

Barrie Touchings

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Camera: Don Bouzek

BT: I was born in 1947 in Edmonton and moved to Jasper Place in 1949. My parents – my dad was born in Edmonton but raised on a farm in the Thorhild area. His dad came from Newfoundland, worked his way across Canada, ended up in Edmonton; worked on construction, did one of the piles for the High Level Bridge, worked on the Flatiron Building, a couple of other buildings, the CPR building in downtown Edmonton; then ended up going out to the Thorhild area and homesteading. My dad's mother came from England; she ended up in Edmonton, went to Alberta College and did some sort of secretarial-type course, met my granddad, and they got married, and of course out to the homestead. My mom came from the Camrose area. Her parents – her father came from Kansas and Oklahoma with his parents in 1880s, thereabouts; they came up by wagon; they homesteaded in the Strome area. My mom's mom came up as a little girl from Idaho. Her dad was Scottish; he came up to the Wetaskiwin area apparently with a number of cattle, and farmed or homesteaded in the Wetaskiwin area. My two grandparents met, and they lived basically farming and homesteading in the Camrose area. They moved up to Thorhild and that's where my mom met my dad. That's my family background. My dad started farming when he was about 14 years old. His dad sent him up to another quarter-section that they had with a team of horses and some equipment, and it was his job to farm that quarter-section that summer. In those days in rural Alberta if you got a grade 8 education that was about all that was available. My mom wanted to go on – she was living in the Thorhild area, and all she could get was grade 8 there – she moved to Camrose to live with her grandparents for a couple of years, and I think she did her grade 10 and part of grade 11 in Camrose. My mom and dad got married in '44. My mom in the early '40s until '46 worked for Canada Packers. My dad worked on construction in the summer and farmed as well. In the wintertime for the most part he went up to the coal branch and did a couple shifts underground in a coalmine. He tells about, I think it was his second shift, the foreman came along and made them step back because they were taking out some bodies. He said, "That was

my last shift underground.” He then worked for a company by the name of Craig. They had a sawmill and maybe even a planing mill up there; he was a blacksmith, sawyer, and a number of things, but that’s what he did in the wintertime. When the war was over, my mom kind of left Canada Packers. Returning soldiers were the ones who were going to get the jobs. I think that’s basically what happened with her job at Canada Packers. I was born in ’47 and she was a full-time mom, stay-at-home mom. Generally speaking, in those days, women were not out in the workplace. The war was over, soldiers were coming home, and they were going to get the jobs. My dad worked on construction after they were married, basically house construction, but also schools and whatever there was for small industrial construction projects. In 1957 my dad got a job full time as a carpenter for the school board. Before that, on construction in the City of Edmonton, it was gangbusters during the summer months. In winter, you got laid off. He tried to get other jobs during the wintertime; I know he worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company in their warehouse for one or two winters. I remember a couple of winters he went up to Fort McMurray. They were doing something with regards to the DEW Line project out of Fort McMurray. In those days there was nothing in Fort McMurray, but he spent a couple of winters up there.

In fact, there was a little bit of concern as to whether he would really be able to work for the school board, because it was the Edmonton Public School Board, and he lived in Jasper Place. That was a bit of a concern; at least my parents expressed it as a bit of a concern as to whether he’d be able to keep this job.

Q: You moved to Jasper Place in 1949?

BT: Right.

Q: Do you know why your parents chose Jasper Place?

BT: Well, they bought this house on 154th Street and 104th Avenue, almost 105th Avenue. I don’t know why Jasper Place. I suspect it was because there was reasonably cheap

accommodation. They bought that house for roughly \$2,500. That was probably a lot cheaper than many houses in the City of Edmonton.

Q: Can you describe the house and the lot?

BT: The house had been built in '47, so it was a couple of years old. It was small, I'm guessing 600 or 700 sq ft. It had two bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen. There was a kitchen table where we ate our meals, and that was it. The basement was a bit of a dugout, and that's where we had our water barrels. Once a week they would come along and fill these, I think it was two, maybe three, 45-gallon barrels. We had a pump, so we'd pump the water from these barrels for our consumption. No bathroom; it was an outdoor toilet. For bathing, we had a tin tub. That was it. We did have electricity. No phone; we didn't get phones until mid-'50s, and when we got a phone, it was a party line, three people on a line.

Q: How long did that last?

BT: Until late '50s.

Q: Do you remember the company?

BT: I don't, no. It might've been AGT but I don't remember. The lot was 50 by 150. We had a small single stall garage with a driveway from the front. That was it. We had a big garden; the garden was probably 50 feet wide by 60 feet long. Both my parents being raised on the farm, we always had a big garden. We'd eat off that for the rest of the year. My mom would can, and later we got a deepfreeze and she'd freeze vegetables. We'd go blueberry picking every fall, we'd come home with three or four washtubs full of blueberries. She would freeze those, can them in the early days and then freeze after we got a freezer. My dad every fall would get a hundred pounds of sugar and a hundred pounds of flour, and that was to last us for the year.

Q: Where did you go blueberry picking?

BT: East of Clyde. There's some sand hills in there. I know my dad as a kid would go with his siblings and friends, and they'd go blueberry picking for two or three days. Can we pause for a moment?

Q: So you had a big garden. Did you have any trees?

BT: No. Actually, that's not true. There were a couple or three white poplars along the front edge of the property.

Q: Any hedges?

BT: No, no hedges. The road in front was a dirty road; if we got a rainstorm, it was barely passable. In fact, my dad used to tell a story about when they bought the house; before they took possession he went out to have a look. My dad drove an old Model A Ford. He said, "I couldn't find the place. I ended up somewhere south and west of this house that I'd bought, and I got to the place by driving over a beaver dam." Now that beaver dam would've been on about 155th Street and 102nd Avenue. There's a bit of a ravine there which is the end of the MacKinnon Ravine.

Q: There were massive ditches in Jasper Place.

