

WILLIAM JENNINGS and his son KENNETH. In May, 1911, WILL and PHYLLIS JENNINGS and their daughter Phyllis Eva and myself came to Canada after a nine-day crossing of the Atlantic on the Empress of Britain. The place that had been recommended for health's sake and for pursuit of William's horticulture, was Strathmore, Alberta, just east of Calgary. According to the agent this was a climate where you grew everything outdoors that was grown under glass in England. William soon lost everything battling a new environment. In the meantime, William's brother Frank and his wife Mary came; then Phyllis's brother, Will Knapp, and wife Zoe. Soon they were all stranded. Frank and his wife moved to Calgary and the Knapps moved to Cobble Hill, on Vancouver Island; William and his family came to Victoria and settled on Ruby Road.

The centre of our story is in this particular area. It was one of those early springs after a mild winter and peas were blooming on the slopes of Dean Heights at a time when Alberta was all snow and ice! When William and family moved to Victoria, after a short stay in a tent where Larchwood now meets McKenzie Avenue, he decided to build his own house on a lot purchased from Jack Irvine on the north side of Ruby Road where 16 now stands. The Uplands was being developed and one of his first jobs was working for a Mr. Simpson, landscaper, in laying out that vast area. Shortly after that the developing company (Anglo French) went broke; hence the ownership passed to Oak Bay Municipality.

Dad used to bring home mushrooms as big as dinner plates and many a tasty meal was had with mushrooms and bacon, or mushrooms simmered in some kind of juice. That helped to stretch Dad's \$18.00 per week wage, for which he worked a six-eight hour day. Of course to supplement this he planted a garden. There were always lots of vegetables and soon the young apple trees and pear trees were coming along too. Then there was an addition to the family. Her name was Daisy and she had the biggest brown eyes you ever did see! She had a special building built for her -- no, we never took her into the house -- she was our very own Jersey cow!

There were only about four houses on the whole street which stretched from Cedar Hill Road to Gordon Head Road; both were narrow, bumpy roads that led off to some place further north. Daisy had lots of grass to eat and rewarded us handsomely with the best milk we ever had and cream so thick a mouse could run across it. Mother made butter and a special treat was Devonshire cream on the berries from the many strawberry farms in the Gordon Head area - in those days before World War One. We always had chickens, hence we had plenty

of eggs.

There was a big stone house on the hill and I thought that must be the Post Office. Jack Irvine had inherited the big house from his father William, and all the area east of it was called Irvine Place. All our letters were addressed, "W. Jennings, Ruby Road, Irving Place, Mt. Tolmie Post Office, Victoria, B.C." (No zip code!). The day we went to the Post Office by the only means available, our legs, I got a real let down. We didn't go to the big house on the hill but it turned out to be south on Cedar Hill and past St. Luke's Church a half block, and there was a little place (still standing) with the sign, "Mt. Tolmie Post Office" on the window in white lettering that looked like bathroom tile. Behind the counter was a tall man on crutches. His name was Norm D. Shaw and he lived there with his wife Polly. Halfway down the store on the left hand side was the Post Office. When the mail came, you waited until the postmaster stamped it all by hand with Mt. Tolmie Post Office stamp and put it all into its proper pidgeon holes and then if you were lucky there was a letter from Grandma in England.

All the things were sold out of barrels or bins or jars. My, those big jars of peppermints and humbugs and turkish delight sure looked good. Amazing how much a few cents would buy. Of course the cents were as big as 50¢ pieces are today and seemed to buy about as much. Sugar was in 100 pound sacks. Flour in 49 or 98 pound bags which made lovely tea towels when the sacks were empty.

There were two grocers in the area. Mr. Shaw at Mt. Tolmie Post Office on Cedar Hill Road and later Mr. and Mrs. Pearson near St. Aidan's Church on the Crossroads, parents of Bert Pearson, former Saanich Police Chief. This was a hard-working couple with a young family. The grocers would come to the house once a week and take orders and then deliver the grocery orders later in the day. Service! - and with a smile! After the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Pearson, the Phillips took over that store. They were there in the hungry 30's when people sometimes were unable to pay for the groceries which the Phillips supplied to them.

