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I was at TH&VS from 1959 to 1964 so in some peoples' eyes I would probably be considered one of 'The Ancients'. Nevertheless, the memories of the 5 years I walked the corridors of the 'Old' Timmins High are vivid and immediate.

I left Grade 13 never thinking for a moment that I would have a career in various fields of medical science, moving from Food Science and Nutrition, through Biochemistry to Clinical Biochemistry and eventually to Clinical Molecular Genetics. Were there any obvious early influences? Miss Bourne's eccentric ways in Grades 9 and 10 science classes; Mr. Jury's physics classes in Grades 11 and 13; Mr. Boissonneault's chemistry classes in Grades 12 and 13? Possibly; but I have no doubt that it was the logical thinking that was inherent to grasping Latin (Miss Giardini and Mr. Ferren) and the order and logic required to solve math problems in Geometry, Algebra and Trigonometry (Mr. Orlando) which set me up to love the beautiful order and predictability in Biochemistry and especially in Genetics.



To this day, though, it is Miss Anderson I think of on a regular basis. She was strict, she was stern, and she was a fierce task-master. But she was passionate about the written and spoken word and, for me, she sowed the seeds of appreciating the power of language, however and wherever we use it.

I've lived in Bristol, England since 1970 with my (English) husband and hardly a week passes that we don't go to the theatre. We have seen Shakespeare's plays in Stratford (of course); in a tiny Watermill Theatre in Newbury where the battle scenes in *Henry V* were outside in the grounds and on real horses; in the small converted Tobacco Factory theatre here in Bristol where we could reach out and touch the miserable, broken Lear; in the grounds of a Georgian country mansion in Gloucestershire where Juliet's body, surrounded by long tapers, was held aloft in a procession through the dusk in the gloomy woods; in the quadrangle of an Oxford college where, frozen in the chilly May evening, we watched our son perform in *Twelfth Night*; and many, many more performances in equally spectacular settings.

In my teens I used to go to the theatre once a year when the screen was removed from the Palace Theatre. We were allowed the afternoon free from the classroom to see a touring company perform one of Shakespeare's plays. When the curtain went up, the deafening noise of high-spirited teenagers subsided and the actors began. I couldn't understand a word and I was terrified that I would miss the whole point of the play. But the ear became attuned to the language, we sat and watched in silence, and I left feeling quite uplifted, if only because I had understood it. My once-a-year play.

It's not just Shakespeare we see. We are surrounded by playhouses, large and small and it's a simple outing on a regular basis to see the productions of all playwrights, modern and old.

Writing the requisite essays was extremely difficult though. Unlike my brothers, I had no creative writing skills, no fertile imagination, and, I'm ashamed to admit, very few opinions, or at least ones that I was

prepared to make public. When I was in Grade 12 Miss Anderson distributed copies of an essay entitled 'The Urge to Conformity is a Threat to Individual Freedom' written by AB who was in Grade 13. The impact on me was not so much what AB had written but my realization that I couldn't have written ANYTHING about the potential impact of conformity. At what point does a teenager acquire the courage and confidence to step outside the norm to become an individual, indeed, a non-conformist, perhaps at the expense of friends, popularity? A difficult call. When I eventually did find my own voice I would like to believe that Miss Anderson was one who had guided me to a path of confidence in personal expression.

Miss Wilson. Rather, Mademoiselle *Veel*-son and the French classes, before the days of 'French Immersion'. Oh yes, we could read the literature of Moliere and Dumas and I could construct my perfect (written) sentences using the pluperfect, the subjunctive or the conditional tense but can I converse when we travel in France? My husband jabbbers away having learned all the shortcuts, not caring what agrees with what, and in the most appalling accent but, guess what? They understand him and he has an animated conversation with the locals. I stand behind him correcting his grammar, cringing at his accent and constructing my perfect sentence in my head. By the time I'm ready to say it, the conversation has moved on.

What about everything else that happened during those 5 formative years at Timmins High? The Saturday night bowling, the movies we saw afterwards at the Victory or Palace Theatre, the after-school basketball games and football games, or cheering on our favourite juvenile hockey team on a Sunday afternoon at the McIntyre Arena; the yearly winter dance, The Snow Ball, where some of us, dressed in our finest, waltzed and jived and twisted with our dates across the dance floor to Henry Kelneck's Band.

No doubt the rules of girls' basketball have changed since the days that I played for the TH&VS Junior and Senior teams. We were allowed only two bounces of the ball (that could hardly be called 'a dribble') before having to stop dead and pass it on. Compared to the boys' game, it surely must have been dreary to watch. Our greatest opponent was Kirkland Lake Collegiate and Vocational Institute but we never seemed to beat them despite Sandra Cattarello's coaching and encouragement. The greatest glory belongs to the Boys' Team who won the Northern Ontario Golden Ball Championship, I think in 1962. I can't remember whether they won the All Ontario Championship as well but that doesn't matter. They were a fabulous team.

Those years of shouting my support for our school teams prepared me well for the years later when I stood on the sideline of the rugby pitch of my younger son's school yelling my support for him and his side. Actually, he eventually banned me from his matches because he said that I was the only one they could hear on the pitch. I thought that was what I was supposed to do - cheer them on. English Mums were clearly more reserved.

The most difficult wrench for me was, on leaving Timmins and Timmins High to go to university in Toronto, I knew that I had left the town behind. I was terribly homesick in my first year and I longed for the security of the town, the school and the friends I had known, friends who had also left and dispersed around southern Ontario to different universities. Six years later, newly-married and sailing across the north Atlantic on the last voyage of the CP liner, the Empress of Canada, to start a new life in England was nothing compared to that first break. This was an adventure, new and exciting, so much to look forward to. Leaving Timmins left a hole; there was a great sense of loss.

Over the years I loved going back to visit the town, taking my young, then teenage sons to my beginnings. I had always expected that I would see someone from my school days, bump into them on Pine Street or Third Avenue, but I never did. Perhaps I was looking at the wrong age group. We were 18 when we left

and it was in those young faces that I hoped to see someone familiar, even as I was in my 30's and 40's. My son had described the essence of Timmins on one of our visits when he was very young. After an outing with my father to his morning coffee club at Kresge's he said, 'Grampa knows a lot of people. Everyone says hello to him and they know I'm from England!' Therein is the care, comfort and security of the town.

Recollections of my childhood and youth in a town in Northern Ontario and the impact of schools, teachers and friends on shaping my life are incomplete without including one very special person, not from high school but from earlier days. Mr. Litchfield. 'Sir', as he was known to us in Grade 5 at Pinecrest (although I am mortified to recall, as he does, that I once called him 'Dad'). As a teacher he was demanding, motivating and inspiring. He seemed to have the measure of each one of us and he was able to draw us out to the farthest limits of our abilities. That year at Pinecrest was the beginning of our transition from childhood to adolescence. As a person he was perceptive, kind and empathetic and so had all the attributes to guide us on that bumpy ride towards maturity. He is in a league of his own.



Linda and her husband biking in the San Francisco Bay area.