

## **Donald Moonie – Memories of Montgomery Place**

**Parents Gilbert and Freda Moonie were the first to move to the new community in 1946.**



*Freda and Gilbert Moonie, married at Camp Borden, Ontario on June 14, 1941.*

On June 1, 1946 Gilbert and Freda Moonie shared their first meal over the kitchen table at 3149 11<sup>th</sup> Street West. They were the first people to move into the new Veterans Land Act (VLA) development of Montgomery Place. Rising up from prairie on the western edge of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, the VLA administration had built 25 homes for returning veterans; three more houses were built independently, for a total of 28 homes in 1946. Water had to be hauled until sewer and water lines were not hooked up in the Fall that year.

There were few services for those first Montgomery Place vets. Heat was provided by a coal and wood furnace, with coal and wood deliveries made by Wenz Lumber and Saskatoon Coal & Wood. After that came an oil space heater, and finally natural gas. The first homes had outhouses. Of the 28 houses, only 12 families spent the first winter in their new homes.

Gilbert Moonie walked to work daily at Intercontinental Packers, the meat-packing plant established by Fred Mendel in 1940 in the former Marshall Tractor Company building. Next-door neighbour Tom Mainland (at 3145 11<sup>th</sup> Street) also worked there. Fred Mendel was a good neighbour to the early Montgomery Place residents. When the homeowners started a Ratepayers Association in 1947, Mendel opened his doors for their meetings. Montgomery families held their early Christmas parties in the cafeteria there. In bad weather, Montgomery Place moms and families were sheltered in the

cafeteria to await the City bus that only travelled as far west as the plant. Mr. Mendel planted a park in the space west of the plant where workers and Montgomery folks were welcome to enjoy. Eventually plant expansion spelled an end to the park.

On the west side of the rail tracks, before the garage and store were built at the corner of Dundonald Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street, there was a huge slough. Dundonald Avenue was little more than a trail at the time. Gilbert shot ducks on the slough that the Moonie family later enjoyed for supper. Tom and Esther Mainland's son Danny charged local kids for boat rides in the slough. Rabbits were also snared for supper, in the fields to the south and west. In 1953, William and Frances Schule built a store at 3111- 11<sup>th</sup> Street. A few years later the slough was gone when Steve Piecowye built a White Rose service station between the store and Dundonald Avenue.

Gilbert Moonie was president of the fledgling Montgomery Ratepayers Association during the early years, taking turns with Gordon Edwards, Gilbert Eamer, Andrew Tregaskis, Forbes Stevenson, Rnold Smith and Jack Mathers. The residents were active in their campaigns for better living conditions in the community, rallying for better home construction, natural gas to be brought to the community, better bus service, mail delivery, milk and bread delivery, telephone service, ash and garbage pick-up, speed limit reduction on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, street signs and lights, parks, trees and greenspace, a community centre to include curling and skating rinks, ball diamonds and tennis courts, and a school in the community.

By 1953 the Ratepayers were exploring hamlet or village status, but the Province of Saskatchewan refused their request due to "proximity to an Urban Municipality." Despite that, early Montgomery Place opinions for amalgamation with the City of Saskatoon were soundly against such a move. But, after negotiating a 25-year tax concession, Montgomery Place was incorporated into the City of Saskatoon on January 1, 1955.

Gilbert and Freda Moonie welcomed their first child, a son, Donald in September 1947. He grew up to the sound of meadowlarks in the prairie grass and chickens in the backyard pen.



*Three-year-old Donnie with chickens in the pen behind him, 1950.*

Freda Moonie supplied her own kitchen with eggs, and sold the surplus to friends and neighbours nearby. Carole Sedgwick from 1103 Lancaster Boulevard remembers her Mom sending her to the Moonie's for eggs, carrying a tin honey pail to carry them home.

Don's memories of growing up in Montgomery Place are sharp. The farmhouse north of 11<sup>th</sup> Street was still standing when he was young, as seen in the left background of this photo of Freda and Don taken in 1948. Today in 2016, North Ridge and Westbow have built new developments atop the old farmstead.



*Freda Moonie and son Don, 3149 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 1948.*

Don remembers his babysitters in those early days: Vivian Sedgwick, Jack Stevenson, Bill Ferguson. He remembers neighbours like the Eamers across the back alley from

Mainlands, also the Coopers, Baileys, Hendricks, Gents, Davies, Horgans, Horgans, Suffredines and the Currie family who lived at the entrance to the Canadian Government Elevator. Memories are still sharp of the days when many families flooded backyard rinks, in the years before rinks were built in Montgomery Park. He remembers that next door, the Mainlands had one of the first garages in Montgomery Place.

Given \$20 cash by his Dad each month, Don would bike downtown to the VLA office at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to make the monthly payment on their home. He always received 14¢ in change after the \$19.86 payment was made. Later, with a paper route to supplement his funds, Don biked up and down the community, meeting people throughout the neighbourhood. This continued as he began an adult career providing dentures, where he renewed friendships with many Montgomery Place people in his parents' generation.

Gilbert and Freda Moonie sold their home at 3149 11<sup>th</sup> Street West in 1984. Freda died at age 76 in 1988; Gilbert died in 1990 at 87 years of age. Don and wife Terry never made their home together in Montgomery Place.