

CITY POLICING

Burnaby and New Westminster



The former locations of Oakalla Prison Farm and the Willingdon School for Girls in what is now urban Burnaby.

A MEMOIR

CITY POLICING

Burnaby and New Westminster

DONALD E. WAITE

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1 Burnaby Detachment

Adventures with Mom

Mom and I left Renfrew in my new Rambler on June 7, 1965, bound for Burnaby, British Columbia. We had been given seven days to complete the 3,000-mile journey to the West Coast.

For a man who had never travelled more than 200 miles from home, the trip was a remarkable adventure. Driving through northern Ontario opened my eyes to the immense size of Canada for the first time. Near Sudbury, Mom and I saw our first moose grazing beside the road. We also encountered a rabid fox, and Mom insisted that I try to shoot it. In the rush to fire and put the animal out of its misery, I accidentally forced a 12-gauge shotgun shell into the barrel of my 16-gauge shotgun. I tried unsuccessfully to remove the shell from the breech, but before I could do anything further, the fox disappeared into the bush.

We spent one day in Regina visiting Delbert Jackson, Grandpa McBride’s first cousin. My great-grandmother, Olive Jane Smith, had an older sister, Anne Marie, who married Edwin Jackson. Delbert was their eldest son. He was a wonderful host and took us to visit “Depot” Division, where I spent considerable time exploring the Police Museum.

One exhibit that left a lasting impression on me was the noose used in the execution of Louis Riel. He was the Métis leader who had fought to establish Manitoba as a separate country rather than becoming part of the expanding Dominion of Canada.

At Banff, I settled Mom into a motel room before heading out to a Saturday evening dance. As luck would have it, I became acquainted with a park ranger who had earlier inspected my loaded shotgun when we entered the national park. We hit it off, and after the dance she suggested we take a drive to the outskirts of town, where elk could be seen grazing.

When I returned to the motel, I found Mom wide awake, in tears, and convinced that something terrible had happened to me. She had spent the evening imagining the worst.

The following morning, Mom and I took the chairlift to the top of Sulphur Mountain. When we reached the summit, a photographer captured our picture seated in the chairlift with the spectacular mountain panorama behind us—a memorable image from our journey west.

When we reached the Fraser Valley, Mom suggested that we stop in Chilliwack to visit her Aunt Aleta, who had been married to Mom’s Uncle Emerson. After Aunt Aleta’s first husband died from the effects of mustard gas exposure during the First World War, she later married Reverend James McKillop. We learned that he, too, had passed away. During this visit, I met Myrtle and Gordon McKillop and their son Elgin for the first time.

During my drive across Canada, I was required to report daily to a police detachment so the Force could monitor my progress and movements. When I reported to the Burnaby Detachment, I noticed a note pinned to the bulletin board in the main office offering room and board to members. I followed up on the notice and found accommodation with Betty and Bill Peterson. She was Burnaby’s leading real estate agent. The Petersons lived on Rosewood Street near Canada Way, less than ten blocks from the detachment. Once I had settled in, Mom boarded the train and returned home.

Another member of the Burnaby Detachment, Ron Kostiuik, also lived with the Peterson family. Ron was a member of the detachment’s elite General Investigation Section and worked in plain clothes as a detective.

Foot Patrols with Constable “Gentleman Joe” Healy



Me and “Gentleman Joe” Healy, with dates at the Burnaby Detachment’s Christmas Sub/Division Ball, 1965.

A career policeman, Joe terminated his career as a Superintendent being Contingent Commander with the United Nations Peacekeeping core. Upon retirement, he founded the website **RCMPgraves.com**. This database has 77,000 entries. Photo by Basil King, The Vancouver Sun

My introduction to real police work began only a couple of nights after my arrival. The Burnaby Detachment was located at the corner of Edmonds Street and Kingsway. I reported for duty at 8:30 p.m. and learned that my supervisor was Sergeant Ken Jensen.

Immediately after inspection, Jensen drove Constable Joe Healy and me to a fire hall at the intersection of Willingdon Avenue and Hastings Street. We were instructed to conduct foot patrol along Hastings Street until 5:00 a.m.

It did not take Joe and me long to develop a system. Our first patrol of the night took us from Willingdon Avenue west to Boundary Road, a distance of roughly one mile. Joe walked one side of the street while I covered the other, checking the front doors of businesses along the way. On the return trip, we inspected the back alleys and rear entrances.

It took us about five minutes to cover each block. Most of the time, we emerged from the alleys onto the same side streets at approximately the same moment. We would flash our flashlights twice to signal that everything was all right. If one of us was delayed while checking something suspicious, the other would cross the street and wait in the shadows, ready to provide backup if trouble developed.

Joe was an excellent partner and quickly earned the nickname “Gentleman Joe.” We soon became close friends. I learned that he had been training at the same time as I had, although he had completed his recruit training at “Depot” Division in Regina.

Joe and I ate our lunches at the fire hall located on the northwest corner of Hastings Street and Willingdon Avenue. Those early patrols marked the beginning of my life as a working police officer.

It was while on our way to foot patrol with Sergeant Ken Jensen that Joe and I witnessed our first sudden death. We were about halfway between the detachment and the fire hall when a call came in that a small child had possibly drowned in a backyard swimming pool. Jensen responded, and we were at the scene within a couple of minutes.

A man was running around the backyard, ranting and raving like a madman, kicking over lawn chairs and pounding his fists against the siding of the house. I next saw Jensen kneeling beside a small child's play pool. It was round and bright yellow and couldn't have been more than six feet in diameter, with no more than three inches of water in it. It took a moment for me to realize that the sergeant was attempting to give a small boy mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

I ran to him, and he told me to get on the car radio and request a doctor. While I was in the car, the distraught father tried to pry his child away from the senior policeman. Joe began wrestling with the father and managed to pin him to the ground without causing him any physical injury. While Joe kept him pinned to the ground, I went to help the sergeant, but the little fellow was blue and rigid. After placing the call for medical assistance, I went to Joe's aid, and together we managed to handcuff the man with his hands behind his back.

The doctor arrived on the scene, worked on the child for several minutes, and then shook his head, indicating that the boy was dead. The father went absolutely berserk, and it took Ken, Joe, and me to keep him from further injuring himself. The doctor gave the father a shot of sedative in the hip, which took all the fight out of him. By this time, a couple of general duty members had arrived and took over the investigation. Sergeant Jensen told them he would drop Joe and me off at the fire hall and then file a report.

Introduction to a “Stool Pigeon”

During my very first week, I spooked three youths in the back alley on the south side of Hastings Street, not far from Boundary Road. The three took off in different directions, with me in hot pursuit. Without hesitation, I chased the one who was lagging behind. He began running south on Boundary Road when I realized we were both sprinting full out, taking four-foot strides on pea gravel down a steep hill, and that a fall would result in an extremely painful tumble.

