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German Immigrant  
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CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM  
**PIER 21**



FIRST FIVE YEARS IN  
CANADA

### Pier 21

We arrived in Halifax in front of Pier 21 the evening of May 4, 1951. We slept overnight on the ship. The next day it was time to go through immigration. There was no problem since we had got our papers for entry into Canada already in Germany. Information for my mother and my brothers and me was all on one page (for all of us) with each of our pictures and our date and place of birth. (Plate No. ?). Why my father was not on that same page I don't know. He must have had a separate document which is missing today.

Pier 21 in Halifax was a modest waterfront shed where immigrants to Canada arrived. America had Ellis Island in New York, Canada had Pier 21. Over one million people passed through that shed in the province of Nova Scotia. Between 1928 and 1971, foreigners looking for affordable property, families looking for refuge from World War II, and the soldiers heading off to fight in Europe, some of whom never came back, have passed through Pier 21. (After being shut down for 28 years, Pier 21 re-emerged into Canadian heritage as a National Historical Site on July 1, 1999.)

### Long Train Journey to Vancouver

It was a long line-up of people at immigration and when our family's turn came we had no problems. Then sometime in the afternoon we were whisked into a waiting CNR (Canadian National Railway) train. (A friend, Cornelius Kampe, took me and my wife Ena to those same tracks in 1989. It was quite emotional standing there after all those tears) It would be a long train ride to our final destination in Western Canada. Indeed: Five days on trains to Vancouver as a start and then from there the complex (in those days) journey to Birken. Someone suggested we better grab something to eat. I with my addiction to coke ended up with a small bottle of coke - When my father said it cost only 5 cents I remember how amazed I was - what a cheap country Canada was. Some time after that my father gave me a nickel (5 sent piece) and I remember how surprised I was to see that it was not round but had many edges.

Sometime in the late afternoon our train started rolling. I remember the first couple of ours we passed through countryside full of lakes. Later when it became darker we passed through woods. We were told by the conductor that the train would cut across a area called Gaspé. Sometime the next morning our train pulled by a steam engine arrived in Quebec City and in the afternoon we arrived at Central Station (formally and sometimes even now called Bonaventure Station), the CNR station in Montreal. (Later in 1951 the station was demolished to make larger, more efficient one which opened in 1952.) We were told beforehand that we had to change to a different railway in Montreal, the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway). But why did we not take the CPR all the way from Halifax without having to change railway companies. Ah ha, I have a theory. The CPR tracks from Halifax to Montreal run through the state of Maine America, and we would not want any refugees to jump off the train and enter America illegally, would we ? So we walked a few blocks in Montreal to the Windsor CPR railway station. Our CPR train left sometime in the late afternoon. I was asleep when we were told we had just passed a place called Ottawa. When I awoke the next morning the train went along the northern shore of some large lake. I knew from my rough study of Canadian geography back in the Amerika-Haus in Germany that it might be Lake superior. No.

"This is Lake Nipissing", the conductor said. " We are just west of North Bay." Soon we were in Sudbury, nickel mining country and terrain where astronauts practiced for the landing of the moon, so much alike was the countryside to that distant celestial object. Much of the rest of the day the countryside from the train looked barren and rocky with hardly a soul to be seen. Is the province of British Columbia (B.C) and the rest of Canada be like this, we wondered. It seemed more like Siberia although we had never been there (but could have been, if we had not escaped). Towards evening things became better. We had reached the western half of Lake Superior. The scenery was pretty as the train hugged the shore and made almost 180 degree turns going around numerous bays. Late that evening we reached the city of Port Arthur and then soon after that Fort William. In 1970 these twin cities and two adjoining townships were amalgamated and assigned the name Thunder Bay.

Early the next morning we were in Winnipeg. Then it was across that flat prairie to Calgary. We had never seen anything like that in our life, this flat country. My father got out in Calgary and walked around the station. He met a man and asked him how he liked Canada.

"This country is no good, I'm 50 years old and can't get a job here. I think it's better in Russia", the stranger said. What a depressing reception statement. My father thought he was a communist. Here we escaped

thousands of miles to get away from the Russians and here was a communist right in Canada (but hopefully the good kind)!

Close to noon the train left Calgary. Today the trip by car from Calgary to Vancouver is about 10 hours but in 1951 the train took about 24 hours. We got out at Banff and sampled the fresh air and beautiful scenery of the Canadian Rockies (Rocky Mountains).