BT: There were. I can vaguely remember when those ditches were dug. Before that, we didn't have those ditches. Somewhere in the early to mid '50s they did dig these massive ditches. To a little kid, they seemed extremely deep. I suspect they were 3.5 or 4 feet deep, but they were probably 10, 12 or 15 feet wide on each side of the road, under driveways of course, over top of them with culverts under the driveways. They were massive things.

Q: What was the runoff like in the spring?

BT: Sometimes the streets were virtually impassable. We'd have huge ruts down the street in front of our house. In fact, one of the neighbour kids and I, we were probably eight years old, went out one spring and we were lying in these ruts. The cars would come along and they'd see us and they'd have to stop. The driver would get out and he'd be really mad, and we'd just take off. Our parents found out; they were not very happy.

Q: Of course, there was no plumbing or water or sewer system.

BT: No, there wasn't. They brought water and sewer in, I think, in '57 in our area. Massive concrete culverts for the sewer; I can't remember what the water line was made out of. But there'd be these massive culverts piled up, and we as kids would like to climb on those. Of course, when our parents found out they were really upset, because of course these things could start rolling and cause serious injury and death. But you're an eight-year-old kid, you're exploring your world, and there are these culverts to climb on.

Q: Was there a furnace down in the dugout basement? Was it a crawlspace?

BT: It was almost a full height basement. We did have a furnace down there, and it was a gravity fed furnace. I can remember early '50s, my dad took all of the interior cladding off the walls – I think it was probably lath and plaster – and replaced the insulation. Whatever insulation there was in the walls was wood shavings; he replaced that with I think it was fibreglass batts, then gyprocked the inside walls. So that was one of his early projects with the house. Then in about '57, when they were bringing water and sewer in, he knew that was going to happen the next summer. The winter before, he spent the winter digging out the basement by hand. This is Jasper Place gumbo. It was clay, hard clay, sticky. I remember he would have these five-gallon pails. He'd fill up these five-gallon pails with this clay and carry it over to a conveyor belt which he had from the basement going out to the outside. He would turn on this

conveyor belt and these three pails of dirt would go up the conveyor belt and drop into a wheelbarrow. He'd then take this wheelbarrow and push it out to the back of the yard and dump it. The wheelbarrow was one of these things that split in the middle. So he could split it apart, drop the clay, put it back together, and wheel it back for another load. He spent a fair bit of the winter/spring digging out that basement. Once he got it dug out, he got some huge pillars, probably 12x12 beams. There were two of them that went north and south. He put those under the house, and with various other pieces of wood – 4x4 and 6x6 – he built these towers and jacked up the house. Then he built some forms to pour a concrete wall. He built a ramp around the outside of the forms – actually, a walkway three feet wide probably – and a ramp down to the ground. He got in a load of gravel, sand, some cement. He had a gas-powered concrete mixer, and he got a bunch of friends to come one Saturday, and they mixed up this concrete and wheeled it around and poured the cement walls for the house. Once the concrete had cured, he dropped the house down onto this foundation, then poured some more concrete for the floor in the basement. He built a little bathroom in the basement, so we now had indoor plumbing. We had a bathtub, we had a flush toilet, we had a sink. We had running water – hot and cold – for the kitchen. This was a big novelty; man, this was a modern house now. He took out the gravity furnace and put in a forced air furnace. He did all of this work himself, never hired any of it out. He did all the work except for the help he had in pouring the concrete foundation, and he had some help pouring the concrete floor in the basement.

Q: Was that over the course of one summer, or was it a multi-year project?

BT: That was one summer. He started digging in the winter and, by probably August, the work was done. My dad was a real worker. For example, in 1952 we got this brand-new car. He kept it for 10 or 12 years, but on at least two occasions, this car needed an engine overhaul. I remember he would come home on Friday, he would tear that car apart, take the engine out, tear the engine down, figure out what parts he needed. He had to have this figured out by noon Saturday because the parts dealers closed noon Saturday. So he'd have to have it figured out by noon Saturday so he could get the necessary parts. Then he'd spend Saturday afternoon and

Sunday putting the engine back together again, dropping it back in the car, and getting it going. He had to have this all done over the weekend because he had to go to work on Monday morning and he needed the car to go to work.

Q: For the supplies for his projects, did he go to local suppliers?

BT: I'm not sure where he would've gone. He had lots of connections, so he might've had some source for the gravel and sand. I'm not sure. There were parts dealers for the automotive parts, and I don't know where he would've gone. He might've gone to Taylor, Pearson & Carson; I think they might've had car parts, but I'm not sure.

Q: Where would he have gone for the beams that he installed in the basement?

BT: No idea. He had lots of contacts, especially working in construction. So he'd have had someone he could've got those beams from.

Q: Were there lumberyards in Jasper Place?

BT: There were. The only one I can really remember is some sort of hardware lumber supplier that was located between 149th and 151st Street south of Stony Plain Road where the Safeway store used to be; it's some other grocery store now. But that was an extension of the MacKinnon Ravine. It was a big hole; it was still part of the ravine. There was some sort of hardware store lumberyard down there, and I can picture it. We'd go in his Model T and have to wind our way down in this ravine to go to the other side because it was located on the south side of the ravine, and we'd be coming from the north. We'd have to get through there so my dad could go and get whatever things he needed from this place.

Q: That area was called the Case Lands. Does that ring a bell?

BT: It doesn't ring a bell, no. But I do remember some years later, probably the late '50s, they filled that whole ravine in. They built first of all a Loblaws store and they built a Safeway store across Stony Plain Road to the north. Then many years later they closed that Safeway store, they tore down the Loblaws store, and they built a new Safeway store on the south side of Stony Plain Road.

Q: But they filled in that ravine?

BT: They filled it in. I don't know where they got the fill material but I remember it being filled in.

Q: What happened with the clay your dad took out of the basement?

BT: I don't think he stripped back the topsoil, but he spread it out in the back of the yard. At about that time, they were building the Meadowlark Shopping Centre. That area was full of peatmoss, they were digging that peatmoss out. My dad borrowed a single axle large dump truck from his older brother, and I remember he probably got 25 loads of this peatmoss that they were digging out and brought it to our house and spread it in the back yard so we could continue to have a garden. He did that the same year that he was finishing digging out the basement and putting in the foundation. They had to bring the water and sewer lines in from the back alley to the house, so that was also bringing up a whole bunch of soil.