The suspect came to the same conclusion and began yelling, "I give up! Don't trip me!" He slowed down, and I caught up to him. I ordered him to lie on the ground with his hands behind his back. He co-operated and allowed me to handcuff him. I then sat down beside him for several minutes, trying to catch my breath. It was then that I began to smell gasoline.

As we walked back up the hill to Hastings Street, he told me his name and admitted that he and his two friends had been trying to siphon gasoline from an old car. I turned him over to some general duty members, who took him into the coffee shop at the Astor Hotel for questioning. He eventually gave a statement revealing the names of his accomplices, and all three were charged with attempted theft. It was my introduction to an informant—a "stool pigeon," or "rat" in the

criminal world. I saw him several years later in a courtroom in Vancouver, and he remembered my name. He was quite surprised when I addressed him by his own name.

A few nights later, I stopped a suspicious-looking character in the back alley near the Astor Hotel. When I asked him to produce some identification, he told me to attempt the physically impossible. Unsure of my authority, I didn't do anything. The next morning, over breakfast at the Peterson residence, I mentioned the incident to Ron.

The following night, Ron drove his ghost car down my back alley until he found me checking doorknobs. We talked briefly, and I mentioned that I had seen the fellow who had refused to produce any identification the night before. Ron told me to jump into the car with him, and we sped off in the direction where I had last seen the individual. When I pointed him out, Ron drove up beside him and, in very explicit language, told him to produce his wallet. He did so, and Ron took his driver's licence and ran a check over the police car radio with the Criminal Investigation Section. He threw him up the side of the car and did a shakedown. The fellow had a lengthy criminal record for break and enter, theft, and assault. Ron introduced me to how to deal with uncooperative criminals.

Once, Joe and I were sitting in the fire hall having lunch and shooting the breeze with the firemen when a woman called to report that a man had suffered a severe heart attack in her apartment. I jumped onto the back of the fire truck with the firemen and arrived at the scene with them. The firemen did all they could, but the man was dead. I took a statement from the woman and learned that the man had suffered a heart attack during sexual intercourse. She went on to say that she had met him in a bar earlier that evening and had not known him before.

World Weightlifting Champion

One night, while I was checking doorknobs, I discovered a back door standing ajar. I listened carefully for several minutes and could hear people talking. Instead of opening the door and walking into a potentially dangerous situation, I retreated down the alley and found Joe. We quietly let ourselves in through the unlocked door, expecting to catch someone committing a burglary. Instead, we found Doug Hepburn, the store's owner, with a girlfriend. Doug took the bust in good humour and explained that, in addition to operating a health food store specializing in bodybuilding foods, he worked at the Cave Supper Club in Vancouver as a singer. He also told us that he had won the world weightlifting title at the 1953 World Championships. Before we left, he insisted that Joe and I accept two complimentary tickets to the club.

A few nights later, I decided to go to the club and listen to Doug perform. He greeted me warmly and gave me the best table in the house. As it happened, the star performer that evening was Jayne Mansfield, one of the most beautiful women in the world. I was totally mesmerized as I watched Jayne sing and dance no more than ten feet from my table. Later, several Cavettes came onto the stage and danced, and after the performance one of the girls came over to my table and asked me what I was doing in the wilder parts of Vancouver. I was surprised to discover that she lived on the same street I did in Burnaby. A couple of years later, Jayne Mansfield and her companion, Sam Brody, were killed when their car ran into the back of a truck.



The recovery of two suicide victims who jumped off the near-vertical cliffs on the northeast face of Burnaby Mountain.

Double Suicide

One morning, while driving back to the detachment, Sergeant Jensen received a call reporting that a person had jumped off a cliff at the top of Burnaby Mountain. We drove to the park and met Paddy Sherman, the Vancouver newspaperman whose passion was leading the North Vancouver Search and Rescue team. His men had driven a jeep to the edge of the cliff, run out a cable and stretcher, and had already lowered two rescuers down the mountainside. Using walkie-talkies, the two men radioed back to Paddy that there were two bodies lying side by side at the bottom of the ravine.

Paddy asked for a police volunteer to go down, examine the scene, and assist in hauling up one of the bodies. I volunteered. The rescuer and I stood in the stretcher and used our free hands to push away from rocks and trees as the cable lowered us down the nearly vertical 300-foot cliff. I quickly realized that my handholds were all that kept me from a deadly fall. I was wearing my heavy pea jacket, which only added extra weight. I wasn't even wearing a helmet.

At the bottom, I examined the second body. It had been there for several weeks and was badly decomposed. The rescuer radioed this information to Ken, who requested that a member of the Identification Section, Sergeant Skip Wheatley, attend and photograph both bodies. He and

two general duty members walked in from the Barnet highway and placed the bodies into body bags. Skip, two other members, and I made two trips carrying the bodies to the highway. It was hard work. By the time we had completed the two trips in and two trips out along the mountainside, it was noon.

After walking the beat for several months, I was assigned to General Duties on 3 Watch under Sergeant Jensen and Corporal Charlie Simms, while Joe was assigned to Traffic Detail. My first general duty partners were senior constables Bill (Mert) Mortenson, Bill Benedict, Don Brown, and Dale Lang.

Bill Benedict and I attended my first family fight. I was not impressed with the way he handled the situation. A wife had taken a severe beating from her husband, and Bill refused to become involved unless she agreed to give a statement. At the time, it was policy that the wife sign the documents required to charge her husband with assault. Out of sheer frustration, the woman punched me squarely in the face, only to have Bill grab and arrest her for assaulting a peace officer. I felt that the wrong person ended up in the lock-up.

I was working with Bill during an illegal strike by Lenkurt Electric employees in the Lake City industrial area of North Burnaby. I realized that senior members dressed as civilians had infiltrated the hall where the strikers had gathered and were instigating arguments with the strike speakers. This resulted in confrontations, and every time a member was shoved, the offender was promptly arrested for assault and handed over to members waiting in cars to escort them back to the detachment. It occurred to me that the men were being deliberately set up and arrested as a way of putting down the strike.

Constable Donald Charles Brown, Role Model Extraordinaire

Constable Don Brown was an exceptional role model for a recruit, and we had several successful investigations together. One afternoon, Don took a call from the parents of a 10- or 12-year-old boy who had been picked up in a car and brutally assaulted by a couple of men. Don questioned the boy about the gruesome details for several hours, carefully recording everything word for word in a statement. He then began asking the boy if he could remember anything unusual about the interior or exterior of the vehicle. The youth recalled part of the licence plate number and an unusual logo or decal.

