

Growing up on Lulu Island and farm stories
about the Paulik family.

For presentation to the Richmond Garden
Club's monthly meeting on June 22,2016

By: Wally Paulik

First of all, I'd like to thank you for inviting me to speak to your club this evening. I didn't intend to do research on your group, but in perusing my archives I came across a "Directory of Frequently Called Numbers", and on the reverse page appeared an article by Bill Lewis on the "Richmond Garden Club". No date appears but under municipal council "Gill Blair" is listed as mayor, so your club has been around for a while.

My first club membership goes back to 1934 or 35' when my older brothers' invited me to join them in the "Junior Achievers Stamp Club". We would meet every Saturday morning at Sonny Banner's Dad's chicken barn on Heather Str. And trade stamps, with the other club members. I still have that first album.

As you can see there's no chicken poop on it, because we'd meet in the end of the barn where the feed was kept.

I was born Apr. 22, 1928 on Railway Ave. between #3 Rd. and St. Albans. Now it's called Granville Ave. Probably renamed when house numbers came in as the same number could appear on the north-south section of Railway as on the east-west section.

My birth certificate shows "Brighouse" as, my place of birth, as I was born at home. In those days, home births were registered the same as your post offices, thus, Brighouse, Eburne and Steveston were used.

Steveston had the benefit of the Japanese Hospital. So both home and hospital births were registered as "Steveston".

While on the subject of Brighouse, I must tell you a story. Several years ago my office was broken into and a few days later an R.C.M.P officer came to make out a report. He asked me where I was born. I said Brighouse. He said "where's that?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say “Northern Manitoba, sir” but on second thought I figured he might have had his initial training in northern Manitoba and could trip me up. So I said “Officer which detachment do you work out of” and he replied “#3 and Granville.” I said, “Sir #3 and Granville is as close to Brighthouse as you can get, as Brighthouse P.O and Brighthouse Tram Station were across the street from you.

Before I go much further I should give you a brief rundown of our own family as I’ll be mentioning them as I go along.

Grandma (Mother’s Mother): Olga Selenko

Dad: Max Paulik (Had a “Doctorate in Forest Engineering.” He studied forestry at Heidelberg University)

Mother: Irene Paulik

Boys: Wilmar (Will), Igor (Egar), Waldemar (Wally), Edgar (Ed)

Sister: Valentine (Val) married Frank Basiren

I came across some “Memoirs of Will Paulik”: I was four years old in 1927 when my father took me on the inter-urban tram to Vancouver, then ferry to North Van and then hiked to grouse mountain to collect seedling trees for transplanting on our farm property. This project was on-going for several years because successful planting would only occur if the young trees were dormant in the late fall.

I can well remember an early snowfall compelled us to stay the night under the stairs of the front porch of the “Chalet”, hugging the two packsacks of seedlings and a cone bag to keep warm. “End of Will’s Notes”. This is my comment: I guess that’s why environmentalists are called “tree huggers”.

My mother and father operated a lamp shade business in Vancouver during the 30’s. First from a store on Main St. then later moved to Pender St. They hired artists who produced hand painted lampshades. Floral designs and Native Indian motifs were prevalent.

They also produced wooden cutting boards which were hand painted across the top edge. These were sold to Woodward's store and were featured in their \$1.49 day sales. Exhibit pencil box I received for my birthday in school days.

I recall mother giving me a lampshade to give to Ms. Chapman, my General Currie school teacher, for Christmas. In the school hallway I remember Alex McEwen, Bill Morley, and Roy Lewis, asking me, what's in the box?

I told them what it was in German and also in Russian and pointed to the glass lamp shade in the hall. They replied "You dummy, you don't even know what the present is". I said, "you guys are the dummies, I know what it is in two languages and you guys don't even know it in English!"

Clearing the land and pulling stumps:

My dad chopped down the pine and birch trees but the difficult job was stump pulling. He would use large wooden blocks and a 20 ft. 6"x6" pole, wrap a chain around the stump roots, attach the chain to the pole and for added leverage my older brothers sat on the end opposite the chain.