Q: We've heard that on the night of October 30th young people ran around doing tricks on people.

BT: The big trick was to push the outhouse over. Of course, it would've been a great event if there happened to be someone in the outhouse when you pushed it over. I remember one time, this would've been late '50s early '60s, it was Halloween night when the outhouse tipping occurred. We'd kind of finished with the Halloween activities and kids going around trick or

treating, and we drove to see some cousins for about an hour and came back. I remember my dad pulling up the driveway and he slammed on the brakes and jumped out of the car and took off. As we were driving up, his headlights caught the outhouse going over, and he was going to catch this guy who tipped over the outhouse. Didn't catch him.

Q: What happened, did you just put it back up?

BT: Just tip it back up.

Q: Anything else about your house?

BT: Another activity – house raising – was about 1957. In about 1960 they decided that my sister should have her own bedroom. My dad then dug out this area to the west of the house right beside the house so he could put in another concrete foundation. We had to knock a hole through the wall between the basement for the old house and the basement that was going to be under this new room. One of my jobs would be to help chip that hole out so we could have a doorway and go from one part of the basement to the other. So he dug that out, he put in a concrete foundation for that, poured the concrete floor, built the room for an extra bedroom on top of that. Then we had a three-bedroom house.

Q: What was the neighbourhood like? Which neighbourhood was it?

BT: This was Canora. I was on 154th Street and almost 105th Avenue. Almost all of the houses were similar to the one that we lived in. Some of them were, quite frankly, a lot older than that. There were a lot of houses closer to Stony Plain that would've been built probably between 1910 and 1925. There were some houses on 154th Street and between about 102nd and 103rd Avenue that were on lots that were 33 feet wide, and they were quite small houses. If you got further east, 152nd Street, 151st Street, a lot of those houses were a lot older than ours. When we first moved there it was a brand-new house, 1949. In the mid '50s we got a few more

houses that were built in the area. They were big and fancy, to our mind. They were probably 900 to 1,000 sq ft; they might've had three bedrooms. And, of course, built after 1957, they would've had the full basement with water and sewer.

Q: Were there development companies that built a whole bunch of houses and then sold them?

BT: I don't know of any in our neighbourhood. Certainly, there were development companies that were involved in house construction in Edmonton. My dad worked for some of them – a number of companies that he did work for. In fact, my mom had some old scribblers where she kept track of my dad's wages and who he was working for and that sort of thing.

BT: So most of the houses around you were single family dwellings.

BT: Yes. One-storey, single-family, no duplexes.

Q: No walk-up apartment blocks?

BT: No walk-up apartment blocks. I can't think of any walk-up apartment blocks until mid to late '60s, and that would've been just north of Stony Plain Road.

Q: What about shops and businesses?

BT: When we first moved there, there was a corner grocery store on 156th Street and 104th Avenue. That quickly closed and they moved to 154th Street and 105th Avenue on the southwest corner, southeast corner of that intersection, kitty-corner from Canora School. That was Sam's Groceries. It was run by a [...] Chinese family. My recollection is, it was like, mom and dad, maybe grandma and grandpa, kids, and they all worked in the store. They lived in a little building just beside the store. It was very basic groceries: candy, pop, that was about it. There

were some commercial establishments on Stony Plain Road, but very few. There was Horan's Hardware, which was over at Stony Plain Road and I'm thinking 156 Street. I could easily stand corrected on that. For groceries in those early days in the '50s, I remember we would have to go to a Safeway store which was located on 124th Street and Stony Plain Road on the northeast corner of that intersection. It was a fairly small Safeway store, and it served a huge geographical area. We tended to go there on Friday nights or Saturdays. It was crowded and there would be I'm guessing four or five or six cashiers at the front. Everybody was lined up to the back of the store with their grocery carts. Safeway then built the new store that I mentioned, on 151st Street north of Stony Plain Road. That was a big event, because now there was a closer grocery store, and it was bigger. The other source for groceries was when Westmount Shopping Centre was built. Woodward's had their department store, and they had a grocery store there. I'm trying to remember when Westmount Shopping Centre was first built, but it was really the first shopping centre I think in the City of Edmonton. My parents for a few years there would go to the Woodward's grocery store. This was a big event for me because I kind of like books. They would drop me off at the Woodcroft Library north of Westmount Shopping Centre, and while they were getting groceries, I'd get my six books for the week. You were only allowed six books you could take out every week.

Q: There wasn't a library in Jasper Place at that time?

BT: No, there was no library in Jasper Place, not any that I was aware of. I don't think we got a library in Jasper Place until the early '60s.

Q: Do you remember ever going to the Jasper Place Department Store on 153rd and Stony Plain Road?

BT: I knew of it, but I can't ever remember going to it. I think it was 153rd or 154th and Stony Plain Road. I do remember in later years when they built the IGA between 154th and 155th Street south of Stony Plain Road.

Q: The Clock IGA.

BT: Clock IGA. I think there was a Clock IGA before that on Stony Plain Road west of 156th Street, north of Stony Plain Road. But I don't have very good recollection of that.

Q: Where did you and the other children go to play?

BT: In our yards. There were no fences, so we used to be able to just run through the neighbourhood. Nobody had any fences. We would go over to the Canora School. They had a little bit of a playground there, at least from the mid '50s on. So we would go over there to play on the playground equipment that there was. They had a slide, teetertotters, and some swings; that was about it. Other than that, we played amongst ourselves. We didn't have much by way of playthings. The big thing in those days, which would be considered highly inappropriate today, would be playing cowboys and Indians. For what movies we had, they were westerns, and the westerns tended to be cowboys and Indians. Very politically incorrect by today's standards, but that's what the fare was. We would try to go to the Saturday matinees at either the Jasper Cinema or the Tivoli Cinema. One was on 156th Street, the west side of the street north of Stony Plain Road – that was the Jasper Place theatre. The Tivoli theatre was on 149th Street, west side of the road north of Stony Plain Road, roughly where Apache Seeds is today. If we could get a quarter, we could go to the movie theatre and we could get a popcorn and a pop. But to get that quarter was often very, very difficult. I remember one time, and this would've been probably when my dad was doing the basement job, I went to ask him if I could have a quarter to go to the theatre this Saturday afternoon. He lost it, "You kids think money grows on trees," this sort of thing. Looking back on it, he was under a lot of stress doing this job; a quarter was a lot of money back in those days. At that stage, my dad was probably working 44-hour weeks on construction, and he was probably earning about \$20 or \$25 a week.