Don and I spent four hours going through the Motor Vehicle Branch records located at the bottom floor of the detachment until Don finally found a vehicle that matched the description and was registered to someone with a criminal record for sex offences. We drove past the house and confirmed that the decal matched the record. Armed with this evidence, Don obtained a search warrant, and later that morning we arrested two suspects and impounded the vehicle. By noon, we had obtained confessions from both men.

For a farm boy who had never really been exposed to the darker side of life, I was amazed by the number of men we encountered who had lengthy criminal records for everything from assaulting police officers, rape and bank robbery to murder.

On one afternoon shift, Don and I stopped a car, and by a strange coincidence, the driver’s name was identical to Don’s: Donald Charles Brown. For a lark, Don removed his own licence

from his wallet and, walking up to the car, handed the driver back the switched licence while asking for his date of birth. Of course, the birth date and address didn’t match, and the man was completely confused until Don explained that both men had the exact same name.

It was while I was working with Don that I submitted a memo to the Motor Vehicle Branch suggesting that a photograph be placed on driver’s licences to reduce the use of false identification. The reply explained that implementing such a process would be far too costly.

I worked with Dale Lang for a couple of months, and he was almost too nice a guy to be a policeman. He had transferred in from Nelson Subdivision, and we worked together for several months. During a cold spell, I had an opportunity to practise what Corporal Roy had taught us during training.

Dale and I spotted two well-known thugs walking through the Old Orchard Shopping Centre parking lot at Willingdon Avenue and Kingsway. The two men were brothers and were known for their boxing skills. Dale pulled up beside them and, getting out of the car, placed his hat on the hood and began taking notes. I saw one of the men knock Dale’s hat to the ground, and as Dale stooped to pick it up, the thug positioned himself to kick Dale in the head.

I lunged at the suspect and knocked him off balance. As we struggled, we both exchanged kicks to the groin area. We both connected, and we both went down on the pavement. While I was on the ground, the other brother engaged Dale in a punch-out. I recovered first and was able to help Dale subdue the other brother. Backup arrived, and both brothers were charged with assault.

Another time, I was with Dale when I spotted a young break-and-enter suspect who was wanted on an outstanding warrant for burglarizing Tip Top Tailors, a high-end clothing store that was on my foot-patrol route. I chased after the youth on foot, and just as I was catching up to him, he jumped over a two-foot hedge of shrubs and disappeared.

I cleared the hedge immediately after him, only to discover there was a six-foot drop on the other side of the row of trees. Upon landing, the suspect and I both took bad falls, resulting in sprained ankles and skinned elbows. Dale was able to drive right to the scene of our mishaps.

Arson Investigation with Constable Dale Lang

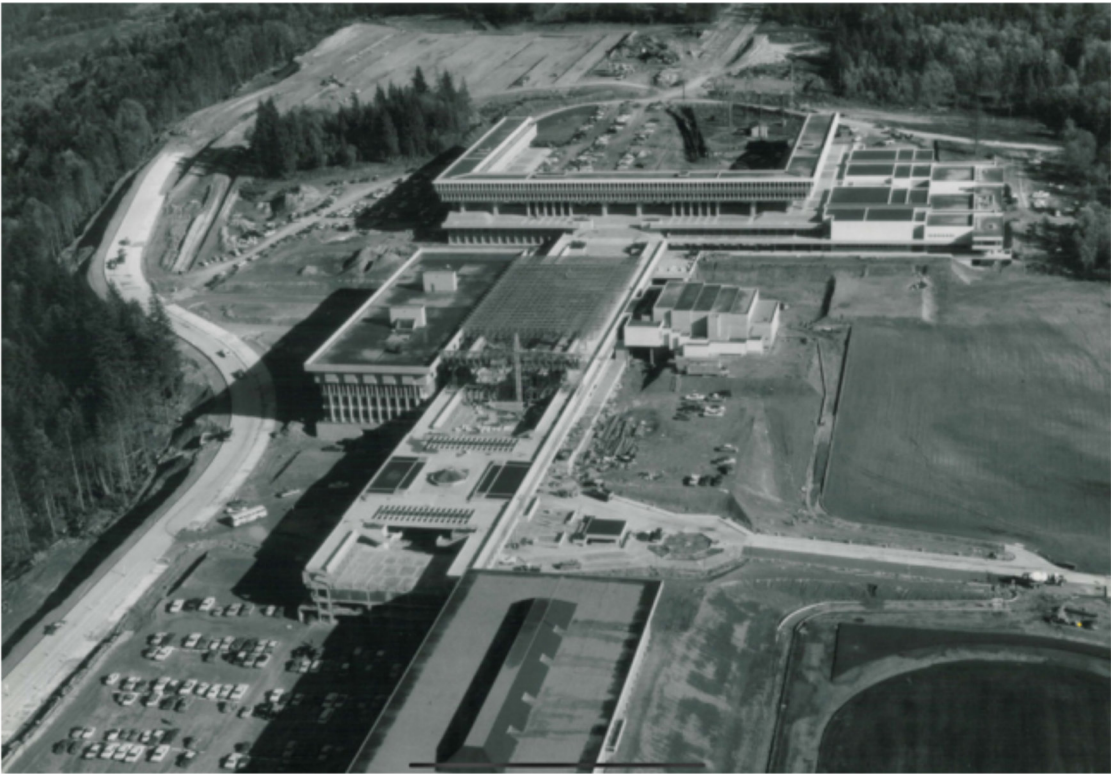
I was working with Dale one graveyard shift when we received a call to attend an arson fire at a private home. It was not far from the Villa Hotel at Willingdon Avenue and the Freeway. We arrived just as the firemen were leaving.

We spoke with the homeowners and learned that their son had a friend living in the basement. There had been an altercation, and the friend had been asked to leave. Dale and I followed his footprints in the snow to the Villa Hotel. We spoke with the night clerk and learned that a young man had checked in a couple of hours earlier. She provided us with the key to his room.

We woke him, and his clothing smelled strongly of smoke. We seized his clothes and arrested him for arson, then escorted him back to the lock-up wrapped in a bed sheet. Although the evidence was entirely circumstantial, we proceeded with the charge. He pleaded not guilty,

and the case went to trial. I testified against him at the fall Assizes in New Westminster. Judge Hyde found the evidence overwhelming and sentenced him to seven years in the penitentiary.

Clandestine Police Work



September 1966 opening ceremonies of 2500 charter students.
Simon Fraser University
George Allen Aerial Photography Ltd.

During another graveyard shift, I was typing up a report when a call came in about a garage break-in within a few blocks of the detachment. Instead of responding in the police cruiser with red lights and siren, I went in on foot.

