
The Bungalow Years

1945-1950

In the Introduction: the Bungalow, the story of these years is set in a capsule of what this place was and became for us—places, people, and events that shaped our lives and the village that “raised a child.”

The Mighty Moira River⁵

In looking back, like the life-giving blood that flows through our veins, the Moira River became for us the life-giving vehicle, if you will, to experience and learn many lessons of growing up, on, in, and around the water. From learning to swim, build rafts, ford rapids and waterfalls, and experience the beauty of nature and all that speaks of that—how fortunate we were to have this river speak to us about life at such an early age.

The Moira begins at Jordan Lake in Tudor and Cashel townships in Ontario at an elevation of 1,165 feet. It passes through Deloro Lake and over the Deloro Falls and dam at Deloro, passing the Deloro Smelting and Refining Company at an elevation of 656 feet, crosses over Highway 7 at the old Ackerman Mine site, empties into Moira Lake at Madoc, and finally reaches its destination at the Bay of Quinte in Lake Ontario at Belleville. For us as children—and by now you know the many names of our childhood friends—this river brought countless adventures and in many ways as well “raised a child.”

*“The river delights to set us free, if only we dare to let go. Our true work is this voyage this adventure.”—Richard Bach, *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah**

Koski's Bathhouse and the Swimming Hole

Remember Harvey and Hilda Koski and their family Ina, Ruth, and Bill? Celebrating their Finish roots, it was not at all surprising that they would build a bathhouse, a steam bath, if you will, a few steps from the first swimming hole we enjoyed on the Moira. The river wasn't too wide at that point, was fairly deep, and would be the way we would cross to get to the high rocks, the blueberry hills. Not knowing what a bathhouse was at this early age, we would learn later in life that the rocks would be heated, so that the person would be sweating and then dive in the river. No wonder this family was so healthy.

"Good health is a duty to yourself, to your contemporaries, to your inheritors, to the progress of the world."—Gwendolyn Brooks

This part of the river would wind its way to the most spectacular part of the river and the Deloro Falls, where we would build many rafts each summer, swim day after day, fish, and just grow. In looking back, it never gets much better than that.

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David and the Spring Waterfall

Now the spring runoff on the Moira River as it passed over the Deloro Falls just above the plant was often high and fast. To traverse from one side of the river above the falls was a huge steel cable that hopefully one could hold on to in order to get across. How it got there we never knew. By this time in our early years—I think we were eight or nine at this time—we knew how to swim and navigate the many rapids that crisscrossed this river.

This particular year, it was early April and the runoff was still high and fast. Tommy and Jimmy Brooks, I recollect, were below the falls as Dave and I began to hold onto this steel cable for us to cross safely. Holding on for dear life, I made it across, and as I looked around—where the hell was David? To my horror, there he was a few feet from the top of the falls bobbing up and down in the water—and over he goes. In a panic, I ran to the edge of the falls and watched David, bouncing up and down, go over the falls into the water below.

Silence—more silence—more silence—and finally with a great sigh of relief, I believe Jimmy or Tommy shouted, “There he is!” and there he was. Winter clothes on as well, he bobbed up and down and swam to shore. Not a broken bone, not a mark of any kind. David, I believe, beat the rocks on the falls because the water was too high and fast—it’s as if he glided along the top of the water over the falls to the basin below. I must admit after all

these years, there was a moment as David was bouncing over the falls to the water below when I somehow knew he would be alright—and he was. Where this came from, I'll never know, but it has left me with the assurance that David would cross safely many more difficult moments in his life—his waterfall moments, if you will. And he has.

I will always remember that moment. Not sure we ever told Mother, but wet clothes and all, she knew this wasn't good news.

"Life is an adventure or it's nothing at all."