Somebody from Europe once told me that his impression of the Rocky Mountains was that they are no higher than the Alps in Europe but that the valleys are broader and towns much further apart. The whole area with several parks has exceptional mountain scenery, wild rivers, still lakes whose waters vary from emerald green to turquoise blue, glistening snow-capped peaks, thundering waterfalls, and ice-blue glaciers including the Columbia Icefield, a mass of ice (116 sq mi./300 sq km.). The most dominant vegetation is sub-alpine forest. This is a high forest, spreading down valleys below alpine meadows like a black tide. It can be an open, sunlit easy-to-walk-through forest typified by lodgepole pine or a dark, dense and damp forest of sharp-pointed Engelmann spruce and alpine fir. A drive along the highways traversing the national parks almost guarantees sightings of moose, elk, mule deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goats, black bear or coyote. In 1951 when we passed through the area Banff was not so commercialized as it is today. Today stores there are owned by Japanese and many signs are in that language.

Our train went on to Lake Louise. In those days we did not realize that there was a gorgeous lake by the same name nestled in the mountains close by, that could not be seen from the station. We continued westward, soon going through Kicking Horse Pass. There the railroad builders encountered a major obstacle. The railroad tracks had to drop a very long way down to a valley floor near the town of Field. At first they built a "temporary" route. This came to be known as the Big Hill. This grade was at 4.5 percent and the steepest in North America. As a result downhill trains had many accidents. Trains going up the hill required 4 extra engines to push their cars. Twenty-five years later two so-called Spiral Tunnels were built to replace the "temporary" route.

We suddenly were in the dark. We had entered the upper of the two Spiral Tunnels. The train entered Cathedral Mountain, went in a 172 meter (550 ft.) circle right inside the mountain, passing right under its own track ! We then saw daylight, but only for a while. Then it was time to go through the second tunnel. That one went in a downward spiral with similar radius inside Mt. Ogden. The total drop in elevation of the two tunnels of 30 meters (96 ft.) made a huge difference, reducing the

grade to 2.2 percent. The train continued westward along the Kicking Horse River, at the bottom of its canyon. On the north side was the main road that took travellers across Canada, at places so full of curves that you could only go 30 km./hour. Then soon we reached the town of Golden. Westward before us stood the Selkirk range of mountains. Our train chugged along for about 30 kilometers northward downstream along the Columbia River, then turned westward towards Rogers Pass.

Very early it was seen that Selkirks formed a nearly invincible barrier to transportation. Their sheer mountain walls, snow-fed glaciers and dark rain forests represent some of the most striking mountain terrain in the world. One Sir Sandford Fleming described the territory east of the pass as follows :

"The walking is dreadful, we climb over and creep under fallen trees of great size and the men soon show that they feel the weight of their burdens. Their halts for rest are frequent. It is hot work for us all. The dripping rain from the bush and branches saturates us from above. Tall ferns sometimes reaching to the shoulder and Devil's Clubs through which we had to crush our way make us feel as if dragged through a horse pond and our perspiration is that of a Turkish bath. We meet with obstacles of every description. The Devil's Clubs may be numbered by millions and they are perpetually wounding us with their spikes against which we strike. We halt frequently for rest. Our advance is varied by ascending rocky slopes and slippery masses, and again descending to a lower level. We waded through Alder swamps and tread down Skunk Cabbage and Prickly Aralias, and so we continue until half-past four, when the tired-out men are able to go no further..."

In a century of searching, surveyors had located only one likely route across the central Selkirks: Rogers Pass. Without this pass, all railways and highways would have to take a lengthy detour northward around the mountains by following the Big Bend of the Columbia River. The search for a pass intrigued surveyors for years. Unlike many other areas in the mountains, the Selkirks were almost unknown to the Shuswaps and other Indians and explorers were truly in unknown territory. Yet a rough-edged American character named Major A.B. Rogers managed to find a way, by working from both sides on two subsequent years Ross gained the summit of Rogers Pass on August 17, 1885. But when it came to construction of the railway to and across Rogers Pass, this was a formidable undertaking. Roaring mountain streams had carved deep notches into the side of the Beaver Valley. These streams had to be spanned by major bridges. The initial railway line passed over this summit of Rogers Pass but had to be abandoned because between 1885 and 1911 deaths caused by avalanches totaled over 200, due to the fact that parts of the area receive about 15 meters (48 ft.) of snow a year.