Q: Did you get an allowance?

Commented [CL1]: This text in orange has been added to another post: Memories / Reminiscences: <https://jasperplacehistory.org/memories-of-jasper-place/>

Commented [CL2R1]: See also p. 15 about sledding

Commented [CL3R1]: Going to the movies was excerpted in the profile, from here p. 12 and from p. 16 about movies in Canora School.

BT: I did get an allowance later. I would've probably been 14, and what allowance I got was not much. It would've been, I'm guessing, 50 cents, maybe a quarter. I do remember my first job. My dad sent me out to work on construction to help support the family. I would've been five years old. He took on an evening job where he was building chimneys in new houses that were being built. In those days, the chimneys were concrete blocks about 20 inches square, 8 inches high, with a hole in the middle. My dad's job was to build this chimney from the basement of the house up through the roof, and each of these blocks had to be mortared together. He was working on two-storey houses. It was a lot of work to carry these concrete blocks up to the second storey. My dad rigged up a beam extending out the window of the second storey with a pulley on the end and a rope. This is when we had the old Model A Model T, which we got rid of in '52. He'd tie one end of this rope to the bumper of the car. The rope would go over the pulley and have a hook on the bottom, and he would move all of these concrete blocks under the window. I would have to take this hook and hook it through the block and then around the rope, and signal to my mom. I would then have to run around the corner of the house and my mom would back the car up, lift the block up, and my dad would be upstairs, and he'd pull the block in through the window. At the end of the summer when the job was done, my dad paid me some money. It couldn't have been much. I suspect it was well under \$5, but that was payment to do this work. I remember my mom and dad sitting me down and talking to me about this money: what are you going to do with this money? I'm five years old. What does a five-year-old kid want to do with some money? This was a fortune to me. "Well, I'm going to buy some candy and some toys." They explained to me that what I could do is I could take that money and I could put it in a bank. "Well, what's a bank?" "Well, it's like your piggybank, but this is a building. They'll store your money for you, just like your piggybank, and they'll keep it safe. No one else can get the money, and that's a lot safer than your piggybank. Your friends could come over and take your money out of your piggybank, but they can't take it out of the bank. The other big advantage is that they will pay you interest." "What's interest?" "Well, they'll pay you a little bit of money for being able to hang onto your money." Well, this is a no-brainer for me. Instead of \$5 or whatever it was, next year I could maybe have \$5.50. So that

was a no-brainer; my money went in the bank. My family tells me that that's how I got the reputation of being cheap.

Q: But you did play as well? You had a bike.

BT: I had a bike. I would've been I think it was nine years old. My dad went to a police auction, and he bought this bike for me, and he paid \$9 for the bike. That's a lot of money. That would probably have been two days' salary for him, but he bought this bike for me. The thing was so big I couldn't ride it. I had to teach myself how to ride this bike by putting my feet through the crossbar. I couldn't sit on the seat, so I'd have to ride this bike like this. It was probably two to three years before I could ride the bike properly by sitting on the seat, because I was too small. But that was my bike, and I had that bike up until I was finished high school. The other thing about that bike, it had these very narrow tires. In those days you couldn't buy a tire for the bike because the tires were so narrow. I was continually trying to patch the tires for this bike. Every time I got a flat, I'd have to take it all apart and patch the tire.

Q: Where did you go on your bike?

BT: Generally, in the neighbourhood. I remember when they built the Jasper Place Hotel, and about the same time, they paved Stony Plain Road. I remember one Sunday morning taking this bike and going down to Stony Plain Road. It was all blocked off, fresh pavement, and I had this huge flat area that I could ride the bike on. That was a real treat.

Q: Did you go west of 156th?

BT: Not much until probably late '50s early '60s. We used to go to an area which would be west of Mayfield Road, probably about three blocks west of Mayfield Road and about 111th Avenue. There was a farmer's field there and he had some bush. We went to that area, and we built a fort in that bush. That was late '50s early '60s.

Commented [CL4]: This text in blue about his bike was added to "Getting Around: Part One":
<https://jasperplacehistory.org/getting-around-in-jasper-place/>

Q: Were there roads? What was the infrastructure there?

BT: Roads, the roads were there as they are today. But they were dirt roads. At some stage they started putting some gravel on the roads, but it quickly disappeared into the clay.

Q: What about wintertime? Did you play hockey?

BT: There was hockey. I was not actively involved, though I had contemporaries who were quite active in hockey. Some of us would sometimes build skating rinks in the back yard. We'd flatten the snow down and, after we got running water, we were able to use some of this running water and make a skating rink. I built a number in the back of our yard. The family Zawaski two doors down almost always had a skating rink. That was one of our winter activities. The other thing we often did in the winter is, we didn't have toboggans, but we would go to what we called Cinder Hill. That was on MacKinnon Ravine on the south side of the ravine at about 147th Street. It was an area where we could slide down. Along the way we'd stop at this brand-new Safeway store and we would take some cardboard boxes out of the dump area behind, and we'd use these cardboard boxes as our sleigh.

Q: How far down could you go?

BT: Oh, to the bottom of the ravine. It was quite a hill, I'm thinking 80 feet high, fairly steep. We had to be careful that we didn't hit the trees on the other side of the ravine. It was popular for kids in our neighbourhood, and also popular for some kids on the Edmonton side. There was a skating rink. If you didn't play hockey, you could go skating. There was a rink in the Canora School grounds area. They had a little rink shack, and you could go skating there. That's something that I did a fair bit of. Can we pause for a minute?

