



Len's Eulogy "The Early Years"

Hi, Thank you all for coming out to Len's celebration of life. I am just going to speak about some of the early years as I left home after 18 years and there are some long communication gaps after that. We lived in a small 2 bedroom house in the middle of a 5 and 1/2 acre piece of land off 1st ave now 203rd St In Hammond. I don't know how many of you realize it or not but Len was not always the easiest person to get along with.

The first instance that always comes to mind is the infamous last piece of chocolate cake. Mother had baked a cake and there was only one piece left. When we got permission to have that piece it was a race to the kitchen. Len got there first and he spit on the cake. Needless to say, I was not impressed and he got the last piece which caused a bit of a ruckus at the same time. Mother probably had to use the strap to break us up. I don't remember that part. I did however get even for the cake issue. I don't know how long it was after that, but Len was eating a fudgesicle. Me being the winy kid I was on that particular day, kept hounding him for a bite. I don't remember why I didn't have one. After constant wining, I think our parents said give him a bite. OK this was it. As I got close enough to take a bite. I lunged forward and took probably over half of it in one fell swoop. Needless to say the battle was on again.

Len always had a healthy appetite. He would have a ritual to make sure he was eating his fruit and having his glass of red wine every day, then at 10 o'clock in the evening had is ice cream with baileys Irish Cream . For a while, If you were sitting at a meal with him, he was usually last to dish up as he figured everybody had what they wanted so he could clean up the rest.

We played a lot of scrub games while growing up, baseball at the empty lot at Hayes place, scrub tackle football at the neighbours or in our back field, no equipment and no concussions I don't think.

In the early years we had our bicycles which we rode all over. We would head up River road to get to cars hill to try and break land speed records going down the hill. One person usually went down first to make sure there were no cars coming up. The going down was a lot easier than the slow ride or walk back up. We also road out to kneaves bridge to do some swimming in the Allouette river or just touring the country side, one trip riding down the back roads to what used to be the Wild Duck Inn. It was our

freedom. As we progressed past the bicycle stage, we were getting more interested in cars. In around 1962 or so, dad got a newer family vehicle, a 58 Plymouth. The old 49 chevy became our new toy. We learned how to drive on that vehicle. The thing was, we would rather have had an open sided vehicle like a jeep so in our infinite wisdom, we removed the front doors and the trunk lid and cut out little low plywood doors on it. Custom Len and Don. No Seatbelts. At that time a song came out on the radio called Ahab The Arab, In that song there was a line that went "He'd hop on his camel named Clyde and he'd ride" so we promptly named the old 49 Chevy Clyde and we'd ride, down our 600 ft driveway , on to the lawn of the old shack at the bottom and back up and into the front of the house then go again, taking turns. Not exactly sure what happened to Clyde in the end but while she was running she was good fun. I remember the year 1962 as Rona, Tricias mom was visiting, They had gone into Vancouver to visit some friends that I think were originally from Edmonton. We had Clyde out and one of our friends John C. was driving Clyde. We were just racing around the house and into the back field. John came around the hose and missed the track we should have been on and clipped off our clothesline pole, Oh dear, what to do now. We decided we should dig a hole and put the clothesline pole back up which we did. Not thinking much about it , the clothes line was now drooping pretty much to the ground as the pole was now about 2 or 3 feet shorter which we didn't think about, I don't know why. That night was the night Hurricane Freeda hit the lower mainland. Our parents and Rona were trying to make their way back from Vancouver. Late that night the wind was shaking the house so bad, we were a little scared and decided to go to the neighbours place. Freeda took its toll that night uprooting trees, downing some power lines and blowing shingles off the house, But to our dismay, the next morning the clothesline pole that we had planted in the ground was still standing with the clothesline hanging about 3 feet off the ground. Busted.

When it came to chores, we had our stuff we had to do. Dishes after dinner, I'd usually wash Len would dry. I'm not sure what year we started but one of our first jobs was cutting and raking Uncle George and Aunt Marys Lawn on Westfield. There was always pop to be had in the fridge that was good. We picked blueberries at Austrings blueberry farm in Pitt Meadows and Raspberries in Aldergrove. One day we decided to try picking strawberries in Aldergrove. We rode over in the back of an old truck that picked us up in Hammond. There was about 4 of us, myself Len a couple of friends. When we got to the strawberry patch, the field foreman or straw boss whatever he was called started barking orders on when we could leave the field for breaks and what the lunch hour was and what procedure you had to follow for bathroom breaks. We decided at that juncture, strawberry picking was not for us, so we walked the 20 miles home. Cutting across fields heading for the fairy. I think we ate our lunches at the Fort Langley before heading across the Albion Ferry and following the tracks on the way home. On the way, we came across a big old cherry tree with ripe sweet cherries on it, We decided to stop and have a feast as the tree was not on anybodies property. After filling up we decided we could fill our lunch bags with cherries and take some home so mom could make a cherry pie. That lasted about 15 minutes and someone threw a cherry at someone else, Well that started cherry wars and by the time we got home, the only remanants of left over cherries were the stains on our clothes.

After spending the most part of one summer at Aunt Viola's and Uncle Basils ranch in Alberta, Len's first real job working for a company was with BerryLand Cannery one year. The second summer after that, I started working at the cannery and Len after

working there for a while, got the call to start working at the mill where he remained for 39 plus years.

