



# Orders of the Day

The Publication of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

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## One year on...

By John Ashbridge

Hard to believe it's been a year since he left us. May 27th, 2014. Far too sudden; far too soon.

But, as befitting the man who gave us so much of his time, his talents, his leadership, his wise counsel and - above all - his lasting friendship, the memory of Hugh Austin Curtis is alive and doing very well, thank you.

The Association of Former Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, whose course he can be credited with single-handedly directing through its first 17 years of existence, remains as viable and active an organization as was first envisaged when founded in 1997.

Its periodical newsletter "*Orders of the Day*," on which he worked tirelessly to assemble content and on whose behalf he spent countless hours communicating with its far-flung list of subscribers and contacts, remains in business and in good editorial hands - as publication of this latest issue will attest - still every bit as informative and interesting, since his passing.

Now, his parliamentary and personal legacy will live on through the establishment of *The Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund*, hosted by The Victoria Foundation. A more-appropriate, lasting tribute to the memory of the man and his lifetime of public service would be difficult to imagine.

Yet, sadly, we only get around to shining the editorial spotlight on our friend and mentor a year after his departure. Certainly, the fact-filled obituaries were produced and fond memories recalled when we learned

the sad news of his death short weeks before our planned, 2014 gathering at Government House. And, some among us would continue to question why this fine publication had never chosen to turn its attention to profiling the person who had so much in common with so many of us, one Hugh Curtis.

It's because he didn't want it. It was suggested to him in late 2009 that the upcoming, 40th "*MLA Profile*" of once and former British Columbia MLAs should finally include something about his own, personal history. An editorial submission on the life and times of Hugh Curtis was even prepared for inclusion in that scheduled, milestone edition. The editor-in-chief would not hear of it.

He did not elaborate on his reasons for "spiking" (newspaper term) his own personal profile. Perhaps he felt the public record was quite complete and that we already knew enough. Perhaps we did not.

One area upon which Hugh did 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 public life. His father was Victoria's Canadian National Railways "City Ticket Agent" who went on to win election as a post-war Alderman in the City of Victoria.

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**Her Honour**

**The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC**

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

# Thank You and Miscellany

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*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.

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## From the Editor's Desk

I have received a thought provoking note from Bruce Strachan that serves to remind me that part of my job at OOTD is to walk the fence with both ears on the ground. You can read Bruce's thoughts on the letters page.

In my heyday in the Press Gallery politics just wasn't newsworthy when everyone was singing from the same song sheet. My jaded editors constantly reminded me that only flying sparks and discordant protestations were deemed worthy of the Sun and Province news columns.

Oh, how my life has changed. My first few months at the OOTD editor's desk have been a time to test the waters and explore the potential of this wonderful bipartisan publication. That said, I am pleased Bruce has communicated his thoughts about a potential expanded reach for OOTD.

"I can see it taking on an additional role as a vehicle for thought-provoking political dialogue," he writes. "I'm thinking about an expanded format, non-partisan of course, taking the newsletter in the direction of broader comment and observation."

I hope you will give Bruce's letter your attention and let me know how you see OOTD evolving over the coming months.

Recently, I watched an episode of Vaughn Palmer's Voice of BC on Shaw. He explored health care issues with former health ministers Paul Ramsey and George Abbott. Their exchanges were cordial, reasoned and remarkably in sync despite approaching the issues from different political advantages.

If that is the kind of thing Bruce is thinking of then I'm all for it.

In his article marking the first anniversary of Hugh Curtis' passing, John Ashbridge reminds us that Hugh "worked tirelessly to assemble (OOTD) content and ... spent countless hours communicating with its far-flung list of subscribers and contacts." I will never forget my duty to honour his legacy as we spread OOTD's wings.

Finally, I am pleased to report that Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup> has been set for this year's Association of Former MLAs of BC dinner at Government House in Victoria. Hopefully, by the next issue the association will announce the special guest speaker for the evening.

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**(The late) Hugh Curtis**

*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 ably helmed this publication up through May 2014.*



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# Gifts to Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund “encouraging”

The pace of donations to a memorial fund to honour the late Hugh Curtis is encouraging, reports Sara Neely, Director of Philanthropic Services at the Victoria Foundation.

The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia established the **Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund** to honour the former minister of finance, active association member, and OOTD editor who died one year ago. The fund is hosted by the Victoria Foundation.

