journalists had all the facilities necessary to do their jobs. At former Conservative Leader Robert Stanfield's funeral, in December, 2003, the media were not given access to the church during the service. I asked one of the staffers for information as to the officiating clergyman. His reply, after fetching for me what I was seeking, was: "Lloyd, you are always asking the churchy questions!" He made my day.

I had actually become a member of the Press Gallery in 1998 – soon after our arrival in Ottawa – at the suggestion of Art Babych, who reported from the Hill for several Catholic newspapers. He said I should just tell the gallery officials that I wanted to cover the Protestant side of the street, as he, himself, did for the Catholics. It worked fine and in my "post *CNO*" became an excellent "perch" from which to work. Later, when Deborah Gyapong, skeptic-cum-Baptist-cum-anglo-Catholic, joined our ranks, she dubbed the three of us the "Holy Trinity."

My first post-Manning book came out in 2005. It was a compendium of columns I had done for the various papers and websites with which I was linked, and covered from 1998 to the point just before the Conservatives came to power. It was called *More Faithful than we Think: Stories and Insights on Canadian Leaders Doing Politics Christianly*. Beryl Henne edited it and Gus made the publishing arrangements with Larry Willard, a veteran Christian book publishing and marketing person who had set up BayRidge Books for projects like mine. Preston Manning wrote the forward. It never received the attention that either my Harper or Manning books had but, in many ways, took a much broader look across the Ottawa political spectrum, albeit informed from a faith perspective.

Most of those *More Faithful* columns had appeared in the *CNO*, *CC* and *CWK* newspapers, as well as in *BCCN*, often under the logo of *Doing Politics Christianly*.... A few, somewhat modified, appeared in the op-ed pages of the *National Post*, during its early years of publication in the late 90s.

Covering the faith-political interface did not always turn out quite the way I expected. Some gallery journalists were skeptical about faith-based politicians, especially if they were "God Squad" Conservatives. I recall being sought out one afternoon by a journalist from a Montreal French-language newspaper. She wanted to know the religious affiliations of a number of politicians. Some of the more enthusiastic Christians were, at the time, trying to bend politicians to their views and this journalist wanted to smoke them out – especially if the target politicians were Conservative. I answered the Montreal journalist's questions about several Conservative politicians and the religious affiliations they claimed. Then, I said: "Now, I can tell you the names and affiliations of the Liberals and NDPers who are people of faith." She snapped her notebook shut, and replied: "Oh, I am not interested in them. You have given me everything I need." With seconds, she was out the door.

The years of 2005 and 2006 were pivotal, both with respect to my age and personal health, and with regard to the change in government, in Ottawa, from Liberal to Conservative.

One afternoon in the summer of 2005, Edna and I had been to the local library to pick up some books for weekend reading. I came out of the library complaining of nausea and weakness. I previously had a couple of similar episodes but they seemed to lift after dozing for an hour.

Edna drove me over the Montfort Hospital, the nearest such facility to our home. It was known as the place where Francophone residents would go if they preferred, but they did welcome all and had enough

English language speakers to accommodate westerners like us, whose second language efforts bent in other directions.

A few quick tests by an emergency room doctor resulted in my being assigned a cardiologist. I spent several days in Montfort (pronounced Mo-fort) then was ambulated over to the University of Ottawa Wilbur Keon Heart Institute (HI), where they fixed some major blockages by installing three stents.

I took three months of out-patient rehab at the HI and was given instructions that I called my MEDS – medication, exercise, diet and stress management. I was well able to handle M, E and S but would confess that it took Edna to see to my diet regimen. All went well until late the following spring. My cardiologist had said that it would take two or three years for the stents to really do their work, but that my ticker should eventually be considerably improved.

In June of 2006, I went into Ottawa Hospital for a transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) – a day procedure to reduce the size of my prostate. I did not have cancer but that particular organ did tend to grow itself in a way that fouled up some of my “plumbing”. The “day procedure” ended up putting me in ICU with an infection that caused an “infarction” – removing me from the care of the urologist back to my cardiologist. He determined that my stents were of the kind that ended up clogging up and blocking the arteries they were intended to clear. The answer was bypass surgery, but they had to clear up the infection, first and that took from July through the first part of August.

The surgery was set for August 9, 2006 but postponed to August 22 – apparently because someone needed the procedure more. Later, circumstantial evidence indicated that the famed journalist-cum-senator, Mike Duffy, who had become a pretty good friend, was the person in greater need. He congenially told me later that my timeline theory was “BS”.

The bypass surgery did the trick and I soon returned to the press gallery office almost daily.

Readers should bear in mind that my first book on Stephen Harper had been published in late fall, 2005, a few weeks after the stent procedure. The publisher, Jack David of ECW, wisely, wanted the book out before the election which was expected in early 2006. In that form, it was entitled *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper*. It did come out in time to get some moderate pre-election buzz, as well as more exposure after the January 23, 2006 election – which saw the minority Paul Martin Liberal government replaced with a Stephen Harper Conservative minority.

Later in the spring of 2006, Jack David called me with an election follow up idea. How about, they reissue the book in the fall in paperback, with an additional chapter providing some analysis of the first six months of the new Harper government. So, at the point of getting my TURP, I had completed most of the new chapter and sent it in. But, while recovering from the infection and getting the bypass surgery we were into the editing process for the new chapter. I had no access to my computer so Edna would bring printed copies of the page proofs to the hospital for me to review. She would then take the corrected proofs back, input them to the electronic copy and send them off to the publisher. All that while, she continued a full work load in Maurice Vellecott’s MP office.

There were a couple of interesting incidents during those weeks I spent in the hospital recovering from the infection.

The first was that most evening and early mornings, I could not sleep too well, so channel surfing with my television (with a headset) became the way to pass the time. The channel lineup at the hospital put CBC News Network on Channel 26 and Crossroads – David Mainse’s Christian network – on 27. So it was simple to flip back and forth. And it tended to confirm my long-standing concept of “resonance”,

going back to my days as an amateur radio operator, enjoying the thrill of “tuning in” to an understandable signal from thousands of miles away. I was able to understand what the voice had to say – of all the stuff up there bouncing off the ionosphere – because my transceiver had a tuning device and amplification system that facilitated and “resonated” the signal.

Now, I could listen to David Mainse, Jim Cantelon, Lorna Dueck or any one of the other host of players on Crossroads and understand what they were trying to get at. Down one channel, on CBC, I could also listen to a different set of players who would have had little spiritual resonance with the Christians on 27. And, because of the resonating device – and my own spiritual “ear”, I could both understand what they were saying and could, as well, detect some innate Christian value which most listeners might have missed.

This is a good place to say that, often, around the Hill, I could see God, Jesus and, perhaps the Holy Spirit being reflected in people that otherwise would not have been identified as Christian believers. In the Bible, such people were referred to as “secret disciples” – like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

But I digress. In that new chapter in my re-issued Harper book, I made the case that his minority government would be successful if he practiced collaboration. I did not use the word “conciliation” because I thought that it might have too much religious baggage and be interpreted by faith skeptics as seemingly like “virtue signalling.” So we entitled the re-issue as *Stephen Harper: The Case for Collaborative Governance*.

One pleasant surprise after the surgery was to find a huge floral arrangement one afternoon in my hospital room. It was from Stephen and Laureen Harper and was about three feet high with all sorts of blooms lined up along a long spine of an evergreen bough.

I recovered well in the fall and, during that time, had two brief but interesting conversations with the new prime minister. The first took place when press gallery members were invited to 24 Sussex for a Christmas celebration. When I had a chance to talk alone with the PM, I thanked him and Laureen for the floral arrangement. I told him that it had lasted quite a while but that eventually, the flowers faded away. The evergreen bough remained, however, and as Edna and I took it from the vase, she gave it a quick snap, as if it was a whip.

I told him about the “snap” and suggested it reminded me of how some of the more cynical press gallery members tried to communicate the idea that he, Stephen Harper, figuratively “cracked the whip” on them. He smiled mischievously and wished Edna and me a Merry Christmas.

The second conversation came toward the end of 2006. Jack David of ECW Press, my publisher, suggested that we might want to supply a few complementary copies to the prime minister’s office and asked if I could arrange to personally hand off the copies to Harper.

That meeting took place between Christmas and New Year’s in the PM’s Centre Block office. I offered the unsolicited advice that if he read and acted on the new chapter about collaboration, his government would be successful. He again smiled mischievously and wished Edna and me a Happy New Year.

A few years later, I learned where one of those New Year’s copies ended up. One of Harper’s communicates aides, managing the PM’s speech-writing staff, was Nigel Hannaford.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> I had met Nigel 15 years before, when he was publisher of the *Alberni Valley Times*. As it happened, he was a new Christian believer and let me know that. Nigel went on to become a columnist at the *Calgary Herald*, where he worked with editorial page editor Licia Corbella who, as I reported earlier, had come to faith at the 1984 Billy

The story that Nigel recounted, was about a journalist who had approached him one day, knowing that she was going to be reporting often on Harper. She asked if he (Hannaford) could provide some background. He thought for a minute, and gave her a copy of *Collaborative Governance*. Not long after, the journalist, Michelle Lang of the *Calgary Herald* took on a six week assignment covering the Afghanistan War. She died on December 30, 2009, when the tank in which she was embedded hit a land mine.

It was a story that moved me when Nigel recounted it, because it represented, implicitly, one of a number of instances when Harper selectively and effectively practiced collaborative governance.

The first example came just days after the election when, to everyone's surprise, Harper named the former Liberal industry minister, David Emerson, to his own cabinet, to the international trade portfolio. His rationale, at the time, was that Emerson came from BC, where he served in civil service trade positions in a province where many governments had long-standing reputations for centre-right governance.

And the new prime minister seemed not bothered, at all, that Emerson, some weeks before the election, exercised some political rhetoric by declaring he would be "Stephen Harper's worst nightmare."

That second "collaborative" reference was that, later in that first year of minority governance, Harper appointed former Liberal foreign minister and deputy prime minister, John Manley, as chair of the special Afghanistan committee, to advise on Canada's conduct in that war. And it was in a Canadian tank in Afghanistan that Michelle Lang died, perhaps after reading *Collaborative Governance*.

I referred, earlier, to the compendium of my columns which were assembled into a book entitled *More Faithful Than We Think: Stories and Insights on Canadian Leaders Doing Politics Christianly*. Those columns covered 1998-2005 – that first segment of our Ottawa sojourn. After I wound away from direct newspaper publishing and editing, I continued to write columns which Flyn Ritchie posted to a BC Christian News-owned website, [www.canadianchristianity.com](http://www.canadianchristianity.com). I also have a complete set of those columns, called OttawaWatch on Word in my own computer. There are about 100 columns on cc.com but the full set, covering 2006 to 2013 – when we moved back to the west coast, totals 378.<sup>90</sup>

In the process of writing *Reflections*, I ended up reminding myself to try to find these columns – written in real time, usually at least once a week. At this stage, I am not sure what to do with them. It is my intention to ask Flyn how we can make sure they stay on line. One possibility is to arrange with a university – Christian or public – to lodge them with their archives. And I would like to find out how to publicize access to them for people – political science or sociology students or scholars for example – who could use them in their own research. Between *More Faithful...* and OttawaWatch, there is a 15-year record of life in Ottawa, written from my "perch". I am too old to do anything about it now, but would welcome personal communication with people who might want to put those years into a current context.

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Graham mission. From there, Nigel moved to the Harper speech-writing post when the PM formed his initial cabinet and staff.

<sup>90</sup> In early 2022, I donated the original 378 edited-by-me columns to the Trinity Western University archives, to be accessible and searchable by students and researchers wanting to explore the faith/political interface in Canada during those particular years. There are also plans afoot to permit me to relate to the TWU-affiliated Religion in Canada Institute and some of the political science programs at the university, as long as I have the health and energy to do so. I am hoping, as well, that appropriate departments and faculties of Canadian universities, including my two existing alma maters, Simon Fraser and Tyndale universities, will be able to tap in to the material. One of SFU's vice-presidents, learning of these plans, advised me to ensure that my TWU-housed files be easily accessible by students and researchers at other Canadian universities.



There was a six-month period in 2011, when no *OttawaWatch* columns were written. Here is the story behind that “empty period”.

For many years, there was a Mel Smith Lecture program – accompanied by an annual scholarship – at Trinity Western University, usually each February. Melvin Henry Smith was a Victoria-based lawyer who for several decades held director or deputy minister positions in the BC government, in the fields of constitutional and administrative law. He had played a major role in the 1982 Canadian constitutional negotiations, in framing BC’s position.

Mel was also a Christian believer, raised in the same Brethren assembly as was I, Oaklands Gospel Hall – later Oaklands Chapel, in Victoria. He placed all his papers in Trinity Western archives before he passed away in 2000.