—Helen Keller

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The High Rocks, Blueberries, and Bears

Every summer as long as I could remember, there were weeks and weeks of blueberry picking on the high rocks. What on earth are the high rocks, you say—well let me tell you. They were a series of rock elevations across the Moira River bordering on Highway 7 east toward Madoc. There were three rocks, as we called them, each one a higher elevation than the first. The third rock was it, blueberry heaven. Mr. Haike at the General Store would give us twenty-five cents for a six-quart basket and fifty cents for a twelve quart. That's after Mother and her friends got their hands on them.

So, across the Moira River at Koski's bathhouse, through some pretty dense forest and bush, till David and I, with the addition of a few of our friends sometimes, began to reach the first rock elevation. Then up we would go to the third rock, have lunch from Mother, at least four or five six-quart baskets to fill, straw hats on—and as I get in touch with the feeling and memory, the zeal of adventurers like Lewis and Clark. It was always the same, each and every summer. David and I would get in the most terrible arguments, wanting to end in punches sometimes about the route through the forest and bush—David would wind this way and wind that way, almost, I thought, retracing step after step, never in my mind leading anywhere close to the first rock. Whereas I would argue, straight ahead, straight ahead, leading of

course to more of those heated discussions. However, somehow we made it, and to this day I never knew how.

However, that's not the story; this one beautiful summer's day, we were on the high rocks and collecting blueberries. The first order of business was to put our lunches out of sight, in a cool place if possible, and our usual place was to hang them from the branches of a shade tree—lots of poplar trees around—to make sure they were safe. Little did we know, or as David would later say, that was not one of our brightest ideas, for along about noon this one day when we had filled more than half our baskets and were ready for lunch, lo and behold bounding over the crevice of the rocks above us, seeking our lunches, of course, was—in my eyes—the hugest black bear I has ever seen, and it wasn't stopping.

You know, brother Dave was a bit sharper than I was at this time, and he knew exactly what this bear was after and the bear would have no trouble getting them from the tree. I didn't—and I ran—ran—ran—and ran. Brother Dave years later would recall this story and would tell everyone as I ran, he could hear Jim saying as he was running—BBB—BBB—BBB—bear—over and over again as he disappeared, not stopping once, back down the rocks, over the river, past Koski's bathhouse, and home. I remember wondering, in exhaustion, trying to tell the story to Mother, if brother Dave had survived that day. Well, he did, and he just loves to tell everyone about this day—Jim, the bear, and the high rocks, leaving nothing out—including the BBB—BBB—BBB—bear.

"Don't be afraid to be afraid. Have fear, then conquer the shit out of it."—D. Antoinette Foy

Summer in the Village and Banished to the Farm

Never a dull moment ever—up in the morning—gone for the day— reminds me of the song that was playing over and over again on the radio—That Lucky Old Sun.⁶ “Up in the morning, out on the job, work like the devil for my pay, but the lucky old sun has nothing to do but roll around heaven all day.”

Magic it was each day. Richardson’s farm and family and any one of six other farm families one day. We would work and learn so much and of course be fed by some of the best cooks ever. Rafting and swimming and fishing at Ackerman Mine. We would ride our bikes to Glen Allen Park on Crowe Lake, while on other days we would go to Bonters dock to fish. Pick raspberries in Mr. Callery’s fields. We would walk up and down the Moira with Beaver, checking his muskrat traps and learning so much from Beaver about tracking, herbs, and coming across such an array of wildlife. Much of the time, we would be accompanied by any one or more of the village kids. We would stay overnight at Howard Sabine’s in Marmora and swim in the Crowe River behind his house.

The DS&R would put on the best July 1st day ever: races, contests, ball games, and the day topped off in the evening with a great fireworks display. We would grow in so many ways; not just physically, but in the broadening of our understanding of the beauty of relationships and trust. Idyllic, I suppose, but that’s

how I look back at that time—the things that mattered the most at that time, and matter to me most personally today, is trust and nurtured relationships and community, without which, and I can say personally from experience, almost nothing else matters.