As of April 10, the fund had reached \$5,700, Neely says. The association donated seed money of \$4,000 to get the fund started. Now members of the association are growing the fund. It must reach a minimum of \$10,000 before grants can be awarded.

“We’re pleased with the response and look forward to it receiving further contributions to bring the fund to the level where it will be able to fully grant out in support of the BC Youth Parliament. Given that it was just announced last month this is encouraging,” Neely says.

Grants from the fund will acknowledge Hugh’s interest in youth and his commitment to the BC Youth

Parliament (BCYP). The fund will provide opportunities for wider participation in the Youth Parliament’s annual sessions in the Parliament Buildings in Victoria by helping to defray travel and accommodation expenses for two youth who live outside the Greater Victoria area.

BCYP is a youth service organization dedicated to fulfilling its motto: “Youth Serving Youth.” Each year, 95 individuals, ages 16 to 21, from around the province meet in the Legislative Buildings and debate legislation that outlines projects that will then be run throughout the year. In addition, Private Members Resolutions are introduced giving members the ability to debate any issue they choose to, while still participating in a practical lesson on the parliamentary process.

The Victoria Foundation, Victoria’s nearly 80 year old philanthropic organization, granted more than \$11.8 million to registered charities in 2014. Guided by its motto – “Connecting people who care with causes that matter®” – the Foundation has deep roots in the community and through its donors and grantees has touched the lives of thousands of British Columbians for the better.

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## An invitation to donate to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund

The Victoria Foundation looks forward to receiving donations to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund from all of Hugh’s well wishers and friends.

**By phone:** Call 250-381-5532 to make a donation by credit card directly via the Victoria Foundation.

**By cheque:** Send cheques to the Victoria Foundation at #109 645 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1G2. Please ensure they are made out to The Victoria Foundation. Note the name of the fund in the memo line or in a cover letter.

**Online:** The Victoria Foundation’s mechanism for online donations is [CanadaHelps](http://CanadaHelps) and the steps are:

- Go to [www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca](http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca)
- Click on the [Make a Donation](#) button and then on the “Online” link and then the [CanadaHelps](#) link which will take you to the Foundation’s page on the CanadaHelps web site.
- Click to indicate whether you want to donate now or monthly and you will be taken through the steps to make your donation.
- In the section for designation of your gift, click on the drop down menu to select the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund.
- You may pay with VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Interac or through a PayPal account.
- After you pay for your gift, CanadaHelps.org will send you an online receipt.
- There are several privacy permissions available. If you choose to include your name and address in the information which is sent to the Victoria Foundation, the Association will be pleased to acknowledge your gift.

If you have any questions about how to make a donation to the Victoria Foundation, please contact Sara Neely, Director of Philanthropic Services, at 250-381-5532 or [sneely@victoriafoundation.bc.ca](mailto:sneely@victoriafoundation.bc.ca)



# Lingering snowbirds get wings clipped

Many former MLAs have evolved into Snowbirds as they enjoy a well-earned retirement. Sadly, snowbirding comes with a warning these days.



If these happy wanderers think they can linger in the sunny U.S. desert as long as they please, they better check the cross-border regs. They are about to get their wings clipped and most don't even know it.

An agreement quietly signed last June by Canadian and United States border authorities allows information sharing between the two countries to ensure snowbirds don't overstay their welcome.

I'm an RVer and, like many of you, I assumed I could roam the U.S. for up to six months a year. That is wrong. The annual threshold is four months (120 days) and anyone remaining in the U.S. longer may be at risk of: Being considered a U.S. resident and having to pay taxes on worldwide income; losing their health care; and/or being deemed illegally in the U.S. and being banned from the country for three to 10 years.

What's changed? The new agreement - part of the Canada Border Services Agency's and Homeland Security's Entry/Exit Initiative - allows border officials to exchange specific passport information. Previously, you stopped at the American border on your way into the U.S., so they knew when you came in. But when you crossed back you came to the Canadian border, so there was no record of how much time you spent there. Now border officials can request that information.

Gail Hunnisett, a constituency assistant for Castlegar-based NDP MP Alex Atamanenko, (Southern Interior), has done some excellent research on this issue which she has shared with RV West Magazine.