The stumps were then placed in piles to dry and were burned in the winter when the peat ground was full of moisture and not as likely to start burning underground.

The ground was then ready for spading and garden planting. While on the subject of spading leads to another story.

One day a man threw a brick through my parent's lampshade store window on Main St. but didn't take anything or run away.

My Dad talked to him and the man said "he did it so he could go to jail and have a place to sleep and get some food." A police man walking the street came by and was ready to take him to jail when my Dad asked the man if he'd rather work on our farm, spading and gardening for room and board.

He readily agreed, was a fantastic worker, and my Dad would give him a couple of dollars on Saturday so he could go to town and have a beer or two. I tried digging alongside him but he said my shovel wasn't going deep enough and he gave me a hoe instead to breakup the spaded soil. Jim, after a while, landed a job at an up coast logging camp.

There was a chap nearby on Blundell Rd. who had a team of horses and ploughs. My Dad had him come over to see if he thought the horses would sink through the peat.

He decided that a team with a double plough was too risky. So instead he came with a horse and single plough.

Everything went fine until the plough hit a sunken stump and the horses' hooves started sinking and the ploughman started swearing as he unshackled the plough and got the horse turned around to pull the plough out backwards. More sunken stumps were hit and more swearing as the day went on.

After Dad passed away my brother Egar and I rented a Fordson tractor from a fellow named Ted Koski who operated a small equipment rental from his home on Westminster Hwy. near #3 Rd. That was easy going, and no swearing. We then planted the middle acre in potatoes. After the potatoes were harvested we planted fall rye.

I'm going to try and cover a few childhood memories of growing up on Lulu Isl.

Halloween: We'd use burnt cork to adorn our faces. At most homes we visited, the people handed out apples and pears.

We'd meet friends on the road and they'd tell us Mrs. so and so is giving out chocolate bars, we'd start heading for that house and the friends would yell "but you have to sing for chocolate, otherwise you get an apple!" We'd yell back "forget the singing" and so went the chocolate bars but that didn't matter because it was also Wilmars birthday, so we'd go home after "trick or treating" and enjoy Will's chocolate birthday cake.

Christmas on Railway Ave: Brother Will told me this story as I was too young to remember this incident. Dad put up the Christmas tree and instead of lights he had old clips that attached to the branches and had a socket that held a small candle.

When all the candle clips were in place he lit all the candles. The tree looked pretty, all glowing in candle light. But after a while the whole tree was ablaze. Dad managed to put the fire out. So much for “the good old days.”

Garbage Pickup: In the 30's, the Richmond Review would carry a notice that the annual municipal garbage pickup would take place on a stated two week period in the spring of the year.

We didn't have much garbage to put out as we always had a compost pile and animals to feed. Newspapers were saved to light the wood stove, Japanese orange wrappers and the sears catalogue had their place in the outhouse.

Any tin cans we acquired were placed on the driveway for road bed (cheaper than buying gravel). Best of all, plastic wasn't invented yet.

There were no restrictions on what you put out roadside. You'd see a steel bed headboard and some neighbor would pick it up to use as a gate for his pig pen and so on, the recycling continued.
(ONE MANS TRASH IS ANOTHERS TREASURE)

By the time the two single axle dump trucks the municipality hired came by, there was really little left to pick up.

Municipal dog catcher: John Enright, lived on Ferndale Rd, had a dog kennel, and would issue dog licenses and impound dogs that raided chicken coops. His only vehicle was a bicycle. I recall seeing a photo in the Richmond Review of Mr. Enright on his bike, with three german shepherds tethered there to heading to his kennels.

Rev, Patrick McEvoy: Lived on Alberta Rd. He had a bicycle with a two wheel cart attached. His cart was filled with all kinds of household notions. He travelled throughout Richmond selling notions from his pedal powered cart.