*“Childhood is the one story that stands by itself in every soul.”—Ivan Doig, *The Whistling Season**

Oh no! Banished to the farm—why oh why would Dora and Harold send their two well-behaved and charming boys away for the summer?! You get three guesses, and the first two don't count!

As I look back on this time from the Canary incident when we were five or six to this time nearing our teenage years, from the many stories—and believe me, there were many others—our parents just needed to get rid of these two kids. Couldn't really understand this at the time—thought we were the most loving kids our parents could have. It seems history was on our parents' side on this one. All I remember is Mother saying, “It'll be good for you.”

So off we go—part of July and August each year, for at least three summers, our parents would drive us to visit first our grandmother (Harriet) and grandfather (Frederick) Mobley in Ottawa (Mother's parents). Our parents told us Frederick was in the battle of Ypres in the First World War were he, along with many others, suffered from the gas attacks. He suffered many kidney problems; however, we were told he would take the streetcar to Hull, Quebec for 10:00 a.m. when the pubs opened, have his beer, return home, and sit in his leather chair each day to listen to BBC News at noon. We were warned to be very quiet as he listened to the news.

Then off we would go to Grandma (Fannie Dalton) Cleary (our father's mother) and Uncle Will Cleary. Our grandfather, Lieutenant James Edwin Dalton, died in the First World War

and Grandma remarried into the Cleary dairy farming family. And quite a family it was. Uncle Will, the patriarch, had a feed and farm supply store, and we were not sure he really liked us, a gruff sort in a way. His son Fred had three sons, Elgin, Howard, and Willis, and one daughter, Marjorie. Uncle Fred had the main farm, and each son had a farm, and that's where we would be each and every day, on one of the farms, from morning when the milk from the day before was loaded on the train (whose tracks were right next to Grandma Cleary's home) to Ottawa at 8:00 a.m. until supper time when Uncle Fred would drive us in the back of his pickup truck to Grandma Cleary's. My we were fed well and had more than enough exercise: haying, hoeing, gardening, cleaning stalls, and watching the magic of milking machines. We thought this was cool—late '40s it was. Our parents were right—they needed the time away, and we needed to begin to grow up, as it were. There was lots of work but also lots of love and memories: the player piano in Grandma's house, riced potatoes for the first time, the milk train, crokinole on the front lawn Sunday afternoons—cherished memories of my grandmother and the Cleary family.

One story in particular that would go down in history from our time on Uncle Fred's farm involves a tractor, and its importance is because of the lesson it taught me about humility—which I'm sure at that time I had no knowledge of just what that was. Years later I would take my wife, Reverend Brenda, with me back to this farm, and Uncle Fred's son Elgin made sure Brenda heard the story of Jim and David on the tractor.

Here's the story, and it is true—brother David and I would often sit on the wheel well of the tractor on its way back from baling hay, or any other job of that day. Uncle Fred stopped the tractor and said, "Who wants to drive the tractor?" Well, I jump up and down and say, "I do, I do, I do, Uncle Fred, I can drive the

tractor, I know how," almost begging. David said nothing. Uncle Fred, with a smile on his face, looked at me, smiles, looked at David, and said, "Well, seeing as you already know and can drive the tractor so well, maybe we should let David drive so he can learn." Stone silence. Uncle Fred laughed, and David drove the tractor home.

To this day, I remember that moment of what I now know as utter humility—being found out as it were, naked before the judge. A lesson I have never forgotten—and neither has anyone else in our family.

"Life is a long lesson in humility."—J.M. Barrie,
The Little Minister

We would return home to Deloro, feeling things had changed, and of course, they had. There was something happening within me. I could feel it and could only wonder. There was still some summer left before school again, and of course new adventures—might I say—again to the chagrin of our parents. The stories continue...