Q: We've come across parade photos for the opening of the Tot Lot in Canora. Does that ring a bell?

BT: No. I do remember I think we had a parade on Stony Plain Road once in a while. I have a vague recollection of that. We also had some of these little fairs with rides that would come through from time to time. They would set up their rides in Canora School grounds, for example. They had maybe four or five rides. You could go there and pay your 5 cents or whatever and have a ride. They were midway fair type rides. There'd be a Ferris wheel, some ponies, maybe a merry-go-round, that sort of thing. Each one had maybe five or six rides. That happened with some regularity for eight or ten years every summer. Another thing that happened is people would come through with movies, theatre movies. This was before I had any recollection of a movie theatre like the Tivoli theatre or the Jasper theatre. They would play these movies, for example, in the basement of Canora School. People in the community would come and they'd pay their 5 cents, or whatever it was, and watch this movie. I have a friend who, later when he was 12 or 15 years old, had a little business going around playing movies in Jasper Place.

Q: Would it have been the National Film Board?

BT: No. These were, I think, Hollywood produced movies. One movie I can remember was about Stanley and Livingston. It was black and white. I remember this one scene with these porters with loads on their head, and there's a long line of them going on this trail. That's one of the movies, but most of them would've been cowboy movies, western movies.

Q: What about your school years?

BT: I went to Canora School to start with, started there in grade 1 and went through in Canora until grade 6. Even though I was only three houses away from Canora School, for grade 7, they took people from our neighbourhood and moved them to Brightview School, which at that time

was on 151st Street south of 105th Avenue, so I took grade 7 there. Then, for grade 8, I was back to Canora. For grade 9, they bused us to Lynnwood School. People south of 103rd Avenue went to Central, which I think was located right where the Orange Hub is now. But because I was north of 103rd Avenue – I think was the cut-off – they bused us to Lynnwood School. They had probably seven or eight classes of grade 9s in Lynnwood School. Then for grade 10, we went to Jasper Place Composite High School. That would've been 1961, and that was the first year that Jasper Place High School was opened. I was in the grade 10 class for the opening of that school. They had grade 9 as well and, of course, grade 11 and 12. The high school before that had been Brightview and before that it was Centre High.

Q: Who were your classmates? How big were your classes? Any memories of teachers?

BT: Of course, I had some good teachers and some poor ones. Our classes generally would've been 30 to 38 students in a class, a fairly mixed bag of students. There were a fair number of Ukrainians that lived in the community, and some of them I'm still in some contact with. There was one oriental family, one black family. In the mid '50s we started getting some Europeans immigrating to Canada and a lot, quite frankly, from the Netherlands. Interesting they would come here. They would tend to be put into a class about two grades lower than what they should be. They'd come here and they didn't speak a word of English. Within six months they'd be fluent, and they'd move up through the grades; they'd accelerate them. Starting in when I was in about grade 7 – that's my first recollection – we had a number of Indigenous students that joined us. They lived in a residential school at St. Albert, and they would bus them in from St. Albert to a number of schools in Jasper Place. For example, in my grade 7 class, we probably had three, four or five indigenous students. My recollection is that most of them came from B.C. They were with us then from my grade 7 level right through high school, and in high school we had a fair number of indigenous students in Jasper Place, at Jasper Place Composite.

Q: Would they be bused in daily?

BT: They'd be bused in daily, and they'd go back to the residential school for their meals and sleeping in the evening.

Q: You talked about the music in your school.

BT: We always had music classes. In high school we'd have high school dances, and we'd tend to get what became big name bands: The Rebels, Nomads, Privilege; Barry Allen, I remember, was one of the artists that came to play. One of my high school classmates was a guy by the name of Al Water, and he played in a number of the big bands. He started in high school playing sax. He played with all of them. The Indigenous students formed a rock and roll band called the Chieftones. They met with considerable amount of success. I think they cut a CD. They went to Vegas a number of times and performed in Las Vegas.

Q: Did they play for school dances?

BT: I can't remember them ever playing for school dances. We would have talent shows in high school where students put on skits and played music. I remember one high school student, George [Sackelerio?], who played classical guitar music. He was phenomenal.

Q: How often did these school dances happen?

BT: Four or five times a year.

Q: What about the people who lived around you in the neighbourhood. What was their heritage?

BT: Most would've been... I'd say 40 to 50 percent would've been Anglo-Saxon, 20 to 25 percent Ukrainian. I remember in the mid '50s, a Japanese family moved a few doors down from us. They came from the Taber area. We had a few indigenous families, not very many. I

remember my dad had a friend who lived two or three blocks south of us who was an Indigenous family. I remember another kid in school came from somewhere north of where we lived, who was indigenous. But I think there was the one black family, and that's about it.

Q: Did they live close to you?

BT: No. The Ukrainians certainly lived close to us. I can think of four Ukrainian families that lived within a couple of blocks, five, six.

Q: Were the people in the community mostly working class?

BT: Yes, most people who lived in our community were tradespeople: carpenters, plumbers, electricians, general labourers. There were certainly no professionals that lived in the community. I would say that the average educational level of the adults in the Canora area would've been grade 6 to 10, average. I don't know of any adult in the Canora area who had a university education. There probably was some, but I certainly didn't know of it. It was almost unheard of for any students to go to university. When I got into high school, I had an ambition to go to university, and a number of my classmates did as well. I don't know where that came from because I certainly was never exposed to people with a university education. I was barely exposed to anyone with a trade school education. NAIT didn't exist in the early days. Most people with a trades ticket were grandfathered. They never had any formal education; it was just on-the-job training. My dad as a carpenter was grandfathered because he'd done carpentry work all his life.

Q: Did these tradespeople work within Jasper Place, or did they have to go outside the area?

BT: They worked all over. A lot of them worked in the city. A lot of them worked on house construction, but other types of construction activities, some in maintenance.

Q: Did your teachers live within the community?