Hunnisett says many Canadians believe that if they spend fewer than 183 days per year in the U.S., they will both avoid U.S. taxation and retain their provincial health

care. "This is a common misconception. In fact, retirees who own second homes and/or spend the winter months in the southern states may have to submit forms to the Internal Revenue Service in order to maintain primary residence in Canada."

As of last summer, each day a Canadian spends in the U.S. is automatically recorded by Homeland Security. RV West reports that Canadians who spend longer than 120 days may be subject to U.S. tax laws. In order to avoid liability for U.S. tax, you must file the Closer Connection Exemption Statement for Aliens (IRS Form 8440) with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. This form acknowledges that you have exceeded the "substantial presence test" in the current year, but establishes your closer residency connection to Canada. Individuals who file the form each year by June 15 may remain in the U.S. for up to 182 days.

Hunnisett says: "I think it's important to look at who this is targeting ... this is for people with RVs or homes, often retirees, who go down to the U.S. for the winter. It's a common misconception they can stay down there for 182 days and the primary concern is to get back to Canada, specifically BC, so they don't lose their medical coverage. But it's a little more involved than that."

Hunnisett says border officials can go back three years and look at how long you've been down there. She has some tips to make sure you aren't faced with an unwanted investigation.

- ❖ Every time you cross the border, write down the date you entered, the date you came back and the purpose of your trip. Don't rely on memory.

- ❖ If you travel to the U.S. on business you need to tell the U.S. border officials it's not a personal holiday. Chances are you will be waved through and it won't add to the day count.

- ❖ There are exemptions to the total day count. If you become ill or get into a car accident and can't get back across the border as planned, make sure you have documentation.

- ❖ Take the IRS form 8840 with you whenever you cross the border. That way if you're asked about time spent in the U.S., you can reply with accuracy.

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Small wonder that son Hugh would later parlay his already-popular broadcast profile at CJVI, and later at C-FAX Radio, 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 public-life accomplishments: 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 an Alderman and as its Reeve (a term changed to Mayor during his tenure) prior to being elected as an MLA in 1972.

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

And, for Hugh, there was also a life after elected office. Into his 80s, he remained busy with his ongoing

roles with Variety, the David Foster Foundation and BC Civil Liberties, to name but a few of the worthwhile BC-based charitable organizations that sought out his experience and insight.

Today, through *The Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund* - reflective of his lifetime as a broadcaster, politician, public servant - we can now ensure that some financial support can be offered to the young British Columbians of whom he was most fond and who may choose to follow in his very large footsteps.

And those of us who no longer count ourselves as 'young British Columbians' - or young anything for that matter - can still point with pride to the esteem in which this Association and its members continue to hold his memory and continue to keep alive his legacy ... through the reminder - found on Page Two of every edition of "*Orders Of The Day*" - that its one and only "Life Member" is '(the late) Hugh Curtis.'

(John Ashbridge is a former CKNW broadcaster and has been the Vancouver Canucks public address announcer since 1987. He is a long time supporter of the Association and OOTD, and a life long friend and colleague of Hugh Curtis.)



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# Another Successful BC Teachers' Institute

The Honourable Linda Reid, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, recently sponsored another successful British Columbia Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy (BCTI). Teachers from across the province spent four intensive days of professional development at the BC Parliament Buildings.

The 17th BCTI offered 14 elementary and secondary teachers the opportunity to learn about parliamentary democracy and the political process. The four main goals of the Institute are:

- To provide a successful learning experience enabling teachers to gain a deeper understanding of parliamentary democracy in British Columbia;
- To offer an opportunity for teachers to develop new lesson plans on parliamentary democracy and effective citizenship to the benefit of students, schools and communities;

- To encourage participating teachers to promote a greater knowledge of the importance and relevance of parliamentary democracy; and,
- To honour and recognize the achievements of participating teachers from across British Columbia.

The Institute includes briefings by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Clerks of the House, Cabinet Operations, Treasury Board, Chief Electoral Officer as well as both formal and informal meetings with elected officials. Tours of the Parliament Buildings include a behind-the-scenes peek at the Legislative Chamber, Speaker's Corridor and the Legislative Library – all highlighting the grandeur of our majestic Parliament Buildings. Other activities include presentations from Legislative Assembly staff on the Parliamentary Committee system and the Sergeant-At-Arms as well as panel discussions with Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Press Gallery.



