



Orders of the Day

The Publication of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

Special Supplement

A tribute to Hugh Curtis

The heart and soul of our Association



**Under the Distinguished Patronage of
Her Honour**

The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC
Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

Orders of the Day is published regularly throughout the year, and is circulated to Association members, all MLAs now serving in Legislature, other interested individuals and organizations. Distributed throughout BC and into Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

Material for the newsletter is always welcome and should be sent in written form to:
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Annual subscription rate is \$40.00 for those who are not Association Members.

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The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.

Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produced in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office. Hugh Curtis served as Editor from 1998 to 2014.

Thank You and Miscellany

There is a very different feel to this issue - *Orders of the Day* is dedicated to Hugh Curtis and, for the first time in over fifteen years, without Hugh Curtis.

I have many people to thank for their assistance in the creation of this tribute to Hugh.

Thanks to his children - Gary, David and Susan - who proposed the idea that has become this memorial to their father.

Thanks to the Directors of the Association for their support of this tribute issue.

Thanks to the many Members and readers for their encouragement.

Thanks to those who have contributed their thoughts and recollections to this issue.

Thanks to Jim Hume and John Ashbridge. Along with then Association President Bill Reid, we had conspired to secretly feature Hugh as the 40th Profile; however, Hugh caught wind of the idea and quashed it. Jim and John have updated their original Profile articles for this tribute.

Thanks to the many people at the Times Colonist who have graciously given permission to reprint articles and photos that originally appeared in that newspaper.

Thanks to Saanich Archives for providing photos during Hugh's days on council.

Thanks to those who sent along their condolences to Hugh's family - and to me. Your words were very comforting to all of us at a difficult time.

Hugh spent thousands of hours in service to the Association, and wrote tens of thousands of words that have appeared in the pages of *Orders of the Day*.

This issue, representing just a fraction of the time and words, is dedicated to him.

Rob Lee

Remembering a father

June 15, 2014

How fitting that today, Fathers Day, I am writing a tribute to Dad for the *Orders of the Day* publication.

The Celebration of Life held on June 10, 2014 at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre was an emotional send-off for me, honoring a man who was known and admired by many in Saanich and throughout British Columbia.

Dad's achievements in elected office were astounding and well documented. My experience growing up with Hugh Curtis, the well-known politician, had many advantages and disadvantages.

Travelling throughout the municipality of Saanich as a young man allowed me to witness projects firsthand that were dear to Dad's heart. Jumping into the car on a Saturday morning, he would make his rounds with me as his co-pilot. The beautification of the Gorge Waterway, construction of the Pearkes Recreation Centre, and the Gordon Head Recreation Centre were just a few of the projects I remember.

I sensed at an early age that Dad was well-known, well-liked, and that he wanted to serve. We as a family recognized that sharing him with the public would require a sacrifice of our time with him. However, the ways he *did* spend time with us were creative and unique. We children held pretend meetings in Saanich Council Chambers on Sundays while Dad worked in his office. We terrorized the halls of the legislature while commissioners raised their eyebrows. Didn't all kids have the parliament buildings as their playground? I spent many nights at the dining table in my pajamas listening to Dad talk to Mom about his day.

Dad also integrated family time into his travels to conventions and visits to constituents. One day after racing to Osoyoos and back, he was embarrassed by the two speeding tickets he had received, and cautioned me, "Don't tell your Mom."

I was privileged to have met Prince Andrew at Government House, to witness every swearing-in ceremony, and to have travelled to London with Dad on two occasions: once when he was a cabinet minister and once when we visited Tewksbury, the birthplace of his mother. How he loved England! I was blessed to have shared that with him.

It was ironic that, when it came to spending time with Dad, the tables were turned after I moved to Alberta, for then I had very little time to spend with him, even after his retirement. I suspect that with his ongoing commitments to the David Foster Foundation, Variety Club, and his



Hugh in London, 2008

passion for *Orders of the Day*, we still would have been juggling our schedules to find time together if I had remained in Victoria. He phoned frequently to pass along messages and to tell me about his activities and of those around him.

My Dad taught by example, and was never one to lecture. He was honest, hard-working, caring, and was the glue that held all of us together. He was a perfectionist with a curious mind and oh, what a mind!

Dad was very proud of his many profiles for *Orders of the Day*. He travelled to different parts of British Columbia to interview past MLAs without bias; he appreciated all who served regardless of their party or political beliefs. That was my Dad, telling stories of many who had held elected office.

The annual dinner at Government House was his time to shine, and I am sure he enjoyed it more than Christmas! My daughter Ashten and I were very fortunate to have attended his last one in September of 2013.

Although Dad was unable to spend much time with us as children, he made up for it with his grandchildren. Spending time with them was very important to him.

I will miss Dad. He was my mentor, quiet supporter, and the one I try to emulate in my own life. I am proud to have had Hugh Austin Curtis as my father. He will always be in my heart.

Gary Curtis
Red Deer, AB

Hugh's grandchildren share their thoughts

Two of Hugh's grandchildren share their recollections.

I couldn't narrow my memories of my Papou down to one but the common thread amongst them was his love for making us Grandkids laugh...no matter what. There were more than a few times that his jokes and humor got us some concerning looks from others around us while we tried to keep straight faces. I hope that everyone got to experience some unapologetic Hugh Curtis humour, I know that I will miss it greatly.

He was the glue that kept our family in touch, no matter how busy we got or how far apart we lived. It was a shock to have to say goodbye so soon, but I can still hear his familiar, over pronounced "Ash-ten! My number one grandchild!" and I will keep that with me forever.

Miss and love you Papou.

Ashten Curtis

Known as Hugh Curtis the politician to a lot of people, Hugh Curtis was Papou to me.

The intelligent, upstanding, straight forward and most loving Papou I could ask for. I hope to carry the traits he is known for with me in life to show how proud I am to be his grandson.

Jay Curtis



Taylor Curtis, Kailee Streichert, Jay Curtis, Hugh, David and Sue at a recent family lunch.



Gary, Dani and Taylor Curtis



Ashten Curtis, with Preston Manning and Hugh.



Alexandra, Hugh, and Sue Curtis

From all walks, people pay tribute to a life of service

Sandra McCulloch / Times Colonist
June 10, 2014

People from all walks of life and political stripes crowded into an auditorium and overflow room at Gordon Head Recreation Centre on June 10 to celebrate the life of Hugh Curtis.

Curtis died peacefully May 27 at Royal Jubilee Hospital at age 81, closing out a remarkable career in public service. Curtis never lost an election, serving as Saanich mayor and in three cabinet portfolios under Social Credit premiers Bill Bennett and Bill Vander Zalm.

Curtis "was one of my role models ... and epitomized the phrase 'service before self,'" said Lt.-Gov. Judith Guichon at the celebration ceremony.

Saanich Mayor Frank Leonard told the audience of an early-morning phone call he got from Curtis in 1986, hours after Leonard was first elected to Saanich council.

Curtis, who was leaving politics at the time, had two pieces of advice for the newcomer: "Take ownership of the small projects ... and never walk past a washroom."

Curtis was the first mayor of Saanich and then spent 14 years in the provincial government - from 1972 to 1986. He served as finance minister from 1979 to 1986, bearing the brunt of public hostility over the Socreds' tight fiscal policies of the early 1980s.

He was the first chairman of the Capital Regional District board, said Leonard, "and we'd like to bring him back now [to sort out the regional sewage woes]."

He was an immensely popular mayor and MLA, Leonard said.

"Hugh could have run for any party he wanted and he could have got elected."

Among those attending the service were former NDP premier Dan Miller, former MLA Ida Chong and former Oak Bay mayor Chris Causton.

Premier Christy Clark delivered a message by video, saying Curtis "exemplified the best in all of us. He felt the call of public service stronger than most people." Curtis's constituents knew he was always on their side, Clark said.

One of Curtis's remarkable features was his rich, baritone voice. It served him well in one of his first jobs, announcing at C-FAX radio.

"He could not only be sales manager ... he could read the 6 o'clock news every night," said former colleague Keith Dagg.

The side of Curtis that many didn't see was that of a husband and father, said his son Dave Curtis, one of three children.



Son David Curtis delivers his eulogy at the celebration of life for Hugh Curtis.

Photo by Darren Stone/Times Colonist

Family life "revolved around election cycles," said Dave, current president and CEO of Viking Air.

The Curtis kids grew up in campaign offices, knocking on doors and accompanying their father in the Victoria Day parade.

During his tenure on Saanich council, Hugh Curtis oversaw the construction of three recreation centres, including Gordon Head where the service was held, and the acquisition of a substantial amount of park-land. The Curtis kids were the first to swim in the new pool at the rec centre, Dave Curtis said.

The deep baritone voice that reverberated across the airwaves and in the legislature had a different tone at home, Dave Curtis said, who remembered "being bellowed at to clean up [my] room."

Still, there are plenty of wonderful memories, he said.

"His mind was sharp and his voice was clear until the day he passed," said Dave Curtis.