I looked through one of the garage bay windows and saw a man crouched near a workbench at the back of the shop. I worked my way along the side of the building to the front door, but the suspect suddenly bolted out the back door. I took off after him and was soon

running flat out between houses and across several side streets. The chase lasted less than five minutes before the suspect gave himself up. He was completely exhausted.

The person I had been chasing was Ron, my roommate at the Peterson home. He told me he had been trying to install a voice-activated tape recorder under the workbench in the garage. He had obtained a warrant to conduct a surreptitious break and enter. The garage was being used as a chop shop, where stolen cars were being stripped for parts.

“What am I going to do with you?” I asked.

Ron paused for a moment. “As you didn’t come in a cruiser, you might let me go and report back that you gave chase, but the suspect managed to escape.”

That’s what I did. Ron gave me a very sheepish grin at breakfast the next morning.

Ron and I had lived at the Peterson home for only a short time when Mrs. Peterson told us that the house had been sold and they were moving to Chilliwack. Ron and I both moved in with

the Brownrigg family. Ron had been attending Simon Fraser University with the Brownriggs’ daughter, Kathy. I stayed there for a few months and then moved again.

This time, I shared room and board with Joe Healy with the Angela and Thomas F. Dempsey family. Mr. Dempsey was an intellectual who taught at the local high school. He was instrumental in persuading me to try to enrol as a charter student at Simon Fraser University, which was being built on top of Burnaby Mountain. I wrote home requesting my Grade 13 results from Renfrew Collegiate Institute and had no trouble being accepted into first-year courses at the new university.

Contract Killers and 6’2” Constable Irv Just

I worked with Constable Irvin Just for several months. We were a Mutt and Jeff team, as Irv was 6’2” and I was only 5’8”. Irv’s girlfriend was Miss Burnaby, and it was her parents who owned the Casa Loma Motel on Kingsway. When we worked afternoon shifts, we would often take our lunch or coffee breaks in the residential portion of the motel.

One summer afternoon shift, I was driving along Kingsway with Irv as my passenger, heading to the Casa Loma for our usual coffee break, when a call came over the air that a suspect vehicle was travelling east on Kingsway. The dispatcher provided a description and the licence plate number of the vehicle. It was approximately the same distance west of the Casa Loma as we were east.

The dispatcher then issued a broadcast instructing all vehicles to attempt to intercept the driver, as he was a police informant and his intended rendezvous was with two hired hit men from Chicago at the Casa Loma Motel.

While this exchange was coming over the radio, I saw the suspect vehicle turn directly in front of us and enter the motel driveway. I immediately activated the emergency lights and siren. In the few moments that followed, the informant managed to park directly in front of the door to the motel room where he was supposed to meet the two men. He jumped from the vehicle and ran toward the door, but I intercepted him and asked for identification.

I told him he had just struck a pedestrian and was under arrest. He looked completely confused. I placed him in the back seat of the police car, explaining that if he was innocent, I would sort everything out back at the detachment. I left him in Irv’s care while I went into the motel and obtained the names and particulars of the two men in the room.

Once we had left the area, I explained to the informant that, moments before we intercepted him, we had learned he had been “ratted out.” The supposed coin collection buyers were not collectors at all—they were contract killers.

A short time later, members of the General Investigation Section, with the cooperation of Irv’s girlfriend’s parents, entered the room with revolvers drawn and caught the two men while they were sleeping. During the search of the room, they recovered a loaded revolver with a silencer hidden under the pillow on which one of the men had been sleeping.

.38 Smith & Wesson Arm Wrestle

I was partnered with Don Henderson when we received a report that a soldier from Camp Chilliwack had gone absent without leave and had been spotted in a back alley in South Burnaby. We responded immediately. I volunteered to search the alley on foot while Don and officers in other police cruisers cordoned off the area.

Because we were looking for a soldier, I expected him to be wearing a military uniform. When I encountered a clean-shaven man in civilian clothes walking toward me, I told him I was searching for an army deserter. Without saying a word, he walked past me.

A split second later, my instincts told me something was wrong. I glanced over my shoulder just in time to see him charging toward me with a large stick. He had grabbed it the moment I turned away.

There was a pile of sand in the middle of the alley, and I tripped over it in the darkness, landing flat on my back. Instinctively, I raised my flashlight and shone the beam into his face.

He stood over me with both hands raised high, gripping the makeshift club and preparing to bring it down. I hurled a handful of sand into his eyes and somehow managed to roll clear and scramble to my feet.

We faced each other for battle. He had the club; I had only my flashlight.

At that instant, a car came out of nowhere and struck the soldier, hurling him through the air. I immediately threw myself on him. As I reached for my handcuffs, I accidentally unsnapped the retaining strap on my holster instead.

During the struggle, my Sam Browne belt became twisted, leaving my revolver holster where my handcuff pouch should have been. Before I realized what had happened, my assailant had seized my loaded .38 Smith & Wesson service revolver, and we were fighting for control of the weapon. I finally wrenched it from his grasp and hurled it out of reach.

Luckily for me, a citizen saw the confrontation and drove his car straight into the deserter, sending him through the air. I handcuffed him and then afterwards walked over and thanked the civilian driver whose quick thinking had possibly saved my life.

Some first successful investigations are memorable and one of my first involved a baby-sitter and the theft of \$20. Don was my partner. The bill went missing from a night table in the master bedroom. I asked the babysitter, “Were you in the room?” She replied, “No”. I explained a policeman would be attending to dust the table for fingerprints. I explained that he’d have to take her fingerprints to eliminate her as a suspect. She’d boxed herself into a corner. She confessed.

Another general duty partner was Bill Dawson, a laid-back prairie lad who never seemed to have a care in the world. I worked with Bill for several months. He’d chit-chat with a suspect and ask a couple of dumb questions and pretty soon the suspect would become comfortable with the line of questioning and let his guard down. Bill ‘the cat’ would then ask a few smart questions and in a moment or two the mouse was in the trap. I enjoyed working with Bill for several months.

Once, working with Bill, a call came in around 5:00 a.m. that a restaurant had been broken into overnight and the cigarette machine had been pried open for the silver coins.

Shortly after leaving the scene of the burglary, Bill and I spotted a man hitchhiking along Lougheed Highway near the Willingdon Avenue intersection. Instead of having the suspect stand spread-eagled with his hands against the police car, I began to search him while he was standing on the shoulder of the highway.

As I frisked his legs near the ankles, I noticed large bulges in both pant cuffs. The suspect had cut holes in his pockets and allowed the stolen silver coins to fall into the lining of his trousers. I looked up and saw the man standing there holding a hunting knife.

By this time, Bill had already drawn his service revolver and was pointing it at the man's face. As I looked up, Bill said, "Move and I'll blow you to Hades." The next instant, the knife dropped at my feet.

