

I was born on June 8, 1953. On the day that I was born in Newmarket Ontario, there was a big thunderstorm. The doctor who delivered me was in a meeting and rushed through a red light to get to the hospital. The police saw him do this and then provided an escort to the hospital. The headline in the Paper the next day noted the event and declared, Babies must be born! Some might say that I came into the world getting attention and I haven't stopped seeking that kind of attention.

My mom liked to dress me up in frilly outfits and take pictures of me. Even when I was young, I hated that and I even went so far as to try to destroy the picture. I of course do not remember any of that but was told about it and shown the evidence of my destructive tendencies. I had a special little blanket, like many people do, and as of this writing that blanket is still in my possession, a little worn but still functional.

My first actual memory was when I turned 4. My parents were busy with Salvation Army business in Wetaskwin, saving souls and trying to save drunks, so I have remarkable autonomy. The idea of having a hideaway seemed really appealing. So I went to the cemetery and found the perfect place...The stone supports were already there. I did not appreciate the faux pas of using gravestones as my supports. I went to a nearby thicket and notice that someone had kindly stacked wood (just for me). I took those spindly poles, one by one and built my fort. Big sticks for the top and little sticks for the sides. I had a nice big entrance between two grave stones! When I was finished the outside, I used some extra wood for the floor. I was so proud of my first fort and decided the next day to ask my parents to come and see my handiwork. When they saw it, their faces went to the color of ash. I did not pick up on this nuanced look till they immediately started taking it down. My mom snapped a picture with her trusty Browie camera (I've seen the picture) and then destroyed my fort. My dad was angry. It was the first time I was aware that other people did not see the world as I did. They explained to me that I must never do this again and disturb the dead. Apparently I asked what dead was...I remained clueless.

I feel that what went on before my ability make memories it is the pre-personhood stage of life. I know that this is not a

Have you ever heard of anti-anti-I -Over? The game was played by older kids where there are two kids one on each side of the house. Then one kid yells anti-anti-I -Over and throws the ball over the top of the house. If the guy sees it and catches it he would run around and throw the ball at the other guy, if he is successful he gets a point. I thought this was maybe the best game I had ever seen! I asked to play and the kids told me to get lost. I perceived that it was really a matter of skill, so I took stock of my resources and thought that they would play with me if I had some skills. I did not have a ball but I had rocks! So I immediately made a collection, right by the Shoemakers shop. I got a stone and hurled it as hard as I could crying out anti-anti-I -Over! I had launched three stones when a very angry shoemaker, who I thought was my friend came out and grabbed me by the ear and hauled me home. My mom was dumbfounded why her son would do such a thing! After the shoemaker left my mom asked me to explain so I did. She accepted my reasoning and then prayed for me to be a better boy. When my father heard about it he got out his strap and I had my first taste of corporal punishment. Then he went over to the shoemaker and told him the story and offered his most sincere apology to the shoemaker. The next day the shoemaker invited me for milk and cookies. It was a bitter sweet moment. Much later, I still love anti anti I over but I learned that there is a big difference between rocks and balls

I don't remember much from my time in Edmonton but there is one memory that got emblazoned on my mind. I was having a usual adventure in a clover field, I was running and jumping and imagining the world as I wanted it to be. I was searching for a four leaf clover. I heard this brings luck. I did not really understand what luck was, but I thought it was a good thing. Turns out that is not how the world operates. While I was questing through the clover, I annoyed a bumblebee who decided to sting my ear! The same ear that the shoemaker had used. I remember howling and running home not actually knowing what had happened. My mom gave me some ice to put on my screaming ear. I thought I had done something bad again. The next day I had a very giant ear and looked a little silly but I was off to play again. My mom comforted me and told me it was one of those really fat bees who could barely fly. I have a tiny piece of my ear missing. I am sure that it was that bumble bee.

While in Edmonton I was enrolled in kindergarten. I thought it was punishment that adults inflicted on kids. I held to this as a truth I had discovered. No playing, no adventures...just learning to sit properly and try to use right handers scissors, which was noted on my report card I could not do. I knew my mom was tired so I hatched a plan to clean the whole house. I found the best cleaner I could find...AJAX. The Ajax container was made of cardboard with shiny tin ends, In the top there were holes to be punched out to let the Ajax come out. So I did. I poured the can onto the floor thinking how much time I would be saving my mom. The whole can was now on the wood floor. Next I got a pail of water and a mop. I started to mop the floor but it just made a sticky paste, Solution? More water. I started to pour the bucket onto the floor when I heard the front door open. I was sure my mom would be happy but she said, Gerry, What are you doing? I did not notice the alarm in her voice. She grabbed the mop and bucket and I knew this was not going to be good. Rather than yelling at me, she said that she appreciated my willingness to help but I should leave the cleaning to her. I knew I had made more work for her and I felt bad.

My dad wanted to leave his job selling freezers and take on a church. My mom's health was poor as a result of the work

she did so, we packed up and moved to Cayley. This pack up and move thing was pretty crazy. It turns out it would be hallmarks of my existence while growing up. Lots of times my sister Sharon and I would all of a sudden be best pals because we were in a new place with no friends. With each place, we got to know a few kids. It was a time when kids were to be seen but not heard. Curious questions were not welcome. But it was also a time of almost unlimited freedom. I would wake up in the morning and be off on an adventure....rafting in the spring time, catching gophers, building forts in trees, it was a perfect place and time to be a kid.