Recognizing our common roots and complementary interests (law and journalism), the Mel Smith Lecture committee asked me to join the group while we were in Ottawa. I would attend the committee meetings by phone from Edna’s office. Then, in 2011, I delivered the annual Mel Smith Lecture at Trinity Western. It was entitled “The Role of a Christian Press in a Pluralistic Society” and can be found at <http://archives.twu.ca/assets/MelSmithPDFs/LectureMackey2011.pdf>

A few weeks before the lecture, I received word from Flynn and the board chair of Christian Info Society, an immigration lawyer named Jeffrey Lowe, that *BC Christian News* was going to be shut down, after almost 30 years of publication. There were two other publications – *The Light Magazine* and *Context* – ready to move into the gap. *Light*, to be published by former *BCCN* publisher Steve Almond, was more inspirational and less news oriented than *BCCN*. The other, *Context*, was aimed at a Christian and “seeking” youth market.

Being able to do the Mel Smith Lecture at that point was therapeutic for Edna and me. We recognized that print news media conditions were changing and we came to the point where we could watch the change knowing it was okay.

But, when we got back to Ottawa, we recognized I still needed to earn part of the household income, and, at age 71, to work with Edna at being financially ready for retirement by age 75.

The ability to keep earning came when newly-appointed Senator Don Meredith, a Toronto “oneness” Pentecostal pastor and youth advocate, was looking for a communications advisor. I held the post for five months before Don indicated he had run out of money and could not keep me longer.

Don’s “national youth strategy” appeared well-crafted and I enjoyed helping him with various ideas for introducing it around Ottawa. In retrospect, acting as his advisor, rather than his communication director, was wise on my part because when he disconnected me, I was able to leave him with 4,000 pages of raw research, intended to help him give feet to his youth strategy. I was more relieved than disappointed. In due course, Don was forced out of the senate on the basis of accusations – quite accurate, I believe – of unethical and arguably sexually immoral behavior. The earlier charges related to his masters and doctoral degrees, which were from unaccredited and generally unrecognized institutions. The matter that brought him down related to inappropriate sexual relations with a teenage girl.

I had left the press gallery to take the Meredith appointment and, soon after being let go, returned there. Some members, I understand, were not too happy that I wanted to come back, having departed to what Hill journalists sometimes call “the dark side.” But, as it turned out, my seat was still warm.

The less unhappy side of the Meredith time was that I earned more on my Meredith contract in five months than I would have received for *OttawaWatch* and my other free-lance writing in one year. This was all pretty significant. When we went to Ottawa, we were not sure how we would be able to retire. Christian newspapering has never been very good to those practicing it. When I was 60, I recall telling someone who was trying to financially advise me that I would have to die at age 73 in order to be able to afford to live up to that point. For Edna, things were better, even though much of her executive assistance work had been done in Christian educational institutions.

Be that as it may, I was able to keep a fair revenue stream from age 65 until we moved back west at age 73. And Edna's best earning years were after she was 65, so that helped her in being able to have a decent federal pension. And while she was not in a public service union, House of Commons staff positions were pegged to union rates and benefits.<sup>91</sup>

Before we wrap up talking about our time in Ottawa, there are a few more Hill and press gallery stories to tell.

One day, a nearby seat mate, Mark Bourrie, began circulating a complaint that one of the members of the gallery was there illegitimately. The member in question was a correspondent for the Xinhua News Agency. The illegitimacy claim came from the fact that Xinhua (pronounced Chin Wha) is an integral part of the Chinese Communist government. So, maintained Mark, the agency was, in effect, a foreign spy and its membership in the gallery gave it unauthorized access to government ministries and members of parliament.

Eventually, Xinhua left the gallery, under some pressure to do so. But, in the meantime, I sometimes felt in a dicey position. The Xinhua correspondent sat right behind me – one metre away. Over the top of my bookshelf and across a narrow aisle, a journalist sat, who had a fair affinity to China. That was in part because he and his wife had adopted two children from there. And two metres to his right was a reporter for *Epoch Times*, affiliated with the Falun Gong. That was the organization which has often accused the Chinese government of atrocities against its group – imprisoning its members, then harvesting their organs for transplant. That reporter, in casual conversation, would periodically state his belief that the Chinese Communist leaders, through the years, have been responsible for the genocide of 50 to 60 million of its own people.

And there I was, between these warring factions. One day, I said – tongue partially in my cheek – to my friend who had the two children from China, that as a faith-based journalist, I wondered if I was in the most dangerous place in the world.

The fact was, I never felt that much in danger and I seldom received the sense that either the gallery office or the two "Houses" just steps from its doors, posed any sort of threat to God. I know that some Christian groups maintained that only enemies of God were inside these walls, but I did not find that at all true.

Sometimes, I would hear wafting of music from the Hall of Honor rotunda, just below and behind the Peace Tower. Student choirs were often booked in there to provide entertainment for politicians, staffers and visitors. One noon hour, the music sounded like that usually associated with a sung version of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm – *The Lord's My Shepherd* to the tune *Crimond*. I was out of the gallery like a shot, heading for the rotunda. What was interesting was the number of people listening, some of them members of parliament

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<sup>91</sup> I should note that my own experience and Edna's with respect to male-vs-female earning power was the opposite from the commonly-stated situation. And I knew of a few other examples that reflect ours. I am not saying that there is a lack of pay for female work of equal value – just that occasionally, it works the other way, to the disadvantage of the male.



and even a cabinet minister or two. And not a few had tears running down their cheeks – even strong men! In my modest view, God was there.

The group singing that day happened to be some home-schoolers from Calgary – high school age – whose parent-teachers had put together the trip as a reward for their diligent studies during the previous winter. And the leader was an octogenarian, Bernie Smith. Where had I heard that name before? Why he had grown well-known and beloved for his song-leading at the 20,000 strong Inter-Varsity Urbana missions conferences of yore, as well as for leading choirs for some Billy Graham associate evangelists. Bernie passed away in August, 2019, in his mid-80s.

Some of my most interesting moments in the gallery came in writing down-time, when journalists started swapping tales or exploring deep questions. It was interesting to compare notes with people who said they were skeptics but were really believers or vice versa.

Sitting two desks over from me was Kady O'Malley, about four-foot-ten, and one of the most popular pundit panel guests in the gallery. One day, she came bouncing in and asked me if I had ever heard of Pascal's Wager. I said, "No" and waited for the next shoe to drop.

Pascal's Wager, she said, was an axiom developed by Blaise Pascal, the 17<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher,

In brief (And I am taking this from Wikipedia):

Pascal's Wager is an argument in philosophy. It posits that humans bet with their lives that God either exists or does not.

Pascal argues that a rational person should live as though God exists and seek to believe in God. If God does not actually exist, such a person will have only a finite loss (some pleasures, luxury, etc.), whereas if God does exist, (the person) stands to receive infinite gains (as represented by eternity in Heaven) and avoid infinite losses (eternity in Hell).

Half a dozen of us sat around and talked about the Wager for the next half an hour or so, until the next deadline loomed for some. It was most useful and gained for me some sense of how meaningful faith could be for even the most skeptical, when push came to shove.

On another day, Kady asked me how much it would cost to get a copy of my Harper book. I answered offhandedly "\$20", then immediately regretted it, adding, "But the publisher allows review copies to be given to bona fide journalists and you fit into that category. Here is a copy."

Later that day, she told me that, in lieu of payment, she was contributing \$20 in my name to World Vision, so they could supply pencils and notebooks to students in less developed countries. I thanked her and told her she was perceptive in choosing a charity that was in my comfort zone. And I quickly added, tongue in cheek, that World Vision should think progressively about adding laptop computers to their list of school supply gifts.

Another time when the faith talk came easily and congenially was when Pope John Paul II was dying (in 2005, while I was completing *More Faithful...* and my first Harper book.) The public vigil, awaiting his demise was on all the television screens in the gallery office. That was when one could sense many with Catholic background using the occasion to come home to faith. And John Paul, himself, was seen by many evangelicals as being not all that far off the mark. His major theme on his 1984 Canadian tour was his desire to help Catholics and other Christians to "know Christ" and to make him known – a motto well known to long time Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship adherents.

Another online funeral, which understandably did not get the same attention as the papal passing, involved Robert (Bob) Holmes, an old friend and long-time pastor in several Fellowship Baptist churches, including Central Baptist in Victoria.

The Fellowship affiliation was the more conservative of Baptist connections, coming out of the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the early 1920s that had split many mainstream Protestant denominations. But, over the years, as succeeding generations took hold of the respective Baptist groups, it grew easier for rapport to exist when previously it had not.

Bob and Jean had five children, one of whom was Peter, who became a pastor in the other, arguably more liberal, Baptist group, known today as Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM). In fact, he became – and still is – the senior minister at the Baptist “cathedral” – Yorkminster Park Church, a semi-gothic stone structure in a park-like setting on Yonge Street in mid-town Toronto.

I had asked Bob, at one time, what he thought of Peter’s different Baptist choice, he responded, with what I detected was some fatherly pride: “It’s okay. He preaches the Word.”

When Bob’s health was declining, he and Peter worked out an arrangement where his funeral would be in Yorkminster Park and would be conducted jointly by clergy and senior leaders in both Fellowship and CBM groups.

Over 1,000 people nicely filled the “cathedral” and it was livestreamed for a few thousand more. And that is where the press gallery came in.

As I clicked in to the funeral service and put on my headphones to get the audio without disturbing my colleagues, Mark Bourrie asked me what cathedral that was. I explained that it was a Baptist church in Toronto and told him about Bob and Peter Holmes.

He stared in disbelief. An obvious connoisseur of ecclesiastical architecture, he said “but it has stained glass windows. Baptists don’t have stained glass windows.” I took the headphones off and let him listen to the audio and, afterward, we had an intelligent discussion about the various ways of corporately worshipping God.

And, speaking of Yorkminster Park: One morning in early 1999, not many months after we first arrived in Ottawa, I had a phone call from Ron Argue. He wanted to drive me down to a law office in Toronto to meet someone who had both evangelical faith and authentic Liberal political credentials. Ron, himself, was a cousin to Christian television’s David Mainse. He had a career as a senior civil servant, serving both Liberal and Conservative governments. Faith-wise, he and his wife, Andrea had Free Methodist and Wesleyan connections, as Cousin David had in his earlier years before becoming a Pentecostal pastor. The folk at One Way Ministries consider Ron to be both politically and religiously astute and a good advisor to newcomers wanting to fit in to the Ottawa faith-political scene without too much toe-stubbing. Andrea was very involved in prayer education and spiritual direction.

The person Ron wanted to introduce to me was David Smith, the managing partner at a major Toronto law firm and had long connections with the organizational apparatus of the Liberal Party of Canada. His wife, Heather, was at the time a Citizenship Court judge and later became Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court.

At the time, David was connected with Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, having come through a health crisis which caused him to renew his earlier faith. So the aforementioned Peter Holmes was his pastor.

This starts to get a little complex. David Smith, too, like David Mainse, was a cousin to Ron. David’s father was Rev. Charles Bannerman (CB) Smith, a beloved Pentecostal pastor who served at Glad Tidings Church in Victoria a little before the time Bob Holmes had been at Central Baptist, just down the street a couple of blocks. David went to Victoria High School slightly after I had been at Oak Bay High, to the east a couple of miles. David’s mother, Beulah, was an Argue.

CB had also served in congregations elsewhere in Canada, including Bethel Church in Ottawa. So, having been a “preacher’s kid” in both a provincial and federal capital, it made a certain amount of sense that David might get the political bug.<sup>92</sup>

Ron believed meeting Cousin David (Smith) might be a good idea. (It also explained why other Cousin David [Mainse] tended to be somewhat favorable toward Liberals. Former Liberal cabinet minister John Munro had been legal counsel for Mainse’s television ministry.)

David Smith worked with several Liberal prime ministers through the years: As president of the Young Liberals under Prime Minister Pearson and executive assistant to John Turner in the 1960s; as an MP and cabinet minister under Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the 1980s; as a leader of successful Liberal Party campaigns under Prime Minister Jean Chretien in the 1990s and the early 2000s.

Finally, he was named a senator in 2002 by Chretien, serving in that role until 2016 – at the mandatory retirement age of 75.

While David was a senator, we would occasionally touch base, often in the parliamentary coffee shop on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor in Centre Block or occasionally in his senate office. We had many good discussions and, even though I was two years older than him, I saw him as a sort of elder and mentor in things relating to the faith-political interface.

I recall on one of those occasions – when I was trying to explain my thoughts about conciliatory and collaborative politics. I cited Lester Pearson as a better example of that kind of approach than Pierre Trudeau. David’s diplomatic reply: “Trudeau was good. Pearson was great!”

In line with my interest in conflict studies, management and resolution, I came across Vern Neufeld Redekop, who, at the time, was leading the conflict studies program at St. Paul University in Ottawa.

St. Paul is the school from which University of Ottawa emerged decades before. Located about five minutes outside the downtown core along the banks of the Rideau River, it contained a Catholic seminary plus the liberal arts and social science studies which were adaptable to a faith-infused perspective. So Redekop brought a Mennonite Anabaptist approach to consensus and conflict management within the context of this Catholic university. And Brian Strom, the son of a former Alberta Social Credit premier and himself a Nazarene church member, ran the Centre for Conflict Studies, also at St. Paul.

Redekop had authored *From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of a Deep-rooted Conflict Can Open Paths of Reconciliation* (Novalis, 2002) In it, he cited projects in which he had been involved and others that he had researched and studied – Oka (First Nations), Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Belfast and Afghanistan. This research became the basis for the St. Paul program, including its PhD in conflict studies.