To Catch a Criminal, Act Like a Criminal

A few times my shirt-tail cousin Elgin McKillop and I visited the Smilin' Buddha on West Hastings Street in the seedier part of Vancouver. One time I was with Elgin and we sat at a table with Juanita Venus, a stripper, and 'Guitar' Shorty, Jimi Hendrix's brother-in-law. When Juanita was stripping, she kept peeling and throwing her garments at me. It put me in the spotlight. Shorty chatted with me and explained that a short time earlier had been arrested coming across the border with his favourite loaded revolver. He expressed his hatred for cops. At about 4:00 a.m., he invited Elgin and I to his place with a few of his friends. He asked about my profession. I worked in the bank. He asked which bank. When the discussion got around to banking, I suggested to Elgin that we head home. During our time in the Buddha, the police raided the place and collected my name resulting in it showing up on the police bulletin's suspected-persons list.

First Bank Robbery and "Mouse-trap" Constable Bill Dawson

Greater Vancouver experienced a series of bank robberies during this period, and Bruce Northrop of Burnaby's General Investigation Section developed a strategy for government paydays by having RCMP members park within a block of a bank and wait in case a robbery occurred. We had shotguns while a few of the bank robberies had machine guns.

One day, Bill and I were patrolling up Burnaby Mountain toward Simon Fraser University when we received a call about a bank holdup in progress at the Bank of Nova Scotia located at the northeast corner of Gilmore and Hastings Streets in North Burnaby. Despite being some distance away, we were the first to arrive on scene and got there just in time to see a man running southbound on Gilmore Street.

As Bill screeched to a halt, I jumped out of the police cruiser and hit the pavement on my elbows and knees. My revolver flew from my hand and skittered across the street. I quickly retrieved my gun and, limping slightly, continued running across Hastings Street and southbound down Gilmore.

The man I had seen moments earlier suddenly came running back toward me, waving a revolver. I dropped into a crouched position, ready to fire, and he immediately threw his weapon about 25 feet into the air and raised his hands.

He was completely out of breath and yelled that he was the bank manager. He explained that the bank robber had pointed a handgun at him and threatened to shoot him. Until that moment, I had believed the bank manager was the bank robber.

By the time I reached him, he had lost sight of the suspect. Within minutes, the area was swarming with police officers who began a house-to-house search for the bank robber.

It was then that I realized my knees, elbows, and hands were bloodied from jumping out of the moving police car. The plainclothes members of the General Investigation Section apprehended the robber three days later.

Incorrigible Young Women and Willingdon School for Girls

The Willingdon School for Girls, a correctional institution, was located on the southwest corner of Willingdon Avenue and Canada Way. One day, Bill and I received a call that five girls from the school had escaped over the fence and were hiding in a nearby swamp in Forest Glen Park.

Bill dropped me off near the intersection, and I entered the swamp alone to search for the escapees. I found them at the root-tangled end of a large fallen western red cedar, in the process of changing from their prison clothing into street clothes. Friends had hidden clothing and shoes inside a large stump to assist with their escape.

I walked down the length of the fallen tree and announced, "Hello, girls. Isn't it time to come with me?" Their giggling quickly changed to verbal abuse, and one of the girls suggested that, since they outnumbered me five to one, they would beat me up.

I treated their threats lightly and responded by shouting, "Help, rape."

At first, I chased the girls through the swamp, but after about 20 minutes, the situation reversed, and I became the one being chased. One girl made the mistake of breaking away from the others and coming too close. I lunged, grabbed her, and threw her to the ground before removing her shoes. I tossed her shoes into the swamp and retreated, calling out, "You can't catch me."

This infuriated the girls, and they became even more determined to catch me and give me a beating. I led them through the wettest part of the swamp, and before long, everyone was covered in mud up to their knees.

I finally emerged from the bush not far from the intersection of Willingdon Avenue and Canada Way. I ran past a lady waiting at the bus stop and shouted, "Call the police, I need help."

Within moments, police cruisers converged on the scene and took the five escapees into custody.

Many of these girls were labelled as "runaways" and had no doubt left home to escape abusive parents or relatives, often because of sexual abuse. Many were very precocious when it

came to sex. I recall attending several complaints involving the rape of young girls. Often, the offenders were their own fathers or other relatives. Oddly, I cannot recall any of the “runaways” ever being asked why they had decided to leave home.

Canada’s Most Wanted Criminals

Around this same time, I was working with Bill when we received a call that two inmates from the Oakalla Prison Farm had beaten a guard with a chair, scaled the prison fence, crossed Royal Oak Avenue, and escaped into Forest Glen Park. We were told the two men were dangerous and to use extreme caution.

Bill dropped me off on Royal Oak, and I was the first officer to enter the heavily wooded park. I climbed onto a large log and, with my revolver drawn, carefully surveyed the dense bush for any sign of the escapees.

A police dog team was brought in, but the two men managed to steal a vehicle and temporarily evade capture. They were apprehended several days later. The escapees were John Emmett McCann and David Ian Clark, who were considered two of the most dangerous criminals in Canada at the time. I would later see both men at their trial for the attempted murder of a prison guard.

During that period, a youth’s weekend escapades caused police a great deal of extra work in North Burnaby. One night, Bill and I responded to a noisy party complaint. Bill had just driven up to the house when the young man began shouting obscenities and fled on foot between neighbouring houses.

In the darkness, he failed to see a set of cellar steps and took a bad tumble head over heels down the concrete stairs. I ran to the bottom and found him in a semi-conscious state with a serious scalp injury. We charged him with causing a disturbance and transported him to Burnaby General Hospital. We never saw him again, as he later moved to another jurisdiction.

Botched Drug Bust and Constable Bill Dawson

Another summer evening, I was working with Bill when a call came in that a break and enter was in progress at a home on Gilmore Street, just north of Hastings Street. Bill and I reached the residence within a few minutes and found a woman hysterically screaming at us from the porch.

She told us that one of the thieves had tripped while trying to escape and was lying on the lawn beside the house, while the second suspect was being subdued by her husband and his brother inside the living room. I ran over to the man on the lawn and kicked him in the ribs while he was still on the ground. I then pulled his hands behind his back and placed him in handcuffs.

I ran into the house and found the homeowner, a burglar, and Bill struggling for possession of a shotgun. Bill and I managed to wrest the weapon away from the other two men.

After several minutes, we discovered that we had interrupted a drug raid. Two Vancouver City detectives and two members of the Vancouver RCMP Drug Section had been following a known drug addict and a dealer on Hastings Street in Vancouver. They boarded an eastbound bus

on Hastings Street heading toward Burnaby. The two Vancouver detectives boarded the bus, while the two Mounties chose to return to their vehicle and continue following the bus.

