

## Growing up in Montgomery Place

My maternal grandparents, (Capt.) Alfred and Maisie Carter, were among the earliest settlers in Montgomery Place:

They moved into their home at 1104 Lancaster Boulevard in 1946.

My mother, Joyce, then nearly 17 years of age, was with them, along with my uncle, Kent Douglas Carter..

Mom married my dad, Leslie Charles Bocking, in May, 1949. The reception was held at my grandparents' home in Montgomery Place.

At some time during 1952, my parents and I moved in with my grandparents. While we lived there, my brother, Ken was born.

I vividly remember an occasion in 1953 in which I, along with brother Ken who was now capable of crawling, investigated the mysteries of our grandfather's tobacco pipes. We pretended to smoke them, as we had seen him do: I placed the stem of one pipe to my lips while Ken placed the bowl of another pipe in his mouth and found the experience to be somewhat negative!

On another occasion, I got into trouble when I did not sleep one afternoon, having been put down for an afternoon nap. I began to explore the effects of my mother's lipstick when applied to the dresser, the floor, the bed sheets, my face, and so on.

That evening, I was punished:

I was prevented from going outside to observe the wonders of the "flower garden tractor" (e.g., roto-tiller), while my innocent brother Ken was allowed to do so.

In June, 1953, I celebrated my second birthday. I recall receiving a birthday gift from a "Mr. Ashton". He was the father of Maude Edwards (nee Ashton). She, her husband Gordon, and their family lived in the house kitty corner from my grandparent's home.

As owners of a "small holding", my grandparents raised crops to sell: potatoes and raspberries. I understand that they sold potatoes through the Co-op. I recall being involved in the process of picking raspberries. Alas, I consumed all the raspberries I picked and did not actually contribute a benefit to the enterprise of raspberry sales.

In 1955, my parents purchased the lot at 3136 Dieppe Street and erected a house there, with the assistance of my grandfather, Edwin Bocking. At the same time, Edwin oversaw the construction of my uncle Ted's house at 3152 Dieppe Street. 3136 Dieppe Street is the house where I grew up.

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While our house was under construction, our family lived in a small trailer parked behind the residence of Andy and Mildred (“Midge”) Suffredine at 3142 Caen Street. In this small trailer resided my Mom and Dad, myself, brother Ken and infant sister Cathy. Mom was pregnant at the time with my youngest brother Keith, who arrived in 1956.

Though I was only 4 years old, I knew at least 3 different routes by which I could travel from the Suffredine’s to our emerging house.

How times do change: I would never consider letting my own children do such a thing!

The construction of our house at 3136 Dieppe Street during the summer of 1955 was a magical experience for me. My dad, my grandfather and I were in charge of construction! (Even if my only responsibility was to bring the lantern when the sun light was fading...) I remember the grading and graveling of Dieppe Street, the work of the “sewer digger” in trenching for the sewer connection, and the plumber who came to solder the sewer line and stack into place.

On occasion, numerous work colleagues of my father showed up to help:

I vividly remember the day that the outside walls of the house were raised into position with the help of many members of the Saskatoon Police Force.

Some of these men were in the process of constructing their own houses in Montgomery Place.

After many months of work by my grandfather, my dad (and I!) we moved into the new house on the evening of December 15, 1955. I clearly remember watching the key being inserted into the door knob and then going inside to find our beds made and ready for us. What a miracle that was!

Early months in the new house were eventful:

- We celebrated Christmas without a tree, but Dad hung the Christmas lights up each side and across the top of the big picture window in the living room.
- I got a toy road grader for Christmas!
- Contractors completed the mudding and sanding of the drywall, while we kids got mononucleosis because of the dust.
- The wind howled through the attic vents in a ghostly manner.
- My brother Keith was born in March, 1956,
- My aunt Joan came to visit on many weekends and make buns from scratch.

During the winter of 1955-56, there were no houses across the street from our house. Our living room window afforded an incredible view of the steam-powered trains that made their way across the Grand Trunk Bridge westward to parts unknown. I recall watching the massive and wondrous plumes of smoke and steam that the engines gave off and imagined how grand it would be to straddle and ride those plumes like they were horses, wherever the trains might go.

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Eventually, the freezing winter gave way to warmer weather and a very muddy spring. We emerged and slowly began to explore our new environs. As spring approached, we met Murray Ross, our new neighbor from across the street at 3135 Dieppe Street. (We became close friends for many, many years.)

I remember meeting Naomi and Richard Beamish on the prairie behind the Ross's house when the Buffalo Beans were in bloom (I called them "Buttercups")...

