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## Always an Adventure: An Autobiography

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University of Calgary Press

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Dempsey, Hugh A. "Always an adventure: an autobiography". The West Series, No. 3, University of Calgary Press, Calgary, Alberta, 2011.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/48493>

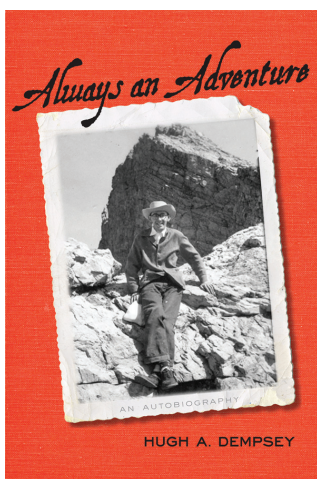
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## ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by Hugh A. Dempsey  
ISBN 978-1-55238-568-5

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## *Off to Work*

My decision to quit school came just a few days before the starting of the 1947–48 fall classes. Now that the die had been cast, I had to decide what to do next. There obviously were no jobs for apprentice portrait painters or fine artists, so my first step was to look in the yellow pages, where the only category which even came close to my goal was that of Sign Painters. So early on a Monday morning, I mounted my bicycle and began to make a tour of the paint shops in Edmonton. At each one I was either told there were no openings or to leave an application. Finally, I reached Artcraft Signs, just off Jasper Avenue on 102nd Street, and – lo and behold! – they needed a painter’s helper. I was hired on the spot at a wage of \$18 a week.

Artcraft was a typical sign shop. It did everything from billboards to gold leaf, from showcards to window displays. Initially, my task was to help build signs, undercoat and surface-coat them in readiness for the painters, and to do any infilling on large images. I also helped to build screens for silk screening, string canvas banners over streets, and install window displays. One time I even helped paint the backdrops for an Icecapades show at the Edmonton Gardens and worked all week in changing sets between shows.

My boss was Leo McKinnon but my mentor was Vic O’Neill. He voluntarily took on the task of teaching me the business and was extremely patient with me. He showed me how to hold a showcard brush between my thumb and finger so I could make smooth curves by giving it a gentle twirl. He taught me how to use round-ended pens for showcards and during quiet times he made me practise on sheets of old newspapers. He was, in my view, a real artist and had a well-deserved reputation of being one of the finest gold leaf specialists in the West. He not only did all of Artcraft’s work in putting gold leaf signs on doctors’ and lawyers’ doors but he did subcontract work for other sign shops that lacked this skill. But what really impressed me was his ability to produce

illuminated scrolls and presentation pieces. One time, I watched in fascination as he prepared a frontispiece for an ancient book owned by a Catholic order of nuns. Using gold leaf and his own mixture of oil paints, he created an illustrated page in gold, enamel, and ink which followed the ancient traditions of the Catholic Church.

Under Vic's tutelage I was soon given the task of producing cards for Kresge's department store. They had tabletop counters for most of their wares, and each section had a 1 x 4-inch card indicating the price. Every week, a hundred or more of these had to be produced with a round-ended pen. From there I graduated to laying out showcards and doing penwork, but not brush work. That Christmas, I was given the task of designing and installing a window display for Mike's News Stand. It consisted of a cutout Santa poised to climb down a chimney while in his pack were popular magazines of the day.

The guys at Artcraft were a great bunch to work with. The carpenter/painter was an old German who mixed his paint from white lead and was single-minded about the care and cleaning of brushes. A couple of sign painters, plus Vic, Leo, and I, rounded out the crew. I knew I had been accepted when one day I was sent to another shop to borrow their board stretcher. Leo explained that a completed sign was a little too small and had to be stretched to size. I didn't give the matter a second thought and went traipsing off to the other shop. The manager called to one of his men, asking where he'd put the board stretcher. He said he'd loaned it to a third shop, so I was sent there to pick it up. When that shop was in the process of sending me to yet a fourth place, I saw a flicker of amusement in the eyes of the manager and suddenly realized that I had been suckered. My common sense took over: how in hell can a board be stretched? I arrived back at Artcraft amid unbridled laughter from the entire staff and was needled about the incident for weeks after.