Saturday night was the big event! Dad would take Mother and us children to town and buy us new clothes and other needed things. Did we go in a car? Car? What was that? Bus? Never heard the word. The nearest transportation was the Mt. Tolmie street car. The old #10 (terminal where Mayfair intersects Richmond Road). Boy, when that got rolling down the slope from north of Lansdowne going south, it zigzagged so bad that you'd swear it was going to jump the tracks. There was a little box on a pole near the Jubilee Hospital and the motorman going south put a coloured stick in the box and coming

north the other motorman would take it out again. You see, it was a single track on Richmond Road. But the #10 didn't run too often, so we mostly used the Hillside street car which went as far as Hillside and Cedar Hill; after that we walked home along Cedar Hill Road past the McRaes White Farm (site of today's Cedar Hill Community Centre).

I had boots (no shoes) except sandals. They were made in Canada and they were called Leckie boots and they had a loop at the back to help pull them on. I figured that if I pulled hard enough on both those loops at once, I could lift myself right off the ground, so I never tried! Supposing I lifted myself 20 or 30 feet into the air and then let go -- a guy could get hurt trying a stunt like that.

There was a store on Yates Street, opposite to where Standard Furniture is located now, called Sam Scott's and he sold those reefer coats. Navy blue outside with brass buttons and red inside. I felt like an Admiral in that warm and colourful coat. Then there were the sailor suits with their middies. Long black stockings that came up over our knees. Sometimes they were bought but often as not they were hand knitted - and always long black stockings!

Don't recall what the girls wore. They wore plenty, but who cared about girls! Certainly not boys! There were more interesting things to do, like catching butterflies in the fields or in the woods. All the area opposite the present home at 1700 McKenzie was bush. Fir trees and cottonwoods and willow trees that spread from Mortimer Street to the creek about 150 feet south of Ruby Road and from Gordon Head Road to the Bowker Creek which was just east of Shelbourne. Shelbourne Street was something that came after the Jennings. Seems like it was built about 1913. They used the water from Dad's well to dampen down the road bed when Shelbourne Street was made. If they pumped the well dry it was always full again in the morning. The well is still in use today. In those days they used fair-sized rocks and then finer stones and rolled them in with a steam roller. The steam roller had a large, tall stack on it. Oh, the hours that we watched that road. The stones and gravel were hauled in dump wagons pulled by horses. They were great inventions, those dump wagons. When they got to where they wanted to unload, they just pulled a lever and the bottom opened up like a Lancaster Bomber and the whole load dropped out. Ingenious people, these Canadians!

The Engineer for Saanich was Mr. S.S. Girling. His daughter taught at Cadboro Bay school and later at Cedar Hill. He must have been well paid

because he drove a car!! A clever man. He never had to dig up a road once it was made or move a sidewalk once it was laid down. Sidewalks - that reminds me - were made of wood planks running longways and sometimes in the dry weather the slivers would get into your feet, especially if you wore sandals or running shoes with the toes worn out of them.

Sometimes wasps made their nests under the sidewalks and you sure didn't walk over that part a second time! I remember once a hornet got into my trousers and stung me you know where! Right on the seat!

The sidewalk on Richmond was narrow slats laid crossways and it was much safer to walk on once you got to know where the wasps were.

Over in the bush where Garnet and Ansel and those side streets run today were the greatest patches of blackberries. Not those big round Himalaya blackberries which have gone wild all over the countryside, but smaller berries, thin and long and the best flavoured berry you will ever taste. Mother and I would take a pail and a walking stick and we'd find these luscious berries often growing over an old stump (most of the fir strees were logged off before we came to this area). In the hollow spots there grew masses of blue violets and around the trees grew the wild honeysuckle. Dad couldn't understand why the honeysuckle had no perfume. Of course, the English honeysuckle was so very fragrant. Then along the creek and over in the bush were wild mock orange, flowering currant, and tiger lilies. We could walk in a diagonal line from St. Luke's to our home on Ruby and save going around by Cedar Hill Road. That saved a few steps.

Later, the Chinese came and filled the Shelbourne valley with their vegetable gardens. They were great gardeners. Some of them went around the district selling fruit and vegetables from their horse-drawn rigs.