I know you would laugh if you knew how a phone call was made. There was a cone that was connected to the phone and a crank. One full crank would get you the operator. My mom told me it was important to talk to Jesus so one day I got the idea that I would use the phone to call him and have a chat. I called the operator and said 123 Jesus, please. I forgot to mention that back then lines were not private. People used to listen to other people's conversations...it was called rubbering. As luck would have it, people were listening in on my call...and soon everyone knew that I tried to call Jesus. He didn't pick up the phone.

Undaunted, I decided to write a note but I really could not articulate very well...so on the paper I wrote. Hi Jesus. I had made myself a bow and arrow and I got scotch tape and shot my arrow into the sky. As it went higher and higher my hope increased. Then it came down, I rushed to see if it was a note from above but nope, it was just my hand written note. No burning bush for me...not even a note.

My dad wanted to take me fishing so I decided to dig some worms, so I got up at 4am and went with a little shovel to the garden, I dug till I had a bunch of worms. I had nothing to keep the worms in as I had not considered that. But, I had an idea. Mom had a whole bag of clothes pins, If I attached a clothes pin to each of the worms they for sure could not escape and if I put them on the clothes line, they couldn't get away!

Meanwhile my dad did not get up to go fishing. By mid day the worms had all gone stiff and were hard. Then my mom noticed what I had done. She made me undo all of the worms. It was more fun attaching them than cleaning up clothes pins. We never did go fishing.

The neighbour thought that it was time that a boy like me should have a bike. The idea of a bike was the most exciting thing I could imagine. The bike was an old bike that was way too big for me but it was my only chance at freedom on the road. My first lesson was on a hill. My dad got me on the bike and ran a couple of steps and let go. I was flying down the hill as I heard the faint sounds of watch out for the telephone pole. There was only one obstacle I could have hit and I hit it. I flew over the handle bars like Wiley Coyote and smacked myself good. I learned what pole rash was and I vowed never to ride a bike again. The next day I walked my bike to the school and practiced there...getting the hang of balance, how to turn, and most importantly how to stop. Let the adventure begin!

After a few days I could ride my bike to the store to buy candy! I got ten cents a week and I blew the whole ten cents on candy! Jaw breakers, candy cigarettes (can you imagine), atomic fireballs, Hot Tamalies and candy necklace. There were others but they had politically incorrect names. The candies had no packaging, they were pieces of candy fished out of big glass jars that sat on the counter of the country store and placed in a brown paper bag.

A little bit about my town. Cayley had a horse drawn fire brigade. If there was a fire, they would have to hook up the horses and drive to the fire. Cayley had a park and a band stand. Not once did we ever see a band but it made a really good staging place for snowball fights. Have you ever used an outhouse? We had an outhouse. You go out to do your business no matter how cold it is. You sit over this hole with a secret fear that you might fall in. Sometimes when we didn't have toilet paper, pages from the Sears catalog were used. I was sitting quietly doing my business when I look down and saw a woman in a bra and panties. I honestly had never seen this before. What is that I wondered? I was intrigued.

Our house was a two story house and very old. It was infested with mice. My mom was afraid of mice and would do this crazy dance trying to escape them if they were in the same room. One day a mouse came out from behind the sofa and headed straight for my mom. She was jumping and screaming and then, splat she stepped on it. She was mortified. The next day we got a pet cat named Tabby. A few days later, all of the neighbours complained about an infestation of mice. We knew Tabby had scared the mice out of their secure home...no one said a word.

My mother insisted on me getting piano lessons. I had to catch a bus out of town on Thursday to a kind lady who started to teach me piano. I made a deal with that piano teacher who was the church organist. She knew I could care less about piano but if I practiced she would let me go to the coulee. For a walk. The coulee is a little valley with an amazing rock formation shaped by wind and water. It was a colossal fort! It had tunnels and weird shapes that mesmerized me. I hatched a plan. I had a bike and I had friends with bikes so over the next couple of weeks I hatched a plan to memorize the route. I knew it was seven miles but I did not know actually what a mile was. I told my friends that we would go out there and they would be amazed. We poked our finger with a needle making a little dot of blood and we mixed our blood with an oath that we would keep

this place a secret. The time came to pedal our bikes out to the coulee and so we did. After pedaling farther than we had ever gone before we reached it and discovered that it was a hundred times cooler than any of us could imagine. The first time we went, we did not take water with us, so I elected to ask Mrs. Sloan (my music teacher) for a glass of water. She was amazed that three town boys found their way out so far from town. We had spindly little legs. But we had a vision of our own castle. Mrs Sloan looked at us and doubted we would make it home and offered to drive us to the edge of town...but there was a catch....I have to practice. This is how I was introduced to adult blackmail. I readily agreed and she dropped us three boys off at the edge of town so we could pedal home. We were relieved and I kept up my end of the bargain...for two weeks.

Did you ever get a magpie for a birthday present? It was the coolest birthday present a seven year old could get. This bird did not like his cage and he definitely did not like Tabby, our cat who was intent on eating him. After a few days the bird learned to sit on my shoulder. I tied a string to his leg and my hand so he would not think of escape. Maggie occupied my time and my heart for many months. I had no idea if Maggie was a he or a she but to me she was perfect...except for one thing...she pooped on ever shirt. My mom not want to expand our laundry cut me some shoulder clothes. Pretty soon Maggie could fly and we perfected the landing on the right shoulder while biking. We had a secret raft that my friend and I built and we spent hour chasing frogs and ducks. Maggie would always squawk and give away our location. Carl's dad gave us some scraps of wood and we build a tree fort that summer Carl fell asleep and fell out of the tree fort and broke his arm. No more shinangans were told.