*"Leaving home in a sense involves a kind of
second birth in which we give birth to ourselves."*
—Robert Neely Bellah

Jimmy Dikun and the Beegee Gun

Jimmy was one of the friends who were part of many of our journeys. Jimmy lived with his mother (never met a dad) on a small farm off the Deloro Road that sided the rail tracks where George O'Neil and the Dinky would bring the cobalt ore for refining at DS&R. At the Deloro Road, as you enter a path to the home, was—well, I call it a milk stand, if you will, now old and not used—and in front of this was what we called the lily pad pond. Bright coloured lily pads, yellow and white flowers from green pads, where we would watch the frogs jump from one to another. Nature it was, in all of its beauty.

Up the path we would go to Jimmy's home. By this time most of us kids in the village had a BB gun, carried over our shoulders, and as we got closer to the home, what we saw was out of this world. First, Mrs. Dikun had a very strong accent, not ever sure what country she was from, and there was a very large axe in her hand. Mrs. Dikun was chasing this chicken around and around the yard, never once, I believe, seeing us there. Almost comical, and we tried not to laugh with Jimmy there. Caught the chicken, she did, and in one swoop of the axe over a large tree stump—whoomph—off goes the chicken's head. Now the comedy really begins—the chicken keeps running around headless in circles back and forth, back and forth—never saw anything like this before. In my moment of laughter, my BB gun

falls off my shoulder. I pick it up, and somehow it went off, right into one of the cheeks of Jimmy's ass.

Mrs. Dikun sees her Jimmy in some kind of pain; off she goes right toward me, axe in hand, waving it over her head. And as we fled down the path to the Deloro Road and out of her way, all we could hear was—

“You shot my Jiminee in the ass with a beegee gun!”

“You shot my Jiminee in the ass with a beegee gun!”

On and on she went, till we had reached the road up to the cheese factory, praying she would not follow.

Not a good day for us or Jimmy—BB guns were confiscated by our parents for a while. Not sure how this got back to our parents, but like most of our journeys, it did.

Did we learn anything from this event? A very long lesson by our parents on and about guns, BB or otherwise.

“Guns are bad, I tell you.”—Eminem

The Dinky and the Track Side Car

One of the things that fascinated me in particular, and most of us who journeyed together as kids, was the Dinky—a little train engine that brought the iron ore from Belleville on Lake Ontario to the smelting plant at DS&R. I was fascinated as well that this iron ore came all the way from Africa. The only thing I knew about Africa at the time was on the map in our school room.

Then there was a track side car. Well, that's what we called it. Do you know what a track side car is? Well here is my best description. A solid wood platform about six feet by six feet with four train wheels attached. In the middle was a large lever (or pump, if you will) that you pump up and down and it moves the wheels along the track. We thought it was used to check the tracks and do maintenance work on the tracks so the little Dinky would have safe passage for all of its iron ore. Can't you just picture that? To give you a better and more modern image of what this was and maybe used for, you can see today a large truck rolling along a railroad track, train wheels attached. The truck could then when needed to go on the road, switched to tires.

It took about six of us to lift it on the tracks—and away we would go. Many a warm summer's day was spent on our little track side car. It was hard to get started as well, leaning on the lever—up and down, up and down—till it began to move along the tracks. We had to be careful not to get it going too fast as the

lever would continue to go up and down on its own. So there we were, at least six kids at a time, from the beginning down to the Deloro Road and Jimmy Dikun's home. We would get it to slow down, stop, and pump it back to where it was originally. We were always watching, of course, to see if this was the Dinky day with George O'Neil.

I'm not sure we ever measured the danger factor in this escapade until one day, lo and behold, it was Dinky day. We were fortunate we had fairly well come to a stop to return, and we jumped off, somewhere near Jimmy's house.

Did George know who was behind all this? Of course he did. Whether it got to our parents, we weren't sure, even to this day. However, in the jumping off, I remember distinctly to this day, something twigged inside of me that maybe this was not the thing to do—ever—and we never did it again. I recognized the very danger, not only to us, but to the Dinky and its engineer.

Oh my God—am I finally growing up—is my deeper sense of conscience now awakened?!