Mr. Speller, Lionel's father, used to sell coal oil (kerosene) from door to door.

Came the day when we started school (Cedar Hill), and it still stands today. The principal, Miss Alward, lived in a house on the grounds. Also my chum, Maurice Mallett and his family, lived there for a while. There was the remainder of an older school right against the east fence of the school grounds. We were allowed to play in it sometimes, or did we just break in? The fun we had playing Run-Sheep-Run and Kick-the-Can in the area where Merriman Drive and Shorncliffe now service the houses there. A couple of families lived back in there and they had to go along a narrow path single-file through bracken and broom for a quarter of a mile to their homes. The fun we had pulling the young bracken for spears and playing Indians there and on Oak Hill where Doncaster and Jennifer now run. Lots of wild Easter lilies

grew over there, besides bluebells, cowslip and many other flowers.

Over in the meadow to the west was a pond (we called it King's pond) which used to freeze over in the winter and the kids went out there and skated.

There was a little pond in the bush opposite Cedar Hill School where we collected frog's eggs and watched them develop through the tadpole stage and into frogs. We had them in jars on the window ledge in our classroom. I did all eight grades at Cedar Hill. There was no such thing as inside plumbing or hot and cold running water. The toilets were out behind the school and you'd hardly call them restrooms. We pumped water from a well in the school yard.

Mr. Miles used to bring children from Cordova Bay via Blenkinsop and the Cross Roads. The school bus was a horse-drawn, covered wagon with a seat all around the sides. The McMartins, Jellands, Knights, Lusse, and Pearce children came in those days from Cordova Bay. Then children came from across the meadow where Cedar Hill golf course now stands. They must have lived in the Cloverdale-Maplewood area. When Cadboro Bay School was closed, some one brought the children from there also. All in all, we had three whole rooms full of classes. The fourth room was our music room and there we learned to sing songs like Men of Haarlech, Tenting Tonight, Sweet and Low, and of course, Oh Canada, and the Maple Leaf Forever. Mabel Irvine played the piano and Miss Jarvis taught the music. Later on Mabel Irvine played the organ in the biggest theatre in town. Once on a Good Friday, she took her class up to the top of Mt. Douglas and on the way home treated us to a visit to the big stone house. There was a lookout place at the peak of the roof, reached by a long stairway. What a view!!! In later years this lookout verandah was removed and the roof continued to a point. They said it leaked and that is why it was removed.

There was another building on the higher part of the school grounds - just one room. It was the Manual Training building and Mr. Campbell gave us instruction in carpentry one morning a week while the girls stayed in the main school and did sewing. Boys came from Cloverdale School and Cadboro Bay School to the Manual Training classes. Mr. Campbell was chauffeur and teacher. He brought the boys from the other schools in his Velie touring car. Recently, Jack Merrett showed me a picture of Mr. Campbell with a load of boys in his car. Mr. Campbell was big and strong and very gentle. He had two large fingers and one large thumb on each hand.

Then a Prof. Hallwright used to come round the schools and give us instruction in gardening. For a few years we had little garden plots and I got the prize for best school garden. Westward Ho! Still have the book and have read it several times. Elsie Creeden was my teacher at Cedar Hill then. That would be about 1917 or 1918.

During World War One soldiers used to march out from town and have sham battles across the road from Cedar Hill School, where the Golf Course is, and over the surrounding rocks. We used to follow them and pick up the brass shells from their rifles. I thought, at eight years of age, I could at least be a bugler in the army but no one was interested in taking me!!

By this time, Dad was manager of Quadra Greenhouses on Quadra where the B.C. Tel now stands. Quadra Greenhouses had a flower shop on Fort Street and a stall in the City Market. Everybody went to the market on Wednesdays and on Saturdays. Originally, a producers' market, you could buy the produce of the farmers from the surrounding areas. Many Saanich people had stalls there and sold their fresh meats, flowers, vegetables, pastries, and plants. The market was patronized by the rich from Rockland Avenue, as well as by the poor. Dad was coming up in the world. Soon after war's end, he got an old Model T Ford with a brass radiator, vintage 1914. Up until now you could play on Quadra Street, but now Clyde Ballantyne and I started counting cars. We liked the ones that had a spare wheel on the back with a cover which said, "Another Nash"! They were easier to identify.