Hugh Curtis was predeceased by his wife, Sheila, and is survived by children Gary (Kathy), David, Susan, daughter-in-law Toni and five grandchildren. Those wishing to make a donation in his memory are invited to contact the Boys and Girls Club of Victoria, the David Foster Foundation or the Variety Club of B.C.

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From the Association President

At the beginning of May, I wrote a note to Hugh, as I had unexpectedly been out of contact for over a month. It said....."Hugh, I want to thank you for all the work that you do for the Association. You have kept the Association alive and well, and with the help of Rob, produce the remarkable and always interesting Orders of the Day. The publication keeps us informed and in contact with so many people and we always wait with great anticipation for the next edition. Thank you, Hugh." I never got the opportunity to give him the note.

I met Hugh many years ago and he gave me a piece of advice that I have always remembered...."Always be yourself; you have to look in the mirror every day". To me, that is what Hugh stood for. He was a man of integrity, honesty and he had the strength to make decisions that he believed were right, but not always popular. There should be more people like him. We will miss you Hugh, and I will miss the 5pm phone call that always came on Mondays.

Gillian Trumper
President, Association of Former MLA's of BC

The Association Recognizes Hugh Curtis

The following statement was made by **Outgoing President Ken Jones**, prior to presenting the **first Life Membership** in the Assn., to **Secretary-Treasurer and 'Orders of the Day' Editor Hugh Curtis**.

Curtis was pleasantly surprised with this announcement and certificate presentation, at the Annual Dinner of the Association, at Government House on Friday, May 23rd 2008:

"I have one brief but very important announcement to make.

Those of you familiar with our history will know we exist today because of the tremendous amount of work done by a handful of volunteers.

And you will also know that over the years we have never said a proper thank you to those who do the grunt work.

Well, we've decided to change that to make a few amends, and say a specific thank you to one of our Members by asking him to honour us by accepting a life membership in our Association.

He has already set a remarkable standard of service and we now ask him not only to accept this modest honour, but to also continue to work on our behalf, to continue to hold us together as he has these past many years.

It will surprise no one when I tell you whom we have chosen for this honour. I would ask you to show your standing approval as I ask **Hugh Curtis** to accept our gratitude for a job so wonderfully well done and to please join me in beseeching Hugh Curtis to live long and prosper, and to keep us all active and eager to serve for many years to come.

Hugh! please!"

(The last half of the last sentence was drowned out by thunderous standing applause.)

A special thanks to **Jim Hume, Ian Izard, and the Assn. Directors** for their significant contributions to this recognition.



Hugh Curtis Profile:

by John Ashbridge

As a sometimes-contributor to this fine publication and professional associate of his for far too many years, I had inquired on more than one occasion when *Orders Of The Day* might finally get around to running a Profile of its Editor and the Secretary-Treasurer of this Association, one Hugh Austin Curtis. He almost answered the question himself, with his World War II reminiscences, published in the August 2009 edition of *Orders Of The Day* (Vol. 15, No. 7).

But, this being the tribute to the Association's heart and soul, it seems entirely appropriate that the editorial spotlight finally illuminate the man who has provided much of the 'glue' that keeps this Association together and made it his task to ensure the continuing publication of its monthly newsletters.

I will admit to having known Hugh from a very early age. Mine, not his. As a very annoying teenager who wanted to 'get into radio,' I was introduced to the much-older and vastly more experienced CJVI announcer and sales representative Hugh Curtis during my final years at Victoria High School, from which, it turns out, he had also graduated some 14 years earlier. As I have since discovered, he too attended Sir James Douglas Elementary School, both of us having been residents of Victoria's Fairfield neighbourhood during our respective 'school days.'

One fact upon which Hugh does not dwell in his stories about growing up in Victoria and about which some may not be fully familiar is that he was likely predestined to wind up in political life. Yes, his father was Victoria's Canadian National Railways "City Ticket Agent." But Mr. Curtis senior would also go on to win election as a post-war Alderman in the City of Victoria. Small wonder that son Hugh would later parlay his already popular broadcast profile into a career in the public service ... to become the even better-known and more-widely honored member of the Curtis political clan, thanks to his own accomplishments as an elected official: Life member of the Union of B.C. Municipalities, which he served as its president; Freeman of the Municipality of Saanich, where he first served as both Alderman and Reeve (a term changed to Mayor during his tenure) prior to being elected as an MLA in 1972.

The history books will tell you that, as a member of the Legislature - first elected in 1972 as a Progressive Conservative MLA, later to join the Social Credit caucus - Hugh was named to several cabinet portfolios including



Father Austin and Hugh Curtis

Finance, Government Services, Provincial Secretary and Municipal Affairs and Housing, between 1975 and 1982. But he also holds the distinction of having been the first Chair of the Capital Regional District, vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities and chair of the Municipal Finance Authority among his career highlights in the public sector.

After politics, Hugh kept busy with his ongoing roles with Variety, The David Foster Foundation and B.C. Civil Liberties, to name but a few worthwhile organizations that sought out his wise counsel. Hugh Austin Curtis, reformed broadcaster, politician, cabinet minister and public servant, continued to provide a valuable service to anyone who shares a bit of knowledge and respect for the political history of British Columbia and the people who have helped shape it ... not the least among them, himself.

*I wrote this piece at the request of the late Bill Reid when he was President of the Association. It was his intention to get it published in *Orders of the Day* as a surprise compliment to Hugh - then and until his death the Editor of OOTD. I once asked Bill Reid what had happened to my voluntary offering. He said: "Hugh told me he didn't have space for it but that he might be able to fit it in "sometime".*

His own accomplishments were always low on the list of MLA's he thought worthy of "Profile" recognition.

~ Jim Hume

Hugh Curtis profile for Bill Reid

By Jim Hume

July 29, 2009

They called it "the pint parade" and in its 1950's heyday it proved one of the best ways to increase blood donations for The Red Cross. And its best feature was that it was organized by a group of Victoria high school kids, teenagers with a desire to leave a better mark on their community than graffiti.

They persuaded the manager of the Odeon movie theatre to put on a Sunday night show with free admission to blood donors. The first Sunday night movie was a sell out, as was every other "pint parade" movie night that followed.

Prime mover and organizer of the idea - his first major community service project - was Hugh Curtis, a kid who grew up with a sense of community service taught to him by father Hugh Austin Curtis, a Victoria school trustee for many years and later a Victoria City council member, and his mother Helen. The young son never lost his desire to serve.

When telling the story of "the pint parade" he would recall that first Sunday night at the movies and remember the concern as opening night approached that his idea might prove to be disastrously wrong. He could still savour the feeling of relief as he and his teenage friends watched every seat in the Odeon occupied.

Organization and hard work had paid off and the lessons learned when he was 17 come 18 were never forgotten as the years rolled by and Hugh Curtis became an integral part of the political fabric of British Columbia. It is said of Hugh that he ran scared when he first sought and won public office in 1962 at the age of 30, and that he ran scared in every subsequent municipal and provincial election he contested - even the one in which he was returned by acclamation.

It was, he would say, the only way he knew how to run for office. To be confident, to be organized - but to never take anything for granted. It was a formula that saw him win every Saanich municipal election between 1962 and 1972 and every provincial election between 1972 and 1986 - the year he vacated the field.

It was a formula appreciated by members of this Association with every publication of *Orders of the Day* - and between annual dinners at Government House. Those social events of the year hit an all time high a few years ago when internationally renowned song writer, pianist, entertainer David Foster performed in private concert for the Association at Government House. That night to remember didn't just happen - it happened courtesy the generosity of David Foster and the organizing energy of Hugh Curtis.

Complimenting him on the success of that evening and he would thank you but immediately stress out that he had a great deal of help from other Association members, the staff of Government House and from donors who made it possible for the

night to be as successful financially as it was artistically. That attitude was a Curtis trademark: recruit the best help available, and never forget to give credit where it is due.

Praise him for his work in rescuing Victoria's Gorge Waterway from a derelict skunk hollow to today's pristine in-city water-park jewel and he would immediately recite a list of the names of "those who made it possible." Remind him that some of the Saanich municipal bureaucrats on that list often complained their Mayor - "the bloody kid" - was driving them crazy and he would answer: "Is that what they said? Well, I guess I was, but we did get things done - and they were great to work with. John Tribe the administrator, Gordon Hayward, a first class clerk, and Neville Life, the perfect engineer for an emerging municipality." Hugh Curtis may have been the captain but he never forgot that Tribe and Hayward were the navigators and Life the engineer as Saanich shook off the mantle of hayseed cousin and steered its way to major-player role in the capital region.

When regional districts were created in 1965-6 Curtis became the first Chairman of the Capital Regional District and led the push for the eventually coordinated sewer system for the four core municipalities of Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt and Saanich. When the Municipal Finance Authority was created to provide funds for such projects, Curtis was its first chairman.

It was on his watch as CRD Chairman that the first regional parks were acquired. They now number in the 30's - plus a spider web of incredible walking trails from urban ambles to wilderness wild, and all harbingers of what would become known as the green generation. Hugh Curtis was talking "green" and acting "green" years before the word became part of the language of the day.