I was often sent to other shops to borrow things, as the sign painters seemed pretty friendly with each other. Usually it was a can of showcard paint or a special type of cardboard that was needed on a weekend or after the wholesalers were closed. One Saturday I heard my boss phoning around looking for some sheets of acetate used in silk screen work. He was obviously having no luck, and in desperation he phoned a shop which he normally ignored. After a short conversation, he called me over.

"Hugh, I want you to go to their shop and pick up some acetate. But be sure to look at it to make sure it isn't dried out. We've had some trouble with these guys in the past and I don't trust them."

With that caveat in mind, I went to the shop in question and found the acetate rolled up and waiting for me. Conscientiously, I peeled back the wrapping.

“What are you doing?” asked the manager.

“Oh,” I said innocently, “I’m just checking to make sure the acetate’s fresh.”

He gave me a dirty look and stomped into the back of the shop. The acetate was okay so I took it back to Artcraft and the incident was forgotten.

A couple of months later, in the spring of 1948, the boss informed us that our company had been sold and the new owner was waiting to interview us individually. When I went into the office, I saw it was the manager from the other shop.

“You’re the smart ass kid who thought he was an expert on acetate,” he snapped. Then, before I had a chance to explain, he added, “You’re fired.”

So there I was, less than a year into my illustrious career as an artist, out on the street. I knew there was no point in trying the other sign shops so I was at a loss as to what to do next. I considered going to Winnipeg or Vancouver to look for work, but my former boss, Leo McKinnon, talked me out of it. When I concurred, he wrote me a letter of reference in which he said, “I am very glad that you decided to sever your connections with the sign business. With your ability and competence, you certainly can achieve more in some other line. Talent like yours is wasted in this concern.”<sup>6</sup> Those were nice words but they didn’t put bread on the table.



One of my hobbies since about the age of seven had been stamp collecting. I had become something of a Canadiana specialist, was a member of the Edmonton Stamp Club, and really took the hobby seriously. One day when I was in Wevill’s Rare Stamps, a shop facing the Macdonald Hotel, the owner offered me a job as clerk. I loved being around stamps, so I immediately accepted. And it was a fun job. Besides normal clerking duties, I helped evaluate collections, prepared first day covers, and made up nickel packets of stamps for beginners.

Harold Wevill was an interesting man. He was a war veteran, and the gossip was that he got his start by an incident which occurred during the liberation of Holland. I was told that he was in a tank that “accidentally” ran into a post office and somehow their stamps and money disappeared. I don’t know if it was true, but Wevill seemed to have unlimited sets of fifteen stamps that made up the 1944–45 liberation issue, and piles of ten-guilder banknotes. Yet in all

the months I worked there, I never saw him gyp a customer. More than once, someone came in with an old album with no idea of its value and his price was always fair. After he bought an album, he removed all the valuable stamps, then tossed the book onto a table where everything was two cents each. If the stamps were glued down, as many were, I had to tear the album part, soak off the stamps, and put them into stock books.

One time I saw a stamp which I thought might be valuable and pointed it out to the boss. "If it's on the two-cent table," he told me, "it's yours." Over the next several weeks I bought scads of nineteenth-century low-denomination stamps and quickly filled my tiny album. I bought three Suez Canal stamps which according to Scott's catalogue were very valuable; Wevill took one look at them and said, "They're fakes." I still have them and he was probably right. On another occasion, a hodge-podge collection contained two envelopes with bisected Canadian stamps on them. They weren't in the catalogue so again he pronounced them as fakes and again I bought them. Even today, some of my purchases probably aren't worth much more than I paid for them, but it was a lot of fun. Other stamps proved to be good investments but these weren't on the two-cent table. I was still getting a minimum wage of \$18 a week, so I was limited in the number of good stamps I could buy. Yet I did develop my Canadian, Dutch, and Irish collections to a point where I could be proud of them.

Working at Wevill's was almost like being on a holiday, but like most holidays, it didn't last. Late in October 1948, Wevill told me I was through at the end of the month. I was shocked. I thought I had been doing a good job and he certainly needed the help. But it turned out to be my age, not my performance, that was the problem. On November 7th I would become eighteen years old and according to government regulations my minimum wage had to increase to \$20 a week. He didn't feel he could pay the added amount, so twice in one year I found myself out of a job.