The Police Chief, Mr. Bryden, had a Model T, but Sgt. Brown always rode on a bike. I was 14 before I got a bike (my sister's old one) and I must have been 16 before I got my own boy's bike. We had fun over at Lakehill. Clyde and I could tell you where all the wild flowers grew, and where the ant hills were for miles around.

By this time Art Knapp was old enough to toddle along with us. From up on Christmas Hill you could see the V & S on its way to Sidney, following along the southwest slopes of the hill. There were three railways to Sidney in those days, the V & S or "Cordwood Express" (they really burned cordwood). Then there was the B.C. Electric Interurban which left from near the City Hall (Interurban Road was its old roadbed). Then the newest one was the C.N.R. which crossed Quadra by the Winery and then crossed Blenkinsop Lake and through Cordova Bay on what is now Lochside Drive. Too bad some of those old rails aren't still down; what a dandy commuter train service from Sidney and the Ferries today.

Some enterprising chap came along with an idea of a jitney service to Sidney. He had several long touring cars, painted red. They had about six rows of seats in them and he called them the "Flying Line". Then towards the end of World War One, the Cowper Brothers ran a jitney service to Lakehill. Then some war veterans started jitney service to the Haultain area called the "Blue Line". People started leaving the trains and streetcars and riding the jitneys and later the buses, which seems to go where the people lived.

In the early 20's the Williamson boys started a bus line to Gordon Head. I remember Dad chartered one for my sister Phyl's wedding. That would be 1922. The wedding was in the Metropolitan Methodist Church and the reception was at our home on Ruby Road. In 1920 Dad was in the greenhouse business on his own, on his own on Ruby Road, and soon established a reputation for good quality tomatoes, most of them sold through A.P. Slade on lower Yates Street. We grew flowers (mostly chrysanthemums and forced bulbs), as well as raising thousands of flats of bedding plants sold on the premises or in the city market. Mrs. Sydney Pickles recently gave me an old bill of Dad's billing her for one flat of petunias for 75¢ (5½ doz. or so). That was in the hungry 30's. We never went hungry but money was really scarce but what we had went a long way. I remember buying a suit in the 30's for \$8.00. The girls down the street had Harris Tweed coats at \$6.00 each. They worked a whole month as domestic help for \$25.00 and still we had fun. A lot of it we made ourselves. There were concerts in local halls where local talent would perform and we would enjoy listening to Reg Stofer play on his saw or whistle. How he could whistle! Then there were lanternslides at the local church and there was Hunter's Store on the corner of the Cross Roads and Shelbourne where you could slip into a booth and have a 5¢ ice cream or a 5¢ bottle of ginger beer out of a stone bottle. Better than Canada Dry! Of course you could spend more (if you had it).

Another fun place was Cadboro Bay which we reached by walking the east end of Ruby Road, then crawling under fences and through fields where the University of Victoria now stands. Then down Sinclair Hill to the beach. You had to watch out for the occasional bull in one of the fields! Some folks named Jolly had boats for rent at Cadboro Bay (row boats, that is). It was a very popular picnic and swimming spot. At the end of the Bay, nearest to 10 Mile Point, was a big, old wooden hotel. Only the rich went there. Sometimes we went to Cadboro Bay in style. The B.C. Electric had a street car called the "Uplands", which went to about the centre of the Uplands where there is still a circle road (their old turn-around). From there it was a short walk to the North gates of the Uplands and then there were wooden steps going down to the beach just outside the gates. Another big treat was to ride on the open street car that went to the Gorge (terminus where the Park is on Tillicum). There was a Japanese Tea Garden there and other attractions and it was a very popular resort. Canoeing was a big thing there too. People must have been tougher in those days. Everyone swam in the sea (no inside pools). Of course, the bathing suits were much more substantial. I have a picture of my sister and some of her friends at Cadboro Bay with just their faces and hands exposed to public view!!