Sam Wadelin: The right of way road allowance on General Currie Rd. between Heather and Garden City was usually overgrown with brush and blackberries but Dad and other parents would on occasion cut the bushes back to keep the trail open for children to access Gen. Currie school and the Garden City tram station.

Mr. Wadelin had a large chicken barn adjacent to the Gen. Currie trail. This one evening dad and I were walking past the barn and we could hear a violin playing in the barn. I asked dad why doesn't Mr. Wadelin play his violin in the house. Dad said "probably so the chickens will lay more eggs" but now I really think Mrs. Wadelin couldn't stand the noise in the house.

Apparently Mr. Wadelin played in a band in Vancouver and the chicken barn was his practice studio.

Keelers Store: Ken Keeler operated a general store and gas pump at #3 and Bennet Rd. Us kids would go there to buy five lollipops for a nickel. His gas pumps had no meter. They had a glass tank on top of the pump that displayed lines in gallon increments up to 10 gals. Mr. Keeler had to pump a lever by hand to refill his gas pump.

In the depression years gas was always 25 cents a gallon (not litres). There was no use in trying to haggle for \$24.99 because it just aint going to happen.

The Wood Man: Firewood was readily available. Truck owners would pick up the cut offs at the saw mills on the Vancouver side of the north arm of the Fraser and go door to door looking for a buyer at \$4.00 to \$5.00/load. You pay before they dump.

This one afternoon, a wood trucker came by and Grandma agreed to buy his load for \$4.00 if he dumped it on the driveway near her flower garden. The driver looked at her garden and spotted two poppy plants in full bloom with their full sac of seeds.

He said “Lady can I cut these flowers, I bring you next load of wood tomorrow for free.” The deal was made and another load was delivered the following day.

Dad and my older brothers would split the wood to fit the stove. Edgar and I would pile it to dry.

Us boys had our household chores to attend to both before and after school. I recall at age six or seven; I had to take our cow across the street to Mr. Caton’s back acre which was a pasture.

We had to cross a plank bridge crossing the ditch on Mr. Caton's side of the road. This one morning as the cow and I were crossing, the bridge collapsed sending us both into the ditch. I got out but the cow just kept digging itself in deeper.

To call "911" never occurred to me, if it even existed. In any event, we had no phone at home.

But I did think of going next door to the pasture and get "Muskrat Bill" to help me, but then I remembered that he leaves home at 6:00am every morning to tend to his muskrat trap line.

My dad had a pile of sawdust near our driveway so I went for a wheelbarrow and dumped five wheelbarrow loads of sawdust in the ditch so the cow could get some traction. I knew that I didn't have enough horsepower to pull a cow but I remembered something from dad's horse and buggy days he shared with us kids. "You should use a carrot to get a horse to move forward rather than to hit it with a stick". So I went to the barn, got ½ a pail of bran and held it in front of the cows nose. The cow leaped up and out of the ditch.

That's what you call "putting cow power to work." The cow was now in the pasture. I went in the house, told my grandma what happened and said "I need a note for school for being late."

She said "I can't write all that, my English is not that good." So she wrote "Miss Chapman, please excuse Waldemar for late, as he had diarrhea." I looked at the note and asked, "what's diarrhea?" She said never mind, go to school you're late.

Looking back today, now that I know what diarrhea's all about, Grandma was not that far off, but it was the cow, in the ditch, that had the diarrhea.

While on the subject of school, I've got another story to tell. Quite often Alex McEwen and I would walk to General Currie School together and we'd hear frogs croaking in the ditch, then we'd each catch one and carry it to school.

I chucked mine in the ditch as I crossed the school bridge but Alex snuck his into teacher's desk drawer while she was tending the pot bellied stove.

Miss Chapman opened the drawer, out jumped the frog and Miss Chapman said "Alex" and before she could finish he said, "how did you know it was me?" she said, "I didn't before you told me. I was only going to ask you to see if you could catch it and take it outside, and for your little prank you can bring in a bucket of coal from the woodshed and stay after school to clean the blackboards."