Somehow, if there were some deep-seated ways to bring blessing from violence in such conflict-ridden places, there might be some hope for sometimes-mildly-disruptive Ottawa. So I became interested in what Neufeld was doing around 2007. I actually made preliminary inquiries about getting into the PhD program, but was quickly sidelined by the fact that many of the courses were taught in French. (As I explained to Vern: I could read a French newspaper *if* it had a lot of photos.) But it did start me thinking about doctoral studies. So when I entered the doctor of ministry (DMin) program at Tyndale Seminary in

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<sup>92</sup> David Smith died February 26, 2020. His obituary in the Globe and Mail noted: “In more than half a century in politics, David mentored scores of politicians and activists in federal, provincial and municipal politics. He respected everyone who shared his sincere commitment to public life, regardless of party affiliation or ideology.”

2012, I laid out my desire to try to include some conflict studies and research in considering my thesis subject.

My thinking about the DMin started to take shape in that 2007-9 framework, when I was spending some thought on St. Paul. I formally applied to Tyndale in 2009, as I recall, and was given conditional acceptance, if I could complete some prerequisites. My previous degree, from Simon Fraser University was an MBA and the Tyndale DMin called for a master of divinity (MDiv) ahead of entry. I argued, half-seriously, that surely statistical analysis (an MBA staple) could be just as useful as systematic theology (an MDiv component). Not so fast, the DMin gatekeepers advised me. But they quickly set up a systematic theology reading program, an apologetics interterm short course and an online Gospel, Church and Culture course (a Tyndale standard based in part on the writings of Lesslie Newbigin [*Foolishness to the Greeks*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.])

I started on the preliminary work but ran out of steam a few months later when I realized I did not have the money for tuition – about \$18,000 for three years. Tyndale recommended that students seek funding from the ministries that employed them. By this time, I was on a retirement tract and had no ministry which could afford that, or indeed, could claim to benefit from my study.

Now, we move ahead to 2011, not long after Senator Meredith had “disconnected” me and I returned to my desk at the Press Gallery. One evening, the Christian think tank, Cardus, which was engaging in a number of faith-based communication and public policy projects, was having a seminar at the Rideau Club in Ottawa. I was on the invite list and turned up on time and suitably attired in jacket and tie.

After the panel discussion and a vigorous question-and-answer session, the crowd milled a bit. As I drifted through the room, I made eye-contact with Winston Ling, who I had not seen for over two decades, when he offered to try to save *Christian News Toronto*.<sup>93</sup>

Now VP finance at Tyndale, Winston was always watching for opportunities to spread the word about the school. As he greeted me, he did not take long to get to the point. “I hear you withdrew your application for the DMin program,” he said. I replied that I could not afford the tuition.

“You get registered and I will see that your tuition is raised,” he replied. That was about October, as I recall. By the following spring, I was in Cohort 4 and ready to go. The program called for two residencies a year for three years – a one week session in January and two weeks in May – at the new campus. Reading, papers and consultation with professors online, by phone or with regularly-arriving packages of loaned books from the Tyndale library, were all parts of the between-residency activities.

The DMin was in the leadership tract. Since I was the oldest in my cohort, it was generally recognized that my thesis topic might take a different route than those of my colleagues who were in mid-life and actively engaged in professional ministry – either pastoring or leading Christian non-profit agencies.

One evening early in my first residency, Dr. Paul Bramer, then-director of the DMin program happened upon me in the quadrangle of the old Tyndale building, where I was staying.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Taking early retirement from the finance vice-presidency of Crown Life, Winston had, in early 2000, become finance vice-president of Tyndale (then Ontario Bible College/Ontario Theological Seminary) In that role, he was newly-named president Brian Stiller’s right hand for raising the \$80 million needed to buy and renovate the former Sisters of St Joseph mother house for its commodious new Bayview Campus .

Although the meeting, over coffee, was unplanned, I got the impression that Paul understood me and where I was at and had a good idea about the kind of thesis I could handle. For one thing, Paul was, like me, raising in the Brethren assemblies and understood their rather lay-oriented approach to ministry and leadership. And, like me, he had spent adulthood in other groups, he, teaching in seminaries and I, in practicing journalism. A decade younger than me, he saw the value in my being able to tell stories for future generations.

What he hatched was a proposal for a thesis which eventually was titled: *The Design and Development of an Online Encyclopedia of Canadian Christian Leaders*. Before he and my thesis supervisor, Francis Tam, would okay the plan, the Encyclopedia itself had to be in place. And the thesis would need to be written in a way that future readers interested in taking on similar Encyclopedia projects would be able take clear direction and inspiration.

Another person who had my back was the late Dr. Peter Dickens, head of the Tyndale Leadership Centre at the time. By his own confession, he had been “blown away” by a story in *These Evangelical Churches of Ours*, which I had written in 1994. One of its chapters had focused on Walnut Grove, a Langley, BC, town centre in which around a dozen churches of different denominations had been “planted”. At the time, Peter told me, he had come to faith through one of those churches, Walnut Grove Lutheran, because they reached out to his children.

Given my age (75 when the thesis was approved) it was expected that the Encyclopedia could be rolled over into another project, at an appropriate time. That happened two years after my 2015 graduation. Cardus, the Christian think tank, was involved in many online innovative communication projects. One of them, [www.FaithinCanada150.ca](http://www.FaithinCanada150.ca), was designed to tell many faith stories related to Canada’s sesquicentennial, which took place in 2017. So, today, the original Encyclopedia and its structure and rationale, can be found at [www.canadianchristianleaders.org](http://www.canadianchristianleaders.org). And most of its entries plus many other good Canadian faith stories can be found at [www.cardus.ca](http://www.cardus.ca). They are under two possible pulldowns: Faith in Canada 150, and Voices from the Crowd. One of my favorite stories, if I say so myself, is what I call “the Jim Pattison/Glen Clark combo” and is illustrative of the potential I see for collaborative, conflict-resolving approach useful in business, faith, governance and legal areas, to name a few. It can be found at: <http://www.convivium.ca/voices/the-good-faith-work-of-jimmy-pattison/>.

I found it interesting, as well, that the DMin studies gave me opportunity to communicate with the two people who had wondered, back in 1998, whether *Christian News Toronto* should be shut down so as to give the national paper, *ChristianWeek*, breathing space to grow in the Toronto area. My response, at the time, was to leave that decision to my board, but see that the *ChristianWeek* people understood my thoughts on collaboration between national and regional/local Christian newspapers.

Those two people were Linda Cannell, who, at the time of the *Christian News Toronto* demise, was teaching at Providence College near Winnipeg and was on the board of *ChristianWeek* and Don Posterski, who was a well-regarded evangelical leadership guru, then working capably with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

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<sup>94</sup> It was an appropriate place: The quadrangle had been created when the seminary wing had been added to the campus in the early 90s. And I had been, for a few months, the coordinator for the campaign to raise \$3 million to build that wing. Just over \$1 million was raised on my watch.

The Cannell re-contact came during the DMin studies. By that time, she was teaching in a Chicago-area seminary and was guest lecturing at Tyndale on new ways of doing theology. So she was one of my teachers and, in retrospect, I appreciated her thoughts on innovation with regard to Christian communication projects – like a leadership encyclopedia or newspaper.

I encountered Don in June, 2017, during a visit Edna and I made to Ottawa to mark some Hill events Cardus arranged to celebrate Faith in Canada 150 and other projects. I had not actually talked to Don since those conversations in 1988.

He took note of the fact that I had earned my DMin from Tyndale and my involvement, now, with Cardus, as an outgrowth of those studies and my thesis. Then Don asked, cryptically, why I felt the need to take the DMin. I answered, off-handedly: “Maybe people would start listening to me.” More seriously, after a minute, I made two points: someone from Tyndale, Winston Ling, urged me to register and offered to find my tuition support. And Paul Bramer had planted a thesis idea that would enable the stories of Canadian Christian leaders to be told *in perpetuity*.

I got the sense that, at last, Don understood. He died too soon, the next year, of cancer. Someone, who has been influenced by his leadership, should tell his story.

There are many more things I could write about the DMin studies, but I will wrap with one – the Myers-Briggs tests, administered in this case, by Dr. Janyne Peek Emsick. One factor about both my masters and doctoral degrees is that they are in fields where the practical and scholarly aspects are blended. Understanding one’s approach to leadership and related natural affinities can be invaluable in practice.

In some ways, it would have been valuable, years before, to have been able to take Myers-Briggs. But, perhaps, I would not have been ready to receive and act on its analysis. In retrospect, I likely found it difficult to decide that I had completed a project or a term of employment, opting rather to want to “hang in there”. That thinking comes, historically, from what we sometimes call the “Protestant work ethic”. Looking back over my time line, I tend to believe, at this point, that most of my projects ended at the right time and that there was a useful purpose to be served by seeking out the next task or job.

The completion of my DMin took place over the period of our transition from 15 years in Ottawa to “active retirement” on the west coast. Before leaving the Ottawa piece, I would like to relate the travel stories and opportunities we had during that decade and a half – both domestic and overseas.

We did not know it at the time, but Edna’s tenure in Maurice Vellacott’s MP office turned out to be, in her words, “the best job I ever had.” For most of the time, it was a three-person office – Maurice, Edna and a parliamentary assistant (PA). And the PA turned out to be, for ten years, Tim Bloedow – the same person who did the desktop production for *Christian News Ottawa*, in the late 90s and early 2000s. Tim and Lynette, a Trinidadian native, was and is a multi-talented couple with a real sense of both historic Reformed theology and politically conservative thinking. Tim’s responsibility, in Maurice’s office, was to write the background to any public policy stance that Maurice intended to take in the House or committee work. Maurice would best be described as coming from the socially conservative side of the spectrum. He was particularly strong on right-to-life issues and always spoke intelligently, with good background research – provided in fair measure, by Tim.

Lynette, Tim’s wife, has worked diligently in recent years, to develop, under the rubric of Christian Roots Canada, on line courses that trace the biblical background in Canada’s national history – particularly to the three scripture references carved into the Peace Tower. Those references are:

- Over the East window: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea” (Psalm 72:8).
- Over the South window: “Give the King thy judgment, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King’s son” (Psalm 72:1).
- Over the West window: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18).

Since Maurice left politics in 2015, Tim and Lynette moved for a time to Pittsburgh for seminary studies in the Reformed Presbyterian tradition. Their hope was that Tim might be called to a pastorate in the United States but, so far, that has not happened. Meanwhile, he is enjoying his work as an Uber driver in Toronto.

When Maurice offered Edna the job she held for 15 years, he indicated that in ways that he was able to, without conflict, he wanted to be available to help in any “ministry” projects we might have.

The first such opportunity came at the Millennium, when we had opportunity to go to Australia, to the Baptist World Congress, to put out a daily newspaper. We had some on-the-ground financial support from Baptists who wanted to see us there. Maurice was able, through travel points, to help us get there and back.

The Congress was the every-five-year meeting of the Baptist World Alliance, held in a different city each time. In 2000, it was in Melbourne. We actually went in early December, 1999, so we could see a bit of Australia before settling into work, which went from January 13 to 20. So we saw the sights in Sydney, took trains to the Blue Mountains and Adelaide, and the bus to Canberra and the wine-growing region of the Barossa Valley north of Adelaide.

The 10,000-strong Congress, itself, was held in a convention centre adjacent to a huge casino beside a scenic canal in downtown Melbourne. Ironically the centre was financed mainly by casino revenue. The Baptists, for their part, were mostly opposed to casino gambling, seeing it as one of Australia’s great social evils.

While one of the first Millennium celebrations for the world was the Sydney Bridge fireworks, we were elsewhere, on a golf course near the Great Ocean Road in Anglesea, west of Melbourne. There, as dusk came, we witnessed some 200 kangaroo come out of the forest and chomp on the grass fairways of the course. I observed that there were three groups on the course, the members of each group seemingly giving allegiance to one leader ‘roo and ignoring the other groups.

I later wrote a column for *Christian News Ottawa* – complete with a photo of “the editor’s Aussie friend” observing that the kangaroo seemed to be like political, religious and other social groups – ignoring of other sectors and avoiding collaboration. Just sayin’.

The next overseas trip was to Israel and I covered that one previously. At that time, I mentioned the desire to see what those people across the Jordan Valley in a clearly-visible mosque-dominated town in Jordan might have to say. That opportunity came in 2009. Edna and I flew to Amman, the capital of Jordan with a group of 20 Christian journalists from evangelical, mainstream Protestant and Catholic publications in both United States and Canada.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> While awaiting the plane that would take us to Jordan, we stayed at Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML) where my sister, Mary Parsons and her husband, Phil, hold key posts. CMML is a Brethren assemblies service and retreat agency, occupying a former business mogul’s family mansion, in New Jersey, a couple of hours south of New York City. They gave us a wonderful tour of the city and we will never forget having lunch with them at



There were several scenic highlights in Jordan – among them, Gadera, where Jesus was reported to have sent a man’s evil disposition into a herd of pigs, dispensing them over the edge of the mountain and across the valley to the Sea of Galilee, 15 miles westward. The viewpoint was close to the place where the boundaries of Syria, Israel and Jordan intersect – and not far from much of the action that was to come in the Syrian war.