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Teachers are divided into teams during the Institute. Each team is assigned a facilitator, an experienced teacher from British Columbia who has previously participated in the B.C. Teachers' Institute. Time is set aside each day for teachers to work collaboratively and to debrief with their facilitator. Each team will be responsible for developing a lesson plan/classroom activity based on their experiences at the Institute. Lesson plans are presented on the final day of the Institute, and made available on the Legislative Assembly website as resources for teachers across the province. This past February, three classroom activities were developed entitled "To Be or Not to Be... an MLA", "You have a Problem with this.... There will be a Bill for That" and "Using the Legislative Process for Social Change".

The benefits are immense. Teachers have a positive and direct impact on their students year after year. At the secondary level, most teachers have up to five classes of thirty students therefore having an impact of 150 students per term.

In the future, the BCTI will be accepting up to 30 participating teachers each October; to be held



Teachers from across BC take a break from four days of intense professional development at their Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy for an official photo with Honourable Linda Reid, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

during the week of the province-wide professional development day thereby making it easier for teachers to request substitution. Applications are open online now at [www.leg.bc.ca/bcti](http://www.leg.bc.ca/bcti) and the deadline is **June 30, 2015** to attend October 20 – 24, 2015.



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# Prince George at 100 ... "It's been quite a ride"

By Bruce Strachan

March 6th, 1915, the City of Prince George was incorporated. I've been there for just about half of those 100 years and believe me it's been quite the ride.



For openers here's a quick Coles Notes snapshot of the City and its history, then we'll take a look at the heart, soul and dynamics that shaped the community and made it what it is today.

Located at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako rivers, and in almost the exact geographical centre of the province, Prince George began life as a North West Company fur trading post and settlement in 1807. It was first named Fort George in honor of King George III. Historians tell us George III was quite mad which may explain the spontaneous and individual nature of the city, but more on that later.

Substantial development came when the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway announced that its rail line to the seaport of Prince Rupert would run through Fort George. In 1914 the railway arrived giving the small community an economic boost as well as a critically important connection to the rest of Canada. The next year the City of Prince George was incorporated.

For the next 45 years Prince George would develop as a sawmill town and the "Hub City" of the Central Interior. By 1952 the Pacific Great Eastern Railway - later to be called the British Columbia Railway - would reach Prince George establishing the city as a transportation centre.

The big change though came in the early 1960s. By this time W.A.C. Bennett was premier and local MLA Ray Williston was Minister of Lands and Forests. Williston - befitting from advice by Canfor and local foresters - learned that only 25 per cent of the wood harvested was ending up as merchantable lumber; the rest was waste. Williston introduced an incentive which would utilize the rest of the available fibre; it was called "third band" timber and this policy change brought the pulp and paper industry to Prince George.

The coming of the pulp industry to Prince George totally changed the city. Prince George became a boom

town and a community of enormous opportunity. Like thousands of other young people, my wife and I came to Prince George in the mid-60s and never looked back. Jobs were plentiful, investment prospects were abundant and it was great place to settle in, raise a family and build a career.

During that time the population tripled and with that increase came a need for big-city amenities. Prince George attracted many young professionals, including Europeans, people from the large Canadian cities and immigrants from the U.S.A. That in-migration gentrified the city. By 1970 the city saw the development of the Prince George Symphony Orchestra, The Cantata Singers, an excellent amateur theatre company and in general a thriving arts community. In the ensuing years the arts scene would expand to two more excellent amateur theatre groups as well as Theatre North West, one of Canada's best small professional theatre companies.

The next big change was the coming of the University of Northern British Columbia in 1990. Again, an enormous transformation bringing academics, research opportunities and a high level of sophistication to the community. Macleans ranks UNBC as the second-best small university in Canada. In 2004, UBC began a



Prince George townsite circa 1915

Image courtesy of The Exploration Place



medical school at UNBC and in 2012 the British Columbia Cancer Agency completed a full-service cancer clinic in Prince George.

Prince George is increasingly a city of enormous opportunity, high employment and low housing costs. You can buy a lovely home in Prince George for \$350,000 and this for a home that would cost well into the seven figures in the Lower Mainland. Plus, if you live and work within the City limits and it takes you more than 20 minutes to get to work, you need a better car.