We were engineers in our younger days, built a treehouse in our big old Maple Tree out front, built a look out tower with the leg's going thru one of the old sheds in the back yard. Had to tear that one down as our parents complained of it being too much of an eyesore being seen from the road. Dad was a part time fisherman and when he finished his fishing days he had long lengths of rope which were either lead line or cork line. I remember removing the lead from the lead line and melting it down on an old Coleman stove to sell fro scrap. We were flying kites at that time and we decided to make our own. I am not sure where the paper came from but we had lots of wood around and manufactured a kite that was about 6 or 8 feet high. We used the rope that was cleaned from the cork and lead line to attach to the kite. We did get it airborne and it was all you could do to hold on to it until the something broke and there went the kite to bushes unknown.

In our small house, dad did some renovating and built a room in the attic. Up there we had a table set up and mounted the tracks from our Lionel 027 electric train. Len had some building blocks and we used to lock the blocks on the track. We would buy these 39 cent model cars and place them in front of the block, we would then race the train around the track as fast as it would go without it flying off the table which it did on occasion, and ram the model cars , seeing who could make the most incredible crash. What were we thinking. We also had a piece of plywood to put over the tracks to convert it to a ping pong table. I think Len was the clear winner in our ping pong matches. Our tv antenna was also situated in the attic. In those days we had 3 or 4 channels on TV. CBC Vancouver, CTV Vancouver, Independent station fro Victoria and KVOS tv CBS Bellingham. If you were lucky on a rainy wet day, you might be able to pick up ABC from Seattle, with Dick Clark and American band stand. Those days we'd get home after school and one of us would be in the attic and the other at the tv downstairs calling out which way to turn the antenna to get the best reception. It didn't happen that often, but when it did, we thought we were pretty smart.

The Attic as we called it only had one window facing south. We wanted more light and a view of the mountains, so one fine day we took It upon our selves to cut an opening at that end of the house. Not sure which one of us did the actual sawing but we both ended up in deep caca when father got home. He was not impressed. We were also pretty lucky as it was at that point in the house where the electricity feed came in, probably no more than a foot from where we were cutting.

There was a cedar tree in the back field behind the house we used to climb a lot. One day Len was at the top and decided it would be a good look out spot. Well, there was branches in the way that were impeding his view so he grabbed a saw, climbed the tree and cut off all the branches that were impeding his view. Again father was not impressed but what could he do. It's not like you could glue them back on.

I am not sure when we first started experimenting with alcohol. I think it was about the time father was trying to make dandelion wine, lord knows we had lots on dandelions. At any rate , he had it brewing ing the basement, When they were out for a weekend square dancing or visiting with friends to play cards, we decided to try the ,ugh, dandelion wine. It was not good to our taste but what did we know. So dad wouldn't get suspicious about us trying it, we would always top it up with water. I wonder why the wine never turned out.

It was a similar experience with the beer he tried brewing, He made one good batch but must have lost the recipe as after that the beer was just not good.

In high school one year, Len had made a paddle board as a woodworking project. We wanted to take it to Kneaves bridge and do some floating around. I decided to build a duck boat to paddle around in and some friends the Curries made another small boat. We had dad transport our boards and boats to the Allouette river on top of a cartop rack and strapped to the top of the camper trailer I think, where we launched them. We had a few good days with them floating and paddling around the river. We would park them partially concealed on the bank as we had no way to transport them back and forth to home. Eventually they just became abandoned and left to rot. Not sure what happened with Lens paddle board.

We had a lot of good times camping and going for afternoon outings to Hatzic lake, Swans Point, Allouette lake and Cultus as well as trips to Kamloops to see our cousins and camping at Skaha lake in Penticton. Holidays to Woking and Edmonton in Alberta were always an adventure.

After I left home at the age of 18, we didn't communicate for the longest time. Other than receiving mail from home and the occasional phone call brief conversations were all we had. It was the days of long distance phone calls that had to be paid for and snail mail. I would hear stories about the party shed and the power being cut off at 2 in the morning. Along the way he Len had a couple of girlfriends and a son named Clayton that, for whatever reasons, a close relationship was not to be had.

During these years, he always had an interest in old pictures, with the advent of digital cameras and computers in the early 90's, he scanned literally thousands of pictures and documents and created numerous slide shows for different occasions. I was able to create a website and have a page dedicated entirely for some of Lens work. If anyone would like to look at it, you can go to <https://www.donaldpettit.com> and click on Lens Historical Links or I can give you the direct link to his web page if you see me later. The links will also be available on Facebook, We Call it Haney and on my facebook page.

Somewhere during that time he met Wilma and they got married in 1990. The last 33 plus years of being married to Wilma were undoubtedly the best years of his life. I know how much he enjoyed being with his new found extended family and how he adored his grand children and great grand children and liked being called grampa.

Those are other peoples years to reminisce about.

Finally I'd like to say, Rest in Peace Brother and how about those lottery numbers hey, we've only been working on them for over last 17 or so years. Oh yeah no spitting on that last piece of Angel food cake.

Extra Notes:

Len was very interested in astronomy also. Whenever a celestial event was happening or about to happen, he would always call to make sure I was aware of it so I could go out and look at it for myself, weather permitting.

We used to climb vine maples, 2 or 3 of us at a time depending on how big they were, to weigh them down. The person or persons at the top end would then slide off and the remaining person would get flung up as the maple straightened out. Our very own amusement ride.