As far back as I can remember, we always had bee hives on the farm. Dad even built a bee house to shelter the bee hives during the winter months, He built his own honey separator. This consisted of an old round laundry wash machine from which he removed the wringer rollers from the top. He extended the rotation shaft to the top of the tub and welded four frames in the shape of a cross onto the shaft.

He then used a bicycle crank from which he removed one crank and pedal and welded the remaining crank onto the top of the shaft. The tub already had a drain plug under which you'd place the honey pail.

He then inserted four honey frames into the holding frames of the extractor and would hand crank the bicycle pedal at sufficient speed to create centrifugal force strong enough to splash the honey onto the wall of the tub, which then ran down and was collected in a pail.

Dad was a cigar smoker. If things were good he smoked White Owl cigars (5 cents each). When things were not so good, Trump cigars at 2 cents each had to do. When the depression really hit he resorted to growing his own tobacco.

In the fall he harvested his tobacco crop and hung the leaves in the attic to dry. He imported two wooden cigar presses from Germany that held 12 cigars each. He hand rolled the tobacco leaves before inserting them in the press.

I recall as a youngster, he'd be reading the newspaper and I'd bug him because I wanted the comic page to see what "Popeye the sailor man" was up to. He'd often blow cigar smoke at me. I guess Lulu Island grown tobacco just wasn't the same as Kentucky because of our colder climate. So in retrospect, Dad did me a big favour because I never smoked in my life.

I hope I haven't left you with the impression that all we grew on our farm was tobacco and opium.

Actually the poppy took root from a 25 cent package of flower variety seeds my grandma bought, most likely from the Brackman and Kerr Feed store in Brighthouse. As I can recall, there was also a lot of marigold and zinnias that sprouted up adjacent to the two poppy plants.

Our first vegetable crop was always radishes, then lettuce, parsley and carrots. After that it depended on the weather.

But we always grew cucumbers, rhubarb, celery, beets, spinach, turnips, asparagus, broccoli, horseradish, onions, dill, garlic, cabbage, brussel sprouts, scarlet runner, kidney and lima beans, potatoes, beefsteak tomatoes, corn, peas, pumpkins, squash, cole rabi, and zucchini. On the fruit side, I recall cherries, Bartlett pears, greengage plums, strawberries, raspberries, black currants, yellow transparent, roman beauty, and gravenstien apples, as well as crabapples.

There was no shortage of wild black berries and wild blueberries to pick in the surrounding neighbourhood.

Canning, pickling, and drying were the common method of storing for the winter months as well as placing potatoes and carrots in the root house for protection against frost.

Grandma made excellent dried fruit compote. And like everything else she made or baked it was consumed the same day. No need for (best before dates).

Our parents shopped at Woodward's on Hastings St., mostly for items like: flour, sugar, salt, pepper, tea, and coffee, fels naphtha soap, and sometimes Rogers syrup and peanut butter.

It wasn't until "Safeway" opened their store at #3 and Westminster Hwy. that our vegetable garden started to get smaller and the extra land went into Flora and Fauna.

Farm work seemed never ending. I recall as a youngster my grandma took me along to visit Mrs. Truttman on Garden City Rd. one evening after supper, the first two hours were spent with Mrs. Truttman washing eggs, my grandmother sorting them into size, and myself placing the eggs into wooden crates into which you inserted cardboard dividers.

The ladies enjoyed chatting while working and after the last egg went into the crate; I enjoyed the best part of the visit, Mrs. Truttman's Swiss baking and a glass of fresh milk.

Our livestock list was also quite long for a small farm. Besides the Jersey cow you already heard about, we raised Flemish giant rabbits, pigs, ducks, geese, Guinea fowl, Rhode Island Red and Minorka chickens.

Had a goat, bantam roosters and hens, and pigeons that had their own pigeon house which we could see from our kitchen window. We grew a lot of mangels to feed the cow and boiled potatoes for pig feed.