BT: Some lived in the community. Those were people who, at least some of them, had a university education. There were certainly some of the teachers who had a normal school education. I can remember one of my teachers – my grade 5 teacher, a very good teacher – she had a normal school education. At one point they weren't going to hire any of these normal schoolteachers anymore, they had to go back and get a university degree. So I have to correct myself when I say I didn't know anyone with a university education. Yes, certainly our teachers, some of them, would've had a university education. Doctors would have. There were, I guess, lawyers around. I didn't know who they were, though my parents I remember dealt with a lawyer in the city of Edmonton. He would've had a university education. I went to a dentist; he had a university education. But he was not living in our community; none of them were. Helen Merkey, the grade 5 teacher, lived in our community. Others that I'm aware of lived in the city. Once I got to high school, some of those teachers lived in Jasper Place. They didn't come from the Canora area, but they did live in Jasper Place. Lynnwood, for example, some of the teachers lived there. John Bibby, who was our high school vice principal, lived in the community. Walter Sherick lived in the community.

Q: Were there medical clinics and dentists in Jasper Place?

BT: I can't remember any dental office in Jasper Place. I remember my mom took us to a dentist in the Tegler Building in downtown Edmonton. That's the only place I knew there was a dentist. There was a doctor, McAlpine, a doctor in any event, who worked in Jasper Place. I think he may have had his office on Stony Plain Road. He did house calls, but there were no medical clinics that I'm aware of. You want to see a doctor, you went to his office, or you called him and he'd come out to the house. If it was an emergency, you'd go to the hospital, which would be in Edmonton. You'd go to the old Misericordia, which was 110th Street south of Jasper Avenue or the General or the University Hospital. I don't know when the Royal Alec Hospital was built, but that eventually became an alternative.

Q: Were you or any family members ever hospitalized?

BT: Nope, none of us. My dad cut a finger off one time and he had to go to the... I think he went to the General Hospital emergency.

Q: Did they sew it back on?

BT: No, he'd chopped the damn thing off.

Q: So you didn't have any cases of TB or anything like that?

BT: I have no recollection of TB. I do remember that polio was a concern. I had a cousin who was a fair bit older than me, married with kids, lived on 152nd Street and 106th Avenue. I can't remember her as having polio, but she had had polio and recovered. She had no mobility problems or anything as a result of it. But I remember it was a real concern. When the polio vaccine came out, everybody lined up to get it. There was no question about it. You just did it and you got the vaccine because you did not want polio.

Q: That was in the schools?

BT: Yes, those would've been administered in the schools. Every year the nurse would come through and update your vaccinations. There was no such thing as getting parental consent. There was no such thing as, "Oh, I don't want a vaccine." You got it. You didn't question it, it was done.

Q: Was it a transitory population?

BT: For the most part, people would move into their house, and they'd be there for 10, 15, 20, 30 years. My parents didn't move out of that house in Canora until about 1993. When they did, they just moved south of Stony Plain Road into a new house that they built. But people would basically move into the area, and they were there for many years. Of course, you always had some that would be there for six months or a year, but there weren't many of those. Some of them, when they did move, did move into some might say fancier neighbourhoods, bigger houses, but not significantly bigger. Once they started developing Mayfield, Meadowlark, Lynnwood, some people moved into those neighbourhoods. But not many.

Q: Was there an integration between the neighbourhoods in Jasper Place? Did the children from different neighbourhoods play together and go into each other's neighbourhoods?

BT: No, you stayed in your own neighbourhood as a child. My parents would've had more contact outside of the Canora area, especially my dad, because he's out working every day.

Q: But the children stuck to their own neighbourhoods.

BT: Yes. In fact, I was in the public school system. There was the separate Catholic school system, and quite frankly you never really saw one another. You'd see the kids from your school system, but you wouldn't play with the kids from the other school system because you didn't know them, you didn't go to school with them.

Q: How about High Park, which was just north of Canora?

BT: We'd go there for track meets or baseball games or something like that. That was one of the other activities that we did – we played softball in the summertime. Virtually no soccer. But we'd have some relationship with some of the other schools with regards to sports activities, like a softball game, track meet. I remember every year we'd have a track meet at a park off

156th Street. I can't remember the name of the park. But all of the schools from Jasper Place competed in this Jasper Place track meet, so you'd get the day off.

Q: And that's where you all met.

BT: Right. Even though you might meet some student from some other school there, it was just for the purposes of the track meet. You might not exchange any communication with them. They were just there, you competed, you went your separate way. In my recollections, I never had any contact with any students from other schools outside of, for example, the track meet.

Q: Did you use the bus system in Jasper Place?

BT: We did to go downtown, which was to go into Edmonton. There was a bus company in Jasper Place called Diamond Bus Lines. I never took the Diamond Bus Lines to go anywhere in Jasper Place. I did take Diamond Bus Lines to go into the city of Edmonton – with my mom, it would've been. If you wanted to go beyond wherever the Diamond Bus Lines depot was (I can't remember where that was), you'd have to get onto the Edmonton transit system, which meant you had to buy another ticket. On a number of occasions, I remember my mom walking with me and my younger sister to catch the City of Edmonton transit lines. We would have to walk to Stony Plain Road and 148th Street, which was the terminus for the Edmonton bus service. They had a little turnaround there right above Cinder Hill. That way, we wouldn't have to pay two bus fares, we could save that Diamond Bus Line fare.

Q: You spoke previously about playing near the old Edmonton Yukon & Pacific Railway.

BT: In the early days there used to be a railroad line that went just north of 105th Avenue. There was something that was published a few years ago that talked about a railroad line just north of 107th Avenue. I don't think there was one there. It's north of 105th Avenue. I could find a map for you that shows where that rail line was. I do remember that the berm for the line –

Commented [CL5]: Segment in green text has been used in the post on Getting Around: Diamond Bus Lines: <https://jasperplacehistory.org/getting-around-in-jasper-place-part-two/>

the raised area where the tracks ran – ran through the Canora School grounds. There was this mound that would be three or four feet high when I was young, ten feet wide. It ran from Canora School east to 154th Street and it ran west of the school up to the alley between 155th and 156th Street. There was a distinct raised area, obviously a former bed for a railroad line. I do remember that one of the Zaloskis, who were neighbours of ours, one of the kids, found a spike from the old line, and had that saved for a number of years. But that line was definitely there and I remember **it**.