"Many of our daydreams would darken into nightmares, were there dangers to their coming true."

—Logan Pearsall Smith

"Just as courage is the danger of life, so is fear its safeguard."—Leonardo da Vinci

Tippy and Alphonse Clemens

In a section of this book about the other families who raised us (Take A Walk Along O'Brien Avenue), you met Alphonse Clemens. We never knew if he was related to Beaver Clemens or not, but we came to know, love, and appreciate Alphonse Clemens. There was something gentle and caring about this man who crisscrossed our lives often in our time in Deloro.

None were as timely as his presence with wisdom and skill when our precious dog Tippy found a porcupine, or the porcupine found Tippy. Tippy was beautiful collie, black and white, and was David's one and only. There was such an endearing attachment between the two. At the rear of the bungalow was a large shed, filled with David's homing pigeons, wood, kindling, and all sorts of tools and gardening equipment.

That day, Tippy arrived home, his face and mouth full of porcupine quills, and David literally freaked out, major crying, only to have Mother take him inside. Father said to me, "Jim, run now and get Alphonse Clemens—hurry." Up O'Brien Avenue I went, in a state myself, and with Alphonse by my side, we made it back to the shed. David was still crying.

Now what I was about to witness was something I will never forget. With instructions from Alphonse to get a large bottle of vinegar and a pair of pliers, which we did, his request to Dad and myself was to gently hold Tippy down so as to not move a lot.

Alphonse, with his gentle caring hands and soft spoken words to Tippy, poured lots of vinegar over Tippy's mouth and face, and said, "Be still now, we need to wait for ten minutes." It felt like an eternity as I watched Tippy, almost calm as if he knew, through Alphonse's gentle conversation he would not be hurt. David was still crying.

With the hands of an experienced surgeon, Alphonse took the pliers and gently one by one removed more than thirty quills from Tippy's mouth and face. Not once did Tippy flinch or cry. And we waited, for at least an hour, until Alphonse said, "We can let him get up when he can," and he did, tail wagging. David was still crying.

What I learned from Alphonse that day was this—in the midst of chaos and uncertainty, first be calm, be gentle, and speak softly—then do what needs to be done. Over the many years of my life, I have again and again harkened back to these words, and they have held me in good stead in so many of my own chaotic moments. What a gentle presence Alphonse was in our lives.

"When adversity strikes, that's when you have to be the most calm. Take a step back, stay strong, stay grounded, and press on."—LL Cool J

The Sugar Bush Sap and the Axe

As you head north out of town up O'Brien Avenue toward Malone, there is an old quarry to the right side of the road. Many a summer's evening, our friends would gather and we would find some corn from a local farmer's field (cow corn and tough). Over a bonfire, we would cook the corn and enjoy the summer evening. Behind the quarry toward the river was a large stand of sugar maples, and this was our spring pilgrimage. With a brace and bit from home, spittles from the hardware store in Marmora, and empty tin cans from home, we would bore a hole on the south side of the tree, insert the spittle, attach the can, and voila—we were in the maple syrup business.

Well, not so fast—little did we know how long this would take. First we had to bring a large washing tub from home, build a large fire in the midst of the maple trees that should never go out, spend time each day to empty the cans of sap into the tub, bring it to a boil (that was not easy), then sit back and watch the steam roll off and the sap begin to boil down. Looking back, I can only remember the days and hours of endless toil. The object of the exercise was to get the sap boiled down enough to take it home where Mother would do the final boil on the stove, and voila—we were in the maple syrup business.

Well, not so fast again—there were many problems and arguments David and I had. But the moment and story (true)

that is riveted in my mind to this day was when everything seemed to fall apart. Not enough wood to keep the fire burning—who's going to collect the sap today—who's going to stay—etc. etc. etc. Both of us were very angry—but what topped it all off was when we had to lift the tub off the fire, all the sap in the tub went all over the fire and the rest on the ground. Well, that did it—our anger erupted, almost coming to blows, and in my anger, running away with the axe in hand, I threw it wildly behind me. As I looked back in anger, I glimpsed the axe in mid-air just miss David's head by only a few inches. I never knew what rage was until years later, but there I was and almost and surely would have ended his life.