His community service extended far beyond elected office projects. His work with the Foster Foundation was well known. A few years ago the Variety Club of BC voted him the outstanding member of the year. Other organizations honoured him with life memberships in recognition of his contributions. Among them: The BC Civil Liberties Association, the Union of BC Municipalities and the Victoria Conservatory of Music. In 2002 he became a Freeman of Saanich. He was an honorary member of the Firefighters Association - and, of course, secretary-treasurer of our Association of Former MLA's and the driving force behind this monthly newsletter.

At the provincial level Hugh was elected as a Progressive Conservative MLA in 1972 but joined the Social Credit "coalition" for the 1975 election that saw the Socreds returned to power. He held three cabinet portfolios over the next decade serving as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Provincial Secretary, Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Treasury Board.

He held the latter role in the 1979-83 period as BC encountered the ugly world of "recession" - a word Hugh stubbornly refused to enunciate until spending cuts became daily announcements and deficit budgets proved unavoidable. Those were the days when cabinet colleagues with pet projects rejected at treasury board tagged Curtis with the title "Doctor No" and, behind his back but not too softly, referred to him as arrogant and ego-driven.

They were tumultuous years when labour unrest and spending cut protests rocked the province. But the administration stayed on its tight-fisted course and it is a matter of record that, tough those times were, the Bennett government was re-elected in 1979 - albeit by a slim five seat majority - and again in 1983. The voters may not have liked the hard times, but were obviously prepared to accept them.

There was a price to pay for public service above and beyond the call of duty. In his quieter moments Hugh would reflect that he often let political and community duties get in the way of family responsibilities. He was 24 when he married Sheila Diane Halford on March 16, 1957, a union that produced two sons and a daughter - Gary Hugh Austin, David Charles, and Susan Diane Helen.

In a 2002 interview with Times Colonist reporter Jim Gibson he confessed that devotion to politics on top of his sales manager job in radio had been costly at the family level. "I was an absentee father," he told Gibson. While other dads spent their weekends with their children, Curtis spent his at Saanich Municipal Hall at his Mayor's desk. He told the reporter "I can't say they grew up in Saanich municipal hall, but I remember being there many Saturdays and Sundays. Allowing them to ride on the elevator or play at one desk."

If he had little time to spend with his children in his municipal period, he had even less when he reached provincial cabinet status, especially during the 1980's recession years. He once mused that in those crisis riddled years he saw more of Bill Bennett than his children.

There is a touch or irony to the fact that the Hugh-Sheila marriage survived the toughest years but faltered and came to an end shortly after he left public office in 1986. Sheila passed away in the spring of 2009.

After leaving politics Curtis joined Belsberg's First City Trust in Vancouver with an illustrious title of vice-president. He later confessed it was not one of his better career moves. After two years First City and Curtis parted company with what Hugh told reporter Gibson was as an out of court settlement (he had sued for wrongful dismissal) and "not generous by today's standards."

He didn't sit around moping and was soon up to his ears in Variety Club work and other projects - including the David Foster Foundation and possibly his best-loved jobs as treasurer of the Association of Former MLAs and editor of *Orders Of The Day*.

Perhaps the greatest achievement in his years of remarkable public service is the fact that from "pint parade" to this date his name was never been associated with scandal. In BC where politics has always been a blood sport the closest Hugh ever came to "disgrace" was when he was banished from the Legislative Chamber by Deputy Speaker Walter Davidson.

It was the afternoon session of Monday, May 11, 1981. The late Al Passarell, (NDP-Atlin) had accused Energy Minister Bob McClelland of "cultural genocide" against the Nisga'a by

permitting tailings from a molybdenum mine to be dumped into Alice Arm. McClelland objected to the language, said Passarell should be talking to the Environment ministry, and accused the member from Atlin of having no regard for the rules of the house.

As both sides traded insults across the floor Curtis rose to quell the verbal storm. He suggested MLAs should be careful with their words because things said without thought were better left unspoken. His mini-sermon brought a shout from New Democrat Graham Lea that the finance minister should go and "play premier on his own time" and suggested Curtis was angling for Bill Bennett's job. The Premier was absent from the House for the exchange.

The usually equable Hugh, whose "golden throat of radio" baritone voice had minutes before delivered advice on decorum and words best not spoken, forgot how sound that message was and shouted: "Cheap shot! That's just the sort of thing you're known for - cheap shots." The House was in uproar, Davidson pounded his gavel demanding "order!" but was ignored until he finally rose in his place and even as Hugh hurled another "cheap shot" at Lea - ordered the minister of finance to leave the chamber.

Shane McCune writing in *Province* newspaper reported. "His face crimson, Curtis stalked out." And those who knew Hugh Curtis recognized the embarrassment being shown in the flushed face was for being part of the kind of unseemly performance he abhorred and had advised against.

It wasn't his only embarrassment in office, or his worst. That came in 1982, smack in the middle of the recession when it was revealed - to the horror of Curtis - that B.C taxpayers had footed the bill for Broadway theatre tickets for two cabinet ministers - Energy Minister McLelland and Finance Minister Curtis - and senior staffers while they were in New York on official government business. Subsequent investigation established that while the charges were true the theatre ticket costs had been allocated to government by error. Minister of Finance Curtis immediately ordered all who had attended the Broadway shows to follow his lead and immediately reimburse the Treasury.

The Opposition accepted the explanation and the quick return of the cash but couldn't resist tweaking the minister scandal never touched with reminders of his choice of entertainment that night in New York - the Broadway rave hit *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* which later became a movie with the same title. Hugh chuckled about it later but admitted it wasn't funny at the time. As he told me years ago "it was really a great show, entertaining, funny - but not easy to explain to some elderly voters that I'd been to see a play in New York not to visit a house of ill repute in Texas."

Looking back across close to 60-years of community service the two items noted above pale to insignificance. For six decades he walked the mine-strewn fields of BC politics and emerged without a serious scar.

He was called many things on the journey; arrogant, aloof, a tantrum thrower, a loyal man to work for, a hard man to work for, industrious, workaholic, a politically expedient thinker when it came to decisions - but he was never called dishonest.

And in the rough and tumble world of BC politics, especially at the provincial cabinet level, that's about the highest accolade a politician can ever hope to earn.

Life with Hugh

By Robert Lee

The list of accomplishments by Hugh Curtis over his eighty-one years is enviable, and they are detailed much more eloquently by others in these pages. My recollections of Hugh extend beyond dates and facts. Honest, fair, dedicated, steadfast, thoughtful, humorous - these are my memories from five decades of life with Hugh.

Some of you know me from my years producing *Orders of the Day*, or from the Association's Annual Dinner at Government House. In fact, the friendship between the Lee family and the Curtis family goes back many decades, perhaps 70 years - my father Jack was a friend of both Hugh and his father.

My first recollection of Hugh Curtis is from the 1960's. For many years Hugh and his wife Sheila would stop at our house to pick up my parents, and the four would attend the famed Annual Government House Ball. Those of you who attended during the 60's will remember that very formal affair. Our family photo album features pictures that were taken in our living room from those days - two lovely ladies looking elegant in their exquisite evening gowns... flanked by two balding men in their formal tuxedos, looking somewhat uncomfortable.

In 1967, our family opened the Chinese Village Restaurant, across the street from Mayfair Mall. The Curtis family would come in regularly for a family dinner, and we watched Gary, David and Susan grow from young children to adults.

While attending UBC in the late 70's/early 80's, I took a political science course which required a research paper about a person in municipal or provincial politics. Naturally, I chose Hugh as my subject, and I was able to arrange an interview with him at the Legislature. I was impressed when I entered his office for the interview - a spacious outer office for his staff, leading to a vast room featuring a stately desk with a credenza, a number of armchairs around a table, and floor to ceiling shelves filled with books and mementos (I understand that the current MLA spaces are much smaller.) He warmly welcomed me in his booming radio voice with his customary greeting: "General!" (as in General Robert E. Lee.) We sat down and talked for 90 minutes about his political history, our respective families, and why my hair was so long. It was a great conversation, and between the two of us we smoked over half a pack of cigarettes during that hour and a half (I understand that they don't

allow that in the Legislative Buildings now.) Sadly, I only got a "B" for my paper, but I think it was due to my writing skills and not the subject matter.

After graduation, I came back to work in the restaurant. We would see many former and sitting MLA's walk through our doors. Wesley Black, Bill Murray, and Cyril Shelford were among the former MLA's who would bring family and friends for dinner. A number of sitting MLA's whose constituencies were out of town would come in for dinner alone after a session: I recall that Evan Wolfe and Graham Lea even had their favourite tables.

And then there was Hugh. Part of my job was tending bar a few nights a week, and once in a while Hugh would drop in after a long session for what is now known as "attitude adjustment hour." Hugh would sit at the bar, have a little dinner and a few highballs, and decompress from the day's activities. By the time he left for the evening, we would have discussed and solved the problems of the world.

During those years our families would cross paths - Hugh and Sheila attended my parents 40th anniversary party, I was honoured to ring the bell at the church on the day of Susan's wedding - but I only saw Hugh occasionally after he left office. Until 2003.