Directly across the road from Hunter's corner, Fred Ellis had a dairy. Not a "Dairy Queen" - but a dairy with real live cows. That is where Shelbourne Plaza is today. Then, Freddie Pook built a little barber shop which was on the same corner between the creek and Shelbourne Street. Soon after, Percy Ridgley built a duplicate of Freddie's hut and set up alongside in a shoe repair business. That was in the 20's. Bicycles were the most common vehicle on Shelbourne Street and pedestrians were more plentiful than cars. After a very heavy rain, Shelbourne was often flooded over, especially where Shelbourne Plaza is now. Fortunately, the condition only lasted for a short while. It was tough keeping on the road with nothing but the fence posts on either side showing their tops above the water. One of the smells I disliked the most was after a severe frost when the cabbages in the Chinese gardens thawed out and went rotten. It wasn't what you would call a refreshing country air, as you walked along Shelbourne.

The English skylark settled in the Shelbourne Valley and anytime of the day you could hear its lovely song as it soared high overhead. So many of the birds, flowers, and insects have gone from the area now. It is good to know that we are finally becoming conscious of what we are doing to our environment and are taking steps to preserve some of these things.

In 60 years we have seen Ruby Road grow from a graded dirt road to oiled gravel with a ditch down one side which finally got to be two or three feet deep; then it changed to a two-lane, black top road; and at the present time it is a 4-lane, paved highway that handles 19,000 cars a day and sounds like a race track all day and most of the night. Now it is no longer a road, it is McKenzie Avenue, the main east to west artery of Saanich and the Gateway to the University of Victoria.

When we first came to Ruby Road, the Martin Malletts lived near the east end of the road on the south side and in the bush behind them, some East Indians had a dairy. How they could drive a horse and 2-wheel buggy down the street on a Sunday afternoon! More exciting than the Indianapolis! A little to the west was the Saults and then Jimmy Harris, an old stonemason who was a real craftsman. Across the road from him was the Cousins, seed and bulb growers, then down nearer to Shelbourne was Dad's house and that was pre-war Ruby Road.

Seems like the winters were colder 60 years ago than now. There was the big snow of February 1916. It drifted behind our house in between the house and the barn until it was as high as the eaves of the house. I made a cave in it and made steps over it. The intersection of Shelbourne and Ruby had been cut down about four feet below ground level and that filled in solid with snow. It took Dad all morning to reach Mt. Tolmie Post Office.

Quadra Greenhouses to say he couldn't make it to work. That was our nearest phone. Phones reached Ruby Road about 1920 and water was piped there about the same time and in the spring of 1924 we got electricity laid down the street. Goodbye oil lamps! My job was to keep the lamps trimmed and cleaned and filled each day. Seems like we still used a lantern out in the barn after that. Getting back to the weather! We used to get some real cold snaps in late December or January with 50-mile an hour winds. Often, after a mild wet spell, they would damage a lot of plants and of course the plumbing. It would be so cold upstairs the contents of certain things under the beds would freeze. In the winter of 17 or 18, the Martin Malletts came over to Quadra Greenhouses to see us in a horse-drawn sleigh. My children, now in their 30's, have only seen one real, big snow and that was within the last 10 years and lasted the longest ever (six weeks).

St. Luke's Anglican Church and St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church were here when we came to Victoria. My folks, being Methodists, eventually went to Metropolitan in Town but before that attended St. Aidan's. These two churches always had their loyal supporters. The induction of a minister was quite an event when some of the leading Presbytery from Victoria would come out. The old St. Aidan's stood right on the north west corner of Richmond and Cedar Hill X Road, with the manse right behind it. At one of these inductions, my mother recited a poem. She never ever did anything like that in public although she read poetry and the Bible, and sang to us at home, and she gave us a love for books.

At another induction, Maurice Mallett and I discovered an exceptionally good layer cake and consumed most of it unaided! I remember a visiting minister looking over the pew and hoping we boys were not going to make ourselves sick.

You see, the church building had but one main room which was the Sanctuary, Sunday School, and social get-together area all in one. As there wasn't any kitchen, I wonder how they made tea? They must have made it in the Manse next door. The ministers had to get around on foot and visit their folk but they were faithful, and the new St. Aidan's and the enlarged St. Luke's are proof of those who sacrificed for their faith.