Over the next few days, I checked the want ads and followed up anything that looked promising. I seemed to have put my creative juices on the back burner while I concentrated on simply getting a job. One of the ads that I answered was from Sun Life Insurance, which had offices at the corner of 101st Street and Jasper Avenue. I was pleased when I was called in for an interview and I must have made a reasonably good impression as I was contacted a couple of days later and told I was on the short list. My father was extremely pleased. If I

couldn't get a government job like the rest of my brothers, at least I could get into something substantial like an insurance company.

When I went for my second interview, I was taken in to see the manager. He explained that if accepted, I would begin in the general office, writing policies, and eventually I would be directly involved in selling insurance. He said the field had been narrowed down to six candidates, of which I was one. After outlining the responsibilities of the position, he took me on a tour of the place. When we entered the general office, I saw row upon row of desks, people with their heads down, diligently writing or shuffling pieces of paper. Suddenly the whole scene came crashing down on me. It was as though I could see a chain strapping every clerk to his desk and someone standing over him to make sure he didn't smile or laugh. I just couldn't see myself in that situation, so I quietly excused myself and said I wasn't interested in the job. My father was furious. He couldn't understand how I could pass up a position which offered so much security and prospects for future advancement. He couldn't understand that I needed something which appealed to my imagination and sense of adventure. Maybe I didn't understand it myself, but I did know that I didn't want to spend my life being tied to an insurance desk.

A few days later I was walking somewhat despondently along Jasper Avenue when I met Vic O'Neill. He told me he had quit Artcraft Signs shortly after me and was now a reporter with the *Edmonton Bulletin*. Vic was quite a guy. Not only was he highly respected as a commercial artist, but he had the same reputation as a reporter. Somebody once called him a tramp reporter but I don't know if that was true or not. He was a loner with a drinking problem and might disappear without warning, then reappear and easily find work in either the newspaper or sign painting business. And he was a man with a heart of gold. When he learned that I was out of work, he took me to see the managing editor of the newspaper. They already had a copy boy but Vic convinced his boss they needed another one and so they hired me.

Sometime later, Vic quit the *Bulletin*, borrowed a packsack frame from me, and said he was heading for the Northwest Territories. I never heard from him again. My father, who was unhappy that I had taken such an insecure job as working for a newspaper, was also incensed that I had loaned my expensive pack frame to Vic. He didn't understand that I never expected to see it again and that I was so grateful to Vic for steering me into my new profession that I would have given him anything he asked for.

In all the years that I thought I wanted to be an artist, I had obviously misdirected my creativity. I was never a very good artist, but deep in my heart

I knew I wanted to create things. With my limited knowledge and experience, I thought that creativity meant being an artist. However, after I was with the *Bulletin* for only a few weeks I knew what I really wanted to be: a writer. My school marks in English grammar, my proficiency in spelling, and the fact that I had read virtually every book in the children's section of the Edmonton Public Library before I was a teenager had been clear signs of my literary interests, but I hadn't seen them. Now, by pure chance and the actions of a good friend, I was cast among people who wrote for a living.

My job of copy boy covered a multitude of duties. I arrived at 7 a.m., alighting from my bus at the Macdonald Hotel and walking east along Jasper Avenue to a point where it curved to follow the edge of the river bank. I passed Graydon's Drug Store, where the old apothecary jars still decorated the window. On my first day at work, I saw that the sidewalk had been swept clean, so I knew their new boy had either come in early, or old Mr. Miller had done it himself.

The *Edmonton Bulletin* was right at the bend in the road, on the south side of the avenue next to the Zenith Block. The advertising department was on the main floor, but to get to the newsroom, you had to go to a door near the east side of the building and mount a long flight of stairs to the upper floor. As you walked through the entrance, you stepped into the newsroom, which was a clutter of editors' desks, teletypes, and individual desks of the reporters. The women's department and sports department occupied the front area where the windows overlooked the street, while flanking the west side of the newsroom were doors leading to the managing editor's office, the provincial news room, and the morgue.

Out through the swinging doors at the back was the noise and organized chaos of the composing room, where linotype operators sat in front of their machines, typing lines and then casting them in hot lead. In the centre of the room were large metal tables, used to sort the lead slugs into pages, while nearby were the proofing presses, matrice makers, and proofreaders. One floor beneath them were the presses, which were built so close to the ceiling that a pressman had to bend over as he walked along the upper tier.