With apologies to Carl Sandburg - Prince George is a city with big shoulders. And to pull a bit more at Sandburg's imagery, it is a city with a hammer in one hand and a graduate degree in the other. It is a city of contrasts, but they're captivating contrasts. You can hunt, fish, ski, build a log cabin or pursue world-class academic research in the same day and without undue travel time.

Let me close with a recent letter to the editor in The Prince George Citizen - our daily newspaper. The writer is from Ft. McMurray, AB who wanted to hear a live performance of Vaughn Williams "Lark Ascending." He googled a performance schedule and found two; one in Cincinnati, Ohio and one in Prince George. He chose Prince George. On arriving in the city, he went to a restaurant where he met a member of the arts community, who found him a seat for the dress-rehearsal, a backstage visit, a meeting with the soloist plus an after-concert party.

His letter was long, but this last sentence really sums up what our city is all about. "As I travelled home, Sunday, I thought that what most people don' know about Prince George is just about everything: sophisticated tastes, welcoming, friendly people, generosity of spirit; quiet local pride that theirs is a great community."

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# Spring - Is Where The Flowers Are

By Jim Hume

Residents of my home city, Victoria, BC, have been enjoying extended pleasures this year courtesy of a spring that sprung early with snowdrops popping up in January. What seemed like a few days later streets lined with ornamental-blossom trees exploded providing glorious pink or white canopies on just about every street, avenue and cul-de-sac in the city.

In late February and early March daffodils entered the beautification challenge. Tulips were quick to follow and citizens with five years or less as residents went into the annual gloat-boast with a flood of e-mailed photos to friends and relatives in Eastern Canada - or anywhere in the world where people were still digging out from under the white stuff.

Many an old friendship has been sorely tested - and will continue to be tested - until new citizens remember what it was like when THEY were still shoveling snow "back East"... while weather-snob on Southern Vancouver Island battled mini-whiteouts of blossom, drooled over crocus, and photographed clusters of bluebells from every angle.

Mature citizens - that's old folk like me - long ago grew to accept our early spring joyously, gratefully, while subduing



Iris garden at Government House

Photo credit - Friends of Government House Garden Society

the temptation to boast that while spring is undeniably early - again - this year, it isn't the earliest it's ever been.

On December 17, 1925, The Daily Colonist, ran a brightly boxed story with a headline: "Snow won't come, but snowdrops are seen in the city." Readers will have noted that date, or should, as they read the text of the story:

*"(With) All signs of winter failing to appear, spring seems to have taken the situation firmly in hand and has lately been busy writing trademarks all over the countryside.*

*"Snowdrops are the latest tributes to the fair weather and are to be seen blooming profusely for while the Colonist was informed recently of blossoms appearing this month, another notice was received yesterday of snowdrops that first unsheathed their buds on November 27 in the garden of Mrs. L.L. Phillips, 400 Gorge Road - and are still gaily blossoming."*

It wouldn't surprise me if even earlier "springs" have been recorded, but November, 1925, is the best I've been able to find. I merely note that 90-years ago global warming appeared well on its way and I don't think automobile exhausts were causing it.

Any words of comfort for friends living on "the other side of the Rockies" and still longing for the first snowdrop or even the sight of bare earth? Not really, other than the promise not to send flowers or photos of the same. I spent three winters in Edmonton, know how weary the wait for spring can be and understand what the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay meant when she wrote to a friend: "It's not true that life is one damn thing after another - it's one damn thing over and over again."

As I used to think when I had to reach, again, for the snow shovel.

***(Want to read more of Jim Hume's columns? Visit The Old Islander at <http://jimhume.ca>)***



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# Ivan Messmer: Not an easy act to follow

By Dale Boyd

A politician, athlete, businessman and most importantly a friend and family member, Ivan Messmer leaves a lasting legacy that continues to touch many lives.

There were as many laughs shared as there were tears when family and friends recounted the life of the beloved former Penticton Mayor at St. Saviour's Anglican Church in March.



Former Penticton mayor and MLA Ivan Messmer, seen here chatting with John Vassilaki at a political rally last year, passed away at 83.

Photo by Steve Kidd /Penticton Western News

Messmer died March 8 at 83. He held the mayor's chair in Penticton from 1980 to 1986, before running for the Social Credit Party in Boundary-Similkameen. He served a single five-year term holding the cabinet posts of Solicitor-General and Minister of Parks.

