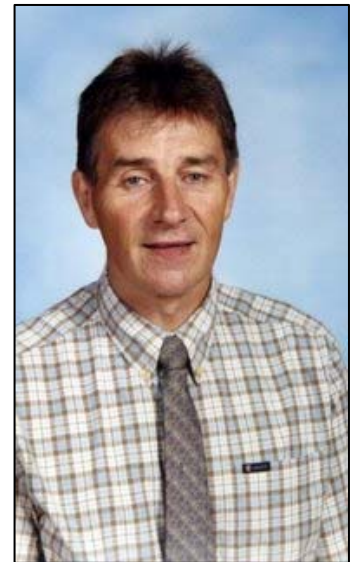


Position recently held: Guidance and Career Education Teacher

As luck would have it, after a long arduous journey that began at the start of World War 2, my parents found themselves on the platform of the Timmins train station in June 1951 when I was one and half years old. After a week long ocean voyage as 3rd class passengers on the Anna Salen originating from Sweden (where I was born) and a long train ride from Pier 21 in Halifax harbour, my parents, exhausted and apprehensive, stood there unable to speak English, not knowing anyone and probably wondering what to do next.



My dad was directed to Timmins by a Canadian immigration official because my father had a team of horses that he drove in the lumber business when he lived in Czechoslovakia. For my father, the train ride from Halifax to Timmins marked another chapter in a life that had been suffocated by Germany's occupation of Europe and the Nazi's Final Solution of the Jewish people. For four long years, my father was forced to work and suffer unspeakable cruelty as a slave labourer in Eastern Europe. Captured by Russians, my father was imprisoned with German soldiers, amidst the chaos that marked the end of the war. My father once again managed to escape death and with my mother, made his way to Western Europe and then Sweden before making their home in Timmins.

My father loved the bush and felt that an opportunity existed in Timmins that he wouldn't be able to find in a big city. Although almost illiterate, he spoke seven languages fluently and built a thriving business in the mining and lumbering communities outside of Timmins. The 'peddler image' belonged to the 'old country' in a bygone era. However, he resurrected and transformed it in order to make his own way in this new world. For my mother and father, Timmins afforded them an opportunity to work for themselves, raise their family and live in a country free from oppression. It was everything they wanted and my dad was always grateful for the life that Timmins gave him.

I felt the same way but for different reasons. I lived a life of privilege coming of age in the 1960's and spent endless hours playing hockey on the snow-covered streets around Birch Street and First Avenue, baseball in the summer and touch football in the fall at the Hollinger Park. I attended Queen Elizabeth, Flora MacDonald and Central public schools before entering Timmins High and Vocational School. High school was a special place and a special time but there are several memories from those years that I've tried hard to forget. However, a few still keep me awake on some nights.

I had done my fair share of stupid things but I never imagined being arrested and imprisoned in the old Timmins jail on Halloween night 1968. Crowds of young people packed the streets and sidewalks of the uptown core, waiting and watching, while others were racing cars, throwing eggs and creating a nuisance. Although I arrived on the scene late, there was no mistaking the excitement and energy of that night. My friend was standing in front of the Peacock Gardens – famous to my generation for its chips with gravy and banana splits. When an egg was placed in my hand, I knew exactly what had to be done - no doubt in my mind and no hesitation in my

stride. Walking past the Golden Cue Billiards, a local haven for my misspent youth, I smashed the egg over my buddy's head and threw in a scalp massage for good measure.

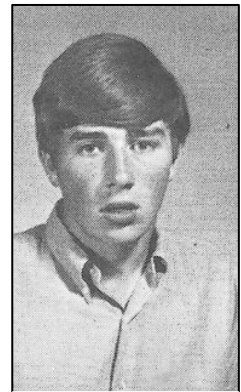
Unfortunately, I didn't notice the police officer standing about three feet away from me. He had seen enough and was anxious to send a message to everyone else that the fun was over. So, I was arrested, escorted to jail in a police cruiser and charged with disturbing the peace. In a small interrogation room, I was forced to surrender my belt – the first indication that I was entering an underworld, completely foreign to me. I was on the cusp of experiencing my own personal Halloween nightmare. I was 18 years old and had tried hard to cultivate a cool, indifferent persona. However, the next 15 seconds quickly erased any and all attempts of projecting that tough, impenetrable image. It was all I could do to keep myself from crying.....for my mother. On the way to my jail cell, scenes from Hollywood movies and prisoners rattling tin cups against the bars ran through my head. As the door closed behind me, I realized that I was caged in a 6x10 foot room with a toilet, a wire mesh bunks and a ½" sheet of rubber for a mattress. This was a far cry from the clean sheets of home. Fear gripped my soul.

In an effort to seek solace and comfort, I tried to engage in conversation with neighbouring inmates. My attempts were met with disdain, as these regular overnight visitors were interested solely in sleeping off a hangover or hurling verbal abuse at any police officer within earshot. These were tough, hardened and intimidating individuals – everything I quickly realized that I was not. The retching noises from the adjacent cell provided an unwelcome distraction. The longest week of my life was the night I spent in the Timmins jail.

Just like in the movies, I was allowed a single phone call. I really didn't want to call my mother but with no obvious divine intervention forthcoming, all I could think of was spending the rest of my life in jail. After listening to her frantic mixture of German and English, it occurred to me that I might be better off in jail. I thought I heard my father's voice in the background suggesting that the police throw away the key. Thankfully, my mother did not heed his advice and placed numerous phone calls in a vain attempt to spring me. Finally, in desperation she called Timmins High School guidance counselor and newly-elected town councilor – Vic Power. In a school of 1,700 students, Mr. Power could greet almost every student by name and had a reputation for taking an interest in all students.

I never did learn the exact intricacies of what transpired after that phone call but in the early hours of the morning, my poor mother arrived at the Timmins jail to take me home. That memory still stands out as one of my life's most humbling moments. I've never uncovered Vic Power's role in arranging my early release but he was responsible for reassuring my mother that I would survive that evening. While my friend may have been disturbed, the judge ruled that the public was not. I was acquitted of the charge.

The egg shampoo recipient is now a provincial judge who spends much of his time differentiating between harmless pranks and real crimes. We are still the closest of friends. The young waiter who regularly served me French fries at the Peacock Gardens is now my dentist and still a good friend. I am now a high school guidance



Elmer's picture
in the yearbook

counsellor who, when walking through the halls of my Mississauga high school, often thinks of Mr. Power, his style and his talents. While I don't possess his ability for remembering names, I attempt to greet as many students as possible and when the occasion arises, have tried to help some of them with their longest nights.

Although my parents left Timmins in 1974, I have tried to make an annual pilgrimage north to visit friends and to ensure that my children know and understand their northern Ontario roots. I am proud that my youngest daughter spent 2 summers planting trees in the same bush that her grandfather loved. I look forward to returning to Timmins once again to see old friends and celebrate the 100th year anniversary of my home town.



Senior Basketball Team 1968-1969

1st row: (L to R) Marcel Mainville, Bill Shannon, Elmer Rosenberg (Co-captain), Doug Loyst (Captain), Gord Behie, Ric Davison

2nd row: Ron Boivin (Manager), Paul Barnby, Roger Sasseville, Andy Bernard, Ginter Baca, Art Parke, Mr. Len Ellery (Coach)