Later, in Aqaba, on the Red Sea, we were in a hotel in easy sight of bits of Israel and Egypt. And if we had been able to climb the tall flagpole down the street, we would have been able to see Saudi Arabia to the southeast.

But the most stimulating experience, spiritually and politically was a long meeting in the royal palace in Amman with a member of the royal family who has been pretty committed to building relationships among people of what he described as the “three Abrahamic faiths” – Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The person was Oxford-educated Prince Hassan bin Talal, uncle to Jordanian King Abdullah II. The prince left each of us with a copy a thin volume of his own authorship, *Christianity in the Arab World*, (SCM Press with Foreword by the Prince of Wales, 1995). His observations, from where I sit, were right on.

Here is what I wrote in *OttawaWatch* on October 6, 2009, shortly after the visit:

Why was it, I wondered, that His Royal Highness, Prince El-Hassan, was sounding quite a bit like the popular California megachurch pastor Rick Warren?

That thought occurred to your humble scribe as I sat at the opposite end of a board room table from the Jordanian prince, in the company of over a dozen other faith-based journalists. We were in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, deep inside the royal compound.

The prince, uncle to Jordan’s King Abdullah and brother to Abdullah’s late revered father, King Hussein, was doing that for which he is best known – encouraging peace, understanding and collaboration among the many religious, political and international interests in and around what we know as the Middle East. His international high-level activities are sometimes affectionately described by friends as “peacemongering”.

The briefing with the Prince took 90 minutes. It was thorough, erudite, comprehensive, and I have very good notes.

Prince El-Hassan’s *modus operandi* as a highly intelligent encourager of interfaith action, is to emphasize action, rather than a whole lot of talk. He reinforced that point several times during his briefing, noting at one stage, that he does not encourage a lot of dialog about “metaphysics or personal belief.” Not to suggest that he papers over religious differences or disparages depth of conviction. But to resolve conflict and encourage social, political and spiritual development in the Middle East, collaborative action is required, he maintained.

When we returned to Canada, I pulled up the Rick Warren piece to ensure that I had remembered correctly that he and the Prince were on the same page, so to speak.

The Warren speech in question was delivered in early July, in Washington, DC, at a conference of the Islamic Society of North America.

As reported in the *Washington Times*, on July 5, 2009, Warren asserted:

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McDonalds in Times Square. We understand that particular McDs has since closed. Mary also took us along the Jersey Shore where, among other things, we saw the Methodist “Great Auditorium” at Ocean Grove.



Muslims and Christians can work together for the common good without compromising my convictions or your convictions.

I am not interested in interfaith dialogue but interfaith projects.

Talk is cheap ... but love is something we do together. As the two largest faiths on this planet – more than one billion Muslims and two billion Christians ... we must believe in this. As more than half the world, we must do something to model what it is to live in peace, to live in harmony.

The prince's book is a primer, so to speak, to help thinkers and leaders in nations in and around Jordan to focus on the Christian faith – in its various forms – and its impact in the Middle East context. Chapter 10 is on Protestants and highpoints, for the most part, the evangelicals.

He pinpoints the development of Arab evangelicalism to the two great American evangelical awakenings in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the mission movements which resulted. He suggests that the movement, in the Arab world, has not been characterized by the development of large numbers of converts but, nevertheless “by outstanding contributions to education and social work.” The prince also made a point with respect to a geographical orientation. He maintained that the Arab nations of which Jordan was a component were best described as being in Western Asia, rather than in the Middle East.

And he has a footnote to synthesize his understanding of evangelical Christian belief, in the form of a reference to two biblical passages:

For it is by God's grace you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. (Ephesians 2. 8-9)

The person who is put right through faith shall live. (Romans 1.17)

To this writer, the royal understanding of the education and social work contribution of the Christian faith was reinforced by his biblical references.

He showed evidence, I believe, that he understood that “a faith that lives is one that works.”

The Jordan trip was the last time we were “overseas” – unless we count the 2019 Alaska cruise with my brother and sister and our spouses.

But, during Edna's Vellacott tenure, Maurice would arrange for her to take leave and go to Saskatoon during national elections, so she could serve as the official agent for the candidate. In that role, she was reporting and filing campaign activities and financial matters to Elections Canada. Sometimes it was said, perhaps a little melodramatically but not completely so, that the official agent's job is to “keep the candidate out of jail.” And in Canadian history, there have been examples of slip ups by official agents that did, indeed, land candidates in hot water with Elections Canada. At times, the resolution came with an admission by the candidate that a mistake had been made. If the “mistake” was proved to be more deliberate, the penalty was more punitive.

Edna would work 10 or 12 hours a day at her role. I would tackle writing or research projects that I did not have time for when I was in Ottawa. And, especially after my heart surgery in 2006, I would power walk – mostly along the banks of the South Saskatchewan River.

A special treat came when election periods fell between April and October. Those riverside walks would include the spectacular sightings of pelicans, which would come north for the summer to feed and nest, from their wintering grounds in southern United States, Mexico or Central America. The big birds could

be seen most often along and around a bier (dam) in the river, just below a high-level railway bridge. The dam had been constructed to regulate the flow of the river some decades before, as a flood control measure. It was a likely spot for the pelicans to catch fish as their prey tried to scale the bier. And it was a constant reminder of the little poem: “What a wonderful beast is the pelican. Its beak holds as much as its belly can!”

There were fulfilling trips to Quebec City (2) and Charlottetown, as well – the latter to present at a Baptist World Alliance council meeting. There, I had a chance to describe the Christian newspaper process to about 200 people from all over the world. Who knows what might have been picked up and put into practice, as a result. All I can say for sure is that a Baptist leader from somewhere in Africa told the crowd, after the presentation, that this was a “God thing.”

Much of my writing work – particularly the *OttawaWatch* columns, were written keeping in mind that many of my readers were in western Canada – British Columbia in particular. And, along the way, some of my long time western associations – a few even dating back to those teenage years when I was still in the Brethren assemblies – came back to become a part of what I was doing in the nation’s capital.

Charles Ellington, who had been my Sunday school superintendent at Oaklands Gospel Hall was in touch with me at one point, asking for help in writing his memoirs. Part of the result of that work is in the link below:

[http://www.convivium.ca/voices/104\\_charles\\_ellington/](http://www.convivium.ca/voices/104_charles_ellington/)

The other Victoria reference was Mel Smith, who was one of my fellow Sunday school students at Oaklands (albeit a few years older than me). He rose in the ranks of the provincial civil service on the legal side, serving directly under Premier Bill Bennett in the 1980s during the patriating of the constitution.

In retirement and before his too-early death from cancer in 2000, Mel lectured in constitutional law at Trinity Western University. He also established his archives there and the Mel Smith lecture and scholarship was established. The scholarship continues. The lectures ended in 2018, although their texts, including my own, in 2011, are archived.

When Charles Ellington retired from the Mel Smith Lecture committee, I was honored to replace him and participated in much of the planning for the lectures. The 2011 lecture (delivered by yours truly) was a highlight for me. Ironically, it took place in the same week that the almost 30-year-tenure of *BC Christian News* which I had helped to found in 1982, came to an end.

Here is the text of that lecture:

<http://archives.twu.ca/assets/MelSmithPDFs/LectureMackey2011.pdf>

One favorite story about Mel: A Christian couple – friends of his and Beverley’s – had a chance meeting with then-premier Bill Bennett. They talked about Mel, letting the premier know that they went to the same church.

To finish this story properly, it should be noted that, in the early years of their marriage, Mel and Beverley continued to attend Oaklands Chapel – the “successor” to Oaklands Gospel Hall. But later, like many Brethren assembly people, they shifted to Central Baptist, a large downtown evangelical church. Later, they ended up at Royal Oak (now Gateway) Baptist, near their home in suburban Saanich.

The premier knew about Oaklands and Central and the background that Mel had provided about them.

When the aforementioned couple told Bennett that they went to the same church, he reportedly asked them, with a mischievous smile: “Is that the church where they don’t drink, or where they don’t dance?”

In case some readers were not yet born when these things were big issues: Oaklands was a church where the elders were tolerant of a little tipling, in moderation of course, while Central’s deacons were okay with attendance at a social dance, as long as the pirouetting partners did not get too close to each other!

By 2013, we were seriously thinking about moving back to British Columbia. It was expected that Maurice would not run for office in 2015, and, indeed, he did not. With his permission, Edna approached Susanne Lo about taking her place. She was met with a warm response and Susanne did succeed her in that position, until election time.

In the years in Justice Building, the edifice where Maurice had his office, Edna made many friends among support staffers. One, in particular, was Anne Andres and her husband, Sebastian. Anne was executive assistant for James Lunney, an MP from a Vancouver Island riding. James was an Israeli enthusiast, having been there many times and spoken often in and around the House about the important role of that nation in the spiritual and international relations.

We have kept in touch with Anne and Sebastian. They moved from Cumberland, east of Ottawa, to Perth, to the west, where, they hope to set up a bakery. Some of those plans remained up in the air because of the pandemic. Sebastian, who married Anne somewhat late in life, is very creative in areas of online activity, classical music, political advocacy – and so on. More recently they have moved to Gatineau, across the Ottawa River in Quebec. We enjoyed watching their son and daughter, Stephen and Kathryn, grow from pre-teen to young adulthood, carrying many of the values of their parents into the future.

I should also note that Maurice sometimes found himself quietly teaming up with John McKay, a Liberal MP from Scarborough. John, in his faith life, is an evangelical Christian. His wife, Carolyn Dartnell, was the producer for Living Truth, the television arm of the famous Toronto mega-congregation, The Peoples Church.

John was, and is, I believe, quietly pro-life. Occasionally, Maurice and he would appear on the same platform to support the cause. When Justin Trudeau became prime minister and told his caucus that Liberal MPs could not oppose abortion-enabling legislation, John quietly agreed but made it clear that it would not stop him from personally supporting women who wished to give birth.

While Edna was winding down in Maurice’s office, I continued my studies and was honored when Alex Binkley and others who sat around me in the Gallery office – knowing I was returning west – proposed me for Honorary Membership in the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery. I quietly negotiated with Terry Gullion, the staff chief, to keep me on the gallery press release list. He was a tough negotiator, I assure you, noting: “You know a lot of journalists would give their eye teeth to get those releases.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Well, I still have my eye teeth and, every day, I scan several dozen releases coming on my e-mail and carefully read at least three or four. By the way, Terry later moved into a key communication role in the prime minister’s office, after Justin Trudeau moved into the top spot.

The move west meant shifting from a national focus in my work to a more regional one. We had almost but not quite sold our stacked townhouse condo home of 15-years when we left. We had thought about driving across the continent, partly in the US and the rest in Canada. I had even wondered, romantically, if it would be fun to take Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles and then drive up the coast.

Neither prospect worked out. Route 66 was too long a run and something further north might mean we would run into snow in the mountain passes. So we vacated our house on October 13, 2013, hopped on a plane that afternoon and were in Vancouver that evening. With a few days to spare before taking possession of our one-level second-storey condo in City Centre Surrey, we headed for Whistler, to a City in Focus conference for Christian leaders. (Once again, not being a leader, but observing them.) City in Focus, under the leadership of Presbyterian minister Tom Cooper, has been a means of bringing together a number of urban-focused Christian ministries, including the annual BC Leadership Prayer Breakfast.

## Chapter 12

### The fellowship of writing

As we move toward the final Reflections, I want to tie up one loose end – whatever happened to Christian Info Society? And, in so doing, I get to talk about one of the “short term” projects in which Edna and I have been involved before and since returning to the west coast in 2013 – The Word Guild.

Writers’ groups have long been a part of the cultural scenes in most English-speaking nations. And likely, they have their equivalents in other language nations as well. And such clusters often develop sub-groups which serve writers of a certain genre or interest level. In North America, for almost as long as I have been in journalism, there have been Christian writers’ organizations. Some of them have existed in Canada.

Such groups have developed conferences and writing workshops. Christian publishers would send representatives to those conclaves, seeking out good book manuscripts and meeting with aspiring writers. In Canada, some Christian writers’ groups would meet locally or regionally, others developed national conferences or retreats. My interest in relating to such groups was to build awareness among writers particularly for journalistic-style news writing.

My first contact with such organizations came in the 70s and 80s when I was working for, among others, the *United Church Observer* and *The Chilliwack Progress*. During those years, Sherwood Wirt and, later, Roger Palms, successively editors of Billy Graham’s *Decision* magazine, developed the Decision School of Writing model. Sometimes they would tie in with the preparation activities for a Graham mission. On other occasions, they would be set up in co-operation with a local or regional Christian college.

In Toronto and Calgary, on two different occasions, there were Decision Schools spearheaded by Palms and Leslie K. Tarr, the pastor who, sidelined by spinal meningitis, wrote extensively on faith issues for the *Toronto Star*, the *Observer* and several other publications. I did some journalism writing workshops for such events.

Later, in the 80s, the emerging Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, took over the Decision model, revamping it a little. In 1982, just as what became *BC Christian News* was getting started, the newspaper worked with the EFC and its new magazine, *Faith Today*, to put together a writers' conference at Trinity Western University, (then Trinity Western College) in Langley, BC. It drew about 80 registrants.