Carl thought my bird was the coolest thing and he wanted to take care of it one weekend. Out of kindness he gave it chocolate chips. The chocolate coated the bird's gizzard and Maggie died. I was very upset! Who feeds a bird chocolate chips? I knew Carl just want to make the bird happy. We buried poor old Maggie by our secret raft.

Carl's dad decided to give us each a soda every day after school to keep us nearby. That was my first taste of soda and I loved it. The next Lent season my mom insisted I give up two things that I liked...candy and soda. The problem was Carl's dad had soda ready for us when we go to his place, What to do? I drank the soda and never told my mom. It was the first outright lie that I can remember telling.

The next day while coming home from school I saw a quarter, frozen in the ice. Try as I might I could not free the quarter. It was more money than I had actually ever had a one time. I went home found some matches and built a tiny fire over the quarter. A few minutes later I had liberated a quarter from the ice and put it in my pocket. Wow! I was rich. I knew what 25 cents could buy! When I went to the store, the store owner immediately phoned my dad and asked where he got the money. My dad did not believe me so I had to show him the little fire I made and the quarter sized hole in the ice. He was really mad at me for taking matches from the house. He took out his belt and I was about to get a spanking. Then I blurted out I asked Jesus to forgive me and He did, what's wrong with you.? It turned out it was the best line I had ever uttered to my minister father. I did not get the belt.

The evidence that most adults are pretty crazy, continued to build. In school, there was a program that was going to protect us from an atomic bomb. It was called Duck and Cover. We all got up out of our desks and huddled scared under our desks as the teacher counted....1,2,3,4. and tried to make us think that this was not a drill. I could not grasp the idea that someone would hate Cayley so much that they would bomb us or that our flimsy wooden desks would protect us. We were supposed to know that Communists were evil...I went home and asked What's a communist? By now I had a lot of experience in penmanship. At first I learned to print with a stick pen dipping it into my inkwell. I smudge a lot if I followed the teacher's instructions and I had daily acquired a blue streak on the edge of my left hand. I finally figured out that if I curl my hand at the top of writing I could write a line without smudging...but then I had to wait for it to dry. Not following teacher's instructions seemed like a good idea until I applied this idea so I tested it. It did not work out so well. After school I had to stay and write out the words on the board I will not talk in class a hundred times. My mom rescued me after I was late to go home. My dad on the other hand was supportive of this kind of punishment.

He wanted me to get into sports. The first one was boxing. I had no intention of hitting anyone. Adults don't like it when you hit people and I had engrained this value. They put on boxing gloves but I refused to hit anyone. I got hit a lot of times and lost every match. I was officially a sissy. To this day, I have never struck anyone. Next was baseball. My father got me a glove but it was for right handers and I could not use it. It was something that upset me very much. I thought my father did not know me well enough to know I was left handed. I wept not for the glove but for the fact that I was not seen for who I was.

At School, they wrapped my knuckles every day taking my pencil out of left hand and forcing me to write with my right hand. I could not. I knew that they thought I was inferior because I could not do it but they kept trying. In grade three I failed art because I could not cut paper when everyone else could. In my mind I wished I was a right hander but I was not. Finally I refused to write and then they let me use my left hand. I was not broken but I was injured. It was pretty well deep in the culture that right is good and left is not good. I learned to turn this into an advantage Eventually.

The school had a Merrygoround and we loved to see how fast we could make it go, get dizzy and go flying off. The swings were chain swings with a wooden seat. We could go higher and higher and then jump off the swing and fly through the air. It was a practice that was banned by the school after a broken leg or two...but when no one was looking?

My bike gave me unimaginable freedom. I learned to collect bottle caps for which I got 2 cents... but hey I could double my allowance with only 5 bottles. Bottle caps were bottle caps but I knew enough not to bring the beer bottles home. It would not look good. I made sometimes a dollar on Saturday...in just one day! The entrepreneurial bug bit us and we decided to expand our enterprise.

We did not have a TV until near the time when we were going to move. I remember seeing John Diefenbaker, the Prime Minister of Canada on television and my mother telling us that we should allow him to see us in our pyjamas so we hustled off to bed. This TV should not be in our house, I thought.

We learned about physics, not from a book but by making ourselves projectiles, by using crazy big levers and my testing and only sometimes succeeding. We learned to estimate by trial and error. We learned about money by working and cashing in!

In 1963, my parents decided to move to Quill Lake, Saskatchewan. I was leaving everything I knew because my father wanted to go to university. It was a tragic day when I realized that I may never see my friends, my fort, my pond and raft my castle... ever again

In Quill Lake, I was in grade 4. I had a teacher that I referred to as crabby apple sauce. Her real name was Mrs. Macintosh. She hated kids and kids hated her back. I was given my first of many intelligence tests to determine if I should repeat grade three or not. Turns out to be a curse. They knew I could do the work and were pressuring me like never before to perform. I had this new hateful thing, homework. I discovered my Chinese friend loved to do homework and had to spend the time doing school work whether he needed to or not. So he happily did my homework for the price of a chocolate bar 5 cents a week.