So now our train retraced the "steps" of those early trains of after 1986 when the CPR was completed. It chugged up the long steep grade towards Rogers Pass. Somewhere along the way the train stopped and for the first time in my life I saw a black fellow (dare I say that these guys used to be called Negroes). Later I read that the CPR employed these fellows as porters. At the end of the steep grade I saw the conductor approaching me :

"We will be going through the Connaught Tunnel for 15 minutes", he said to me.

Remember all the deaths the CPR had? Well, the problem was solved by rerouting the CPR line through the 1916 completion of the Connaught Tunnel (8,082 m./26,517 ft. long) and a series of snow sheds on the west side of the pass. Well, soon after passing through the tunnel I fell asleep. When I awoke late at night my father and mother told me that they had just gotten back after stepping out of the train for fresh air at Revelstoke. I fell asleep again not aware that not longer after this the train would pass an important Canadian historic landmark: Craigellachie, where on November 7, 1885 Donald Smith of the CPR drove the Last Spike that provided a CPR transportation link from Atlantic to Pacific for Canada. When I woke up we were already somewhere east of Kamloops. Later the train followed the eastern side of a fast-flowing river. Years later I found out that this had been the North Thompson River. We continued past Lytton (where my brother Bill and his wife Irene live). At Lytton the North Thompson River flows into the Fraser River.

The Fraser rises in the Rocky Mountains, flows northwest and then south for (1,370 km./850 mi.) and west till it hits the Pacific Ocean just south of Vancouver. The Fraser River takes its name from Simon Fraser, the Canadian explorer and fur trader, who in 1808 followed the river to its mouth, establishing fur-trading posts along the way. The river valley was the domain of the fur traders until the gold rush of 1858. After the discovery of gold in 1859 in the Cariboo district, on the river's upper reaches, the government built a road to serve the valley, and settlement of the region followed.

Soon after Lytton our CPR train crossed the Fraser and the train now moved southward on the west bank of the river. A friendly conductor came up to me to explain something about the river but I did not understand enough English. It could be that he said that the train was approaching the Fraser River Canyon. Just opposite the town of ? we entered this impressive part of the river with its mountain walls rising more than 914 m. (3,000 ft.). Then shortly afterward we reached a point that Simon Fraser described as an "awesome gorge". This was Hell's

Gate, the place where the Fraser River was finally able to breach the mountains to take its waters all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The gorge is only 35 metres (115 feet) wide, but can be as deep as 50 m. (165 ft.) or more during spring and summer run-off.

After a while the train changed direction from southward to westward. We entered a broad valley, the Fraser delta, which is the most fertile agricultural region B.C. ; dairying and truck farming are important. We anxiously looked out the window as we reached the outskirts of Vancouver. We soon arrived at the CPR Station in Vancouver. My father, because he was the only one who could speak sufficient English, had the job of finding us a cheap hotel room to stay overnight. He did, downtown Vancouver somewhere, I don't remember where. Years afterwards I was amused by the fact that my mother, despite of being tired from not getting enough sleep during that long train ride, had enough interest to investigate the Hudson's Bay store at Granville and Georgia. She was very impressed with the ladies' clothing offered.

#### On to Birken by Ship, Bus, Train

The next day we were off. All of us walked to somewhere on Water Street where we took a vessel to Britannia Beach, (42 km./ 26 mi.) north of Vancouver, on an inlet (fjord) called Howe Sound. This town was once the British Empire's largest copper producer, with mining shafts right under the water, until it closed in 1974. We then were transferred to a bus which took us (11 km./7 mi.) to Squamish, at that time the southern terminus of the PGE (Pacific Great Eastern Railway).

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway was incorporated originally under Provincial Charter on February 27, 1912, to construct and operate a railway along Howe Sound and northeasterly to a junction with what was then the Grand Trunk Pacific (now the CNR) at Prince George in northern B.C.. The name of the railroad came from the Great Eastern Railway of Great Britain, but there were problems with the railway. Construction costs were extremely heavy due in part to the nature of the geography through which the railway had to pass. World War I also changed the financial situation since money was directed to the war effort. It was not until October, 1921, that the line became operative from Squamish to Quesnel, a distance of (557 km./ 348 mi.), and even in 1951 when we hopped on the train to Birken it only went as far as Quesnel.