Lorna Cheetham, then executive assistant to EFC president Brian Stiller organized the conference. Edna and I drove her around to take care of many of its local arrangements. I can recall her surprise, on a Sunday afternoon, when we stopped off to visit Lougheed Mall, on the Burnaby-Coquitlam border, It was teeming with people. Her surprise related to the fact that, in Ontario, provincial regulations did not yet permit the opening of malls on "the Lord's Day".

After a decade or so, the EFC invited others to consider taking the writers' conference idea forward. Nancy and Les Lindquist picked up on the concept, initiating The Word Guild (TWG). Nancy was already a well-established writer in both Christian and mystery genres. Les, her husband, was a computer consultant for IBM and others. They put together a team and affiliated it with Imago, a Christian arts initiative developed by John Franklin, a Tyndale prof. Wendy Elaine Nelles worked closely with the Lindquists and was the co-founder of TWG. Wendy helped spearhead an awards competition which would run alongside the annual conference. Through the years, the conferences had attendances of up to 300 at the Guelph Bible Conference Centre. The Canadian Christian Awards was, in effect, the conference kickoff. It was held for many years at the World Vision auditorium in Mississauga, near the Pearson airport. The location was used to get the attention of Toronto media. The tactic sometimes worked.<sup>97</sup>

The Leslie K. Tarr Award for lifetime achievement in Christian writing and/or publishing was one of the features of the evening and great efforts were made to keep the awardee's name a secret. In 2006, the *Ottawa Citizen's* faith/ethics writer, Bob Harvey and your humble scribe were jointly awarded the honor. Because we had kept in touch with each other, comparing story tips and discussing how to report for mainstream and faith-based readerships, we both considered it a privilege to be named together.

Not long after, Wendy approached me and the Christian Info Society board chair at the time, John Irwin. She indicated that TWG wanted to move on from the Imago arrangement – which provided a means to grant charitable receipts to TWG donors. As it happened, when *Christian News Ottawa* rolled over its operations into *ChristianWeek*, Christian Info Society had no project. We soon worked out having TWG and CIS come together in a way that CIS could issue its charitable receipts to TWG donors. John Irwin continued as board chair under the new arrangement.

I continued to be involved peripherally with TWG, serving as interim co-chair in 2018-19, along with well-known journalism and publication executive Peter Stockland. Our task, which has worked

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<sup>97</sup> There was – and is – also an Edmonton-based Christian writers group known as Inscribe. Many of its members were based in western Canada and appreciated that its gatherings were easier to get to than TWG's annual Guelph conference. A fair number of active Christian writers affiliated with both Inscribe and TWG and there were occasional efforts to get the two groups working more closely together. While relationships between leaders of both groups were generally congenial, there did not seem to be any strong motivation to alter the status quo; As in Christian newspapering initiatives, such collaborative efforts are sometimes easier said than done.

interestingly, was to try developing local or regional chapters for TWG. Peter was particularly encouraging to the development of such a chapter in Ottawa, the national capital.<sup>98</sup>

## Chapter 13

### Moving along in Surrey

We received an acceptable offer on our Ottawa condo a couple of days after arriving in Surrey, which meant that we could get relief from, in effect, “owning” three condos – the one in Surrey that we had lived in for six years before going to Ottawa, the Ottawa stacked townhouse we had lived in for 15 years and the place we had bought in Surrey just weeks before,

It was the first time we had used e-mails, scans and other electronic tools to close a real estate deal. In fact, when we had not yet set up our new BC e-mail address, we went to the Simon Fraser University Surrey campus and prevailed on the library staff to let us use their computers to handle the property conveyances. It did not hurt that SFU is one of my alma maters.

We moved into the City Centre condo after the City in Focus conference at Whistler. There was one snag: rain water had leaked into one of the two moving containers that had been used to transport our furniture and goods west. Fortunately, our paperwork was okay, but a dresser mirror, sofa and credenza were all water damaged. We had insurance and, a couple of days later, were able to make a superbly competent sales person at a major furniture store in the Central City mall very happy.

Between 2013 and 2015, much of my time was spent completing the DMin. And Edna was equally busy. She is the youngest in a family that, at one time, had two brothers and five sisters. Two of the sisters, Anne and Hilda, were well into their 80s and their respective health conditions were in decline. Further, Hilda’s husband, Don, had already died and Ann’s husband, Grant, passed on not long after our return west. Neither couple had children, both having married later in life.

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<sup>98</sup> Peter, a devout Catholic who is happily proud of his Irish heritage, brought that perspective to the counsel he provided to the TWG. More recently, he has shifted to working his doctorate in Irish studies and being publisher of the *Catholic Register*.

All of which is to say, Edna had her administrative skills put to work in short order, in helping her sisters manage their affairs in their declining years and, as well, in handling matters of their estates after their deaths. In addition, she has done a good deal of archiving of Dosso and Doerksen family mementos since we returned.<sup>99</sup>

There was a mixture of reasons for being back on the coast – both climate and family related. We wondered to some extent, how that would relate to my family. We have stayed closely connected to my brother, Barry and his wife, Anne, in Comox, a few blocks from their son and daughter-in-law Steve and Sandra Mackey. Anne passed away in November, 2020, after having fought ovarian cancer for 13 months. She had been a fine piano teacher, both in India and Canada.<sup>100</sup>

Steve has a flourishing web programmer business, which involves, at times, some business relationships with such as the CBC. I was able to get him to set up the web page for the *Online Encyclopedia of Canadian Christian Leaders* and that project went very well.

One of the outcomes of the DMin studies was a clearer understanding, for me, about the validity of short term projects. The life long struggle on “attention span” issues has caused me, with Edna’s help, to try to make sure that I was staying the right length of time in a project – not too long, not too short. That could be frustrating, at times, because I would tend to feel that I was leaving a project because I was failing at it, not because my particular task – with my unique vision, bias or skill set – was completed.

I had to learn, as well, sometimes the hard way, that, if my successors took the project in a slightly or substantially different direction, that was okay. In some cases, I would write a manual for my successor, and pass it on to him or her, no conditions attached. Often, in retrospect, I would see that, a few years later, that successor will have followed some of my advice.

In “retirement”, the projects have rolled off nicely. I have already talked about The Word Guild and my year as interim board chair. Intertwined in that rapport were two meetings a few months apart, in the White Spot restaurant just down the street from our Surrey City Centre condo.

The first, described briefly earlier, involved Ray Pennings, vice-president and co-founder of Cardus. A Christian think tank that has developed a wide range of faith-based networks, Cardus had its start as a spinoff from the Dutch-rooted Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). The CLAC has maintained through the years that conciliation as much as combativeness can be the hallmark of relationships between corporations and managers, on one hand, and unions and labor leaders, on the other.

It is a view that found resonance with me. And, as Cardus itself developed, that conciliation/collaboration model has continued to be at the core of its value system.

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<sup>99</sup> Edna’s most senior sibling, Helen Dubland, also passed away in 2014, at age 93. Her husband, Olof, died a couple of years later. They had been long term workers in India with the Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM). Much of their ministry involved leadership in Deodars, a Christian conference centre in the mountains outside Delhi. Ironically, they had met my brother, Barry and his wife, Anne, who worked in Delhi in various Christian development agencies, while we were courting. Between the four of them, in 1968, they figured out about our emerging relationship before we actually announced it to our respective families

<sup>100</sup> Barry is setting up a foundation in her memory to assist students who could not otherwise afford it, in their music education. And Sandra, having retired from doing music therapy with seniors, is now teaching piano in Anne’s studio, on the Mackey grand piano.

It was Cardus' Faith in Canada 150 (FiC150) that caught my attention as I wondered how to take forward what had been done with the *Online Encyclopedia of Canadian Christian Leaders* (OECCL), considering that both Edna and I were moving toward our "four score years and ten". At that White Spot meeting, Ray and I talked about the respective objectives of OECCL and FiC150. To me, as the older guy, the commonalities were striking. And FiC150 had an additional component: As a Canadian sesquicentennial project, it had the cross-communication effect that grows out of a Multifaith approach. True, writers and editors in other faiths could take the concept of the online encyclopedia and adapt it to their own faith. But there was a resonating value, as well in letting Multifaith communication take place in a civil and congenial manner.

On the July 1 weekend in 2017 (the sesquicentennial year) Edna and I visited Ottawa for the FiC150 part of the celebrations. One event that we did not attend took place just down the street from Cardus' Ottawa office. It was for younger people particularly and drew from several world faiths. And it took place in the Global Centre for Pluralism – ironically, the former home for the National War Museum.

The Global Centre was a \$30 million project of the Aga Khan Foundation, associated is the Ismaili Muslims. So the FiC150 session involving young faith-based leaders, symbolically located as it was at the Global Centre for Pluralism, was significant.<sup>101</sup>

I referred, earlier, to a second meeting at that Surrey White Spot restaurant. It was a follow up to my Pennings session and was between myself and Peter Stockland. Peter was leading the FiC150 project, as well as publishing *Convivium*, an online think piece Cardus magazine edited by Father Raymond DeSousa, who has made his mark as a *National Post* columnist.

As Peter and I talked, at that initial meeting, we found some interesting symbiosis. He had served, through his career, in senior editorial positions at *Calgary Herald*, *Montreal Gazette* and *Reader's Digest Canada*. When he took early retirement from the latter, Ray Pennings snagged him for Cardus. A devout Catholic who has woven his faith into opinion pieces, editorials and features with a natural facility through the years, Peter fit his new role well. I learned much from him in our working together.

We also discovered some other affinity during our lunch and a walking tour of the emerging City Centre in Surrey. Peter had grown up in that same neighborhood. He was a student at Queen Elizabeth High School on King George Boulevard at the same time I was a young reporter at the *Columbian* newspaper. At the time, I had covered, among other things, the opening of Surrey Place, the first stage of what eventually became Central City Shopping Centre, office tower and Simon Fraser University Surrey.

After our lunch, I showed Peter City Centre/SFU and then walked a short distance north to Civic Plaza, location of the new City Hall, Central Library and Civic Hotel/condo/Kwantlen Polytechnic University. We then crossed University Drive and went east, beside Christ the King Lutheran Church, sited at the base of Alumni Tower condo building. I explained that I occasionally supplied pulpit at that church. As we surveyed the street, he looked across to an older low rise apartment building. "See that," he pointed out to me: "It is where my first girlfriend lived."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> In the recounting of my time in Burnaby, some understanding of my regard for the Aga Khan will have emerged. The Aga Khan has maintained outstanding diplomatic relations in Canada on both religious and political levels. The acquiring and refurbishing of the former war museum was a result of the collaborative efforts worked out between the Khan and then prime minister Stephen Harper. (Admitting my bias, I need to note that Mr. Harper was able to work collaboratively and creatively with the Aga Khan – while avoiding the subsequent Khan-related conflicts of interest and ethical issues that dogged his successor, Justin Trudeau.)

<sup>102</sup> In July, 2020, a development application sign appeared on the low rise apartment property, announcing plans for their replacement by two residential towers, planned respectively for 23 and 26 storeys.



And speaking of pulpit supply: One of the interesting developments coming out of my DMin, was the interest of some of the pastors I was getting to know, to fill in for them occasionally. The two, particularly, were Christ the King Lutheran, which was the closest church to our front door, and St. Andrew's Newton Presbyterian, a 15-minute drive away, where we attend most often. (We like the pipe organ, gowned choir and simple gospel preaching of the Rev. Geof Jay.)

I enjoy being able to take one of the "lectionary" readings used by major denominations as a way to help people move through major biblical themes in a three-year period. I would take the gospel passage listed for the appropriate date then try to weave something about the church's neighborhood into the sermon.

For example, I was asked to preach the first Sunday after Easter at Christ the King, one year. The lectionary text was about "doubting" Thomas and Jesus' encounter with him after the resurrection. I talked about how Jesus removed Thomas' doubts. Then I posed and answered the question: "Where did Thomas go from there, and what does it mean to us in Surrey in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?"

The answer was that Thomas followed the Rome-to-India trade route and ended up in what is today the state of Kerela, on India's southwest coast. There, in 52 AD, he started the Mar Thoma church denomination, one of Christendom's earliest. Today, there are one million Mar Thomans in Kerela and another one million in diaspora, throughout the world.

I told the Lutherans that some 150 of those Mar Thomans in diaspora worship each Sunday afternoon, down the street and around the corner, at historic St. Helen's Anglican Church. "They are your neighbors," I added. "It would be good, sometime, to get to know them."

In some ways, the pulpit supply work paved the way to another project, in which I became involved with a dozen other people – a book entitled *The Church in Surrey & White Rock: The Untold Story*. In the next chapter, I will talk about the book, a Bible study in which Edna and I are involved and the chaplaincy support work I do in connection with Simon Fraser University Multifaith Centre, on the university's Surrey campus.

## **Book, Bible and Chaplaincy Support**

### **Chapter 14**

The “church book” was not my idea and I was reluctant to get involved as was Edna. But, as it turned out, it became a useful means to connect Surrey and White Rock’s 336 churches and over 100 ancillary ministries to the larger community, its leaders and other institutional and people-based structures.