He invited me to come to his family restaurant, I had my first job interview. I was to come and peel two five gallon buckets of potatoes every other day. My pay, I got a plate of food and a chocolate bar. It was great! I would pedal down there after school

I peeled potatoes and got covered in white specks every day. I was near my friend and it was all good.

A few weeks later I got invited to a movie. I grew up in a household where movies were bad and cards were never played but my dad was off at university and it was up to my mom. It was very expensive but my friend's parents offered to pay the 25 cents it cost to get in and the popcorn 10 cents. I had seen black and white TV but I had never seen a colored movie. It was an eye opening experience. The movie was for general audience and my mom went to interview the movie attendant before she reluctantly agreed.

I woke up one morning and I couldn't move my neck without extreme pain. The doctor was called and I had a wry neck. I did not have a clue what that was but I was destined to be in bed for 3 weeks. It was a terrible experience. My dad felt guilty for being away so he bought me a book and read it to me, a little bit every day. He had never done anything like this before. His reading took me to a place I had never before imagined. He was busy at University all week and then had to drive a long way home, prepare a sermon and do it all over again. It was hard on everyone. He was ill equipped for the rigors of university because he had not actually graduated from high school. I had two wry necks that year. The condition is actually known as *torticollis*

It is not something you want to get.

The only other memorable event of that year was my sister accidentally clocked me with a pressure cooker. I saw stars and collapsed. My mom did not appreciate our rowdy play while doing dishes. My sister would never intentionally hurt me, but she got in a world of trouble.

Our good cat Tabby decided to pee on a bed and you cannot get rid of the smell. Did the cat get in trouble for doing this? NO.

During the summer time we went camping out at fishing lake. There is horseshoe crab in this lake. This made no sense to me but the hurt a lot of you stepped on them. I had noticed fossils in rocks and I started to collect rocks. Hektor was not the only collector. I collected old coins and rocks. (And memories)

Back then there was no Facebook or friend time or anything. No phone calls (it was way too expensive) but we had mail. In my loneliness I resolved to write my friends every week, but that lasted about a week.

Our new house in Aberdeen had no water or sewer. My dad would drive out to a farm with a big plastic garbage can and fill it up 3/4 with water that was to do us for a week. We had a dipper to get the water out. This water did the job of drinking, cooking and bathing. Each Saturday night, my mom would fill an oval shaped metal container and heat water with an electric probe. When the water was warm enough Sharon got the first bath, Sylvia got the second and by the time the third one was supposed to happen the water had a scum film and I was supposed to stand in it while my mom washed all my bits. Soap up my hair with a bar of yellow soap called Life Boy. Then take a pitcher of the scummy water and rinse it out. The reason that I was always last was a principal that made no sense at the time but I bought into...Girls First.

I was well used to freezing my bottom in the outhouse but there was no other choice so you got used to making it fast. By this time, there were no more catalogs but an endless supply of single ply toilet paper that felt like sandpaper on your bum. There are some funny things about outhouses. Naughty boys would go around pushing over outhouses at Halloween. On one Halloween, we heard a scream from the backyard. It was a seriously cold night. My father went out to investigate and discovered two of the boys had fallen into the pit filled with, well you know.

My father stood there with his arms folded as the boys were up to the chest in the contents of the pit. He told them he would help them only on the condition that they never do it again and that they would come back the next day and right the toilet...which they did. I think the lesson stuck.

You never guess what I got for Christmas! A puzzle. It was a giant puzzle of North America. Every province, territory and every state was included. I was allowed only once to put it together indoors...it took up too much space. When summer came, I asked my mom if I and my sister could put a tent up in the back yard and we would sleep there. It was a big canvas tent, so I set up camp. The toilet was closer and all kinds of benefits of tent living. Then it suddenly dawned on me. I could set up a little table. My little sister's little table would work perfectly. So it was that I set up North America. Just as I finished, my mom called me in for lunch. Out of the south came a whirling something, everyone called a dust devil. It headed right for my tent and bam! The tent lifted up and got carried away with my sister's little table and all of North America!

All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put North America back again. To be specific we didn't find South Carolina, Ontario, Texas or the North West Territories. (Maybe I forgot a few)

The games we played were kick the can, hopscotch, marbles, dodgeball, variations on tag, a game called statue, red light green light, capture the flag, mother may I, and nighttime tag. It was during one of these games that I accidentally clocked my little sister. We were playing tag and I ran through the garage and pulled the wooden lock bar down to slow my sister down. She ran straight into it and was knocked out cold. I ran to get my mom and she was not impressed. Told me I needed to play gentle with girls...tea anyone?

I joined cubs and I was supposed to carve soap...A bar of lifeboy flakes is what I ended up with. The next project actually used tools. I got the idea that I could replace Sylvia's table and chairs with ones I made. She loved to make tea parties so I talked my dad into buying the supplies and months of work with a little hand saw, hand drill and sandpaper and I had a little tea table just the right size for my sister. It was painted pink. I was hoping she would like it and it was a hit. My older sister was busy figuring out how to make a bit of money. She baby sat, washed cars and even busses.

My mom made beans with bacon but only in the winter and on Saturdays. Friday nights we would collect snow and put it in a pot. The next day the beans would soak. My mom said it HAD to be snow water. She would send me to the butcher with 10 cents for bacon and 5 cents to get an onion from the store. I happily journeyed out to get the stuff. The butcher was a grumpy guy but interesting and he liked to talk. The grocery man, not so much.