Commented [CL6]: Use this comment for the post on EY&P, to be written, and linked later

Q: Do you know if it still exists?

BT: I don't think so. I think they've flattened it completely.

Q: When would that have been?

BT: It was there from when I was a little kid up until at least the late '60s.

Q: As you got older, did you continue to work with your father?

BT: My dad, especially after he got the full-time job with the school board, would put in his eight hours there, then he'd take on odd jobs in the evening building cupboards for people, building a rumpus room, building a garage. I was oftentimes coopted to help with these projects. I didn't get any more money, I don't think, but yeah, I would have to help with these projects. If he was making cabinets, I'd load them up on the roof rack on his car and take them to wherever he was going and install them.

Q: Did you work anywhere else in Jasper Place?

BT: I had a job as a kid delivering flyers for a little grocery store near the Tivoli theatre. They produced a flyer once a week or once a month, and they'd hire kids to go deliver these flyers. I

did that for a while. Then I got a job with the Clock Drugstore delivering drugs to people in the community. The flyer one I did periodically for three or four or five years. The drugstore one I think I did for a month or so.

Q: Did your mother work in the community?

BT: No, she was a stay-at-home mom. We didn't think of it as work in those days. But once I got into university and my sister left home, she got a job. She worked for Birks Jewellery for a while and then she got a job with the provincial government in their Social Services department. She worked with them until she retired.

Q: She's younger than you?

BT: Oh, my sister? I was talking about my mom. My sister is two years younger than me.

Q: Do you remember any other women in your neighbourhood who worked outside the home?

BT: Yes. There was a lady who lived across the street from us who did work outside the home. She worked for Taylor, Pearson & Carson. Quite frankly, all the time that they lived there, I think she worked outside the home. When her children were younger, my mom babysat them before and after school sort of thing. That's the only housewife that I have any recollection of from our neighbourhood that worked outside the home. Everyone else was a stay-at-home mom.

Q: Did your family participate in civic politics?

BT: No, I had no interest in it. My parents had no interest in participation. They would certainly have comments from time to time about various political things that were in the news.

Q: About the Town of Jasper Place?

BT: No, not about the Town of Jasper Place. I can't remember them ever expressing any opinion about amalgamation. One civic matter that was on a plebiscite one time was about whether they were going to permit alcohol to be served. It was approved, and that's what resulted in the Jasper Place Hotel on 154th Street and Stony Plain Road. Some years later, they put in the New West Hotel up on 111th Avenue and 152nd Street; then, many years after that, the Saxony Hotel. But that was big time stuff, because now we had three hotels serving alcoholic beverages.

Q: And playing music.

BT: And playing music. A lot of these bars up until the late '60s early '70s had house bands.

Q: Did you frequent any of them for the music?

BT: No, I frequented some of them when I got older for the beer.

Q: What did you think about the music at the time?

BT: Oh, it was good classic rock and roll music or country music from the '50s and '60s.

Q: Do you remember the Klondiker?

BT: That is what I refer to as the Jasper Place Hotel. I think it started off being called the Jasper Place Hotel, then it became the Klondiker, then they reverted to Jasper Place Hotel. I think that was the sequence.

Q: Did you go there?

BT: I have been in there maybe twice in my life.

Q: Talk about buying an older house and then upgrading it. Keep talking to Colette.

Q: Your parents moved out of the house in Canora in 1993, and then where did they go?

BT: What they did is they bought an older house that was probably built in about 1910 on 152nd Street north of 98th Avenue. They tore that down and built a newer house. They lived in there until they died. The idea was that they would sell the old house and add some of their cash to it and build this newer house. In fact, they kept the old house in Canora and rented it out for a number of years. We sold that after they died about five or six years ago.

Q: Are some of your acquaintances from high school still in Jasper Place?

BT: I don't know of any of them that still live in Jasper Place, and certainly none of them still live in the Canora area. They've moved various places. One of my friends from the old Jasper Place community lives in Victoria now. One of them is a neighbour of mine, far southwest corner of Edmonton. Another one lives in Lessard. And other places in Edmonton.

Q: Talk a bit about the reputation of the neighbourhood back then, how it was perceived.

BT: Certainly Jasper Place, broadly speaking, had a reputation of being perhaps inferior, a rough area of town. Canora probably had the reputation of being the roughest part of Jasper Place. Once I started getting broader exposure to other places in Jasper Place, it became apparent to me that, "Hey, this Canora area is not looked favourably upon by a number of people." I can remember an incident when I was in grade 9; I was going to Lynnwood School. I had a teacher who taught us English and Social Studies; he was my homeroom teacher. He came into the classroom, and I said to one of my classmates, "Is it English or Social Studies right

now?” He said, “Oh, it’s English.” I said, “Oh, I don’t like English.” The teacher overheard that. He spent that next class lecturing the class – but lecturing me – about this rude comment that I had made and how I was from the wrong side of the tracks. Now, looking on this as an adult, I should’ve stood up to him and said, “That’s inappropriate.” I was really upset. I came home and told my parents. My parents were of the ilk that, “You get in trouble at school, you’re going to get in trouble at home.” That’s one where they were on the verge of going down to the school and raking that teacher over the coals. They didn’t. But, yeah, that’s the first incident where it really came to my attention that, “ Hey, this area I come from isn’t looked upon by the broader world as being an ideal place.”

Q: That’s likely connected to the education level you referred to, and people’s perception of those who work in the trades.

BT: This is interesting that, out of my grade school classes, I can think of two classmates of mine from grade 8 who got law degrees and one who ended up practising law. One ended up as a teacher. One chap got a PhD in Chemistry and had trouble getting a job, and then went on and got an education degree. There’s at least five people out of that grade 8 class who got university degrees. That was from an area where university degrees were unheard of. I remember one of my contemporaries who lived a couple of doors down saying to me, “When we were kids and we heard you were going to university, we were amazed. Here’s someone who’s going to university” One of the kids in that family ended up going on and getting an education. I think he got an Education degree at U of A. But that was unheard of.