Yes, that figure was 336! When I introduce the book to small groups or individuals, I ask how many churches they would guess there are in Surrey and White Rock. The response generally falls between 20 and 50. Occasionally, some will come up with a figure closer to 100.

The book idea emerged from Abbotsford, actually, from the mind of Dr. John Redekop, the retired chair of the political science faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, who is living in active retirement in the Fraser Valley city.

John grew up in Yarrow and received all of his education on the west coast – with his PhD earned at the University of Washington. He will turn 90 in November, 2022 and is sometimes referred to by friends and colleagues as “the energizer bunny”.<sup>103 104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> One of our friends from Chilliwack, Earle Davies, a retired high school teacher who plays the violin in many community settings, recalls John’s teaching style even while he was engaged in masters’ studies. He was in a teaching internship in a high school class of which Earle was a part. We are talking 60 years ago. “He had everything outlined, using color coding to emphasize different points. He had so many ways to reinforce points or recall memory,” Earle told me recently. And that was what I recall about books John

The four “retirement” projects for which John has been best known have been a term on the Abbotsford City Council, the raising of many millions to capitalize improvements at Stillwood, a Mennonite Brethren conference overlooking Cultus Lake near Chilliwack, the “church books” and his memoir, *Mennonite in Motion: The Life and Times of John H. Redekop Ph.D.* This latter 400-page tome was published in April, 2022.

In 2013, John put together a committee of Abbotsford pastors, lay leaders and writers, proposing to them that a book be written that would depict the breadth of church life and community service in the area. Entitled *Being the Church in Abbotsford*, the book captured church life in a range of areas – poverty reduction, business practices, seniors, immigration, outreach and so on. Over a three year period, copies were sold and strategically placed with community and religious leaders, so as to communicate the striking usefulness of churches to the whole Abbotsford milieu.

John had raised considerable funds for the project, arranging for charitable tax receipting through Oikodome Foundation, an Abbotsford Christian education funding family foundation. Between fund-raising and book sales, all bills were paid and a small nest egg became available for another community to draw from.

About 2016, John began approaching some Surrey and White Rock people to see if there was resonance for a similar project “down valley”. He indicated that he hoped the concept might catch on in various cities across Canada. There were several Surrey business people – some associated with the Mennonite Brethren denomination – who were prepared to put in some seed funding. Then he reached out to potential writers and editors, among them Neil Bramble and me. He suggested cryptically, at the time, that he wanted to pass on the project idea to younger people. After all, he was 84, and Neil and I were only 73 and 78, respectively.

As noted earlier, I was reluctant. Books, after all, are in the comfort zone of us older people but younger folk are much more plugged in to electronic technology for communication. John admitted that was true but that a book, properly distributed, could communicate well across the community.

Neil Bramble, who had been a high school teacher and, latterly, editor of the *Canadian Gideon* magazine, agreed to get involved as the “hands on” editor, while I finally agreed to try to raise a few funds and, more appropriately perhaps, recruit some writers and provide a second set of editing eyes. We added a

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has written in the past few years – on God, on Conservative politics and on church/community life. They are text books with energy, written in simple language with complex terms defined.

<sup>104</sup> John was at Wilfrid Laurier University during a most interesting juncture – the 1968-78 tenure of Dr. Frank C. Peters as president of WLU. Then known as Waterloo Lutheran University, the school was struggling with a range of financial and support issues. Both Peters and Redekop, as it happened, were, in addition to their teaching credentials, ordained Mennonite Brethren ministers. In brief, drawing on his people skills and Anabaptist attention to things like consensus and peace-building, Frank led the university and its Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada sponsors through a process of transferring WLU from private to public status. To do that, he had to prepare the Lutherans to lose a school and the provincial government to provide the capital and finances to serve the province with strength. John was there to observe it all and even to provide some politically and religiously sound counsel at strategic points. That and his service as board chair of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada during the time it was led by Brian Stiller meant that he was gaining experience and stature for the projects that were to be placed on his plate once he was retired and back home in BC.

fourth person to our committee, Ross Johnston, who was only 67 at the time, and was a long time Nazarene, Mennonite Brethren, Reformed and Baptist pastor.<sup>105</sup>

Together, we recruited an even dozen writers – including ourselves. And, suddenly, I realized that we were achieving my “dream” of passing a community service project along to younger generations with a variety of life and writing experiences.

The basis for the book, in part, comes from its closing pages – the data base listings of churches, Christian agencies, Christian schools, other faith-based schools and other faith groups. The lists were donated by Steve Almond, the publisher/editor of *The Light Magazine*, the de facto successor to *BC Christian News*. The church listings are arranged by denomination. Our group formed SWR Publishing Company to take the project forward.

My own first “recruit” was Frank Bucholtz, Black Press civic affairs columnist and former editor of what are now *Surrey Now Leader* and *Langley Advance Times*. He and his wife, Bonnie are both seasoned community journalists and committed Christian believers. I had known them since my *Chilliwack Progress* days, when they had first met in the *Abbotsford News* newsroom. (Frank and Bonnie quip that the big decision they had to make when they got married was what kind of Lutheran Church to attend!)

Frank was chair of the Cloverdale Christian School until its merger a couple of years ago with Surrey Christian School. Under his chairmanship, the school was affiliated with Zion Lutheran Church (now Hillside Christian Church) in Cloverdale where he and Bonnie are members. And they chair an African charity operated by their daughter and her husband. That charity, among other things, played a significant role in helping combat the e-bola outbreak in some parts of east Africa a few years ago.

Frank is a history aficionado and so he wrote the two chapters on the comprehensive history of Christian churches in Surrey and White Rock from the mid-1800s to the present.

I then added to his writing particularly relating to the last 30 years, with the development of many of the newer denominations, which often leaned evangelical or charismatic – or some blending. One of the features of those chapters, in my view, was their ability to “even the playing field”. There were, among those 336 churches, some, like the 7,000-strong Village Church, with several campuses but no church building of its own, that contrasted in size to very small ones, often ethnically based or having congregations which came as immigrant groups from some overseas village. And, many of the Catholic parishes are structured in such a way that they have several thousand participants each, and include complex school systems and social service agencies.

I would like to summarize other chapters and name the writers who put them together. In so doing, I will be reflecting some of my thoughts and those of others that have surfaced since the “church book” project came together.

Neil Bramble, the co-editor who handled most of the line-by-line details of the book, wrote the introduction. In it, he made reference to Cardus, the think tank to which I have already referred – particularly “one of their revealing findings that for every dollar a religious organization spends on its programs, a city gets an estimated \$4.77 worth of common goods and services” Although Neil did not reference the specific term, Cardus calls it the “halo effect”

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<sup>105</sup> In semi-retirement, he is a Salvation Army seniors’ chaplain. So, all in all, he has some outstanding evangelical credentials. He also holds a DMin from California Graduate School of Theology.

I have referred to the opening and closing chapters as “bookends”. The opener, by Dr. Joanne Pepper, is entitled “Cities in the Bible”. Its theme was designed to be included in any future “church books” developed in other major cities. Joanne is co-ordinator of inter-cultural studies at Trinity Western University. She presents the argument for faith penetration of cities, in contrast to the belief of many people of faith that it is better to retreat from the city.

Chapter 12, by Dr. John Redekop, answers the question: “Why do churches do what they do?” And, in John’s own imitable style, he answers the questions with 12 points. He talks about other-orientation, freedom, a deep respect for differences, honesty/integrity, justice, a work ethic, compassion, good neighborliness, welcoming a stranger, practicing hospitality, an expression of love, and accountability to God.

The other chapters tackle the roles of churches and associated ministries in poverty reduction, seniors, immigration, health care, education, business, the arts and governance.

If this project were to be done again, I would have tried to get more material on the roles of Christian people and groups in public education, the opportunities for faith-based collaborative efforts between labour and management in the business sector and more emphasis on the public/civil service aspect of governance, to balance the political side.

That said, we had a collaborative group of writers who were able to bring their own experiences and communication skills to the chapters they wrote. Besides those already mentioned, they are:

- Neil Bramble, who had years of experience editing the *Canadian Gideon* magazine was able to bring the business perspective into the book. I was particularly impressed with his profile of Safe Software, whose name tops one of the medical arts buildings developed by Lark and located across the street to the north of Surrey Memorial Hospital.
- Mary Anne Connor is best known around Surrey for developing NightShift Ministries, one of the two mainstay “mission” types of ministries functioning in what is now called Whalley Historic District in North Surrey/City Centre. The other is Surrey Urban Mission (SUM Place), whose director is Mike Musgrove. NightShift draws a substantive amount of its support from charismatic and other evangelical churches and business people. SUM Place was started by Christ the King Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada. Its support base has broadened to include a range of mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches. One factor for optimism, in my modest view, is the way in which NightShift and SUM Place have been collaborating in more recent years.
- Marvin Hunt, a former pastor and continuing mentor at what is now called Horizon Church, has been involved in until recently in elective politics in Surrey since 1987, first at the city council level and more recently as a member of the provincial legislature.
- Beverley and Dr. Ross Johnston wrote the chapters on education and seniors, respectively. She teaches in the independent sector of the school system and he, after decades of pastoring, is a Salvation Army chaplain.
- Perrie Peverall was involved for decades in providing pastoral care in the public health sector and maintains an interest in ways by which spiritual direction and support can remain under changing conditions.
- Dr. Jack Taylor is a Baptist pastor but has been deeply involved in overseas mission, most specifically in the Rift Valley in Kenya. In recent years, he co-founded New Hope Community Services Society, which involves him deeply in faith-based immigration service activity. He is also a novelist of note in the missions genre.

- Barbara Warwick works at Surrey Arts Centre as manager of the gift shop – a “perch” that gives her a close look at the multi-faceted arts communities in Surrey and White Rock, as well as various faith-based initiatives that touch those communities.

Steve Almond, the publisher/editor of *The Light Magazine*, maintains a comprehensive data base of churches and ministries throughout British Columbia. As noted earlier, he happily made the parts of that data base related to Surrey and White Rock available to SWR Publishing. The editors, among us, were able to upgrade and update the base, coming out of our on-the-ground information and sources.

As of August, 2022, this project was coming, soon, to its conclusion, although, understandably, the full distribution of the books had been held up by the pandemic. In working through that distribution, we have tried to remind ourselves how many books it takes being read and/or referenced, by faith, community and business leaders to get its message into the warp and woof of community life in the two cities.<sup>106</sup>

I will talk about two more short term projects before making some general comments about what works for Edna and I, in our personal and community activities. And I will refer to an informal Friday afternoon session in which I am involved.

The first project is a Bible Study group hosted by Ken and Brenda Sewell of St. Andrew’s Newton Presbyterian Church. Ken is an elder in the church and we have been adherents there for the past five years. This particular Bible study has taken place in their home and is in suspension during the pandemic. All the people in the study attend St. Andrew’s. And it is safe to say that all of us are at different levels in our Christian experience. We range in age from about 40 to 88.

The informal Friday afternoon thing is a coffee break at a Guildford or Fleetwood area restaurant, started by Russ Burtnick, who passed away last year after a lot of suffering. We are all “old guys” and those who we have informally charged with providing some spiritual direction to our group would be the first to suggest that their task is like “herding cats.” Unfortunately, while the group presently has about half a dozen members, an equal number have passed away in recent years. Each time someone passes, it hits the rest of us a bit as we realize the brevity of life.

I would like to wrap up this description of “short term projects” by explaining the “chaplaincy support” label inscribed on my Simon Fraser University Multifaith Centre name tag.

Victor Thomas was the director of the Multifaith Centre for several years. He came to Canada from South Africa a decade ago, and has just returned there with his family to take up the task of directing a faith-based service agency. He is a Baptist pastor and has been serving The Point, a church that meets in the Atrium, on Simon Fraser University’s main Burnaby Mountain campus.<sup>107</sup>

When I learned about the Interfaith Centre (now Multifaith Centre), three things struck me. One was that I had a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from Simon Fraser. The second was that, while I was eating dinner each Tuesday and Thursday evening back in the 80s, with my MBA cohorts, in the

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<sup>106</sup> During this final *Reflections* editing process, we received word that the White Rock-South Surrey Leadership Prayer Breakfast attendees will be presented with complimentary copies of *The Church in Surrey & White Rock: The Untold Story*, on October 28, 2022. The speaker at that breakfast will be Brian Stiller, arguably both a Canadian and global leader in the 600 million-strong evangelical Christian movement. For the “church book project” this will be the windup – four years after its launch. Distribution of the book has been challenged by the pandemic but the breakfast, usually attended by some 300 people, will be a fitting conclusion, the committee believes.

<sup>107</sup> The Point’s particular affiliation is the Canadian National Baptist Convention, the Canadian spinoff of the Southern Baptist Convention, whose 16 million members have included such as Billy Graham.

university faculty's buffet restaurant, I was just through the wall from where the Multifaith Centre offices and meeting rooms are on the Burnaby campus.

The third was that, almost three decades later, I was able to parlay that MBA into acceptance in Tyndale Seminary's doctor of ministry (DMin) degree, giving me, in my senior years, an interesting faith/business educational experience. Maybe, I thought, it could be useful on the Surrey campus, just down the street from where we live in Surrey City Centre.