My best friend was named Gracie. I really had fun playing with her. She had an imagination to match my own. We would talk and talk and wrestle for fun. I decided to ask if Gracie could come over for beans. This amused my mother to no end. She said she would talk to Gracie's mom. It turns out Gracie could not come but I started getting teased that I had my first girl friend. I really did not understand this but I was embarrassed by all the attention. I got invited back to her house and I went for dinner trying to be on my best behavior. Our neighbours on one side had a last name of Hamm. Across the street were Bergers. Gracie and I dreamed up all the things my family could be named to complete the story. We could have been Pickles, we could have been Mustard or maybe even onion....but we were just plain old Morgans.

Mr. Hamm was the principal of the school and the teacher sent Gracie to the Principal's office for talking. She was still crying when she came to me. A rage, I had never in my life before raged in me. I hated that guy. No one did anything. No protest, Nothing! No one deserves to get beaten. A short while later it was my turn. I got the strap by the Principal for not living up to my potential. I had never been strapped like that before. I refused to acknowledge the pain. He marched me into my classroom and strapped me in front of my classmates. I was dying inside. I did not flinch. My hatred for school got bigger and bigger. The next day President Kennedy was killed in Dallas. We all were dismissed from school and went home. 1963 ended. What a time it was.!

Here are the historical events of those ten years as organized by Anthropic

Major Canadian News and Trends: 1953-1963

The decade from 1953 to 1963 was a transformative period in Canadian history, marked by significant political changes, economic growth, and cultural developments. This article explores the major events and trends that shaped Canada during this pivotal time.

Political Landscape

1. The St. Laurent and Diefenbaker Years

- Louis St. Laurent (Liberal) served as Prime Minister until 1957
- John Diefenbaker (Progressive Conservative) led from 1957 to 1963
- The end of 22 years of Liberal rule marked a significant shift in Canadian politics

2. The Suez Crisis and Peacekeeping

- In 1956, Foreign Minister Lester B. Pearson proposed the first UN peacekeeping force during the Suez Crisis
- Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for this initiative
- Canada became known as a peacekeeping nation

3. The Quiet Revolution in Quebec

- Began in 1960 with the election of Jean Lesage's Liberal government in Quebec
- Marked a period of rapid secularization and modernization in Quebec society
- Saw the rise of Quebec nationalism and calls for greater autonomy

Economic Developments

1. Post-War Economic Boom

- Continued economic growth and prosperity following World War II
- Expansion of manufacturing and resource extraction industries
- Increased urbanization and suburban development

2. The St. Lawrence Seaway

- Officially opened in 1959
- Improved shipping access to the Great Lakes and boosted international trade
- Significant engineering achievement and symbol of Canadian-American cooperation

3. The Trans-Canada Highway

- Construction began in 1950 and was officially completed in 1962
- Connected Canada from coast to coast, promoting national unity and economic development

Social and Cultural Trends

1. Television and Media

- CBC Television launched in 1952, expanding rapidly throughout the decade
- American cultural influence grew through television programming
- Canadian content regulations introduced to promote Canadian culture

2. Immigration and Multiculturalism

- Increased immigration from non-European countries
- Gradual shift towards a more multicultural society
- Racial discrimination in immigration policy began to be addressed

3. Indigenous Rights

- Indigenous people granted the right to vote federally in 1960
- Growing awareness of Indigenous issues and the beginning of Indigenous rights movements

4. The Arts and Culture

- Emergence of distinctly Canadian literature, music, and art
- Establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957 to support Canadian culture

International Relations

1. Cold War Tensions

- Canada's role in NATO and NORAD
- Participation in the DEW Line (Distant Early Warning) defense system
- Balancing act between supporting Western allies and maintaining an independent foreign policy

2. Canada-US Relations

- Close economic and defense ties with the United States
- Concerns about American cultural and economic dominance

Conclusion

The period from 1953 to 1963 was a time of significant change and growth for Canada. The country emerged from this decade with a stronger sense of national identity, a more diverse population, and an increasingly important role on the world stage. The events and trends of this era laid the groundwork for many aspects of modern Canadian society and continue to influence the nation today.

Chapter 2 Golden Years.

I forgot to tell you about the church. I of course had to go every Sunday and listen to my father drone on. He frequently would stop the service just to publicly chastise me for my fighting behavior and the jokes I made up to share with friends. There were two things that I loved more than anything. The church had a real bell to ring. I got to ring it. It was supposed to ring a few times to let people know that church was starting. If you jumped and held on to the rope the bell would ring and then you would go soaring into the air like Peter Pan. Only to come down for another ring. It was a much fun as one could have a church...Flying through the sky in the foyer of the church and then have to sit and listen.

It seems I had a thing with organists. My first one wanted to teach me music but this one, Mrs. Tompson had the voice of an angel. She was beautiful and I could listen to her, maybe forever. It seems she like me too and asked me to join the choir. I was overjoyed with this offer and went every Thursday to sing with the old folks. She taught me many things about how to use my voice. I could learn the hymns quickly, learn my part and sing my heart out for my teacher.

She invited me to her farm one Saturday and my dad drove me there. She showed me records and played some music for me. I had no idea records could have anything but religious stuff on them. Then she played me a recording that she made. As she played it, she sang with it...there were two perfect voices. I thought nothing in this world could be so perfect.