Even to this day, it frightens me to think that in a moment of rage, in this case over spilled maple syrup sap, lives could have changed forever. I am eternally grateful I have David still in my life with us and realize how fragile we truly are. That ended our maple syrup business.

"How much more grievous are the consequences of anger than the causes of it."—Marcus Aurelius

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The White Snowy Owl

It's taken many years for me to be able to tell this story, one that speaks of shame and eventually forgiveness. It's a very hard story for me to tell, but I tell it as a lesson that had a profound effect on my life. A few months after the Jimmy Dikun—"You shot my Jiminee in the ass with a beege gun"—episode, we got our BB guns back with stern instructions from our parents on the care and use of this weapon (which it was, of course).

As you go down to the ball field and cross through it, you enter a fairly large forested area. Large trees, saplings, beautiful green canopy, silence, and the beauty of nature all around. Here I would find chipmunks, squirrels, all kinds of birds and wildlife. Thinking, of course, this was all fair game, I would attempt to hit—but I would always miss—my target with my BB gun. As this child, soon to be a teenager, with all my insecurities and in my lack of knowledge or even the understanding of the beauty and preservation of all creatures, I failed to see the reason why I was attempting to kill a creature. As I look back now many years later, this was not right, but my lack of understanding led me to continue until one unforgettable moment and experience of shame, only to be forgiven some sixty years later.

As I continued to walk through the woods toward the river, I kept looking up in the tree canopy for birds. Suddenly far above the ground, near the top of a tree, was a bird of great size. I couldn't

quite figure out what it was, but that day it became a target of this deadly weapon I held in my hand. Shot after shot seemingly into the unknown air above they went—a pause, a quiet moment in the forest, and there fallen from the tree, landing only a few feet from me, was this beautiful beyond words white snowy owl—O my God, what have I done—was the first thought and words that came out of my mouth. I truly remember that moment, my moment of shame, then quickly—O my God, what can I do—quick take it home, quick—I gently picked it up by the legs. The owl was stunned at this point, and I thought with panic in my mind that if I got it home right away, we could save it. Hurry—hurry—hurry was all that I could think of—and did.

Racing into the back porch, I called to my father to come and see: “Oh my God, help-me” was what I was asking. Dad came out, took one look, and it’s as if his eyes penetrated my soul. I knew this was wrong; however, Dad’s voice was not a condemning one but one that would summon again our friend Alphonse Clemens. Alphonse arrived shortly after, and in tears, I related the story of my white snowy owl. Alphonse got a suitable box together with bedding and placed the owl neatly in the box and offered some advice as to what food might be placed in the box, with water. The owl was still alive but still stunned and not moving a lot if at all.

I would stay in the shed beside the owl for hours until Mother escorted me to bed. I’m not sure if I slept at all. When morning arrived, off I went to the shed. Father followed only to witness before my very eyes a beautiful white snowy owl now dead. I was inconsolable for weeks, and filled with guilt and shame for the taking of this life.

These feelings waned some as the years rolled on in my life; however, etched there within the depths of my soul was this feeling of seeking forgiveness for this cowardly human act. You

know this feeling, many of you I'm sure—one that seems to always pop up in one's mind from time to time—and it did so for me many years on, one fateful day sixty-two years later.

My wife, Brenda, and I found our way to the Eco Museum operated by McGill University on the West Island of Montreal. First time there, we paid our entrance fee, and walked to the door opening to the vast array of wildlife and nature for all to see and cherish. As we walked in the door, there face to face in the very first enclosure staring me right in the face was an enclosure of beautiful white snowy owls. I wish I could tell you how I felt at that very moment. Everything came back again. I asked Brenda for a moment, and I walked to the enclosure, looked into the eyes of a beautiful white snowy owl, and in what must have been the most profound moment of my life and my soul, I quietly said, "Please forgive me." I stood for what seemed like forever, and I felt like I had finally been redeemed from the cowardly act I had committed so many years ago.