In the late 30's, Dad operated a mink ranch at the back middle acre. After Dad passed away, Wilmar raised turkeys one year in the early 50's which he sold for thanksgiving and Christmas. Later on we planted blueberry bushes and Mom would put out a U-Pick sign and would usually accompany the ladies who came to pick and later became good friends with most of them.

On my birthday, April 22nd, as a kid, I recall going to the breakfast table and seeing it all laden around the border with freshly cut forget-me-nots and a month later, on Edgar's May 19th birthday the same scenario appeared in multi coloured pansies. It's ironic, that 70 years later a Richmond Review photographer would take this picture of Ed posing amongst the pansies on the same property.

Summer Holidays: Hong Wo and Co. Farm and Store:

Edgar and I picked peas, beans, cucumbers, celery paid by the bushel, pay was calculated on the abacus. Credit at store. At 10:00 and 3:00 tea served from large enamel tea pot. Good people to work for.

I also worked in peat mills, rode bike to #8 and River Rd. then south of rail tracks stooking peat to dry.

I worked 10/HR day, 9 cents an hour = 90
cents / day

Will and Egar worked at Columbia Peat Mills on Westminster Hwy. They ran the peat bailing machine there. Another summer they worked at Western peat on #19 road. They also worked on Herbert's farm on Williams Rd. hoeing corn for 85 cents a day.

In the fall of 1942, I took over a Province Paper route. The papers were delivered by tram to the Brighthouse station My first customer was the Morris Dairy Farm at #3 and Blundell.

75 customers later and 12 ½ miles of biking I ended up at Laddys home on #3 near Blundell. That fall the province had a contest for their carriers. Those who could compile a list of all their customers' names and addresses were eligible to attend a Christmas Turkey dinner at the Hotel Vancouver with Dal Richards and his orchestra playing. I remember my Dad saying, you can't go to the Vancouver Hotel without a suit. So next Saturday he took me to his Taylor friend on Howe St. and had me measured for my Hotel Vancouver suit.

In Sept 2004 the city of Richmond invited residents who lived in Richmond for 50 years to a Pioneer Tea with Dal Richards group entertaining. I told Mr. Richards that as a 14 year old I was too shy to ask for an autograph. I showed him a copy of the "Province Carriers News," pointed out his picture and mine and he autographed the paper for me.

Our Mother's birthday was May 9th which very often coincided with Mothers day.

To get her a present that didn't have to be returned for wrong size etc. we invariably went to Lang's Nursery. Us boys all went to school with Jimmy, Ken and Roy Lang. They'd always be most helpful in finding us a rodo or Azelia in a colour or variety that she didn't already have. If we were away fishing we'd phone our wives or sister and they'd go to Lang's for us although sister Val often went with her husband Frank Basiren to Art Knaps as they were good friends of big Frank Van Hess.

I came across a birthday card which our mother sent to Edgar in 1961 to Port Edward, B.C. where he would deliver a boat load of live Dungeness crabs every week to Nelson Bros. Fish Plant. I'll read you part of the notes she sent:

We put in garden. Not very big. I hope it will grow with all the rain, what we had. First 2 days sunshine, for how long? My flowers are beautiful – Azelias covered with flowers.

For my 60th and mother's day, I got nice plants. Big Camelia, clematice, mauve azelia, mollis – azelia (orange) and for rockery, mauve dwarf Rododendrum. I have lots of work to keep ahead of weeds. Egar is going away for 3 ½ to 4 months to Siberia (or some kind of Eskimo Land) [end of her remarks]

Actually Egar got a job as engineer on one of Imperial Oil's ships working out of Tuktoyaktuk in the Beaufort Sea.

Mum wasn't that far wrong in where Egar's going because as Sarah Pallin would say, if you look out of your window in Tuktoyaktuk you can see Siberia!

While we're talking about the arctic brings me to the Lava Rocks in the Paulik Gardens. Edgar picked these rocks up along the Aleutian Island chain. The islands are covered with smoking volcanoes. Most likely from one of his voyages into Dutch HBR.

The granite rocks came mostly out of the Fraser Canyon.