We left the restaurant business in 1998, and I had a store in University Heights Shopping Centre where I did computer-related work. Hugh's house was only two blocks away and he would do his shopping in the mall. When my father and Hugh happened to be in the store at the same time, they would sit and reminisce about the good old days.

One day he came in to ask me a favour. The woman who created the layout for the Association newsletter was unable to work due to illness. He asked: "Can you help me out with the next issue?" That was the start of a twelve year relationship between Hugh, me, and *Orders of the Day*.

Hugh and I talked on the phone several times a week and we met virtually every Saturday morning at JJ Morgan Restaurant, where we would work on the articles and layout for the upcoming issue. I would usually have to pause to decipher the hieroglyphics that were his handwritten notes - any of you who have ever received a handwritten letter from Hugh will understand. When we discussed future Profile subjects, he sought to maintain a balance between left and right, male and female. Hugh

endeavoured to be as fair, non-partisan and inclusive as possible.

Occasionally he would seek out my opinions not only on the newsletter, but about the news of the day. I have always been the type to see all sides of a story and would often take the devil's advocate viewpoint. He would get frustrated and say, "Robert, why must you always disagree with me?" Then, he would usually stand by his decision, and that was us - I was the Opposition to his Government. Despite the fact that I often took the opposing view, he enjoyed the friendly wordplay. Many of you had coffee sessions or phone conversations with Hugh and are familiar with his love of story-telling and his takes on current affairs, and probably engaged in some friendly verbal jousting of your own.

After we finished discussing business, Hugh loved to talk about his family. Every week he would update me about David's current business trip, or Gary's recent musical performance with his band in Red Deer, or the latest news about Susan. Hugh spoke with pride about his grandchildren and their schooling, activities and travel. While some may think that his life revolved solely around politics and the Association, I know that his family was very important to him.

After our meeting was over (and we had discussed and solved the problems of the world yet again), on our way out of the restaurant Hugh would invariably walk by a table or two and say, "Good afternoon" or "How are you today?" With complete sincerity. To total strangers. For me, that captures the essence of the man - the famous and not so famous, spanning the political spectrum, from every walk of life - Hugh Curtis was a friend to all.

Many years ago during one of our Saturday meetings Hugh and I discussed the possibility of scaling back his workload. In addition to the newsletter, he was the Secretary and Treasurer of the Association, and did all the planning and booking for the Annual Dinner at Government House.

I expressed my concern that, perhaps, the amount of work he had undertaken was starting to take its toll.

His reply was memorable. "One day if it becomes too much, I'll pass along the Secretary/Treasurer duties. Somebody else can run the Annual Dinner. But I love the newsletter. I'll do Orders of the Day until the day I die."



Hugh and Sheila attending the 40th anniversary party for Jack and Lily Lee



Hugh greets Lily and Jack at the Annual Dinner

Hugh Curtis, classy politician who forged change in tough times

Carla Wilson / Victoria Times Colonist
May 27, 2014

Hugh Curtis, former Saanich mayor and B.C. finance minister during the tumultuous restraint period in the 1980s, has died at age 81.

Curtis had cancer and was admitted to hospital 10 days ago; he passed away on Tuesday, said son Dave Curtis. "One of the things he was most proud of was that he was an elected official for 25 years and he never once was defeated."

In a 1969 interview, Curtis said he found elected life fascinating because of, "the ability to introduce change, to take the given situation and to work with others in improving it or in introducing a new approach to a problem."

Bob Plecas, a former long-time B.C. deputy minister and author, said, "Hugh broke the ground on this in Canada - on being tough during tough fiscal times."

Curtis was elected to the legislature in 1972 as a Progressive Conservative, switching to Social Credit in 1974.

He held a number of portfolios in the government of then-premier Bill Bennett, most notably spending seven years as B.C.'s second-longest serving finance minister, after W.A.C. Bennett.

Curtis was finance minister during B.C.'s 1983 restraint program, which fuelled the Operation Solidarity movement's massive protests against government austerity measures, including public sector wage restraints and job losses.

The wage restraint program fell under Curtis's ministry and Plecas was the policy adviser. "He certainly knew that he had to make the right decisions and he did. He was a good minister," Plecas said.

Plecas defines a good minister as one who understands that their job is politics and doesn't try to be a deputy minister, is decisive, will back you up, and is honest and open-minded.

Brian Smith, a former Social Credit cabinet minister, said he and Curtis used to meet regularly. "For quite some time, we were the two resident cabinet ministers from Victoria. We used to collaborate to try and protect things that were important to Victoria." These included maintaining the Mill Bay ferry service and fighting the suggestion of a bridge to the mainland.

"He was a very, very classy guy in politics. He was rather formal," Smith said.

Norman Ruff, University of Victoria professor emeritus, said Curtis, "played a key role at that point in



Mayor Hugh Curtis in 1965.

Photo source: Saanich Archives 1981-021-006

B.C. politics when it looked like Social Credit was faltering." When Curtis crossed the floor, along with some Liberal party members, that helped the Social Credit party rebuild as a coalition, he said.

Curtis had enormous influence in cabinet, Ruff said. He "was a partisan Conservative, but he never crossed the line and developed the sharp edge that mars a lot of what goes on in the legislature."

Penelope Chandler, ministerial assistant to Finance Minister Mike de Jong, came to the B.C. legislature after working on a campaign for Curtis. "I would say that Hugh was one of nature's gentlemen."

Hugh Curtis was predeceased by his wife Sheila, and is survived by sons Gary and Dave, daughter Susan and five grandchildren.

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Hugh Curtis: Passionate leader helped build Saanich

Carla Wilson / Victoria Times Colonist
May 27, 2014

Saanich Mayor Frank Leonard sums up his late friend and mentor Hugh Curtis: "He really had Saanich in his blood."

Curtis, who died Tuesday at age 81, was passionate about the municipality where he was first elected to council in 1961 as an alderman. He became reeve, a position later called mayor, in 1964 before leaving for the provincial arena in 1972. He was elected to the legislature as a Progressive Conservative, switching to Social Credit in 1974.

He was especially proud of the parks added in Saanich during his years on council, Leonard said.

Curtis joined Saanich council and served as mayor at a time when the municipality "blossomed," Leonard said. For example, street lights came to Saanich and four recreation centres opened.

When Leonard was elected to Saanich council in 1986, Curtis was the first to call with congratulations.

"He gave me some advice right then and there. He said: 'Take ownership of the small projects. The big projects, when and if you succeed, there's always a long lineup of politicians to take credit for them. But if you want to really enjoy local government, take ownership of some small projects and see them through.'"

When Leonard mentors newly elected council members these days, he passes on that same advice, saying that's the way to learn how government works.

"For the past 28 years, he continued to mentor me and give me advice," he said.

He wasn't alone. Curtis maintained many friendships over the years and took a keen interest in current events and in his family.

Hugh Curtis and son Dave Curtis met at Adrienne's Tea Garden just two weeks ago where topics included the situation in Ukraine. Dave Curtis, president and CEO of Viking Air, spoke with his father almost every day.

Curtis was born with a deep melodious voice ideally suited to radio. He spent 15 years at CJVI and then moved to CFAX, becoming a minority owner with longtime friend Keith Dagg in 1965. Clare Copeland was the majority owner. They eventually sold their shares to Mel Cooper.

Dagg said Curtis played a major role in turning around the fortunes of CFAX, which had struggled financially. "He was an outstanding person to have at the radio station because he could do so many jobs." Duties



Reeve Hugh Curtis switching on first Saanich signal lights at Tillicum and Gorge intersection.

Photo source: Saanich Archives 1980-015-116b

included commercial production, anchoring election coverage, sales and reading newscasts.

"He was one of those kind of guys who could do everything and that is what made him such a big part of building CFAX," Dagg said.

By running for public office, Curtis followed the example of his father, Austin Curtis, who also spent 25 years in public life, as a Victoria alderman and school board member.

The number and variety of organizations and committees that Curtis led and supported is vast.

He was the first chairman of the Capital Regional District, was president of the David Foster Foundation and was involved with the Variety Club.

In recent years, Curtis was editor of the monthly newsletter for the Association of Former MLAs of B.C.

"That was almost completely Hugh," said Brian Smith, a former Social Credit cabinet minister. Curtis was the organization's secretary treasurer and a frequent visitor to B.C.'s legislature library, which he used for research.

Curtis served B.C. with distinction and dignity, said Finance Minister Michael de Jong in a statement.

"Curtis had the challenge of managing the province's finances during the 1980s, a time of great restraint under Premier William Bennett. His strong leadership helped guide the province through tumultuous economic times."

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Former finance minister with 'golden throat' knew when to be tough

By Vaughn Palmer,
Vancouver Sun, May 28, 2014

The defining moment in Hugh Curtis's seven-year stint as finance minister of B.C. was the day in 1983 when he got up in the legislature, red rose in his lapel, to deliver the budget that helped launch 50,000 protesters into the streets.

But as Curtis himself told the story, he was not even supposed to be there. At the approach of that year's provincial election, he had gone to see then Premier Bill Bennett to declare that after 20 years in public life, 11 in the legislature, eight at the cabinet table, he'd had enough.