To this day, I have never owned another gun and never will, and I will cherish every one of God's creatures as my own.

"Mistakes are always forgiven, if one has the courage to admit them."—Bruce Lee

"What is forgiven is usually well remembered."
—Louis Dedek

The Mail and Empire

(Globe and Mail)

*The Globe and Mail newspaper in Toronto was founded in 1936 when George McCullagh united two influential and historically important dailies, *The Globe* and *The Mail and Empire*, which was founded in 1895.*

Now at the age of thirteen in 1949, I found myself the new delivery boy of twenty *Globe and Mail* newspapers every morning before school. Many of my customers still referred to the paper as the *Mail and Empire*. A man came from Belleville, and with my mother at my side, he tried to explain the great savings I could glean in delivering these newspapers. Certainly seemed inviting, and so I began. Wasn't too sure about these great savings—somehow as time went on, whatever savings there were seemed to disappear as quickly as they arrived. As I look back, I recall my spending habits at this stage were not well informed.

However, up each morning at 6:30 a.m. Mother always had breakfast ready for me, as I remember, especially in the winter months, hot oatmeal cereal cooking in a double boiler. What a welcoming aroma. Breakfast in the winter months was always followed by—get this—each and every day—two, not one, but two tablespoons of cod liver oil. I came to almost like cod liver oil. I attribute much of my good health today to my mother's wise and beneficial cooking.

Off to the front of Mr. Haike's General Store, where I would wait for the Sanderson Bus Line bus from Marmora with the many labourers for the DS&R. The bus would arrive at about 7:30 and never stop—only a bus door opening and a bundle of newspapers thrown out.

I gathered up the papers, put them in my own *Globe and Mail* bag, and I went over to the company boarding houses operated by Mrs. McInroe. In the door, up the stairs, papers left at each door and with a loud voice—"Paper—Globe and Mail." Up one side and the other of O'Brien Avenue, and finished at our home about 8:30, in time to get ready for school. Christmas was an extra special time as most of my twenty customers would leave a little tip or so. The one I remembered most was Miss Henderson, the new primary grades teacher after Mr. and Mrs. Hoocy left. Remember Life Savers? Each Christmas a four-pack of different flavours. That was special. Funny how little moments stay with you forever.

My budding career as a great entrepreneur only lasted a couple of years (without great savings). However, the greatest gift I received during this time was my interaction with my customers. I learned to be on time and cheerful in my interaction with each of my customers, and what came back to me was the very same. This was what they would call today "positive reinforcement." I just remembered it felt good.

"Attitude is everything."—Charles Swindoll

Maxwell Hayes and
Marmora High School

Mr. and Mrs. Hooley, our beloved school teachers for many years, left our little village around 1949. I was thirteen and in grade six, ready to move into grade seven in the new school year when our new teachers arrived. Miss Henderson was the new primary teacher, grades one to four, and Mr. Maxwell Hayes was the new senior teacher, grades five to eight.

This was more than quite the change for me, as it set in motion a cascade of events that to this day I was not ready to be part of. I wasn't long in grade seven when Maxwell had us do an essay on our pets—any pet. Innocently I titled my essay "My Pet Pig." Now apparently Maxwell liked it so much and in his opinion, my other grades being good, I should combine grades seven and eight in one year. What!! was my exclamation. God, I'm not ready for high school yet.

However, Maxwell, in his wisdom (which I question to this day), at the time felt it important to share this news with my father, who was at that time the school board superintendent.