On our trip to Birken, (122 km./76 mi.) from Squamish. I remember passing through Cheakamus Canyon, then later through Alta Lake (close to the now famous Whistler skiing resort). Frankly I was disappointed with the scenery seen from the train. It did not seem as nice as going through the Canadian Rockies. At a place called Creekside (Now Mount

Currie, named after the mountain towering above the village) the train stopped. At the primitive station there a bunch of people milled about.

(German) : "Was sind das für Leute mit braunen Haut ?" (What kind of people are these, with brown skin), my mother asked my father.

"Indianer", my father answered. I still love to, with a dramatic voice, tell this story about how my mother saw her first Indian. (In these times I'm supposed to say "native" or "First Nation" instead of "Indian", but hey - the Indians don't even mind being called that - we have become way too politically correct).

### Geography and History of the Area

When we arrived in the area Creekside was the largest Indian Reservation in B.C.. To the south of it was Lillooet Lake and then below it Harrison Lake whose south end was near the Fraser River. Birken lay just 14 mi.) to the west of Creekside. 10 mi. to the west of Birken was Anderson Lake and then came Seton Lake. Just east of there was the town of Lillooet. After gold was discovered soon after 1858 in the Cariboo , the central part of B.C., it became obvious that some kind of road would need to be built from the Fraser River area to the Cariboo. The first version of this Cariboo road used an old Hudson Bay route. To improve this route portage trails were constructed to connect the four above mentioned lakes. Starting from Port Douglas at the upper end of Harrison Lake a virtually "volunteer" force of miners tore a four foot trail out of the wilderness. They connected Port Douglas with the south end of Lillooet Lake. During the same season they finished the portage trail that went through Port Pemberton and what is now Birken to reach Anderson Lake and then the one that connected that lake to Seaton Lake. Thus Lillooet on the upper Fraser could now be reached by packers overland and paddlewheel steamers on the lakes. The packers, however, found it very expensive to constantly load and reload onto the steamers at each lake and the trail was very poor. Because of this it was decided that the wagon road should go up the Fraser Canyon, the great Cariboo Wagon Road.

### First Week in Birken

And so it was that our train arrived at Birken on May 11, 1951. But what was this? Where was the town of 5000 my father and I back in Wiesbaden had thought Birken was? (It turned out that the population was about 20). At the primitive Birken station our sponsor, the Scottish farmer Thomas Greer awaited us, with his dog Tip. All of us and our belongings were put into the back of his truck and off we roared into the unknown. It turned out that Mr. Greer's farm was just beyond the west

end of a beautiful crystal clear blue lake, Gates Lake, shaped almost like a tear drop and about (2 km./1.25 mi.) long. As the truck roared westward from the station on a primitive dirt road (likely the route of the former gold rush trail described above) a (2500 m./ 8000 ft.) high unnamed mountain (let's call it "Mt. McConnell").

" for purposes of this book) towered above us on the right. We soon passed what was called "Birken Lodge" (burned down now). Across a dirt driveway from it was a log cabin serving as the general store and post office. Then we whizzed up a long hill, the road hugging a steep mountainside on our right and with Gates Lake on our left. On the south side of the lake there was a high mountain again towering straight up, with snow covering its top seldom melting through summer months (call it "Mt. Freeman").

When we looked eastward in the direction of the station a third mountain towered into the sky, (over 2700 m./ 9000 ft.) 7-Mile Mountain. We arrived at Greer's farm. Mr. Greer pointed out the house where we were going to live. What a shock. It looked like a large shack in Siberia. Only the woods were missing. My mother wept the rest of the evening and night. The culture shock, the change from city to the "wild country" of Canada, it was too much for her. My father and brothers and I thrived, we felt like pioneers ready to explore.

The next day Mr. Greer taught my father how to milk cows. My turn at this came next. I sat on a stool, milk bucket between my knees. On the underside of the cow hung several what looked like collapsed balloons kids play with. I was supposed to squeeze these and aim them at the milk bucket. What a terrible strain on the muscles of my fingers it turned out to be. Was that normal or did I do something wrong? Yes, I did. I was supposed to pull on these "balloons" (Later I found the English name for them - tits.) as well, not just squeeze. How did I know. There was no school in Birken where I could take lessons in milking cows. I also was put to work turning the cream separator; I remember that I turned it too fast (probably I was trying to "show off") and we didn't get much cream. The next thing to teach my father was to fetch the cows from pasture. I know I helped sometimes (and maybe my brothers) but I know that Mr. Greer must have been annoyed at me when he saw me make and fly kites instead of helping with farm work. We didn't have modern appliances. A creek bringing down ice-cold water from a glacier behind "Mt. Freeman" served as our fridge. Electricity for lights was generated by a wind generator with batteries up in the attic, not enough for cooking and when there was little wind out came the kerosene lamps. A few days after we arrived Mr. Greer told my father that they would spend the next few days working on his sawmill. I never did find out what they produced - boards, two by fours, or....