"I don't want to run again," pleaded the then 50-year old, who'd been thinking out loud about returning to his former career as a broadcaster. "I want to leave."

Bennett's reply: "Well, you can't."

The economy was in its most serious downturn in decades. Revenues had plummeted. The government was scrambling to pull together the cost-containment plan that came to be known as "restraint."

Those pressures had prompted Bennett himself to put off any thoughts of retiring after two terms in politics. As Curtis recounted his exchange with the premier to David Mitchell for his book *Succession*, Bennett expected him to reach the same conclusion:

"The minister of finance can't leave in the middle of a recession. You have to run again. That's the end of the conversation."

Curtis joined Bennett and other members of his Social Credit administration in seeking re-election on the restraint theme - and won decisively after New Democratic Party leader Dave Barrett announced his intention to scrap the program.

That set the stage for July 7, when Curtis delivered the most controversial budget in provincial history. The speech, and accompanying two dozen pieces of legislation, generated an unprecedented backlash from unions, social activists and others.

The anti-restraint forces formed coined themselves "Operation Solidarity," after the union-led resistance to the then Communist government of Poland. The protest reached its pinnacle in October when an estimated 50,000 protesters marched in the streets of Vancouver, as the Socreds gathered at a downtown hotel for their annual convention. But the B.C. solidarity movement ran out of steam soon afterward, when Bennett made some concessions that left much of the restraint program intact.

Looking back on that first restraint budget with the perspective of 31 years, some ironies should help illustrate the degree to which times have changed.

Curtis signalled that the government intended to reduce the public service by 25 per cent, from the then high of about 47,000 full-time equivalent positions to about 35,000. Today,

partly thanks to contracting out and some off-loading, the FTE count for central government is 31,000.

Another provocation was "wage restraint," the initial guideline from Curtis for public settlements having been eight to 12 per cent. Granted, inflation - as measured by the consumer price index - had been running at 12 per cent earlier in the decade. But with the deepening recession, it was dropping fast.

The spending increase in that first restraint budget was also 12 per cent, and the deficit, a record \$1.6 billion. The health ministry consumed about a third of the provincial budget and was growing at a rate that Curtis characterized as "terrifying." Today health is approaching half of all program spending.

Not to suggest that Curtis was the sole architect of the restraint program or the other significant changes in financial legislation that occurred on his watch (1979-86) as minister of finance.

He was ably served by two deputies, Larry Bell and later David Emerson. And the firm hand on restraint originated with the premier himself, there never being any doubt who was in charge on that or any other score during Bill Bennett's tenure.

Still, when Curtis died this week, aged 81, the news coverage recalled his role as the minister of finance who presided over the budget that for better or for worse added restraint to the political lexicon.

"Hugh broke the ground on being tough during tough fiscal times," as Bob Plecas, former head of the public service, told the *Victoria Times Colonist*. "He certainly knew that he had to make the right decisions, and he did. He was a good minister."

Others cited his lengthy service in local government - particularly in Saanich where he lived all of his life - and his generally good nature. "He was one of nature's gentlemen" as longtime government staffer Penelope Chandler put it.

There was also that instantly recognizable, broadcast-ready voice of the former radio announcer whose colleagues knew him as "golden throat."

"Deep, smooth, dark-chocolate rich, with beautifully measured cadences, it lounges caressingly on the airwaves," as Paul Moss described it in a 1977 profile in the *Victoria Daily Times*.

During his long retirement from politics, Curtis assumed a leadership role in the association of former MLAs. "Hugh WAS the association," as former MLA Bruce Strachan assured me Wednesday. "Not just the secretary-treasurer, but literally the association. He was always on the phone, staying in touch with former members."

He also edited the organizational newsletter, *Orders of the Day*. The most recent issue commemorates Expo 86, the happy event that capped the era dominated by that single word, restraint.

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Editorial: We need more like Hugh Curtis

Times Colonist
May 30, 2014

Some go into politics for what they can get out of it; those who make a difference are the ones who go into politics for what they can put into it. Hugh Curtis's record of public service shows he was in the latter category. We need more like him.

Curtis, who died Tuesday at the age of 81, spent 25 years in public office, first as a councillor and mayor of Saanich, then as an MLA and cabinet minister in the B.C. legislature.

A broadcaster by profession, he entered politics in 1961 when he was elected to Saanich municipal council. He became reeve, a position later called mayor, in 1964.

Saanich Mayor Frank Leonard says Curtis served at a time when the municipality blossomed. During that period, Saanich installed its first street lights, opened four recreation centres and added four parks.

Curtis was elected to the B.C. legislature in 1972 as a Progressive Conservative, switching to Social Credit in 1974. Crossing the floor is sometimes seen as an opportunistic move, but in Curtis's case, it's an indication that he put the welfare of the province ahead of party politics. He could not be effective in a party that had all but disappeared from the B.C. political scene.

Under Bill Bennett, who became premier in 1975, Curtis held several cabinet portfolios, most notably that of finance minister, and in 1983, decided he'd had enough of politics. He was contemplating a return to broadcasting, but Bennett wouldn't hear of it and persuaded Curtis to run for re-election in the 1983 election.

Those were tough times, with the economy in a tailspin and the Bennett government trying to put together its restraint program. That became the chief election issue, with the New Democrats under Dave Barrett promising to scrap the program. Social Credit won handily, gaining four seats while the NDP lost four.

But there wasn't much of a honeymoon with voters. Curtis was tasked with quarterbacking the restraint program, and his budget speech and subsequent legislation in July 1983 brought a huge negative response, especially from social activists and unions. When the Socreds gathered for their convention in October in Vancouver, about 50,000 protesters took to the streets.

Governments these days seldom talk about budgets without mentioning the word "restraint," but it was new then during a time when governments were growing at alarming rates. Curtis directed that annual wage increases should be from eight to 12 per cent, and his "restraint" budget called for a spending increase of 12 per cent, positively lavish by today's standards.

It was tough slogging then, but it was necessary. For Curtis, necessity took precedence over popularity.



"Hugh broke the ground on [restraint] in Canada - on being tough during tough fiscal times," says Bob Plecas, former B.C. deputy minister and Curtis's former policy adviser. "He certainly knew that he had to make the right decisions, and he did."

Curtis has been praised as a "classy politician" at a time when that, too, often seems like an oxymoron. His dignified appearance and professional voice would have been desirable attributes for a politician, yet his class came not from appearance, but from his integrity and abilities. He will be remembered not so much for how he looked or sounded, but for what he achieved and how he dealt with people.

In retirement, he became the editor and driving force behind the newsletter for the Association of Ex-MLAs. It's a must-read for retired politicians of all stripes because his wit and gentlemanly nature shone through every issue.

Politics and scandal seem never far from each other. We have become accustomed to disappointing behaviour from elected and unelected public officials whose sense of entitlement has exceeded their good judgment.

More should follow the example of Hugh Curtis, who saw in public office the opportunities to serve, not to be served.

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Recollections of Hugh in New York

(This letter and accompanying article was received at the end of March from Jim Rae)

Hi Hugh:

It was great to talk to you (with Bob Skene) after all these years.

I enclose my brief comments about your speech at the Knickerbocker Club in Feb 1980. Your speech was a knock-out and I appreciated being part of your team.

Also on that trip were Larry Bell, Bill Long, Jim Guthrie (you were right) and Wayne Doggett (a senior economist) as well as Nick Coolidge. David Emerson acted as our go-to guy in Victoria.

As well, you might remember Bob Pickett (Book and Company) who acted as a publicist and helped secure interviews for you.

It was great fun!

Best wishes,
Jim Rae

Hon Hugh Curtis, Minister of Finance, Province of British Columbia

Presentation in New York, re. Credit Rating of BC Government Agencies

Tuesday February 26th, 1980, Knickerbocker Club, 2 East 67th Street, New York

Almost as soon as he became Finance Minister, Hon. Curtis, had made it his priority to secure the highest credit bond rating (AAA, aaa) from the two key bond rating agencies (Moody's and Standard and Poor's) for the subordinate debt of the Province and its agencies (eg. MFA and BC Hydro). These ratings, if secured, would not only presage the strong economic and public finance future of the Province but would also generate many tens of millions of dollars in interest savings over the lives of the debt of the borrowing agencies. The whole process took several months and culminated in several presentations on the robust BC financial and economic picture to the rating agencies. Mr. Curtis led the formal mission to New York and to conclude the effort a large dinner was planned for Tuesday February 26, 1980 at the Knickerbocker Club to which most of the key U.S. financial leaders were invited. It turned out that that the ("black tie" dinner) was very well-attended including two former Secretaries of the Treasury and many such financial luminaries as Henry Kaufman and John Gutfreund of Salomon Brothers.

We all recognized that the reaction to the dinner speech would largely determine the ultimate success of the Mission and as bureaucrats we had all generated paragraphs (even pages) of what we thought should be in the speech. The Minister used our material sparingly and largely as background. He decided what he would say; we held our collective breaths.