When I arrived in the morning, I sometimes had to step over a drunk sleeping in the doorway. On one occasion, the drunk turned out to be a tramp reporter, and when he later wandered into the newsroom, everyone seemed to know him. He worked on the rewrite desk for a couple of days and then disappeared again.



Once I opened up the newsroom, I grabbed a jug and went across the road to Fawn's Cafe to get a supply of coffee for the staff. Meanwhile the other copy boy, John Holinsky, began tearing the overnight output from the Canadian Press and British United Press teletypes. These he sorted and tossed into the appropriate baskets of the city editor, news editor, sports editor, and women's editor. By the time I got back with the coffee, the editorial staff was drifting in, the reporters writing up their late night assignments and the editors looking over the teletypes and the layouts for the morning edition.

For the next two or three hours, John and I were running back and forth to the composing room. As soon as an editor put something in the "out" basket, it was picked up and rushed to the composing room, where the foreman gave it to one of the linotype operators. As soon as something was set in type, a galley proof was made and either John or I rushed it to an editor's desk. Then another editor might call for a photograph from the morgue and one of us dashed off to tell librarian Mollie Stanger. All this time the teletypes kept churning out the stories and every once in a while a bell would ring to indicate something important was on the wire. Everything during those first hours was rush, rush, rush.

I went back and forth to Fawn's Cafe for coffee as often as necessary while John, who was older than me, sometimes visited the liquor store to make sure that our news editor, Bill Lewis, had his coffee cup filled with his favourite beverage. Another of our duties in the morning was to service the local bookmaker. I was told that the only reason we had a British United Press teletype was because it carried the race results from the United States. The *Bulletin* was owned by Max Bell of Calgary, and it was said the bookies dealt directly with him. In any case, when the morning scratches came in, one of us phoned them to the bookie, a swarthy man whom I knew only as John. If we couldn't get through because his lines were tied up, we had to deliver the scratches in person. Conveniently, his headquarters were right across the street next to Fawn's Cafe. To make a delivery, we rang a doorbell and stood so that we could be seen from the top of the stairs. We heard a click, opened the door, and went to the top of the stairs where another door, this one with a peep hole, stood open for us. Inside was a large room, with chairs piled on gambling tables for cleaning the floors.

During the rest of the day, every time race results came in, we had to phone them across to John. There was a tacit understanding among the editors that this service took precedence over everything, even if we were sitting on a deadline. The bell on the teletype rang for every race result, and as soon as we

heard it, Holinsky or I would drop everything and rush to phone the results. The bookmaker gave us a tip of five dollars for our services from time to time, which was a nice bonus over and above my pay of \$85 a month.

Our managing editor was Reg Hammond, who left a few weeks after my arrival and was replaced by Len Tilley, followed by Alex Janusitis. Bill Lewis was the news editor, Charlie MacFarlane the city editor, and his wife Dolores the women's editor. When Charlie left, he was replaced by Ken Liddell. Stan Moher was the sports editor and Eric Bland the chief photographer. At any one time, the editorial department had a staff of about thirty, but because of low wages there was a frequent turnover.

I soon discovered that if one didn't mind the wages, their rise at the *Bulletin* could be meteoric. Shortly after my arrival I expressed an interest in writing, and before the end of 1948 I was doing obituaries and minor rewrites of press releases. Then, after being on the job for less than two months, I was permitted to cover the annual meeting of the Edmonton Stamp Club, of which I was a member. The published item – my first – appeared in the January 3, 1949, issue of the *Bulletin*.

A week later, I was sent to cover a speech that Mayor Harry Ainlay was giving on the future of the oil industry, and the experience terrified me. I don't know why I was chosen to go – likely no one else was available – but I knew this was something usually handled by a senior reporter. After the meeting, I came back to the office and wrote a 300-word account of the mayor's speech and put it into the city editor's "In" basket. Next morning, as I pursued my normal duties as copy boy, I kept a close eye on my story. When at last Charlie MacFarlane picked it up, I expected him to call me over and tell me to redo it. Instead, he simply glanced at it, wrote a head, "Ainlay Traces City Growth" and tossed it into the "Out" basket.