All four detectives had been equipped with communication devices, but the two Vancouver detectives turned off their microphones when they boarded the bus. Things quickly went wrong because the two Mounties abandoned the surveillance before the bus crossed Boundary Road into Burnaby. This left the two Vancouver detectives outside their jurisdiction, but rather than abandon the pursuit, they decided they were in hot pursuit and remained on the bus with the suspects.

When the bus stopped at Hastings and Gilmore, the pair got off and walked to a house rented by the addict’s brother and sister-in-law. The two Vancouver plainclothes detectives got off at the next stop and doubled back, arriving just in time to see them enter the Gilmore Street residence.

Because the residence was known to the two officers, they decided to use a writ of assistance, which allowed them to conduct a search and seizure without a warrant.

The two detectives waited a few minutes and then entered the home, hoping to catch the addict injecting drugs in the bathroom. They kicked in the front door and rushed into the bathroom just as the addict was preparing to inject heroin into his arm.

Rather than be caught with the evidence, the drug user threw his paraphernalia out the window. One officer struggled with the addict while the second ran outside to retrieve the needle and syringe. Unaware that the two men who had forced their way into the home were police officers, the homeowner grabbed his shotgun from a closet, while his wife called the Burnaby Detachment to report a break and enter in progress.

By the time Bill and I arrived, the struggle over possession of the weapon had moved into the living room.

Eventually, the confusion was sorted out, and the two Vancouver officers arrested their suspect, charging him with possession of a narcotic. The senior detective—the same officer who had received my boot to the ribs—told me in very strong language that he was not impressed with the way we had handled their drug bust.

I was working with Bill Smythe, an easy-going policeman in North Burnaby, when a memo was circulated instructing members working the graveyard shift to park their cruisers whenever possible and wait for emergency calls. It was a period of government restraint, and we were expected to do our part by reducing fuel consumption.

The non-commissioned officers explained that the gist of the memo was to find a secluded location and remain there between 3:00 and 5:00 a.m. Some time later, either the economy improved or crime increased, because another memo was issued stating that graveyard members were expected to put more than 100 miles on their vehicles each shift.

First Fatal Car Crash with Constable Smythe

On some graveyard shifts, Bill and I would stop and search every vehicle travelling along Hastings Street between 2:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Almost always, we ended up making an arrest

before morning. We would sometimes leave our assigned area for an hour or two to transport prisoners via the freeway back to the lock-up.

One night, we were travelling westbound on the freeway when a car directly in front of us suddenly went out of control and crashed into the Willingdon Avenue overpass. We were outside our designated territory, but we had no choice except to stop and provide assistance.

I radioed that there had been a serious accident with injuries and requested an ambulance and a wrecker. Corporal Simms and members of the Freeway Patrol attended and took charge of the scene.

The ambulance arrived, but it was on the opposite side of the freeway, facing east. The driver parked, and he and his assistant dashed across two eastbound lanes, the concrete median, and two westbound lanes and began to administer first aid to the injured parties.

Simms shouted at me, “Bring that ambulance over here.” The logistics of this instruction were more complicated than either of us anticipated, but I managed to quickly cross two lanes of westbound traffic, hurdle the median, and cross two eastbound lanes to reach the ambulance. Simms had probably expected me to do a U-turn, but there were concrete barriers separating the east and west lanes of the freeway.

I had no option but to drive east to the next exit ramp and loop back over the freeway into the westbound lane and return to the scene. Traffic was at a standstill due to the accident, and I managed to get back, but by then another ambulance had arrived and the injured parties had already been loaded and taken to hospital. This ambulance had been dispatched with instructions to drive east on the Lougheed Highway to the Willingdon turnoff, and it reached the scene well before I could return.

My letter to the officer commanding the Burnaby Detachment requesting permission to enrol at Simon Fraser University triggered a reply stating that I should prove myself as a policeman before taking on extracurricular activities such as improving my education. Instead of following his advice entirely, I reduced the course load to two - English and Psychology. Upon successful completion of these two subjects, I sent a second memo advising my superior of my passing grades. I requested and received 50 percent reimbursement for the courses.

First Autopsy and a Sad Suicide

No member ever forgets his or her first autopsy or first suicide.

On one of my very first afternoon patrols alone, a call came in of a sudden death. I turned the car’s red light and raced to the home of the dearly departed. Moments later Corporal Simms arrived on the scene. He said, “What’s the hurry, he’s dead?” Charlie told me to attend the morgue at St. Pauls Hospital in Vancouver the following day to witness my first autopsy. The pathologist brought me over to the table and asked me to smell a white lung. He said, “This is what happens to a heavy smoker. What’s it smell like?” My response, “Pus.”

I was working with Bob “Mort” Mortenson in North Burnaby when a call came in of a suicide. We attended and found a woman of about 40 sitting in a custom-made chair. It resembled a child’s highchair but it was built for an adult. It had a food tray. Her husband had

gone off to work leaving her to fend for herself. She had used a pillow to suffocate herself. She placed her face down in the pillow before adjusting a belt placed over her head. She buried her face in the pillow and then cinched the belt before throwing her arms to her side.

The Force’s 180-Degree Flip-Flop

One afternoon I was working alone and received a call of a family fight. Upon attendance I discovered a young wife had taken a severe beating from her husband. I took a statement from him, and he admitted responsibility for her bruises. I then took a statement from the wife and learned the police had intervened on several occasions but had never charged her husband with assault, telling her she had to swear out the information herself. She said she was too scared.

I took the unprecedented step of telling the husband he was under arrest for assaulting his wife and that I would be swearing the information. I escorted him to the lock-up. The following morning I was awakened by a call from the detachment telling me to report to the office. I learned the prisoner had hanged himself overnight after writing a detailed suicide note about his arrest. I was reprimanded for not following procedure. Ironically, over time, things changed and members began to arrest and charge spouses with assault.

Auxiliary Policeman ‘Bobby’ Lewis the Bank Robber

Robert (Bobby) Owen Lewis was an auxiliary policeman who often worked with members on weekends. Consequently, he knew all the coffee shops where members gathered to shoot the breeze. Bobby was a bank robber. He timed his robberies to coincide with the slackest shifts after getting to know them. It took a little while for Staff Sergeant Bruce Northrop and Sergeant Les Holmes to connect the dots.

On one occasion, Les asked me to meet him and Bruce at Bobby’s address on Francis Street in North Burnaby to execute a search warrant. While they searched the upstairs rooms, I began looking through the basement.

I climbed onto a chair to check the area above the air ducts and discovered a blue ski toque containing a revolver. I showed Bruce and Les what I had found, and they called in a member of the Identification Section to photograph the scene and dust the firearm for fingerprints. Les later charged Bobby with bank robbery and possession of an unregistered firearm.