Victor responded positively to my volunteer proposal, and soon the "chaplaincy support" name tag appeared and I started spending one morning a week at a desk in the Multifaith meditation spaces at the Surrey campus.

Taking over from Victor, as of early 2022, is Seth Greenham, former director of University Christian Ministries (UCM) and a long time practitioner of goodwill across various faith perspectives.<sup>108</sup>

Gradually, my thinking on the role is emerging. When I first mentioned the prospect to some of my evangelical friends, I was cautioned about syncretism – the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. Multifaith dialogue, I was warned, can easily slip into syncretism.<sup>109</sup>

I understand the concern. But to address it within context, I would like, in the next chapter, to look at the Multifaith connection along with my emerging sense of what, within the various doctrines of the Christian faith, makes sense of or resonates with me.

## **Faith or not**

### **Chapter 14**

As I grew to maturity in Victoria, then in Vancouver, in the late 50s and early 60s, I experienced some struggles over which beliefs emphasized in the Brethren assemblies and other fundamentalist-leaning evangelical groups were ones which "resonated" with me.

I mentioned earlier about the Sunday afternoon radio regime my parents encouraged me to adopt. I was nudged to listen to three Christian programs, along with the secular shows like *Jack Benny*, *Edgar Bergen* and *The Shadow*. Those three were Billy Graham's *Hour of Decision*, Charles E. Fuller's *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* and Ernest C. Manning's *Canada's Back to the Bible Hour* (later renamed *Canada's National Bible Hour*).

All three had a dual emphasis. Their personal approach was to appeal to individual listeners to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and thus begin a life of fellowship with God and other Christian believers. Their sociological approach was to encourage revival in the community at large as well as in the world of

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<sup>108</sup> UCM was founded by Bernice Gerard in the 1980s. She was a gravelly-voiced Pentecostal pastor and television host whose intelligence and education helped her fit into the university community in a fashion that was not yet common among Pentecostal or charismatic leaders.

<sup>109</sup> Even as I write this, various Interfaith organizations, both in communities and educational institutions, are renaming and rebranding, using "Multifaith" in their organization names, rather than "Interfaith". They see the move as removing the negative aspects of syncretism, permitting various religions their own distinctive beliefs and practices but encouraging congeniality and constructive dialog among the various groups. The "Interfaith" term has traditionally referred to clustering of the "Abrahamic" faiths – Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In a place like Simon Fraser, adherents to East and South Asian-rooted religions, like Sikhism, Buddhism and Hinduism, are just as if not more numerous than the individual Abrahamic faiths.

Christianity. That approach often had a nostalgic aspect – “do it again, Lord”, reflecting back on the great spiritual awakenings that took place in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, through the influences of such as John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody, to name a few.

And those on the Pentecostal or charismatic side of the evangelical spectrum would refer to the Azusa Street Revival of 1906-8 in Los Angeles, which was the embryo of the whole Pentecostal movement, with its emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the practice of “speaking in tongues.” (While Brethren, Baptist and the ISCF did not closely embrace the Pentecostal emphasis, they were friendly enough to its participants. One of my first high school girlfriends was a member of Glad Tidings Church in Victoria and it was through her invitation that I attended a youth meeting there where I was surrounded by dozens of people with hands raised, praying in an unknown – to me at least – language. The pastor of the church at the time was Campbell Bannerman (CB) Smith, father to the late Senator David Smith. As I previously wrote, David brought his Pentecostal/Baptist adherence – and considerable legal skills – into the inner circles and back rooms of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Ernest Manning often referenced the idea of a “heaven-sent revival” when speaking on the *National Bible Hour*, as a good place to begin, to help the Christian community influence the nation toward righteousness and godliness.

So, as a young lad, I was duly impressed with the idea that my parents’ Brethren assembly had some backing from some somewhat larger fish – like an emerging evangelist, a radio Bible teacher and a provincial premier – in actually making a difference in society.

In high school, I found a slightly softer approach in Inter-School Christian Fellowship. Simply put, it was more “evangelical” than “fundamentalist”. Nevertheless, there was a spectrum within the Brethren in British Columbia. Oaklands Gospel Hall, later Oaklands Chapel, was pretty open-minded and open-faced about a warm evangelicalism. The folk over at Ross Bay Gospel Hall and Victoria Gospel Hall were more sharply focused on the “fundamentals” of the faith, including, in a troublesome way in my own mind, a belief in the reality of hell for all those who did not receive Jesus as their savior. There was also an emphasis on the possibility that Jesus could return at any time, a concept wrapped up in a “dispensational” approach – the idea that history and the future were divided into “dispensations” which helped to shape the way God acted in different eras.

Then, when I moved to Vancouver right after high school, unbeknownst to me, I found myself attending a Brethren assembly which was much closer to the “fundamentalist” end of the spectrum than was Oaklands. That evangelical leaning had given Oaklands some resonance with Inter-School Christian Fellowship,

Without getting too wordy, I would offer a couple of illustrations.

At the Vancouver assembly – one of a dozen or so on the east side of Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster – I found good fellowship through the assembly’s youth program. Lots of Sunday night sings around the piano, a place to meet people of the opposite sex and some lively Bible discussions.

One evening, we had a speaker talking to us about what the Bible had to say about hell. He was of the view that a people could not really be “saved” unless they knew that it was hell they were being saved from. I simply could not buy that. It did not resonate because I believed there was more to the Christian faith than being a fire escape from hell. So, I kept in mind that this was something about which I would be skeptical. I realized that Billy Graham, in his early ministry, could belt out a little hell fire at times but, gratefully, I learned that, in fairly short order, he lined up with John Stott, the British evangelical



Anglican theologian, in concluding that “hell” was a biblical way of describing separation from the presence of a loving God.

The other question – the return of Christ and the attendant concept of history being divided into dispensations – had some ramifications for me at the particular Vancouver assembly I was in. One of the elders there was name John. He was not particularly influential on the theological or behavioral side of the assembly leadership. He was an engineer, actually, a very thoughtful person and very kindly toward us young people.

But he had a secret! His brother, Stu, was a United Church ordinand, soon to complete studies and become a full-fledged minister. I found this out because, one Sunday, I went to St. Andrew’s-Wesley United Church in downtown Vancouver to hear a famous Presbyterian minister from Seattle, Ralph G. Turnbull. He was the guest in a preaching series sponsored each year by the church.<sup>110</sup>

Dr. Turnbull was known as an evangelical within mainstream Protestantism and I was curious to hear what he had to say. After the service, a man introduced himself to me. He said he was Stu \_\_\_\_\_. I said I knew someone named John with the same last name. He said that was his brother.

Long story short: We had a genial conversation. We talked a little about some of the complexities of understanding biblical theology. I said I thought a lot of things could be understood through a dispensational lens. His response: That did not resonate with him. He understood many of the teachings of the Old Testament prophets through a social justice lens. (That terminology was just coming into vogue at that time.)

That gave me some pause. John had spoken well of his brother, Stu and indicated he was a serious believer who looked at things a little differently from what the Brethren might. He suggested it would not hurt me to continue to have some conversations with Stu, if the opportunities presented themselves. I did so, a number of times.

Stu went on to minister to some congregations on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Tragically, he lost his life in a boating accident there.

But I found that this business of resonance became increasingly significant as I grew in my own faith. The fundamentalist approach was to view differing ideas about doctrine or scriptural interpretation as “false teaching” and their own perspective as “the truth”.

Truth to tell, I found the same to be so in other groups besides the Brethren – various Baptist groups, for example – as well. Indeed, every religious group, Christian or otherwise, seemed to have its own fundamentalist arm.

After moving from my attempts at pastoral ministry into journalism, I found that things kept on widening. But, except for the time of spiritual crisis emerging from the breakup of my first marriage, I found that what I believed to be God’s irresistible grace sustaining my spirit. So, while I had increasingly less difficulty in accepting the belief systems and practices of others, I continued to enjoy the warmth that God’s grace extended to me.

In journalism, that meant I could open-facedly explore others’ political, social, faith, legal or educational views, for example, and get their stories straight, without undue interjection of my own particular biases.

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<sup>110</sup> By that time, I had wrapped up my attempts at being a telephone apprentice installer and enrolled in Vancouver Bible Institute.

That stood me in good stead in community newspapering, which occupied the first one-third of my journalism career, and in faith-based publication work which took up most of the remaining two-thirds.

One illustration on that level comes from more recent history. Since my retirement from active journalism, I have followed what might best be called the “2SLGBTQIA+ issue.” I have seen people on both sides of the issue fire shots across the ramparts. In fairness, I have cringed at the people who rejected gays on “Christian” grounds. And I also found that there could be an intransigent gay fundamentalism that held anything Christian to be beyond the ken. While there were people who could quickly pinpoint scriptures that called down judgement on gay relations, there were others who pointed out that King David’s friendship with Jonathan appeared to be of greater intensity than that enjoyed in a male-female conjugal relationship. As a journalist and a Christ follower, I tried to appreciate and respect both perspectives – and others along the spectrum. The “spectrum” approach, indeed, became more reasonable to me than the “binary” approach – the idea that one must be on one side or the other and never the twain shall meet.

These matters caused me to reflect thusly: Why am I straight? Is it because the Bible tells me to be or because that is the way I am? I would submit the latter. But, taking that stance changes the way I see another’s perspective. Is someone gay because the Bible told him or her to be or because he or she is that way. (It comes down to the “choice” argument.) So I find that my assurance of the way that I am makes me more open to understanding someone else’s perspective, based, not on biblical arguments but on who or what they are.

It is at that point that biblical arguments can be useful and encouraging in helping any of us to be what God wants us to be.

To extend that point just a little: I have a friend who would fall into the Christian fundamentalist camp on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues – and others as well. But he tries to be a “loving” fundamentalist. He believes that if he shows enough love to the person who is different from himself, he will be able to get the person to change. God’s love changes people, he posits.

My response is that the other person may not see it that way – especially if he or she believes that God’s love allows him to live out his particular 2SLGBTQTA+ perspective.

All that said, I want to add that I do not want to take away the freedom of people who lean fundamentalist to express their views – even to maintain that their views are “the truth”. I would caution, however, that such expressions are more warmly received by the “other” if their utterers can refrain from accusing others of holding “false views” and somehow being inferior for doing so.

Admittedly, my own “on the one hand, on the other” approach to these matters grows out of my emergence and growth as a journalist who wants to be able to tell the story, even when it is someone else’s story.

Some would suggest that I have allowed my mind to become a resting place for “cognitive dissonance” – the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change. Be that as it may, I can recall some practical advice given at some cost to my employers, during the time of my editorship of *The Chilliwack Progress*, back in the mid and late 70s.

It was common, at that time, to receive letters to the editor for possible publication from certain people in the community who, as it happened, were active members of the local NDP provincial body. As such, they were also involved in the local “save-the-farmland” group which was standing firm against most urban development in the Chilliwack area.

The process would go something like this: I would receive a letter for possible publication and read it over. Somewhere in the letter, invariably, would be an untrue statement about some local developer, right-leaning politician or, sometimes, about a Christian pastor or leader. I would pick up the phone and call a lawyer in Vancouver retained by *The Progress* to advise us on such matters. I would read him the letter, including the sentence which I had ascertained to be untrue. The lawyer would say, after a split-second pause: “That sentence is potentially libelous.” I knew better than to ask him to define a libel, because he had done it once, when the first such letter appeared on my desk. I did not want to risk having him bill *The Progress* for each time he had to define it for me.

My next step would be to edit the letter in line with stated *Progress* guidelines which appeared each week in the letters-to-the-editor column. Those guidelines went something like this: “We welcome letters to the editor for possible publication. All letters are subject to editing for brevity, clarity, legality and taste.”

The brevity condition was that we asked writers to keep their letters to no more than 250 words. If there was ambiguity in the wording, we reserved the right to check with the writer to clarify the wording. And that reference to “legality” was framed in the advice from our lawyer. A “potential libel” was to be viewed as subject to a possible court action by the target of the untrue statement.

Our letter-writer friends seemed to understand the game. They hoped, I believe, that somehow I might slip up and let something through. I can recall, on one occasion, the letter writer telling me that he did not care if the statement was untrue: He still wanted to say what he was saying about his target. I simply replied that he could not use *The Progress* as his vehicle because, if he did, the newspaper could be the subject of a lawsuit by the target, every bit as much as the letter writer.

My response proved to be prophetic. A few weeks later, I received a copy of the local NDP newsletter. That was a regular occurrence: That particular letter writer was the secretary of the local NDP and editor of the newsletter and he was happy to get a copy into the hands of the editor of the local newspaper.

To set the stage: A local farmer-businessman – a very intelligent, left-leaning friend of our publisher – had been a strong supporter of the save-the-farmland movement. He had a 33 acre plot of land in an area which had been zoned industrial by the municipality but which had been placed into the agricultural land reserve under the provisions of the NDP provincial government. He was able to get the land out of the reserve because there was a strong argument that it should never have been included, and it thus became available for its originally-intended industrial use.

The NDP newsletter editor had sent me a very short letter for possible publication. It went like this: “Judas Iscariot, 30 pieces of silver – \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the farmer-businessman), 33 acres of farmland.”<sup>111</sup>

I declined publication of the letter on the grounds of potential libel. It could not even be edited because it was too short. Now, in front of me on my desk, there was this NDP newsletter, with exactly the same message. Cec Hacker told me to stay cool, sit back and see what would happen.