Soon after we arrived we had a visitor. Mr. Gramson from a place called Poole Creek came on a horse. He lived on a spread called 10 Downing Street. He was trying to "drum up" business, saying that he offered horseback riding to Birkenhead Lake to the north of Birken. I could hardly understand his English. Then a day later Mary R . . . r arrived to say "hello". I had trouble understanding her ; more about that later. A week after we arrived we had a surprise visitor, an elderly gentleman called Fred Madison. Mr. Madison had a gorgeous lakeside cabin known as "Rest Haven" on the west side of Gates Lake. He was known (in those days) as the only person that had dived to the bottom of the lake and measured the depth of it in several areas. He later told us that it was (27m./ 88 ft.), but today's measurements show the maximum depth to be (18 m./ 59 ft.), so maybe Mr. Madison had found a spot that they missed ! Anyway, Mr. Madison took all of us for a ride across the lake and we ended up in the boathouse belonging to "Birken Lodge". Then he sprung a surprise on us. He said we should walk up the hill to the lodge. We did. There, in a checkered jacket that he so often wore, a man called Earl McConnell stepped out.

"I am the storekeeper and postmaster for Birken", he said in a quiet voice. "We also have some cabins in the woods over there for people to stay and my wife Thelma sometimes cooks breakfast for hungry loggers working in the area."

I could not understand everything he said, having had only a year and a half of English in school, but our father acted as interpreter later. We all were invited to supper. When the McConnells found that our mom was a pianist they asked her to play. She was in her glory. That was our first week in Birken, which we soon became to love as a "jewel", nestled in the Summit of the Cascade Mountains of British Columbia.

### Stumbling with English

In the months and years to come my mother learned a lot of her English at the McConnells where she was invited to play the piano. It was also a good social outlet for her. It also helped her to overcome her misgivings about her new country. I myself had some trials in English. One day I walked to Mr. McConell's store and practiced my English by saying "Good Day". Thelma was there. I was taken aback when she informed me:

"In this country we do not say "Good Day", nor do we say "Hi" - that sounds too much like "Heil Hitler". "

One day I came across Mary R . . . r . She said:

"I used to live up north." Uh - "used to"?. What does that mean, I wondered. They never taught us that in English class in Germany. "Used is the past tense of use", I thought to myself. She should be saying "I used something" but not "I used to live...". It took me a while to figure out that she simply meant to say "I lived up north". On another occasion Mary said: "There is not much to do in Birken at night." "Of course there isn't, in the middle of the night" I thought to myself. "She meant to say evening". Later I realized "at night" can mean "in the evening".

We leave the Greer Farm

By September 1951 my dad had had enough of farm work. A job opening came up as a "section hand" on the PGE railway. This turned out to be backbreaking work for my father who was then 53. The hardest part was pulling out rotten railway ties and replacing them with new ones. The section foreman and his family lived in a house half way along Gates Lake, almost beside the old train station. Anyway, our family found a new place to live. Earl McConnell rented us one of his five cabins, #5 for \$15 a month. It consisted of one room that was all open with the kitchen running into the sleeping quarters; another room off to the back my father used as a darkroom for his photography hobby. We had running water and electricity from supper to bedtime was produced by a generator driven by a diesel engine. (I was the guy who had the job for a couple of years to turn the crank to start the engine so that all 5 cabins and the lodge had electricity.) At other times light was from "coal oil" lamps. (Later we were introduced to lanterns operated by "white gas" which needed delicate and expensive "mantles". Cooking was done on a range (stove) with wood. Fortunately the winters in Birken are not as cold as those on the Canadian Prairie, so we were not often cold except when we had to go outside to relieve ourselves in an outhouse that served as a toilet . Our cabin was right in the woods, but through the trees we could see the shimmering waters of Gates Lake. We often could hear the rush of the wind through the trees around the cabin. My brother George says: " Birken, is sometimes referred to as: "Windy Birken", as the afternoon hours often bring a brisk breeze, usually from the south east".