Bobby confronted me at his trial and whispered that when he got out of prison, I would be a dead man for my testimony against him. I told him that when he got out, he would be an old man. Judge Hyde sentenced him to 14 years in the British Columbia Penitentiary in New Westminster.

A few years later, the federal government brought in the Habitual Criminal Act with the three strikes and you are out and sentenced Bobby to spend the rest of his life in the British Columbia Penitentiary. The very day Constable Al Ellard and I transported him to “the Big House” was his last time to see the light of day. He spent between 1965 and 2005 behind bars. That was 40 years.

Years later, Bruce and Les headed the investigation into serial killer Robert Clifford Olson. My mentor, Don Brown was also involved in the case and interviewed the witness whose information broke the case wide open.

First Annual Leave

My first annual leave began on 4 August 1966, immediately after completing a graveyard shift. Constable Ron Babcock and I left en route back to Ontario. There was urgency for me to get away, as I was hoping to attend my cousin Bob Waite’s wedding reception at Foresters Falls. I had reclined the passenger seat and placed an old mattress in the car so Ron and I could do four-hour shifts of driving followed by four hours of sleeping. Little did I know that the coming weekend would alter the course of my life forever.

The first warning came when Ron was speeding across the prairies and the right front tire disintegrated. Ron managed to maintain control and bring the car safely to a stop. The second warning occurred while I was driving. I pulled out to pass a semi-trailer at high speed and suddenly saw a car coming straight toward me. Before the other driver had time to react, I passed him on the right by driving onto the shoulder of the road. The driver of the oncoming vehicle had no opportunity to respond. It could easily have resulted in a fatal accident.

I dropped Ron off in Toronto and continued on alone, arriving at the home of my youth in Renfrew at 5:00 p.m. on the day of the wedding. I rested for two hours and then drove up to Foresters Falls to attend the wedding reception at the Orange Hall.

Around midnight, Uncle Bob Menzies, Uncle Tom Wark, Dad, one of Dad’s childhood friends, and I went out to my Rambler for a few drinks of Scotch. I sat in the front seat with Dad, while his friend sat in the back seat sandwiched between Tom and Bob. The car was parked under a streetlight, and Dad’s friend kept looking out the window, convinced that a police car would appear and search the vehicle.

Dad finally told his friend not to worry because the police never patrolled the Falls. He seemed to enjoy pointing out the irony that I was in the RCMP, Uncle Bob was with the Peterborough City Police, and Uncle Tom was the Chief of Police for Renfrew.

The ongoing wedding celebrations were cut short by a tragic accident on August 21, 1966. Uncle John, Cousin Reid, and two friends had taken a 14-foot aluminum boat up the Ottawa River and through the Fourth Chute to hunt a cougar or bobcat that had reportedly been seen on one of the islands.

A sudden surge of water, caused by the opening of the Sullivan Dam upstream on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River, capsized the boat. The four men and their two dogs were thrown into the water. Nearby boaters saw one man being pulled under by an eddy. Although the men had life preservers with them, they were not wearing them.

All four men drowned. When first responders later found the dogs clinging to the life preservers, they were able to rescue them.

I heard about the accident when I returned late from a date in Ottawa. Everyone was crying and trying to explain that Uncle John and Cousin Reid had drowned. I was in denial and refused

to believe it because I had seen them shortly before the accident. Early radio reports even listed me among those missing and presumed drowned.

Dad and I drove to my grandparents’ home, but instead of visiting, I let myself into the United Church and prayed that the men would be found alive. Just before daybreak, we drove to the river where the boat had been launched and began searching the shoreline.

That evening, I phoned the hydro station and requested that they lower the water level to assist with the search.

On August 23, the Ottawa Journal reported:

“SEARCH FOR MEN CONTINUES – RENFREW (Special)

A search was resumed this morning for four Foresters Falls men whose overturned boat was found in the Ottawa River Sunday afternoon.

Missing and feared drowned are John Waite, 37, his nephew Reid Waite, 32, Donnat Duguay, 38, and Maurice Boily, 34...”

Five boats searched the area from dawn to dark. Dragging operations were carried out where possible. Two Ottawa skin divers also assisted.

Dad and I spent the entire week walking along the shoreline of the Ottawa River. The river returned a body on four successive days. John and Reid were the last two recovered. On one of those days we saw a body bag on the riverbank containing one of the victims. The OPP sergeant in charge of the case learned that I was a policeman and showed me the body.

This personal tragedy, combined with a professional policing memory, scarred me deeply. It led to recurring nightmares that blended the image of a cadaver I had seen preserved in formaldehyde at the University of Toronto with the drowned victim—one of my relatives' two friends—whom the OPP sergeant had shown me. For months, I would wake from the same dream, which continued to recur sporadically for years.

Along with Bob and his brother Carl, I served as a pallbearer at the funeral on August 28, 1966. Three bouquets for John bore the inscriptions “Father,” “Son,” and “Uncle.” By the dark hand of fate, the happiest and saddest weekends of Bob's life occurred in the same month. Before the burials, Grandma Waite placed a handful of dirt on each coffin and said, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Grandpa Waite was in such profound shock that he was unable to attend.

To add to this devastating week, two of my childhood school friends also died that week. After attending my relatives' funerals, I went later to the wakes for Richard Clifford and Lloyd Acres, who had been killed in a car and motorcycle collision.

The deaths of John and Reid took a devastating toll on Grandpa Waite. His health deteriorated rapidly. Less than two months later he was admitted to hospital with a gangrenous arm. The arm was amputated on October 6, but circulation failed in the other arm, and he died on 7 February 1967.

Making Detective

Back in Burnaby, while interrogating a young suspect in the presence of his parents during an investigation into a series of car thefts and break-and-enters, I explained to his parents that I knew he was guilty because a couple of other youths had provided information about his involvement.

His father responded by giving him a couple of cuffs on the ear and telling him to tell me everything he knew about the car thefts and burglaries. More than 50 people were charged as a result of his confession. Over the following month, many previously closed files were reopened.

My work impressed my superiors, and on January 9, 1967, I was transferred to the General Investigation Section’s newly formed Burglary Detail. I was the youngest member in Burnaby to join the plainclothes squad and was given several perks, including access to an unmarked “ghost” car, food vouchers, and flexible hours.

Staff Sergeant Bruce Northrup was in charge of the General Investigation Branch in Burnaby, while Sergeant Les Holmes was the original founder of the Burglary Detail. This unit was responsible for investigating residential break-ins. I was the junior member of the team, working with Sergeant Robbie Pickell and Corporal Barry Daniels.