He was born in 1931 in Barrhead, Alta. Having never left Alberta, or even been on a plane, he was drafted to play baseball with the Pittsburgh Pirate's farm team.

Cindy Lewthwaite, Messmer's daughter, said during the service that he shared many stories about his time travelling through the southern U.S. playing baseball.

Once, while walking with his teammates, he stepped into the curb to let a woman pass. He was scolded by his teammates because the woman was black, they told him "that's no lady."

"Until the day he died, our dad always stepped into the curb for a lady," Lewthwaite said. "He gave us everything but an easy act to follow."

Messmer acted as a role model through the generations leaving a lasting impact on his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

"He challenged me to be a better person my whole life. Most kids growing up had a poster of Michael Jordan hanging in their rooms and I had a picture of grandpa playing baseball," said Matt Strohmman, one of Messmer's grandsons. Strohmman said his four-year-old son called Messmer a "great man" and that he left the best presents under the Christmas tree.

After playing baseball, Messmer returned to Canada, taking on many jobs including becoming the youngest grain buyer for the Alberta Pacific Grain Company. He also worked with a small-town lawyer handling the real estate division. The firm took over a construction company with 14 projects

underway and Messmer took over as manager. He would eventually own the company.

He and his family moved to Penticton in 1967. It was here he started getting involved in politics. He became an alderman in 1975 and eventually took over as mayor of Penticton in 1980. He would remain mayor for six years.

Family friend and political colleague Nancy McDonnell spoke of Messmer's political history at the service.

"Today I believe we all sit on the same side of the aisle and we're here to give our respects to Ivan," McDonnell said. "Ivan always felt that public consultation, service and volunteerism were the backbone of any community and Penticton certainly has its share of volunteerism."

She said Messmer loved participating in parades and festivals throughout the Okanagan, and it was his opportunity to get out and speak with the people.

"Ivan was a doer, a go-getter and a man with an overabundance of integrity and common sense. I will always call him my boss and my friend and will always miss him."

Through the list of achievements and accomplishments, and the legacy he leaves behind, the consensus was clear that Messmer was regarded as a friend, family member and an all-around humanitarian.

(Reprinted courtesy of the Penticton Western News.)

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## Chinese book of prophecy says: "Get out of town!"

By Brian Kieran

Like many old hands I lament the decline of our once great daily newspapers. Many of us grew up dependant on them for our news. I had the good fortune to grow up in them.

The very sad thing is that in their decline our daily newspapers are becoming more and more slaves to their shrinking advertising base.



The contest of wills between editorial and advertising has always been a fact of life. I learned that lesson early on in my career. In the 1970s I was briefly editor of the Nelson Daily News. The publisher was an advertising man whose mandate was to pander to the powerful merchants of Baker Street. He lived in mortal dread of what I might say on the editorial pages.

One day I was watching life go by on Baker Street from my office window when a city works crew pulled up to do some routine street maintenance. I took notes as three city workers idly leaned on their brooms while one of their junior co-workers completed the task at hand. I decided to share this appalling waste of taxpayers' dollars with my readers.

I must note here that Nelson was in the iron grip of Mayor Lou Maglio who could have played body double for Don Corleone in the Godfather movies. I must also add that the city works department was generously populated with members of Maglio's extended family.

When my piece appeared next day, the mayor flipped out. The Baker Street merchants flipped out because they were not subsidizing independent controversial thought and my publisher flipped out because he feared the mayor even more than the merchants.

I was summoned to the mayor's office to be lectured

on the role of the city's newspaper. When I failed to show the appropriate measure of regret Maglio became so livid that he had two cigarettes going simultaneously.

I pointed this out and left city hall a marked man.

Sometime later my best friend David showed up from the coast and we decided to celebrate his visit with an evening on the town. In the 70s, an evening on the town in Nelson meant just one thing, a visit to one of the local hotel bar rooms. At every establishment we were refused service at the door. Clearly, word had spread from the mayor's office to the merchants that the editor of the daily paper was persona non grata.

David was freaked and consulted his "I Ching" for guidance on my behalf. The I Ching is a complex ancient and classic Chinese divination text. Accessing its wisdom involves the production of seemingly random numbers that unlock the book's prophecies. Many guru-like, latter-day 1970s hippies (David) packed it everywhere.