Needless to say, it was all a tremendous success and B.C. debt was upgraded to the highest credit rating. Besides the obvious routine due diligence and presentations on the BC economy, I think the Minister's speech had a tremendous impact on our new rise in status. The Minister was in great form and soon congratulated the US hockey team for its winning the Olympic ice hockey gold medal (the so-called "Miracle on Ice") only weeks before at Lake Placid. The sincerity and generosity of Mr. Curtis' comments impressed the crowd and they stood to applaud the comments on the sporting event which had just captured the hearts of even this sophisticated audience.

After a few minutes, the Minister said that he would give his view of the US economy and its future. There was dead silence in the room and we all gulped. What seemed like minutes and hours passed but I'm sure they were only seconds, and then he said "Having done so, I would like to thank you" The crowd roared with laughter; the BC delegation roared with relief. The speech, while short, hit all the key points and made me realize that no bureaucrat could possibly have delivered that speech. Despite the sophistication of the audience, the Minister knew how to choose his playing field and quite handily won over these hard-nosed financiers.

When we were planning for the mission, it was impressed on us (by Nick Coolidge our canny adviser in New York) that we should have some memento which participants could take away. Being an academic and bureaucrat I pushed hard for a book, - namely the recently published "Atlas of British Columbia" which I thought captured the concept of a prized take-away. When we left BC with the books for New York, I noticed that boxes of specialty canned salmon were also loaded on the plane at the Minister's request. Again, I could not imagine New York's financial gurus leaving the dinner with cans of salmon in their collective pockets when they could be carrying out a beautiful BC Atlas. Needless to say, when the dinner broke up, all the canned salmon quickly disappeared and we lugged boxes of the "Atlas of British Columbia" back home. Again the Minister proved he knew his audience better than the rest of us.

A Tribute to the late Hugh Curtis

by Stephen Rogers

June 10, 2014

Travels with Hugh

Hugh would never publish stories about himself in *Orders of the Day* but with his passing, now seems a good time.

In the spring of 1984 after the House had risen, Premier Bennett decided that there would be a BC Trade Mission to India. The objective was to expand the range of our metallurgical coal exports. Some BC coal had made its way to Pakistan, and India responded with an invitation to us.

It was not an easy time to be a Finance Minister and I suspect that Hugh's name was added to the list of those on the Mission to give him a bit of a break. I, along with the late Herb Doman, and several people from the South East coal exporting companies flew to London, then on to New Delhi where the majority of our meetings took place.

The Canadian High Commission arranged the meetings with a multitude of Ministers, all somewhat involved with steel, coal or imports and the industry people arranged the commercial meetings with their contacts.

On our second day in Delhi, Hugh and I were taken aside by an official and asked if we would like to meet the Prime Minister, we both said yes.

We were briefed in advance of the meeting by officials "in the know". We were to expect the meeting to be brief, and that the Prime Minister would say very little, and possibly there would be a photograph.

We were escorted into her office by at least half a dozen staff; she dismissed them all. This was to be a private meeting.

Indira Gandhi was the only child of Jawaharlal Nehru, and at that point, the most powerful woman in the world, why were two Provincial Ministers from far away British Columbia in her office?

Mrs. Gandhi sent out for tea and started talking; she wanted assurance that Stanley Park was just as she remembered it. And then she began to tell us a story of one of the high points of her early life.

In April of 1935 at the age of eighteen she had joined her father on a trip around the world. One of the places she remembered in great detail and with much fondness was her time in Vancouver.

She and her father had arrived from Japan on an Empress Liner (hopefully it was the Empress of India)

and stayed at the Hotel Vancouver; they had dinner at the "Roof" and spent the whole of the next day in Stanley Park.

She described everything that she had seen and done; it was truly heart-warming. She then went on to describe the train trip to Banff and the stay at the Banff Springs Hotel.

She described how in a small town at the western edge of the Rockies, the passengers were invited to get off the train and watch the second and larger locomotive hook on to the front of the train for the climb through the Rockies. One of us suggested that the town was Revelstoke and she replied "yes" as if we had filled in a vital blank in her memory.

She clearly had a wonderful time here and had a story that she wanted to tell someone and we were the lucky recipients.

Our time with her was approaching an hour and I think we had a few brief words about our mission but my memory fails me now on those details.

Hugh and I basked in the great pleasure that comes with being in the company of one of the world's great leaders.

When we went to leave she summoned the photographer and we stood in the majesty of the moment.

We left her office and were immediately surrounded by the large scrum that was outside. Hugh stood before the collection of microphones and took the only one question. "What were you discussing with the Prime Minister?" Hugh replied "matters of mutual concern and interest". When the second question came saying much the same thing Hugh turned and gave that "look" that said no more questions, and we moved on.

For the rest of our time in India our status was greatly increased because everyone seemed to know that we had an hour with the PM.

Tragically Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated by one of her own security detail just two years later.

Hugh was a pleasure to travel with and a great colleague in Victoria, I have kept in touch with him; will miss him. He has kept us all in the loop with *Orders of the Day* but he never wrote about Hugh, so now this tiny part of his long career is out.

Letters

My recollections of Hugh.

A long time ago (1985&86) I was a young jeweller in Port Alberni and President of the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, as the local NDP President no less. Hugh was doing the Finance Ministry road show on getting folk's input into the upcoming budget. As Pres. of the Chamber I went down to Parksville and made the Port Alberni Chamber's presentation.

What surprised me was that after the meeting Hugh made a point of coming over to me and talking to this young upstart (by my first name no less) about my comments and other political matters in Port Alberni. He took an interest in what was going on around him and never got confused about how important one may make themselves out to be.

I was impressed and always remembered that approach in my own political career.

Gerard Janssen
MLA for Alberni, 1988-2001

Rob Lee,

Your decision to organize a tribute to Hugh Curtis was a good one.

My recollections of Hugh are summed up in a few words.

He spoke eloquently, as we all know.

He was always a gentlemen.

He was not outwardly engaging, but he was a friend.

He stayed the course when it was necessary.

He was an important Minister in the Premier Bill Bennett Government of 1983.

Sincerely,
Russ Fraser

It was with great sadness that I read the news about Hugh.

I always considered Hugh a really true friend ever since we shared the same office way back in Opposition days.

Hugh was steadfast and a very hard worker. He believed what he believed and worked very hard to promote his beliefs. He will be missed by many, many people for his work on the *Orders of The Day* publication.

Sincerely,
Don Phillips

I first met Hugh when I was first elected in February, 1974. It was a year of great partisan turmoil as some will recall, the sands of political alignments shifting. Hugh comported himself through this difficult period with great dignity and went on to become a great Finance Minister.

But his time of best service to his friends who are former MLAs was to lie in the future. He virtually was the Association, its heart and soul and voice and it has been my pleasure as well as that of so many others to talk to him frequently. The best thing we can do to remember him is to carry on.

We have lost a great and good friend. All kindest thoughts to the family.

Regards,
Gordon Gibson

HUGH CURTIS- The Man I Knew

Hugh Curtis and I go back a long way.

In my early days on Victoria City Council (1977), Hugh was a Minister in the Social Credit government. We came from opposite sides of the tracks, politically speaking. My first encounter with Hugh was over housing issues. He was the Minister that a brash new Alderman decided to take on. I still have the political scars. He was tough, and gave as well as he received. From then on I treaded lightly with Minister Curtis!

When I was elected to the legislature in 1983, Hugh was Minister of Finance. It was a tumultuous time in BC. Needless to say our swords crossed, sometimes in passionate debate. But we would often "adjourn" to the restaurant for a coffee. I would hazard to guess that such civility in today's often poisonous political climate is rare.

When I retired from the legislature, I came to know Hugh even better. He was the driving force behind the former MLAs newsletter. It was a very difficult time for my family and I. Former colleagues from my side of the house vanished except for a very few. But Hugh would often call to see how we were doing, and would often include a kind note with my copy of the newsletter. Just days before his passing he had given me a call.

I will miss his phone calls and notes, and his distinctive speaking style so clear and precise. Hugh was a true gentleman of honour and integrity. He was a good man, always fair and kind. I will miss him.

Robin Blencoe

Remembering Hugh Curtis

Anyone who followed politics at all in BC would have known Hugh Curtis's name, at least, from the time he entered the Legislature and carved a distinguished career. Before that, municipal politicians would have known him through his extensive work in Saanich and the UBCM. Many knew him through his encouragement and support of community events and organizations. All of which demonstrated his concern and generosity as a citizen.

I was lucky to get to know him through the Association of Former MLAs of BC, where he directed his warmth, enthusiasm and energy to involving as many people as he could in an organization made up of those whose previous commonality had been adversarial and highly charged. He wanted all of us to find recognition and, yes, even affection across party lines; and we did. A man with special vision and great generosity, he will be sorely missed but warmly remembered.

Anne Edwards

As I write my small contribution to this OOTD special issue in tribute to Hugh, I know it will be a "Profile" like none other. That is as it should be, because all of our 'Profiles' only exist because of Hugh's dedication to honouring our collective contribution within a culture that few British Columbians understand, let alone respect. While I appreciate all those who have served or currently serve as Directors of the Association, I think there would be unanimous agreement that the main reason the Association exists and has continued to flourish through the decades is because of Hugh. With his endless enthusiasm for celebrating the experience we all shared, he constantly reminded us that politics is indeed an 'honourable profession' and that each of us, regardless of our political alliances, should always be proud to have served the people of BC in this way.