I recall coming back through the canyon from a hunting trip with Egar and there was a sign "road closed, two hour delay for blasting."

We got out of the truck and walked over to a bulldozer pushing rocks and sand into the Fraser River. Egar went over to the road foreman and said "you shouldn't be doing that. Fish have a hard enough time getting upriver as it is without narrowing the channel." The foreman said do you want this stuff. Egar said "Sure we'll take any rocks that we can lift." So we filled the truck and trailer and into the garden they went.

I'd often drop in, to see Mom anytime I was passing by and have a cup of tea. This one day she said "Wally, can you bring me some nails next time you come?" I said sure, and asked what kind do you want? She said "doesn't matter" I said "it does!" You don't hang a picture with a spike! Finally I said O.K. I'll bring you an assortment of nails and a hammer. She said "I don't need a hammer".

I said "have you got one in the utility room?" Finally she relented on what needs fixing. She said "My roses don't look good, they need iron" So I brought her a box of old rusty nails and some old railroad spikes I picked up along the railroad tracks.

So if any of you gardeners come across old Iron and think you've unearthed an Indian midden, before you call U.B.C's Anthropology Dept. check to see if you are in the Rose Garden.

I recall one day going to visit Edgar in his garden.

When a chap said to me are you the English gardener, I said to him "I'm looking for him too. But English he aint but a gardener he definitely is."

Another time just after the family home was demolished a fellow entered the yard with an empty wheelbarrow and Ed said to him what are you doing with that? "Oh I'm just helping myself to some plants." Ed told him in typical sea-man's language where he and his wheelbarrow can go.

In around 1945 our wooden driveway bridge needed replacing again.

Dad went to a junk yard in Vancouver and spotted a 20 ft. x 30" Diameter steel boiler stack. He asked the scrap dealer what he'd take for it. He said \$10.00. Dad said deliver it to Lulu Island and you've got a deal. It was delivered, ditch side.

Dad went to the Municipal Hall to get a bridge permit. The clerk said we can only issue permits for wooden culverts because steel will rust out. Dad went home, dug the ditch deeper and decided to see how long the rusty steel would last. He rolled it in the ditch and we back-filled the top with gravel.

In around 2003, the city had Progressive contractors filling in the ditch and Edgar was watching the excavator's operator trying to punch the excavator's bucket teeth into the culvert to remove it.

Finally the operator gave up and had to lift one end, placed a chain around the culvert and pulled it out.

Ed told the operator that it's been in the ditch for at least 50 years. The operator said "do you have any use for it, because that pipe's good for another 50 years". So much for "city knows best."

I'll now read from some excerpts from a letter Edgar wrote home on Nov. 18th, 1948 from "S.S Lake Sicamous" while in the port city of Kobe, Japan.

"We're going to be Vancouver's Christmas ship this year." From here we go to Nagoya, then Nagasaki, and finally Yokohama. We're going to load 7000 tons of Japanese oranges for Vancouver. We should be back home between 15th - 20th of December.

After Edgar passed away, the “Richmond Review” of Oct. 13, 2007, under “Paulik Garden won’t be quite the same,” stated many of the flowers of Paulik Garden’s neighbourhood park are starting to wilt. The greens are looking a little more brown. I walk through our former homestead at least once a month and am delighted to see a vast and continual improvement, thanks to a volunteer group of plant and garden enthusiasts.

I’m sure Ed would be proud of your achievement. I know I am, and Dad would be please that his “Labour of Love,” the forest, has survived the condo craze.

Wilmar would be happy that the bag of cones he hugged as a four year old are still itching to reach the clouds. Edgar would smile to see a salmon jump in the upper Fraser, whose journey he made easier. My sister Val Basiren would be overwhelmed if she could see the “Richmond Garden Club 2016 Calendars” hanging in her daughters, Kelly and Tashi’s homes. And last but not least I’m sure Mom would like to know if the nails helped revitalize the rose gardens.

Once again, thanks, to you all, for your continual support of the massive endeavour you're undertaken.