Oh no, I said to myself, he didn't read it! He didn't know it was written by his inexperienced copy boy! I'm gonna get fired! In a daze, I took the item to the composing room and later brought back the galley proof. Again I expected the city editor to fix it up before it actually went into the paper. But he didn't and later that day, January 13th, there it was in black and white for everyone to see. I waited for the inevitable explosion, but none came. The managing editor didn't roar over to the city desk demanding to know who had written that terrible article, and no one called from the mayor's office demanding a retraction. Gradually I relaxed and later in the day I even got up enough nerve to read the article. Not bad, I finally concluded, not bad at all.

A week later, I got my first byline for a story on a school operetta, and so it went. During the day I was a copy boy and occasionally after hours I was a cub reporter, covering stories relating to schools, art classes, and winter carnivals. In the summer of 1949, I took on the added duties of being a liaison between the editorial and advertising departments. It was a bottom-of-the-barrel assignment but one which I embraced with enthusiasm. Whenever a new company opened for business, the advertising department tried to sell a page of congratulatory ads and a portion of the page was left for a so-called “news” story about the opening. Over the summer and autumn I waxed eloquent upon the merits of such firms as Avenue Furniture, Marr’s Fashions, Nu-Way Cleaners, and Milky Way milk bar.

I was still willing to do more so I was given the task of writing so-called “reviews” of upcoming movies. I never saw the shows; I just did rewrites from their press releases and wrote captions for the glossy photographs they provided. Besides these assignments were the ever-present obituaries, club meetings, and minor rewrites. And as with Artcraft Signs, Vic O’Neill was there to help me during my first months. He taught me the pyramid style of writing where one put most of the essential facts into the opening sentences, i.e., the top of the pyramid. As the story progressed, the information became more voluminous but less important. This style had two advantages: if readers lost interest after the first paragraph, they still got the essentials, and if the article was too long, an editor could lop it off anywhere at the bottom and not lose anything important.

I also learned that the opening sentence – which was often a paragraph in itself – had to be as dramatic, pithy, and fact-loaded as possible. Often, that first sentence was the hardest part of the whole article to write. Another lesson was conciseness. One time I wrote an article and Vic told me to take it back to my typewriter and cut it by one third. I found this to be difficult, for all my words seemed like pearls of wisdom. But at last I succeeded and proudly returned it to him. He looked it over briefly and told me to go back and cut it by another third. I protested. He insisted. And he was right. I struggled over the piece, concluded that my words weren’t as sacrosanct as I believed, and in its final form the article was far better than the original submission.



Late in 1949, at the age of nineteen, I was officially promoted from copy boy to reporter soon after Ken Liddell took over as city editor. I was given the weather beat, which sometimes was as little as writing a daily summary of

local temperatures or as much as doing major stories on storms and weather conditions. I also did the travel guide, which was a daily schedule of trains, aircraft, and highway conditions. To that, Liddell later added the hotel beat, which meant daily tours of the Macdonald and other leading hotels to see if anyone important was in town. And for the first time, my bylines identified me as a “*Bulletin* Staff Writer” as I covered such stories as Christmas mail pileups, hibernating bears, and the Robbie Burns night at the Macdonald Hotel.

But bylines are funny things. On January 2, 1950, in addition to my other duties I started to write a daily children’s column, and even though I produced some 130 columns of 700 to 800 words each, no one ever knew who I was. A couple of years earlier, the *Bulletin* had started the Tawasi Club, where children could get membership cards and badges and have their names published on their birthdays. The main activity of the club was to offer crossword puzzles, pictures to colour, a locally written children’s story, and the syndicated children’s columns Uncle Wiggly or Burgess Bedtime Stories. The idea had been the brainchild of Edith McLellan, a mother of three who wrote under the pseudonym of Ruth Barry. Early in 1949, she left and was replaced by Eleanor Page, who wrote under her own name for less than three months before she was replaced.

At this point, the editors felt that these changes were having a detrimental effect on the continuity of the Tawasi Club, so they opted for the generic name of “Joan Walker” for all future columnists. During the rest of 1949, a couple of people were involved in writing the stories and at the beginning of 1950, I officially became Joan Walker.

Over a period of time, the Club became little more than the daily column and birthday greetings in a corner of the comic page. In April 1950 it was reduced to three times a week, alternating with a Whipper Watson Safety Club column written by Edmonton sportsman Tiger Goldstick. I continued to write the Tawasi Club column until the end of August 1950, at which time I was promoted and the whole club was discarded in favour of a crossword puzzle.