After a couple of years of living in McConnel's cabin Earl McConnell offered us two houses to live in on his 48 acre property. They were located just east of the Birken railway station. One was for my mother and my brothers Bill, Ivar, and George. The house had two bedrooms and a kitchen / living room area. My brother George remembers that he and Bill and Ivar slept on bunk beds in the room, closest to a creek where we drew water from. He remembers falling off the top bunk. Since there was no room for me and my father in that house we occupied a second one (I will call it "my father's house) about 100 meters (300 ft.) away. My "mother's house" had the appearance of a large shack. Lighting was by

means of "white gas" lanterns and water had to be drawn in pails from a creek in summer and from the lake in winter. My dad and I went for meals to the first house. But how to communicate between the two? Easily solved. My dad with his electrical knowledge ordered a set of telephones used in the 1920s from the Army and Navy store in Winnipeg. He built a telephone line between the two houses with living trees acting as telephone poles. In strong winds the wires were about to break, but no matter, the battery-powered only private telephone system in Birken worked fine.

Between "my mother's house" and the road there was a field of alfalfa and a large plot for a garden. We tried to plant a vegetable garden but despite the hot summer weather and plenty of water from a creek that we fed to the garden via irrigation trenches nothing grew well. Years later I discovered the problem. The hot sun and the ice-cold water from the mountains was not a good combination!

### School Days in our New Country

A week after we arrived it was time to go to school in a new country. Someone told us that if Mr. Greer had not sponsored our family with four kids the school board would have to close the one-room school where grades 1-8 were taught by one teacher. Bill, Ivar, and I (George was not yet of school age) had to walk to school. We often walked along the railway track eastward the (1 1/2 km./ 1 mi.) from Greer's to the station. Then it was about another (1 km./ 1/2 mile) to the school. East of the station the road leaves the edge of the lake, and runs along a wooded area on the left, with several other cabins at the east end of the lake. That's the route we boys followed, summer and winter. Soon after the road descends to a creek through what we boys called "the dark woods", one is greeted by an old log cabin, with several windows. The cabin still exists to this day and this was our schoolhouse - for the residents and their families in the area, and for us during our five years in Birken.

We arrived in school almost at the end of the 1950-51 school year. Our teacher was Mr. Wright, a very patriotic fellow. I remember I had to hoist the Canadian flag (at that time the Ensign) up a flagpole some of the time and we sang "God save the Queen". But I received a shock when Mr. Wright put me right back to Grade 1. At the end of June he allowed me to skip to several grades. Now about the other kids in that school. We already have met Mary and Bob R . . . r, but they also had a sister, Lena. Their father Garth worked on the PGE as a section hand. (Sometimes somebody would joke about him, I don't know why: Hey, Garth, can you smell the alcohol?) Bob was a year or two older than me whereas Lena was two years younger. Then there was Heather Gimse. She was about seven years old. Their father Gunnar had a farm about (2

km./ 1 mi.) east of the school and was about forty years old. We used to see him and his 26-year old wife Marjory drive by in a station wagon. His father was a lawyer in Norway but had emigrated to Canada with his wife and Gunnar. There were some other kids at the school that year whose names I don't remember. During the school year of 1951-52 Christine Nygard was our schoolteacher. At that point my brother George was old enough to go to school and he was joined by Carl Gimse, a lifelong friend of George. Miss Nygard was only 18 years old (just graduated from "Normal School", a school where you train to be a teacher). The school was heated with furnace oil and big drums of oil were kept underneath the porch. I volunteered to pump oil into a canister and make sure the stove always had enough oil in it. This required rolling the heavy oil barrels. School year 1952-53 brought Marion Floyd to Birken. She stayed at the Gimses. I remember her complaining about Joe McCarthy in America "going overboard" chasing down communists and her assigning me to read "Lady of the Lake". Also from her I learned the expression: "Put on your thinking caps. One day all our school went on an excursion and hiked up Summit Falls, a waterfall on a creek that came from the glacier behind "Mt. Freeman". The sad thing is that by the time Miss Floyd left Birken I was only in Grade 8 - I was three years behind the rest of kids of my age and Miss Floyd informed me that the school inspector from "Howe Sound School District" refused to advance me because of "inadequate English".

In 1953-54 Lorne McLennan, a lifelong friend of the family, was at the helm of Birken School. His doctor had suggested that he get away from the noise of his job at Dominion Bridge Co. in Vancouver so he came to quiet Birken. During that time I was supposed to be attending...

Editors Note: Story ends as if a portion has been cut off.