What an incredible place it was! Right on the edge of the prairie, we had this wide-open, limitless playground available to us! Behind the Ross's house, an unused railway right of way became in our imaginations a trench from World War I where we fought and vanquished every foe. Clumps of poplar trees became mysterious "forts" in our imaginations:

Fort Red Ranger, Fort Hill, Circle Plains...

If we could imagine it, we could experience it! There were trees to climb, underground huts to excavate, tree houses to construct... The opportunities and adventures were endless!

On other days, there was Riddell's Shop-Rite store. We kids could go there with empty pop bottles, or pennies, nickels, dimes, etc. to purchase "penny candy". I recall that sugar strawberries were 5 for 1¢, jaw breakers were 3 for 1¢ and licorice cigars or pipes were 2¢ each. Bottled pop was 10¢, but you got 2¢ back when you cashed in the deposit. If you bought Old Dutch chips, I think it set you back 5¢, but you could collect the empty bags to go on Kids Bids on CFQC-TV to compete for prizes.

In 1956-57, when I was 5 years old, I went to "kindergarten" at the residence of Mrs. Peck at 3204 Dieppe Street. My brother Ken attended with me, even though he was only 4 years old, because I was too shy to go by myself. Others who attended included: Megan Suffredine, Max Chalmers, Linda Winslow, Bobbie Irwin and Pattie Hook. All of us eventually attended Montgomery School, starting in Grade 1 with our teacher Mrs. Fast in the fall of 1957.

Later, one of my annual rituals at the beginning of summer was to spend a week at the "paddling pool" getting a tan. I would soak in the water of the shallow pool and then lay down on a towel spread on the concrete apron. After about 5 days, I was good to go with a passable tan (almost!) all over.

My mom used to tease me that I could go outside without anything on and people would think I was merely wearing a flesh-colored bathing suit!

Sure!

Another rite of passage was learning to skate. The community of Montgomery Place arranged to have members of the Saskatoon Fire Department maintain and flood the rink, and to have each family take a

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turn supervising the rink . I remember that Mr. Mainland met me at the door of Mrs. Fast's first grade classroom as school was ending one day so that he could give me the key to the Rec Unit. My Dad then minded the skating rink. Each of the other families took their turn,

On other occasions, I vividly recall returning home in the moonlight, having spent the evening skating, and falling, skating, and falling, over and over again! I remember fingers and toes tingling with the cold, while hearts were happy with the elation of exertion.

Remember "crack the whip", "choo-choo train", "pom-pom pull away?"

Another important rite of passage was learning to ride a bike. I didn't have a bike of my own, but my friend Naomi Beamish did. I was there when her father taught her to ride...

He also taught me.

Very generously, he allowed me to borrow Naomi's bike periodically to practice until my parents got me a bike of my own.

There were also swimming lessons at the Riversdale Pool.

Does anyone remember Mrs. French or Mrs. Waldner, the instructors?

The water was always c-c-c-cold as heck! In spite of that, I eventually learned to swim.

The Montgomery community also supported organizations like Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides. As I look back at these organizations, I marvel at these gifts given to us by the Moms and Dads in the community:

Our parents and neighbors had fought or otherwise endured the privations of World War II, survived, and then decided to find ways to foster and enhance our lives by providing programs like this.

At the time, none of us young people recognized these gifts for what they were... But, in retrospect, their devotion to us is readily apparent.

By the time I was in Grade 4 or 5, my friends and I took to going on bike excursions out into the country along what is now Valley Road. We would bring along a pack containing some matches, canned beans, water and other snacks and then cycle along Valley Road going south. We stopped at a clump of bushes near the Merrill Road. There, we built simple shelters of sticks and fallen leaves. And, we made small fires over which we could warm our cans of beans. Such simple fare was never so much appreciated! Oh, how we roughed it!

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One of the things I remember most about these adventures was that hordes of grasshoppers sat along the edge of the road. As we rode by, many of them panicked and jumped through the spokes of our bike wheels. I haven't seen grasshopper hordes to compare since!

Eventually, there was Teen Club, held periodically in the auditorium of Montgomery School. There was also the phenomenon of the Beatles. They inspired me and many others to form bands so that we could emulate them. This gave rise to the "age of the garage bands", much to the distaste of my uncle Ted Bocking. He threatened to walk down the block with a screw driver to poke into the electronics of our amplifiers!

Thankfully, he never did!

And, of course, there was love! It was inevitable... So many young guys growing up in the same neighborhood as so many attractive young gals...

Love can be fickle, but, then, it can also be true!

"Faded photographs, covered now with lines and creases,  
Tickets torn in half, memories in bits and pieces...  
Traces of love, long ago, that didn't turn out right...  
These traces of love, with me tonight..."

Now, from the viewpoint of more than 50 years, I still treasure the experiences I had growing up in Montgomery Place. It was really the best of times and the best of places.