After feeding me my mom came to pick me up. This is when I decided I like the company of women better than the company of men.

This idea was reinforced later when I got to take swimming lessons. The swimming instructor was from the sink or swim school of methods. I was supposed to hold on the pool and kick hard propelling me toward the edge. I thought the purpose was to get to the edge so I pulled instead of kick hard and got caught. The instructor pointed at me and said you, boy, get out of the pool! So I got out of the pool. He picked me up by my shorts and threw me into the deep end of the pool. Time to sink or swim! Since I had taking a big breath I went down near the bottom and then I bobbed up again. What are you going to do boy, sink or swim? He repeated. I chose to swim.

That year my mom got breastcancer and was operated on. The surgeons took her breast and completely disfigured her. She had to go and endure chemo and radiation treatment which gave her permanent burns. The doctors back then did not know what they were doing so she spent the rest of her life with a sleeve on. I spent many hours trying to reduce the swelling. The cancer would come back 9 times but thankful, not all bad stuff happens at once and we don't know what is in the future.

She was a woman of great faith but she spent most of her life suppressed and willingly sacrificed herself for the greater good. Before she got cancer, she took in a boarder who was a teacher at the school. It was because our family needed money. He stayed on and helped with everything just like he was a member of the family so it was a great thing to have him around. My father was not present most of the time and he was the man in the house. One day on my way home from school, Mr. Anderson threw a snowball at me. I scooped up some snow and started running as fast as I could. Then I stop turned around and let my first snowball fly. I hit him right in the ear. I meant to hit him, but I did not mean to hurt him. He stopped and the teacher in him took over so I ran for home. By the time he came to the house he cooled off. He knew he had started it and knew I did mean it. I did not apologize. Eventually he apologized to me. He respected me much more after that incident.

Mr. Anderson even took me to Saskatoon on a date he had. He had a very charming lady friend and we all had dinner together. Then I got dropped off at the hotel and somewhere in the night he showed up. On the way home the next day, he had the radio on and it was playing The War of the Worlds. It sounded just like the atomic bomb scares and I took it for real. He let me listen to it and then asked if I thought we were doomed. I told him about how stupid the plan was for the atomic bomb so it is like that, then we are doomed. I had been douped. My grade 5 self felt foolish but later I read that thousand of people thought it was real. It was a good lesson for me.

Do you know what was on our TV? The Ed Sullivan Show! In glorious black and white. The News papers headline read Beatles Invade New York. I misread the headline and thought that New York was experiencing a bug infestation. They the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan and I started to understand. This was so exciting to see. They played songs and the crowd went wild. I heard a sound that I thought was something completely new. My parents were not impressed and when the Ed Sullivan show came back on, it was bedtime for the kids...No Ed Sullivan no Bonanza. I took things into my own hands. I got two tins and some wire and made myself a receiver...and it worked. I was content to listen as Ed Sullivan brought to Topo Gigo to the British Invasion. I heard it all. After Ed Sullivan was Bonanza. My parents like Bonanza but thought it was not OK for kids I listen for months undetected.

My dad had a bakelite radio that no longer worked. It had tubes in it and he could not afford to fix it. I asked if I could have it. I took it apart and clean all the tubes and contacts and turned it on and it worked! I had my very own radio! Things were improving!

During this time the church hired a dowzer? Do you know what a dowzer is? I didn't. This guy comes with two shiny ball on a chain and the balls are supposed to start whizzing around. The dowzer walked the property and in the corner on the property sure enough the balls start whizzing about. A few days later, a drilling truck comes and we have our very own water. I was 100% sure this was baloney so I asked the dowzer if the driller did not drill on the exact mark then we would not get water. Every part of me wanted to move that stake but if I was wrong, and got discovered,, it would not be a happy day for me. So I left it alone. The driller hit a gusher. The water tasted terrible. It was very high in iron but water is water. (I guess) A few days later we had water indoors for the first time in my life. By the way, I still haven't changed my view of guys who charge money for making balls spin and con people out of money.

Before the year would end I would face another strapping by a crazed teacher named Mr. Peters. Mr. Peters saw an eraser flying across the room and demanded to know who threw it. He line up all the boys and demanded to know if they were the one or name the one who did it. I refused to participate. I did not do it. The boys were line up in front of the rest of the class and the first boy was strapped once on each hand. The second 2X and so on. When it came to me he told me to get up and he was going to make an example of me. 11 hits on my right hand and wrist. 11 hits in my left hand. My hands were swollen badly, It hurt a lot. Blood vessels in both my wrists were broken and my arms and hands went a hideous color of blue.

I got my bag and left for home, I knew I had done nothing wrong but I burst out in tears and my hands and arms pulsed with pain. When I got home, my dad saw my arms. He did not ask what I did. He marched into the school and confronted the teacher...and told him if he ever touches my boy again, he will sue and make sure he can never teach again. A similar scene was played out in the principals office.

This guy who never paid any attention to me, stood up for me and I had never seen him so angry. After a couple of hours he asked what did I do, and he was even angrier when I told him that all the boys got strapped because someone through an eraser. No one got the strap for the rest of that year. I healed of course but my view of school was confirmed very deeply.

My father applied to be a minister at Imperial Saskatchewan. Aberdeen had been a disaster. My mom got sick with cancer. I was turning inside myself not wanting to draw any attention. My father had been away for three years and our family was beaten up. It had not been a good place for us. When you little you think the whole world is like the place the place you live in.