As the saying goes, we "threw" the I Ching and it spoke to us in no uncertain terms. I paraphrase: "Some battles you win; some you lose; get out of town now!"

We immediately consumed a litre of Similkameen Superior red and called it a night.

The next morning I was awakened by the ringing telephone. It was the publisher of the now-defunct Nanaimo Free Press. He said he had heard on the grapevine that I might be looking for work and offered me the job of city editor over the phone, sight unseen.

This coincidental cosmic collision of rejection and opportunity had me in a state of stunned amazement. David just smiled like Confucius. Not remarkable at all, he said, patting the I Ching.

Of course, I accepted the new posting and got my butt out of Nelson as fast as possible.

When the Nelson Daily News was shut down years later I shed not a tear. I was told the publisher ended up working in a butcher shop.



# Len Norris



May 28, 1969

"Henry! d'you want to go in some kind of lucky lottery contest... if you can answer the simple skill-testing questions?"

## Advance notice of 2015 Annual Dinner

*Our Annual Dinner is scheduled for the evening of **Friday, September 25**, at Government House.*

*The cost for the dinner and the guest speaker will be announced as soon as the information is available.*

*Please mark your calendar for this popular Association event.*



# Letters

To OOTD:

Enclosed is my membership for 2015.

A quick note to inform you that I was elected to my sixth term on the Smithers Town Council this past November. We elected a much younger council this year; the average age is six years younger than the outgoing council, so I'm looking forward to the fresh ideas these people will bring. At 37, our Mayor is the youngest of all.

Bill Goodacre  
Bulkley-Stikine 1996-2001

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Hi Brian:

Congratulations re: Editor of The Former MLAs of BC newsletter.

Please find enclosed a cheque which is to cover Cliff's membership plus extra.

We are just back from Palm Springs where we spent the last nine weeks. Cliff went in the Tour de Palm Springs Bike Race and did 100 miles in six hours and 24 minutes. It was his fourth time in the event.

Good thoughts,  
Lois Serwa  
Kelowna

---

Brian:

Great to have Orders of the Day back - appreciate your hard work.

Dan Miller  
Victoria

Dear Editor:

As OOTD moves into new editorial hands, I can see it taking on an additional role as a vehicle for thought-provoking political dialogue. I'm thinking about an expanded format non-partisan of course taking the newsletter in the direction of broader comment and observation.

For example, it would be interesting to look at current political polling methodology and why it seems to have lost its accuracy. Two such examples would be the 2011 federal election which was predicted to result in a Conservative minority, or the BC Liberals 2013 surprise surge and win.

I know this is fraught with perils, but I think OOTD could expand its readership - and perhaps sponsorship - if it could appeal to a wider audience.

One other idea might be to offer op-ed pieces from the left and right. For example, two opinions on the current Lower Mainland transit tax issue. It will be over soon, but that's the type of column that could be interesting to our readers.

There's a lot of good talent out there. For example: Anne Edwards is a solid writer; so is Paul Ramsey. On the right side of the political spectrum we have Kevin Falcon, Colin Hanson and others who could contribute.

All the best  
Bruce Strachan  
Vernon

We welcome your letters - mail them to:  
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Victoria, B.C. V8N 6J3

Or email to: [oofd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:oofd.afmlabc@gmail.com)

## 2015 Association Dues

It's that time again. Dues for 2015 are due. For those who have already sent in payment, we thank you.

Annual membership in the Association is \$60 and that includes the subscription fee for *Orders of the Day* (OOTD).

Fans of OOTD who are not Association members should send in a cheque for \$40 to remain on the newsletter subscription list.

Cheques should be made out to:  
The Association of Former MLAs of BC

and mailed to:  
PO Box 31009, University Heights PO,  
Victoria, BC V8N 6J3



# Member News

Please send news about your activities to [ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com) for the next newsletter.

## Goodbye Burnaby; hello Bella Coola Valley

Joan Sawicki left the British Columbia Legislature as the NDP MLA for Burnaby-Willingdon in 2001. She also left city life.

Sawicki was the Minister of Environment, Land and Parks for the NDP government when she decided she wouldn't seek re-election in 2001. Today she lives the ideals she stood for in that portfolio in a remote log cabin located on two acres within Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.