I will remember Hugh as a kind and considerate man. I will miss the hand-written notes that he often included with copies of OOTD that were mailed out, thanking us when we sent in a bit extra on our membership dues. Many of us did this, I believe, because we wanted Hugh to know how much we appreciated his thousands of hours of work and his commitment to all of us. Through his efforts, Hugh not only blurred the lines between our political affiliations, he erased them. That is Hugh's legacy to the Association and I hope we can maintain that legacy in his honour.

Joan Sawicki
former NDP MLA, Burnaby-Willingdon, 1991-2001

One thought kept coming back to me when I reflected on Hugh Curtis - just what a wonderful example of being a gentleman, and that is what all of us will miss. Truly dedicated to the Association and its publication *Orders of the Day*, he made it all hum beautifully and I cannot think of anyone who would have made it better. My guess is that every member of the Association's executive over the years knew this too.

For me personally, Hugh's passing is a great loss. For, despite his busy schedule reflecting his dedicated commitment, he did have time to appreciate his membership to the Association. In my case, he was one who provided encouragement at the right time when I faced setbacks, both wealth and health, providing that critical support when we occasionally need it.

He took a genuine interest in his colleagues too. When I once mentioned to him that I was submitting a presentation of the development of baseball in Western Canada to a conference in Hollywood, he immediately thought whether I could submit a similar essay to the "Orders". What a great idea! A fantastic project as I provided the story and he researched some old photos. It was a fun collaborative project and Hugh was just wonderful about the whole exercise.

Earlier this year when I talked with him, he wondered whether my "farewell address" to my students last year would be possible. There was no prepared text but I did have a major theme: that a political scientist had a responsibility and thus a public duty to question our politicians and institutions, to stir the pot and continue the solemn promise of the Socratic tradition even to the point of injury or worse. Such a sentiment seems applicable now to express as Hugh was a great encouragement for honesty and truth, the finest of gentlemen and someone to remember when we think about the purpose of politics.

Allan Warnke

Many Members and readers sent along their condolences and recollections of Hugh upon hearing the news of his passing. Following are excerpts from a sampling of those responses.

Hugh will indeed be missed. He had an unwavering commitment to our province and the protocols and processes which made government work. His research and stories about former MLAs might never have been recorded were it not for Hugh's respect for the work of parliamentarians from all political parties. We will miss him very much.

Penny Priddy

What a shock to hear the news. It seemed like only a few weeks ago that Hugh called in the morning and we had a very enjoyable chat. He asked how we were doing, and we talked about the Association. I had the impression that all was going well with him. Life changes so quickly, we have to make time for every opportunity that is presented to us.

Please express my sympathies and support to Gary, David, and Susan on the loss of their father. Our prayers will be with them as they go through this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Kenneth "Ken" Jones

Hugh was the backbone of this Association. Please pass on our thoughts to the family. No matter what their age they are always your parents and it is really tough to "let go."

Noel and Val Roddick

So sorry to hear that Hugh is gone. Somehow I convinced myself the moment would never come and that I could anticipate forever the monthly phone call which would always be Himself finding out how I was doing and what I thought about recent political disasters. I shall miss him. A gentle man has left the room.

Darlene Marzari

Like other Directors I am just so saddened to hear of Hugh's passing. Saturday mornings will not be the same (I sometimes joined Rob and Hugh for coffee as they worked on Association business).

Jeff Bray

Thank you for the notice re: our friend Hugh Curtis. It is indeed a great shock to lose such a wonderful colleague and good friend; my thoughts and sympathy go out to his family and those who knew Hugh as a friend. He will be sorely missed.

Jim Gorst

Please pass on my condolences to the family. Hugh served the Province and humanity with dignity and pride.

Gerard Janssen

I was very sorry to hear that news today; it slowly circulated through the Parliament Buildings and saddened us all. Please know that he and his loved ones will be at the forefront of our thoughts. He will be sorely missed. God rest his soul. He was an exceptional human being

Angela Larsen
Office of the Speaker

This is such sad news--I had just spoken to Hugh a few weeks ago. He was such a sweet person.

Please pass on the sincerest condolences from myself and my wife, Gila. I know how much he loved and enjoyed each of his children and grandchildren, and how much they meant to him.

Mark Dwor

I talked to Hugh just a week or so ago and he never let on that he was not well. I served in Cabinet with him under Premier Bill Bennett and we all thought very highly of Hugh. We went through a rough time during the restraint program but he and the Premier bore the brunt of it. He was a terrific Minister of Finance and never lost his cool, no matter how rough it was. We also shared many laughs together, he had a great sense of humour. I will miss him.

Sincerely,
Claude Richmond

I returned home last night after being up at Port McNeill on a bit of business, and I was filled with sadness to see the departure of our sterling warrior.

If he was a Bond he would have been rated 'Triple A' by all the International Bond Rating Standards.

I will miss him very much. Like many others I used to pick up the telephone to gab on a regular basis every 2 weeks whether we were in our 3 months sojourn in the desert every year or whether we were here in East Sooke for 9 months.

We had many great lunches on Victoria, where we discussed every manner and variety of thinks of old friends, politics, cabbages and kings and antics in general.

Suzanne and I bought him an East Sooke Baseball cap and I was pleased he wore it with pride on our many lunch occasions.

As Executive Director of the Municipal Finance Authority of BC for 17 years I had much to do with him and I must say he was alone in the Provincial Government to see the importance of getting all local government borrowing under one wing and he was of great assistance in responding to our pitch of getting legislation passed to place Greater Victoria Water, Greater Vancouver Sewer, and Water and Drainage and Hospital Districts under the MFABC borrowing wing and under our Triple A credit Rating with great benefits to both sides.

His incredible service politically and later his 'one man show' running the Retired MLA's Association speaks for itself.

He worked until the very last moment with a great urgency to get the right things done for all of us. He was a vital, silver tongued raconteur with a perfect 'radio voice', an honorable politician, a gracious servant to the Province he was all of those things and many more - he will be missed.

Hugh was our hero!

Jim Craven

How unfortunate, Hugh enjoyed life and lived it to the fullest. I will dearly miss our 'coffee moments' discussing politics. Please extend my deepest sympathies to the family. My thoughts and prayers are with them.

Roy Cullen

Many thanks for your note. It is largely through the Association that I got to know Hugh personally and over the years had come to value his engaging conversation. He will long be remembered for his remarkable contributions to the local community and the life of the province.

Norman Ruff

Associate professor emeritus, University of Victoria

It is with great sadness I receive the news. Hugh & I were lifelong friends. We sold the Times Newspaper together back in the 40's and went on to serve in the Legislature.

Cliff Michael

I can't begin to tell you how sad this news has made me. I will certainly miss him. He went so suddenly, and although that may be seen as a blessing, it is still terrible news.

Please pass on my condolences and good thoughts to his children David, Gary and Susan and the grandchildren, whom he loved so much.

Joan Barton

So very sorry to hear this sad news. Hugh will be greatly missed by so many people. We have lost a great man. My deepest sympathy to his family.

Sincerely,
Valerie Green

I have been a friend of Hugh's since 1951 when we were both working at CJVI. We often visited Hugh and Sheila when my wife and I were living in Victoria. I think we had to sleep on air mattresses on the floor. We spent New Year's Eve at the Empress and Hugh's mother baby-sat Gary and our Susan. Hugh and Gary came to Montreal to visit us during Expo-67.

I last saw Hugh during the summer of 2011 when we had lunch together at a restaurant around the corner from his house. He arranged for me to tour Viking Air. Hugh loved *Orders of the Day*.

David Chamberlain

Please pass on my deepest condolences to David, Gary and Susan. Their father was one fine gentleman and politician. I first met him in 1964 when he was mayor/reeve of Saanich and I had just been hired by the Victoria Daily Times as a reporter and was assigned to cover Saanich which I did until 1970. I watched with admiration how Hugh worked with others, displaying considerable leadership qualities, in bringing about major improvements in Saanich: the four indoor recreation facilities, connecting up McKenzie Avenue as a through road across town, acquiring the McRae Estate (Cedar Hill Golf Course), protecting the Blenkinsop Valley as farmland, the Gorge Waterway beautification and more. I spoke with him almost every working day our routine was for me to phone him at CFX at 8:45am for news and views. I covered all the council meetings, public hearings and committee meetings and so I watched him and council and staff working together for the common good. Our work paths diverged after 1970 but in recent years we reconnected and enjoyed many conversations about politics and current events. And lunches at JJ Morgan. It was an honour to have known him. He will be missed.

Roger Stonebanks

Needless to say I was stunned to hear the sad news, as I'm sure all were. Hugh and I go back a long, long way. Our thoughts go out to David, Gary, Susan and family.

Sincerely,
Graeme Roberts

Please pass my condolences along to Hugh's family. He was an extraordinary person who loved this province and served it well. He will be missed by many, but I am sure by none more than his family.