When we moved, the cat was nowhere to be found...so we left without the cat. The house that were we moving into was brand new! It was a new start.

I quickly discovered that our neighbourhood had a Larry, a Barry and now a Gerry. My clothes looked silly on me. I had grown to 5'11". Compared to my classmates, I was a freek.

Most of the time when you grow that fast, you are awkward and gangly. That did not apply to me. I had turned into an athlete. The school gym was my home after school. I quickly learned volleyball and basket ball and by Christmas I was on the senior basketball team and I was their top points getter. I moved fast and smooth. Our team played local teams and as a team we were actually pretty terrible...but getting bussed to games...wow!

My dad insisted that I play hockey. He had become a TV junkie and watch Hockey Night in Canada...which I disliked intensely. With his new job, he was able to buy a small phonograph. He ordered a record, it was all about Frank Mahovlich instructing boys how to play hockey. Yes it was as bad as it sounds. He also bought me a record called the Ballad of the Green Berets..by Sgt. Barry Salder.

I hated the message of the songs but I sang along. Saigon's a strange city...I missed my singing teacher and instead I got a creepy military guy talking about guys who jump and die. (The Ballad of the Green Berets)

I went for a hair cut. My mom went to tell the barber what she wanted. His name was Nels Bergren. He listened and told my mom that she could go shopping and return in an hour and I would be ready to go. This of course was a bit embarrassing...because the barbershop was also a pool hall and an art gallery.

He then said to me, now that your mom is gone...what is it that you want? I had never considered that I could have a choice when it came to how I looked. So I said the same but shorter I guess. As he cut my hair he talked of art, and poetry and places he had been. I was mesmerized by this man. He asked me if I had ever played pool. Would like to learn he said. I will teach you. So he taught me how to hold the cue and how to measure angles and of course the rules of the game.

He said I could practice for free if a table was not busy but as soon as I decided to play, it would be 25 cents a game.

Soon my mom came back and he spent a few minutes talking her up. She was so happy with my hair. He explained that I had a double crown and not many people had that. (Just means your hair sticks up at the back of your head.) He had already observed that I was left handed and suggested that baseball might be a good game. Then he told her about the pool. I thought my mom would never agree to let me go there but to my total amazement, she agreed.

He is such a nice man she said on the way home. He suggested that there was a sale on clothing coming up and he said the boys these days have new fashions. Later I went to the store and we got a pair of jeans -they were orange! I did not know such a thing existed.

My teacher that year was Mr. Allen. He was a crazy enthusiastic teacher who commanded attention. He tested my reading level and told me I was behind by one year but he would catch me up using a special program called SRA. He told me because I was a lefty, he expected that I would be creative. He taught geometry by using the Socratic method and made me believe that I had invented the Pythagorean theorem.

He was friends with Nels Bergen and invited him to teach us painting with a palette knife. Since the school could not afford real paint, Nels got us to mix putty they mix in linseed oil and add tempera paint. He taught us how to draw in areas. We had mixed over 50 jars of paint. Every color of the rainbow.

He taught us to imagine a scene and build it layer by layer, Half way through Mr Laen announced that 4 of the entries would be on display at the Regina Art Festival. Everyone in class tried harder hoping to be the one.

Between these two men, they lit a fire in me that still burns today. I loved learning. I loved these guys. At the end of the year, I was reading at a grade 12 level. I was half finished reading the World Book encyclopedia. I was on the senior basket ball team, I won thrid place in the art competition and first place in the regional speaking competition. None of this would have happened without these guys.

I want you all to remember,when you have kids find people who love to be around kids and enourage them. Who ever they are, they can set you up for life.

With Spring came track season, I was still way bigger than anyone else in my class. I joined to train with my phys Ed teacher. And he put me in long jump, triple jump and the 500 yard race. My legs were strong from biking and running to school. My coarch got me to practice technique. Hit the board. Launch, tuck and stretch land. Im practice I was hitting 16 feet long jump and over 40 ft in triple.

I was representing my school. We had the regional finals and in long jump I had beat the provincial record with a jump of 17'4.5 inches. My triple jump did not go as well. I jumped 39 ft. and I was pulled out of the race because of a leg injury. My dad cautioned me, don't get you hopes up.

After I got home, the whole school knew I had won.

This opened all kinds of doors for me. I got invited to play seniors baseball, I even becma a member of the yearbook team and the school photographer. (With my moms Browie Camera)

I got treated with respect...and I like it a lot.

I had Mr. Alen another year and my friendship with the barber coninued. He taught me rock identification and how to display rock collections. He gave me many rocks from his personal collection which I treasured. He helpe me design a display box which I built and used in school projects. Then he showed me one last thing. His collection of polished rocks. It was like the most excellent transformation for a rock to a gen, I had ever seen. I had to do this.

On weekends I mowed lawns. 2.00 a lawn. I also worked as a field rock picker clearing field behind a moving tractor with a cart. I worked for 50 cents and hour for twelve hours. My goal was to get enough to buy a rock saw and polisher. I heard I could get a used one of 50.00. As it turned our a priest had just such a unit that he would sell me for 50 dollars.

I could not get it set up right. Every time I tried, the belt went flying off. I really had no idea what I was doing but I ordered catalog from Greens Rock and Lapidary in Calgary and it was more exciting than anything. I calculated that I could make a lot of money by buying rock. My head swam with the possibilites! But I did not know how.