Q: Did you ever feel a disparaging attitude from people from Edmonton toward people from Jasper Place?

BT: I never did, no. I probably led a fairly insular life. I was heavily involved in books.

Q: Can you retell the story about the cold winter day?

BT: We had a huge cold snap. This would've been '66 or '67. We were on the old Fahrenheit scale at the time. I can remember that at the end of the cold snap the Edmonton Journal produced this certificate that you had survived whatever it was, 25 days of below zero weather. But I was going to the University at the time, and to get there I had to walk from 105th Avenue to Stony Plain Road to catch a bus to go to the University. So I did that in the morning and then I came back after my classes. The University did not close classes because of the cold weather. I walked from Stony Plain Road north into the wind to almost 105th Avenue. I was barely able to move, I was so frozen. The news broadcast that day was that the wild chill was 105 below Fahrenheit.

Q: Do you remember hitching rides on the bumpers of cars?

BT: No, but I do remember hitching a ride on the bumper of the Diamond bus. It was icy, so you'd wait until the bus was just ready to go, and you'd grab onto the bumper, and you'd slide on this ice. It was great fun. When my parents found out about that, I was in trouble.

Q: Did you ever go to Muk-Luk Mardi Gras?

BT: No. I remember the name.

Q: It would've been 1963 when the Jasper Place Sports Arena was built, and they held dances there for the teens.

BT: No, I don't think I ever participated in that.

Q: Otherwise, it wasn't really in Jasper Place. A little bit in Laurier Park, but not really in Jasper Place except for the teen dances.

BT: No, the only dances I went to would've been high school dances, and almost always we had a band.

Q: Someone else talked about Indigenous kids in their class, but in that case the Indigenous kids were older and there was a real disconnect between them and the others. Was that the case in your school as well?

BT: No, not at all. They all seemed to be contemporaries to us in age. They did tend to stick to themselves because they knew one another. They lived with one another. They were very shy but very nice people, very nice people.

Q: You said many of them came from B.C.?

BT: I understand that a number of them came from Alberta and Saskatchewan as well, but my perception was that they were all from B.C. It's only in recent times that I've heard, "Oh, yeah, there were some Alberta and Saskatchewan students that were there as well."

Q: Often now, the Indigenous presence in Jasper Place is fairly visible. Was that the case when you were growing up?

BT: I never had any perception that there was any difference, quite frankly, until we started getting this influx of the Indigenous students from the residential school. But as a young kid growing up, they were just other kids. My dad had this Indigenous friend who lived in Jasper Place, and he was just part of the community. Everybody accepted him as part of the community, and there was no discrimination whatsoever.

Q: Do you remember the name?

BT: It was either Bill or Alex Barore.

Q: Did you ever go to the Starlite Drive-in?

BT: Oh yeah, I was aware of it. Starlite Drive-in, I remember before the Starlite Drive-in was built that was a refuse dump. I remember going with my dad and driving down into this ravine to drop off refuse. The tendency was that when we dropped off refuse, we'd look around to pick up some good stuff that we could take out of the refuse dump and take home. But that's the beginning of that particular area. After the refuse dump was filled as much as they could put in, they then brought in some soil and made this flat area on top of the dump where they put the Starlite Drive-in. I probably went with my parents two or three times to the drive-in. It's right across the street from where Lynnwood School is. My perception is that we'd be able to be across the fence at Lynnwood School and be able to watch the drive-in movie, then we wouldn't have to pay. But then they took out the drive-in theatre and put in the apartment buildings there.

Q: You mentioned that a person who became mayor was a janitor in your school. Do you have memories of that?

BT: Absolutely. Ken Newman was the janitor at Canora School. His son, Ken Newman – or Bud Newman – was a contemporary of mine. He was a year older than me. We went to school together and we were in Cubs together. I can remember Ken Newman Sr. as the janitor for our school, and then he went on to get involved in civic politics and became mayor of Jasper Place. I'm going to high school with his son; we were in the same high school class together. His dad was mayor and was instrumental in getting the amalgamation between Jasper Place and the City of Edmonton. Then I knew Ken Sr. in later years as an alderman. I knew him as a kid going to school because I'd go to my friend's house, and then in later years I got to know him as an alderman.

Q: What about your own career path?

BT: I went to U of A, got an Arts degree, Law degree, then practised law in the city of Edmonton for 52 years.

Q: What kind of law?

BT: Very broad general practise. I did a little bit of everything over the years, but mostly construction claims, construction litigations, and moved away from that just to do conveyancing and wills and estates. Also, for a number of years, I have been teaching a course at the University of Alberta for the Faculty of Engineering. It's a Law class. I started that, I guess, 50 years ago. I [...] had two sections of that course, and I passed that off to two young chaps who had taken the course from me, became engineers, practised engineering for a while. One went on to get a master's degree in Engineering, the other got a PhD in Engineering. They then saw the light, went back and got Law degrees, and are now practising lawyers. They're heading up one on each of those sections, and they use me as relief. Whenever they have a trial or discovery or meeting or whatever and they can't go to class, they call me, and I step in. Or I co-teach with them. As a matter of fact, this morning I was over at the University doing a class with one of these chaps.

Q: So the intersection of Law and Engineering is around building codes?

BT: It's basically contract principles. A little bit of torts and negligence thrown in, but basically contract principles.

Q: Back when your family dug their own basement, building codes didn't exist.

BT: No that's right, they didn't exist. To the extent that they did, I can tell you my dad wouldn't have paid any attention to what the code said. He knew how it had to be done, and he would

do it that way. He was really a jack of all trades – he did it all. He did the electrical, he did the mechanical, he did the drywalling, he did the roofing.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

BT: I think you've exhausted it. But you know, if I were to sit down and look at some of your materials, sit down with contemporaries and maybe talk about some of these things with them in your presence, a number of other things would undoubtedly come to the forefront.

[END]