In due course, the left-leaning farmer-businessman sued the NDP executive and editor for libel. His suit was heard, in Vancouver, at the BC Supreme Court. I was called as a witness for the plaintiff, the farmer-

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<sup>111</sup>I should note, in case it should escape the reader’s attention, that a few thousand Chilliwack newspaper readers would have enough biblical awareness to immediately understand the reference to Judas Iscariot, the rogue disciple of Jesus who betrayed the Savior to the Roman prosecutors for 30 pieces of silver.

businessman, and testified that I had received a copy of the letter and had declined to publish it because it was potentially libelous.

The justice found that the letter, as it appeared in the NDP newsletter, was, indeed libelous and awarded the farmer-businessman \$2,500 in damages, to be paid by the local NDP association.

An interesting, albeit tragic, postscript: The letter-writer remained active – activist – in local NDP and union politics, and, at times, was a bit of a threatening figure to people whose political perspectives were to his right. I told that story on page 49, but repeat it briefly to put it into the context of some comment about conflict management. The following paragraph contains that summary.

About 20 years later, I picked up a copy of the *Province* newspaper one morning and found a front page story that this letter-writer had been charged in the shooting death of one of the managers of a Chilliwack food processing plant. It turned out that the letter-writer was working at the plant and had become a major figure in the union representing the plant workers. The targeted manager was on the other side in the contract negotiations. It was reported, at the time, that the letter-writer-cum-alleged-shooter, upon being transported to the local court house for a preliminary hearing, shouted to the crowd as he emerged from the police van: “Workers of the world unite!”

Now I know that people like my letter-writer nemesis are not typical of the usual union or NDP member. But my experiences, through the years, with unions and left-leaning politicians, have left their marks. I tend to posit that, at some point, it will no longer be necessary for the “people” or the “workers” to be the enemies of the corporate “classes”. When that time will come, I have no idea. But, in my dotage, I hope that I will be alive to see the day. And, I see the current “Jim Pattison/Glen Clark combo” as a harbinger of that coming day.

Of course, some of my fundamentalist friends would insist that such collaboration will never occur until Jesus comes again!

All of which brings us to a relatively new short term project – that of providing “chaplaincy support” for the Simon Fraser University Multifaith Centre, particularly concentrating on the Surrey campus, just down the street from where we live. The Centre is an official SFU activity, reporting to the university’s Student Services.

The Multifaith Centre is a pretty diverse group – several kinds of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Baha’i and Buddhist clerics and clubs. As noted earlier, the centre’s main offices and meeting rooms are on the SFU Burnaby Mountain campus – just through the wall from the buffet café where, from 1980 to 1983, I had dinner each Tuesday and Thursday evening with my MBA cohort.

I am happy, as a Christ follower, to be an “honest broker”, if you like, within the Multifaith Centre structure at the university. When asked, I am happy to share my own faith story. But, acting ethically, I believe, I listen to the other stories, of students with whom I have contact, faith group leaders and chaplains. And, where appropriate, I try to smooth the way in which the various faith groups share the facilities – prayer rooms, meeting spaces and offices – that have been made available to them through Student Services. In that way, I sense a personal “call” on it, like Queen Esther’s uncle Mordecai, in the biblical book of Esther, who saw his role as an elder close in to the circle of the king’s court, and who could provide influence and support on behalf of his own people.

In immersing myself into this activity, I became aware of the “Interfaith Amigos” – three clerics from the Seattle area who developed a You Tube presence and subsequent TED talk in favor of their approach to

multi-faith communication. The name of the group was inspired by the Three Amigos operatic singers who had been popularized in music a few years before.

The TED talk began with the three – respectively Christian, Jewish and Islamic – clerics talking over each other, in three different languages – English, Hebrew and Arabic. They were repeating their respective faith’s traditional statements of exclusivity.

The point was that they were not listening to each other, but rather making their own “bold assertions” concurrently and in languages which were likely not understood by most of their viewers.

Quickly, they abandoned that method of communication and posed the question: “What can we talk about without denying our own particular perspectives?” One obvious answer: ethics. As well, there were other possibilities.

One of the roles I could play out would be to introduce the “Interfaith Amigos” perspective into the SFU context. At the point of writing, this is a work in progress, the results of which will not become evident until the pandemic has passed.

And, as well, I suggested to the Multifaith Centre director that a link to a recently established website set up by the Database of Religious History (DRH), based at the University of British Columbia. I was intrigued particularly with the DRH researchers’ use of algorithms and other STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) methodology to find and identify regional and local religious bodies around the world that might be fully isolated from other similar groups elsewhere on the planet.

Another approach is to find ways of helping students in such fields as applied sciences, business administration, sustainable engineering and computer science, who have some connection to one of the several religions that are part of the centre. Such students often are so deeply involved in their studies – usually science-based in some measure at least – that they have little time to think about “the big questions” posed by their own or other religions.

Yet each of those religions, as part of their desire to serve humankind, have sectors whose leaders want them to serve in such fields as poverty-reduction, social justice and human rights, to name just a few examples. In an interfaith or multi-faith context, I can see a significant role for graduates in those science and business based programs to bring their acquired perspectives to helping their particular faith traditions to serve their wider communities in relevant ways. It is often the social, family or affinity-based factors that help them to tie in with their faith communities, more than any deep theological understanding.

All these Reflections, I hope, will assist readers in understanding something about the life meanderings of Charles Lloyd Mackey. Some things about life, faith, resonance and family I learned early on. Other matters I am still trying to figure out eight decades later. And as I learn more about the vastness of the universe, on the one hand, and the complexities of life in the jungles or beneath the ocean surfaces, I wonder if, somewhere, there is a planet or a civilization not unlike our own, which has been visited by God in something like the same way as people of faith – including myself – believe we have.

I would welcome the opportunity to talk or listen to any who have read these pages, to see what further insights are available. But please read the Epilogue to follow, first.

## Epilogue

### Systemic adversarialism

My spell check tells me that there is no such word as adversarialism. I hope that, some day, an algorithm might correct that situation, because it seems logical, from this perspective, that adversarialism is a system that, in due course, could become redundant. Meanwhile, in this Epilogue to *Reflections*, I want to add to the conversation about “Systemic Racism” (SR) by gently suggesting that SR is one significant part of a system of adversarialism that permeates all of our societies – the law, governance, politics, economics, religion, race, labour-management relations, family life, communications, health and international affairs.

True, there are some institutions in society that require a competitive, arguably adversarial, approach. The military and athletics are two such examples.

But, sometimes, tongue-in-cheek, I have written that, as a “militant moderate”, I believe if there is anything I can’t stand, it is intolerance. Like United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, I tend to

have the gut feeling that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, war like that engendered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine is “an absurdity”.

I would like to put forward the premise that, in due course, with good will, it might be possible for society to evolve to the point where it is safe for collaboration and co-operation to successfully achieve what extreme competition and conflict cannot. To put it another way, I would like to gently suggest that, some day – hopefully within my lifetime – discussion and dialogue will be able to do what sharp and rigid debate cannot.

Hopefully, along with that, it might be possible that labour leaders on one hand and managers and business leaders on the other, would determine that the other side is not “the enemy”. It could take time – perhaps even a decade or two – to build the kind of trust between “classes” that will permit them to sit at a round table and recognize that “the other” represents a perspective that helps contribute to a full-orbed picture.

In international affairs, I would hope that leaders who otherwise get caught up in power or ego trips might be willing to talk together about how nations can help each other to grow economically, protect their environments and assist their people to communicate across artificial barriers.

In faith activity, I admit to a life-long sense that groups whose leaders say they have a corner on the truth and that other groups are “false teachers”, contribute to systemic adversarialism. While I maintain that believers – including this humble scribe – should be both free and encouraged to share their faith stories, with clarity and energy, I would also maintain that disparate believers benefit from listening to each other’s stories. And it never hurts for people who believe strongly in *their* God to say to people who see a different shape to *their* God, that they, indeed *might* be right – rather than declaring them to be promoting “false doctrine” or “cultic practice”.

In the field of communication, which has been central to this particular human being’s life work for most of eight decades, I would provide an illustration coming out of the most recent of those year sets. When we lined up our cable channels to get as balanced a news perspective as possible, we chose Fox, CNN, PBS MSNBC, BBC and Al Jazeera. Sometimes, when checking across the channels, we find that each channel seems to be communicating a different world than all the rest. Can they all be right? Can they all be wrong except the one I like the best?

I recognize that in pointing out all of the above, I am not providing any particular “solution”. But I would like to challenge readers, particularly those who are younger and who have more time ahead of them than do Edna and I, to think, dialogue and collaborate to take us the next step toward cities, nations and a planet that studies conflict and sees conflict management and resolution as objectives worth pursuing.

While cautious about providing a “solution” to “adversarialism”, I don’t mind diplomatically proposing “collaboration” and “collaborative conflict resolution (CCR)” as concepts to be considered. (The Justice Institute of British Columbia offers online and in person short term sessions in CCR.

That said, history tells me to be careful. During World War II, the Vichy Regime in France “collaborated” with Hitler’s Nazism to place that nation into severe human rights violations and racist repressions. “Collaboration” with “fundamentalists” can create unbearable conundrums.

But here are a few options for people who are interested in exploring the dampening of adversarialism and the encouragement of collaboration:

- Think tanks that explore various communication possibilities, offer good places to start. Cardus, for example, is a Christian faith-based structure with Reformed, Catholic and evangelical roots as well as good links into other faith communities.
- In the political and economic spheres, think tanks offer opportunities for people of various perspectives to dialog together in safe places, *sans* the heated rhetoric that often marks communication in the partisan bear pits. One new group with much potential in Canada is the Coalition for a Better Future, co-chaired by Anne McLellan and Lisa Raitt, respectively senior cabinet ministers in the Liberal and Conservative governments of Jean Chretien and Stephen Harper.
- Similar objectives can be pursued by such groups as the right-leaning Canada Strong & Free Network (formerly the Manning Centre for Building Democracy) and the leftist-oriented Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Both groups build capacity for research that place their particular ideologies into the broader political, social and/or economic spectra. Hopefully, as time passes, their instigators will increasingly see the value of consulting together or even collaborating on values of common interest.
- Universities often develop institutes or centres designed to encourage dialog in a conflict-managed setting. Two British Columbia schools with which I maintain some ties – Simon Fraser and Trinity Western universities – respectively public and Christian in their moorings – have cultivated such initiatives. SFU has the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. The Centre’s stated purpose is “to use dialogue and engagement to facilitate transformative conversations and create real-world impact for society’s most pressing challenges.” And Trinity Western’s Religion in Canada Institute exists, according to its purpose statement, as “an interdisciplinary research centre and intellectual community of scholars at Trinity Western University committed to understanding the multifaceted role of religion in Canada for culture, individuals, and social institutions.”
- Citizens’ assemblies are periodically used to facilitate discussion on electoral reform intended to create less partisan and more collaborative ways of forming parliamentary assemblies. The instigators of such assemblies will often argue that democracy is advanced through such processes. They point to electoral reforms which have occurred in such places as Germany and Australia. Sometimes the reform comes through the implementing of “grand coalitions” of very diverse political parties. Others utilize elected senates to permit a mix-and-match of political leverages.
- Mediation law is a field that sometimes benefits a jurisdiction’s legal, judicial and corrections systems through collaborative influences.

I recognize, also, that there are people and groups who maintain that we must be realistic about recognizing conflict – and adversarial systems are important factors in “making the world go around”, so to speak. Two such examples are the military and sports/athletics.

With respect to the first, I would suggest that the military world is different to what it was 100 years ago, because the collective global psyche changed at the end of World War II, with the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan, to end that conflagration.

With regard to the second, even the most avid competitive sports person will allow that “it is only a game” and the conflict does not change in the real world – although it is bound to have an impact on the moods and mental frameworks of the participants.

Presently, we are well occupied with the issue of systemic racism. At other times, in recent years, people and groups have been in conflict over systemic gender discrimination and systemic religious discrimination, to name a few factors. My gentle suggestion, at this point, is that we broaden our minds to consider adversarial systems as being parts of issues that sooner or later could use our collective attention.



In making that suggestion, I recognize that there is a danger in trying to talk down people who are complaining about systemic racism against their own group. Too often, people who are defending themselves against such racism charges respond with “What about ... ?” That is their opening rejoinder, for example, to the leaders in the Black Lives Matter movement. The rejoinder could be any one of a number of identifiers: What about ... anti-indigenous, anti-Chinese, anti-Semitic, anti-Punjabi, anti-Muslim ... Do you get my drift?

My caution is that the person using the “What about ...?” response will be seen as trying to deflect or otherwise denigrate, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement. Better to listen and to find out all one can about the story behind BLM. Your turn will come later and, indeed, the recognition of systemic adversarialism will become clear as each particular kind of discrimination is identified and nailed down.

That then is the Epilogue of *Reflections*. But I hope it will not be the last word. Edna and I pray that the idea of community and spiritual collaboration will increasingly become significant, locally and globally.