Second Court Martial—False Statement in Police Report

The transfer caused some jealousy, and because I was attending university, some senior members called me “The Professor” or “the absent-minded professor.” Bruce and Les later headed up the investigation into Robert Clifford Olson, serial killer. Barry later became Chief of Police for Abbotsford.

Just before joining the squad, I had investigated a house burglary that would later come back to haunt me. The youths had used matches to light their way through an unoccupied home. I included two inaccurate statements in my report. One was an oversight: I had written that the complainant had been notified when I had not yet done so. The second was an incorrect statement indicating that Corporal Simms had attended the scene.

When questioned, it quickly became clear that I had made errors in the report. I complicated matters further by stating that other members sometimes embellished reports with “little white lies.” My superior demanded that I provide names and pressured me to give a statement.

I refused, saying, “I am refusing to give a statement. This is my statement.”

I was charged with two counts of making false statements in a police report.

I asked senior members to act as my defence, but no one was willing. I was removed from Burglary Detail and returned to duty under Sergeant Jensen as telephone orderly.

Most officers never face a court martial during their entire career, yet I had faced two in less than three years.

I explained my situation to Mr. Dempsey, my landlord, who helped me prepare a written statement for Inspector Robert Simmons who was later the Commissioner of the Force. He accepted my self-representation and issued a reprimand rather than dismissal. Afterward, I was

further demoted to the New Westminster Subdivision Headquarters orderly room located on the third floor of a building on the northeast corner of 6th Avenue and 6th Street.

2 New Westminster Subdivision & Detachment

The Natural Spy

Although my duties were primarily clerical, I occasionally opened confidential mail addressed to Superintendent Herb Bloxham. One day, he knocked on the door of the orderly room and asked me to come to his office in an hour. It was a long hour. I sweated bullets.

When I arrived, he asked me why I had been reading his mail. I admitted that I had been doing so out of curiosity. He smiled and said, “If you’re going to try things like this, you have to be smart enough not to get caught.”

He then told me there were three rules of clandestine activities: “Number one, don’t get caught. Numbers two and three are the same as number one.”*

I asked him how he knew I had opened the envelope.

He smiled and replied, “The envelope was still wet.”

There were two positive aspects to being demoted to the orderly room. First, I had the opportunity to enjoy daily coffee breaks with some of the top criminal investigators in the province. They included Sergeants Jack White and Larry Proke and Corporals Les Holmes and Bob Steenson. During these breaks, everyone exchanged war stories. The odd time, one of the elite crime fighters would be asked to slip down to the nearest liquor store and buy Herb a bottle of rye. Life for these investigators seemed remarkably relaxed until a major case came in—a safe blowing, rape, attempted murder, or murder. Then everything changed. They would immediately take charge of an investigation and often work around the clock until every lead had been exhausted or the criminals were behind bars.

The second benefit was becoming friends with Sergeant Skip Wheatley, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Identification Section for the area stretching from Vancouver to Chilliwack. The Identification Section offices were located in the basement of the subdivision building.

From time to time, I rode shotgun with Skip when he attended major crime scenes. It gave me a firsthand look at how the Identification Section processed major investigations and gathered forensic evidence.

I spent many a night in the darkroom with him processing film and printing 8 x 10 black and white photographs of the serious crime scenes.

I was later transferred to the New Westminster Detachment and for the first several months our regular duties included the more routine task of serving summonses, and walking down to the post office to pick up the mail. This all changed with the Fall Assizes that took place in County Court. It was here that most serious criminals appeared in court for an acquittal or a long period of incarceration. Al Ellard and I handled prisoner escorts between Oakalla Prison and the British Columbia Penitentiary. These escorts were dangerous, as many prisoners were serving lengthy sentences for violent crimes.

The Fall Assizes

Constable Al Ellard and I transported John Emmett McCann and David Ian Clark during their trial for the attempted murder of an Oakalla guard. We were dressed in Red Serge and breeches. We’d sit in court within a few yards of shackled men in the prisoners’ box and listened as witnesses testified against the two career criminals.

By this time, Magistrate Hyde had become the senior judge in the province. He sentenced the two men to fourteen and a half years in prison.

These were the same men I had pursued into Forest Glen Park after their escape from the Oakalla Prison Farm. They later told me they had been hiding beneath the very log I had been standing on and that, had I found them, they would have tried to kill me. I replied that I had my service revolver drawn and likely would have shot both of them.

During the trial, John, who went by Jack, and I talked about his incarceration. He told me that when he was only 11 years old, he had intervened when a man was attempting to rape his older sister and stabbed the man in the neck with a ballpoint pen. He died. Jack entered the penal system and never escaped it.

On sentencing day, both John Emmett McCann and David Ian Clark were unusually cheerful. Later, the warden reported that they had triggered a metal detector and were found to have concealed knives made from sharpened tableware inside the manila envelope containing their trial notes. If I had not handcuffed them through a carabiner attached to their belts, which completely immobilized their hands, they likely would have attempted to attack Al and me at the first red light.

He said, “I like you, Don, but if you ever give me a chance, I’ll kill you if I have to in order to escape.”

Shortly after their convictions, the federal government introduced the Habitual Criminals Act, under which offenders with more than three serious criminal convictions could be sentenced to life imprisonment. I later learned that Jack had been retried under the new Act and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

The day Al and I delivered Jack to the British Columbia Penitentiary was the last day he saw the free world. I later learned that the prison warden had sentenced him to more than two years in solitary confinement in a windowless 11-by-6.5-foot concrete cell, with the lights kept on 24 hours a day. He was in custody from 1965 until he died in 2005. He died after spending 40 years in custody.

Before leaving New Westminster, I made two requests. The first was to join the Vancouver Drug Squad. Around that time, I had the opportunity to go on an aerial photography flight over Vancouver and along the coastline toward Squamish. It was one of the first real highlights of my life. The experience confirmed my interest in aerial photography, and I submitted a second request—to obtain my air photo licence. The Force turned them both down.

The Murderous Slumach and the Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

During this period, Corporal Frank Badon asked me to help him clear out an old vault at the detachment. He casually mentioned that Slumach had been hanged on the circular staircase that ran from his room up three levels to the room where the files were stored. Inside were historical criminal records dating back to the late nineteenth century. While reviewing the files, I was told the story of Slumach, an Indigenous man who was hanged for murder in connection with the Lost Mine of Pitt Lake.

Before long, I was transferred to Haney Detachment. My final assignment at New Westminster was guarding Canada's Centennial Caravan as it toured the province. While stationed in White Rock and Maple Ridge, I was responsible for protecting the travelling exhibit, which was housed in two large trailers.

The story of Slumach and the Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake would remain with me for the rest of my life. I spent many years exploring the mystery and eventually writing about it.