Well, there we were in our front room in the bungalow, Father, Maxwell Hayes, and me. This is not good, I remember saying to myself—I'm not ready for this. Well, Maxwell sure did a selling job on my father, and any agency that I might have thought I had didn't matter at all. I was going to skip grade seven, into grade eight in one year, and in 1950 go to Marmora

High School. Now I have always wondered why Maxwell would push so hard and play to my father's pride for his son. Well, my father knew—what do you think? Here's another one of those "I'll give you three guesses and the first two don't count." Regardless, I was going to high school after skipping one grade into another in one year. Mother revealed to us many many years later what was going on that day, and with respect for Maxwell Hayes, it stays within our family.

So off I went to Marmora High School in 1950. The high school had two physical locations at that time. The upper school was near the Dr. Hamilton Crawford Arena, and the lower school was opposite Saint Andrews United Church. We would go between buildings each day for different classes. Leonard Begley L.L.B. was the principal (the custodian of the strap), along with Layton McGinnis and other teachers whose names and classes are almost forgotten. Some forty years later, I would meet Layton McGinnis again in the little village of Grand Valley, Ontario in my first pastoral charge as a United Church minister. I will always cherish and remember my time with Layton and Mary.

My time at Marmora High School was a difficult transition; I felt like a fish out of water. The usual school bus bullies, who destroyed at least three lunch boxes a year. Not much has changed, has it? As time went on, new friendships were made, especially the female friends. Janet and Wilma and others. Janet would be my very first date in life, attending a dance with me at the Deloro Hall. All I remember about this was my mother buying me a brown suit, shirt, and tie from Marrett's Dry Goods Store. I remember the heart-thumping moment meeting Janet's parents in Marmora before Father drove us to the Deloro Hall. The only thing I can remember is that they played on an old record player a '78 vinyl recording of Glen Miller's "In the

Mood⁸ most of the night. In fairness to Janet, who I'm sure was just as nervous as I was, it was a very good first date.

The two years at Marmora High were, in fairness, more of a blur than anything else. Father and Mother were often called to Ottawa for the M.J. O'Brien company meetings, leaving Dave and me alone at home. Of course, we were old enough and responsible enough?? Beaver Clemens and I would skip many school days then, trapping, fishing etc., only to have Beaver always be the one who got the strap from Principal Begley. Standing outside the office, waiting, I suppose, for my turn, we could hear whack, whack, whack, and Beaver would come out holding back tears. To this day, I never knew why I missed out on this experience. I did receive some kind of certificate for completing grade ten. However, in the summer of 1952, we left this little village and its memories intact to this day.

"Life is a roller coaster, but I feel a change."

—Donny Most

An Extraordinary Experience Standing on the Corner

Now that little brown suit my mother got for the dance with Janet continued to be worn each and every Sunday, well, most Sundays, as I would wait for someone to pick me up on the way to Saint Andrews United Church in Marmora. There on that corner of the Deloro Road and O'Brien Avenue, facing the Town Hall and Mr. Haike's General Store, I would wait, and without fail, Mr. Barlow and family, including Anne, their daughter, would pick me up. After church, they would go to Shannon's Drug Store, and I would have the most delicious Nielsen's butterscotch ice-cream cone, and then they would take me back home again. I have this special memory of the Barlow family.

While waiting this particular Sunday morning, a warm spring day, a light breeze and the spring smell of new growth on trees, birds in flight, something that I cannot put adequately into words welled up within me, around me, over me, and enveloped me with a warmth and gentleness. A feeling or a presence that stayed with me it seemed forever, without any sense of fear but a feeling and warmth of assurance and love. That moment, that day, on that one Sunday, has remained etched in my soul forever. Something profound was happening to me, and in silence, I waited—and with the honk of his horn, there was Mr. Barlow.

This presence has occurred twice more in my life to date, and each time at significant life-changing moments. Each one for me at least was the assurance of being not alone and loved on whatever journey I am on. I know what this presence is for me.

"You don't have to go to church to be spiritual, but there are certain times in your life when there is a presence of something very spiritual."—Tom Watson