In sympathy,
Andrew Petter

I am so saddened by the news Hugh and I became great telephone buddies over the past year and I will so much miss our banter. My prayers go out to his children whom he cherished and spoke of so often.

Shirley Stocker

Shock and sadness at the loss of a great man. I met Hugh when I was seventeen years old (I am now 70). He worked for a radio station and was the MC on the steps of the legislature when I was crowned Miss Victoria 1961. Also knew him during his years in the legislature as MLA and Cabinet Minister. I was the Premier's secretary at that time. My husband, Bill Ritchie, was a colleague of Hugh's also as an MLA and Cabinet Minister and he passed away in February. May I say, that heaven has two new members who will be a great addition to that realm. May God bless his family and friends at this time and give them peace. Let them smile as they honour this wonderful man.

Sincerely
Nina Ritchie

Thanks for notifying me of Hugh's passing. He was a good friend, mentor and colleague. He contributed a great deal in his service as a MLA and cabinet minister. He will be missed but fondly remembered by all.

Jim Hewitt

Over the past two years or so I have been having coffee every 6 weeks or so at JJ Morgans. Those were delightful days as we talked about old times and new times. I marvelled at Hugh's incredible recall and discussion of current events. Also, he still had his incredible voice.

At our last meeting I brought two former colleagues with me, Jerry Woytack and Jim Rae, both of whom worked for Hugh during their careers. That meeting was one of the sparks that led to Hugh's story in his last Orders of the Day on Expo 86.

My own initial contact with Hugh was in 1979 when as Minister of Finance he had responsibility for BC Systems and I was VP Finance. Two years later I privatized part of BC Systems with Hugh's concurrence and guidance.

I will truly miss my wonderful coffee sessions with and will remember him fondly.

Bob Skene.

Hugh and I first met at Vic High--he was ahead of me by a few years, but Stan Murphy, who taught journalism and who served as the reeve of Saanich, invited Hugh back to Vic High to talk to the class, of which I was a member. A great talk by the then whiz kid of Victoria radio! I think that was in 1954.

Of course, I have many other great memories of working with Hugh, when I represented Saanich as the MP and Hugh was the mayor, and later, when we were both MLAs in the opposition during the first NDP government.

A few weeks ago we were on the phone to one another trying to arrange a lunch early this summer, but sadly that will not be possible now.

Sandra and I would like to extend our deepest sympathy.

David Anderson

Never to hear again that deep melodious voice of his on the phone "Hi, just called to hear how you are doing." My deepest condolences to the family and to all the other ardent readers of *Orders of the Day*. He is and will be sorely missed.

Jeanie Campbell

Sorry to hear of Hugh's passing. He was someone who brought people together!

Tom Perry

I was indeed saddened to hear of Hugh's passing. We last talked a few months ago when he called and asked how Frances and I were doing.

Hugh took over my newly minted Housing portfolio when we lost the 1975 election. We shared a continuing interest in the senior staff: Larry Bell, Michael Audain and the late George Chatterton. It was while serving on a committee at the end of our 4th terms that I realized that we had other shared interests such as jazz music and a continuation of our common experience. Mark Rose, Frank Howard, Dennis Cocke and a few others from our side had talked of the former MP's association in Ottawa and it was on the special committee on televising the proceedings of the legislature that we found that the same ideas were being discussed on the other side.

Every year Hugh was asked to leave the general meeting in order to discuss the honorarium. We all agreed that we didn't know how the Association could function without him. We are sadly about to find out.

Lorne Nicolson



Biography of Hugh Curtis

Hugh Curtis was named Freeman of the Municipality of Saanich in 2002. Here is the biographical information that accompanied the honour.

Hugh Austin Curtis was born to Austin Ivor and Mary Helen Curtis on the 3rd day of October, 1932. A native of Victoria, B.C., he attended Sir James Douglas, Spring Ridge, Central Junior High and graduated from the historical Victoria High School.

Immediately upon graduation, he embarked on a career as a radio announcer. After hearing Hugh speak, it is obvious one of his many outstanding qualities is his rich glorious baritone voice. His extensive radio broadcasting and management adeptness encompassed the areas of sales, promotion, creative writing, producing and management. His talent, skill and impeccable work ethic won him the prestigious national award, the John G. Gillin Jr. Memorial award for public service radio series.

Highlights from his broadcasting days indicate his early interest in public service. While still in his teens, he undertook Sunday evening theatre rallies for Red Cross Blood donations and conceived and produced 'Spotlight on Youth', a teenage radio talent series. While in small boats and often seasick, his coverage of several attempts to swim across Juan de Fuca Strait accompanied by the renowned sports broadcaster Ted Reynolds, helped prepare him for things to come!

Hugh's political exposure came very early as his father, Austin, had served 25 years in local government. It was no surprise that gradually, his radio career gave way to elected office, thanks in large part to the encouragement of the late Stan Murphy, former Councillor and Reeve of Saanich. Hugh was elected for the first time to Saanich Council in 1961 and re-elected in 1963. He was elected Reeve in 1964 and re-elected for three consecutive terms. It was at the helm of Hugh's reign in 1968 that Reeve was change to Mayor, technically making him the first Mayor of Saanich! He was the first Chair of the Capital Regional District and was re-elected same in 1967, 1968 and 1970. During his municipal years he was also President of the Union of B.C. Municipalities, vice president for B.C. of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, and Chairman of the Municipal Finance Authority.

The accomplishments of municipal councils consist of coordinating consensus plus strong leadership. Some of the successes of Hugh's Mayoralty included the instituting of the Sewer Enterprise program, which permitted the installation of major sanitary sewer systems. He initiated the creation of the Urban Containment Boundary which prevented the carving up of rural Saanich, thus preserving areas such as the Blenkinsop Valley. In the early years, Saanich was truly in the dark and under Hugh's direction, there were major street lighting installations.

Famous for major and numerous parkland acquisitions, his legacy includes Lambrick Park, Elk/Beaver Lake Park, Mt. Douglas Park, Cuthbert Holmes Park, and numerous smaller ones. The acquisition of private lands around Swan Lake completed the project as it is today. Also, as chairman of the Capital Regional District, the East Sooke Park, Witty's Lagoon, and several parks on the Peninsula were purchased for

preservation and enjoyment. When he became Mayor, there were no Saanich Recreation facilities. Hugh lead the way to have the 'Indoor Recreation Referendum' passed which saw the building of the Les Passmore Seniors Centre, Pearkes Arena, Gordon Head Swimming Pool, and the Cedar Hill Recreation Centre. The initiation of the acquisition of McRae lands has lead to the busiest golf course in Canada, Cedar Hill Golf Course. And it was his initiation of the Gorge Shoreline Beautification project which inspired Victorians to enhance their portion which includes the Inner Harbour.

The Police and Fire Honour Guard for a Freeman Ceremony is very appropriate as Hugh proved very supportive of both, facilitating increased manpower, training, equipment and programs. He is an Honorary Member of Saanich Firefighter's.

It was in 1972 Hugh Curtis decided to toss his hat in the provincial ring, becoming a Member of the British Columbia Legislature. In 1975 he was appointed Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in 1978 he was appointed as Provincial Secretary/Minister of Government Services and in 1979 Minister of Finance/Chairman of Treasury Board. During his service as a cabinet minister, he was responsible for B.C. Transit, B.C. Assessment Authority, the Provincial Capital Commission, B.C. Buildings Corporation, B.C. Systems Corporation, Islands Trust, B.C. Housing Management Commission, B.C. Lottery Corporation, Sport B.C., B.C. Provincial Museum, the Compensation Stabilization Commission, Critical Industries Commission and was a member of the Board of Directors of B.C. Hydro and Power Authority.

It would be difficult to detail Hugh's contribution in his extensive provincial government career, but it is worth quoting 1977 Vancouver Newspaper Reporter Sean Rossiter 'What makes you suspend judgement on Curtis is the fact that, once given the public trust, he has never abused it.'

One notable credit of his many, while Minister of Finance he facilitated the acquisition of larger premises (St. Ann's Academy) for the Victoria Conservatory of Music. Being grateful for his efforts, they made him an Honorary Life Member.

All tallied, Hugh Curtis stood for elected office eleven times and was victorious in all eleven!

Hugh's legacy of dedicated commitment to public service is much broader than the government spectrum. Hugh has committed his energy to many worthy endeavours including Treasurer and Director of the Variety Club of BC, Past President and Director of the David Foster Foundation, and Honorary Director of BC Civil Liberties Association.

Through all his leadership, commitment and public service, his family has been steadfast. Married to Sheila, they had three wonderful children, Gary, David and Susan, who in turn made him a proud grandfather. It is with all successful, accomplished people that family sacrifices are made for the greater good. One quotable wish of his long career, would be that he could have had more hours to spend with his family. May history record, for their love, support and understanding, he is most grateful!

The aforementioned is but a glimpse of why, on March 23, 2002, after a unanimous vote of Council Freeman of the Municipality, the highest honour of the Municipality, is bestowed upon Hugh Austin Curtis