"Citizen Joan's" cabin in the Bella Coola Valley is 45 km to the nearest town for groceries, another 15 km to Bella Coola for everything else. It's not an easy life, said Sawicki, but it's the one she and her husband envisioned long before her departure from the political arena.

"People, especially young families, move here for the clean water, the clean air and the ready access to nature and outdoor activities," said Sawicki, who volunteers with the local BC Parks office. "We never for a moment regretted the move."

Sawicki has worked to improve the way the cash-strapped Bella Coola Valley handles its solid waste by



salvaging surplus garbage trucks and recycling bins from her old stomping ground in Burnaby.

"I still smile each time I see the 'City of Burnaby' logo on our blue bins," said Sawicki.

*(Reprinted, with edits, from the Burnaby NewsLeader.)*

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## UNBC celebrates 25 years of northern learning

It was in June 1990 when members of the Legislative Assembly passed the University of Northern BC (UNBC) Act, officially creating Prince George's new home of higher learning.

The dream of having a northern university goes back to the 1960s when then-MLA Ray Williston set aside the campus land as a university reserve.

The modern UNBC story began in January 1987. Three local residents - Tom Steadman, Charles McCaffrey and Bryson Stone - had been talking about the idea of a northern university and decided to see if their idea had any merit by each inviting 10 people to a meeting on the topic. Forty showed up.

By the fall of 1987, after a dozen meetings, it had become apparent that there was considerable enthusiasm for the creation of a full university in the north, and on December 1, 1987, the Interior University Society (IUS) was incorporated under the Societies Act. Key founders would go on to chair the IUS: Murray Sadler, Elsie Gerdes, and Roy Stewart.

Important early support for the IUS was obtained from Bruce Strachan, MLA for Prince George South and Minister of State for the Cariboo Region, who saw the regional development potential of a northern university. This led to the commissioning of a study authored by Urban Dahllof, a Swedish expert on northern universities. His report, *Building a Future of Excellence: a University of Northern BC*, demonstrated the credibility and feasibility of a university in the north and was a major element of the IUS strategy.

The other elements included a petition signed by 16,000 people who had paid \$5 for the privilege, letters of support from every town, village, city, regional district, hospital board, school board, and chamber of commerce in northern BC and an Angus Reid survey indicating that 94 per cent of northerners were in favour of creating the university.

Then-Premier Bill Vander Zalm endorsed the northern university when he announced that Strachan would be the new Minister of Advanced Education.

In January 1990, Minister Strachan made a formal statement that the government had accepted the IPG recommendation that a university was to be established in the north with a main campus in Prince George. On June 22, the Legislature passed Bill 40 with all-party support. This officially created UNBC. The Interim Governing Council, chaired by Murray Sadler, then met formally for the first time on July 21. It was to act as both Board and Senate until such time as the University had gained the officers, faculty, and students capable of forming a senate.

In February 1992, a model of the Prince George campus was



In August 1994, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the university. Celebrating with her were the university's first Chancellor, Iona Campagnolo (far right), and then-Skills, Training & Labour Minister Dan Miller.

unveiled, and in March, members of Convocation elected the University's first Chancellor, Iona Campagnolo. April saw the official sod-turning ceremony for the Prince George campus, conducted by then-Premier Mike Harcourt. This was followed in May with the largest and most prestigious event in the university's history to date - the Inaugural Convocation Ceremony. August saw the registration of the university's first students when 70 students joined the "QuickStart" program at facilities in Prince George, Terrace, Quesnel, Dawson Creek, and Fort St John.

On August 17, 1994, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited Prince George to officially open the university. The event attracted upwards of 10,000 people to the campus for the ceremony. Many more watched on television, during a live, nationwide broadcast on CBC. Classes began three weeks later when 1,400 students participated in the start of full operations. Interestingly, thanks to Quickstart, UNBC produced its first graduates before the campus even opened: six students graduated that May.

Dan Miller, then-Skills, Training & Labour Minister, recalls: "At the time, it was the first new university opened in Canada in 35 years. I was very proud of our government's completion of this initiative begun by the previous administration.

"I even bought a new suit for the occasion, the first and only double breasted suit I ever owned," Miller says. "The Queen and I didn't chat much; my one line was 'welcome to Prince George your majesty.'"