My parents trusted me, so I got to go to school dances when I just sat and watched in amazement. I was one of a dozen boys to shy to dance...or ask a girl. (But I was definately starting to notice them)

The yearbook at school came out and there were all the picures I had taken. It was so exciting to see. I was the only non highschool member of the yearbook committee. The were quietly organizing a party. I asked my mom if I could go and she was addamant I could not. That night a few of the people that I worked the yearbook with died in a car crash at a bridge. The driver, was drunk and hit the bridge. My mom had saved my life.

I was a left handed pitcher, in my last year there I pitched senior baseball. I maybe never actually hit a ball as a batter. ...but I could pitch well enough with a well developed curve ball to strike out most players. If they had looked at my batting, I was a miserable failure but I played most games as the starting pitcher.. One day a really big guy came to bat and hit a line drive right at my head. As luck would have it I put my glove up to protect myself and caught the line drive. It was a legendary catch. I tied to play it cool like I intended it all along but knew it was just self preservation. Luck! Ill take it.

My father was not accepted by the church as well as we had hoped for so it was time to go. He applied to go to Trinidad! My sisters and I thought that would be very cool. He got an offer from Mossbank...not so exciting but off we went. I was leaving a place that I was actually liked and respected. The people in Imperial saw something in me and helped me develop. I was about to start over in my first year of highschool.

Reset to zero. Here I was a PK. (Preachers kid) and that was not cool in this town. Almost all my class smoked. I was not going to do that. The main entertainment was weekend booze parites. I was not going to do that. What choices do I have? There's s pool hall, I have a pingpong table, I have my rock equipment and there is the skating ring.

Skating was never high on my list. Going round and round the rink while music played was mind numbing and soul

sucking but it was something to do. The church had a big hall in the back and I was allowed to put up my ping pong table. There was a kid who lived with his grandparents and he had somehow got really good at table tennis. Most nights you could find us playing each other and we were getting pretty good. As it turns out, the principal of the school was a provincial champion. At lunch he would take on all challengers. So I challenged him. He beat me but not by much. He basically said I would not likely get any better unless I made some changes and he would coach me. Johnson, my practice mate and I took on all comers. One of them was Terry Tollifson. He was pretty good. He was not fast but he could spin the ball like nobodies business.

One day in November, our principal called Terry, Johnson and me to the office and asked us if we want to go to Saskatoon in early December to test our skills. It was an all expense paid trip to the provincials. I advanced to the finals in my age class. I did not win but came in second to a girl whose dad was the overall champion.

It was really cool. At the end of the year, I thought things were over. The principal left. We continued to play.

Johnson was the fastest player, I ever played...I learned playing him to slow down the game. Playing Terry I learned how to counter spins.

The next year the new principal had heard of us and volunteered to drive us to Saskatoon again. Guess who was in the tournament? My old phys ed teacher! He was a good player but I beat him.

One of the things that I never saw before was you could cook a hot dog in this new huge over called a microwave. This was seriously cool. It happened so fast. It was at the University of Saskatchewan. When I tried to explain this thing to my mom and dad all they could say was how can it be hot when it was just wrapped in paper? I did not have an answer so they thought I was exaggerating.

Enough about ping pong for now.

My dad's aunt came for a visit and I showed her my jewelry making equipment. She marched upstairs and gave my dad a tongue lashing. The boy needs a work bench for his jewelry. The new day lumber arrived and my dad built a first class bench for my jewelry equipment. I had a new diamond blade and I cut my first rocks. I had been making key chains and things like that out of my tumbler but I had supplies for that. My aunt must have given my father some money because soon I had had equipment to melt metal and using a lost wax process create custom rings. I realized right away a few silver quarters could make a ring. I practiced with my new equipment. I made pendants, rings, key chains, necklaces and much more.

The sales started out slow but I just kept on making stuff. A local store wanted to sell some on contingency. In that year, I was selling over 250 dollars a month., which is more than my dad made. I upgraded to opal and found I could turn a few ounces of opal into hundreds of dollars. My mom wore my jewelry. It was a proud moment. She had no hesitation about telling people that this was made by her son.

I had an English teacher who loved to read Shakespear. She would read outloud as we followed along in the book. Her voice transported to to the world of Hamlet. The spoken language was exquisite.

My Social studies teacher Miss Gray was in her early 20's She had a soft irish lilt which I had never in my life heard before. She was kind and the class gave her a bad time. She like to play chess so together we played. I took her to the tennis courts and we played tennis. She was lonely. I was lonely so we sort of became pals. One day, she said you don't have to call me Miss Gray...my name is Jane but only when we are together...not in class. I got a lump in my throat. I never heard a teacher talk like this before. I was star struck.

In English and in Social studies my marks were the best. Their style, their poise, their voice made me want to do my best. By this time I was well read. I had a very large general information base to draw from so conversation with adults was much easier than conversation with peers. In the company of Miss Gray, I started to feel like an equal. She gave me confidence in myself and ignited feeling that I totally did not understand.

I have some adversity growing up but my mom was always there and she always knew just what to do. My middle school teachers ignited in me a passion for learning that continued throughout my life. A couple of my high school teachers saw me...the real me. When you have children of your own, love them, believe in their potential, seek out to have great teachers who will see the something special that each of us possess. .