When I look back over my old scrapbooks, I can see that the experience as Joan Walker was good for me, not just in writing but in learning how to do research. I started off with Aesop’s fables, then haunted the public library searching for good children’s stories. But my best source proved to be a children’s illustrated encyclopaedia I had bought at an auction sale when I was about thirteen. All ten volumes were picked up for 25 cents, and I had a devil of a time carrying them home in the basket of my bike. But they were now a godsend, providing information on the origin of names of months, Egyptian

hieroglyphics, Roman ruins, discovery of tea in China, and a host of other assorted data.

But as time went along, I became more and more interested in local stories and Indian legends. Even as a child, local scenes captivated me. Hunting birds with a bow and arrow, imagining myself back in the “buffalo days,” and feeling a sense of the past while working for Graydon’s Drug Store, all evoked within me a romantic feeling about the past. I wrote about such topics as Alberta place names, an Indian battle at Fort Edmonton, the formation of the North-West Mounted Police, and adventures of Father Lacombe and other missionaries. In the field of mythology, I used such authors as George Bird Grinnell, Diamond Jenness, and John Maclean to tell Blackfoot stories of Scar Face, the girl who married the Morning Star, and others.

My writing style for these columns was somewhat cloying at times, and I also did quite a bit of moralizing. For example, I wrote, “It’s wrong to suppose the early Indians of Canada were cruel and hated all white men. They had been moulded by conditions in the forests and were superstitious of anything unusual. They were never guilty of low or mean vices and before the coming of the white man with his ‘firewater,’ they had quite a high sense of morality.”<sup>7</sup>

The beauty of writing this column was that I had a completely free hand. None of the editors bothered to read it, and my copy went straight to the composing room. Mind you, if I had ever strayed beyond my mandate, I would have soon heard of it. But over the months, as I became more and more aware of Canada’s Indians and their problems, my columns (or rather Joan Walker’s) reflected this interest.

Like most writers, I promised myself I would get a dozen or so columns ahead but I never did. Hours before a deadline, I would be rushing around, looking for a topic and dashing off my short essay. This work was in addition to my regular duties as a reporter but I loved it.

During this time, I mixed with an interesting bunch of fellows. Probably the most outrageous were Stan Burke and John McLean, who lived in a basement apartment which they called “The Towers.” They were wild, irreverent, and the most likeable pair that one could ever hope to meet. Once, one of them (I won’t say which) was invited to a swank garden party in the West End. As a guest he brought a hooker whose social conversation was limited to shop talk. Needless to say, he wasn’t invited back. Also, Burke was probably a better cartoonist than many of those who supplied the *Bulletin*. Satirical and humorous, his drawings graced the walls of the newsroom and two even found their way into my personal collection. One shows Burke entering a maternity

delivery room with a plumber's helper in his hand while nearby a nurse says, "A difficult case. Dr. Burke, the specialist, is being called in."

All in all the *Bulletin* news staff were a great bunch. The newspaper was far behind the *Edmonton Journal* in circulation, so to sell papers everything was done to make it bright, cheery, and sensational. About this time, for example, the *Journal* placed wooden seats at bus stops; they were painted dull green and inscribed "Rest and Read the Journal." The *Bulletin* responded with wood and concrete seats, painted bright orange, and inscribed "Wide Awake People Read the *Bulletin*." That reflected the competitive, upbeat attitude of the *Bulletin* and its staff.

Jack DeLong, with the face of a prizefighter, was just as pugnacious in his daily column "On the Town." Brud Delaney was the police reporter, while Harlo Jones was our specialist on the rapidly expanding oil industry. Spud Murphy covered the city hall beat, Jim Sherbaniuk the university, and Ted Horton the legislature. Others such as Eunice Hoffman, Pat McVean, Paul Hurmuses, Don Flach, Art Etter, Ivers Kelly, and Don Travis were general reporters or had their own beats. In the sports department were a bunch of jocks, including Jim Algeo, Ernie Fedoruk, Jim McCurdy, and the loudest of the bunch, Dick Beddoes.

Those reporters who worked on Saturdays often gathered in the managing editor's office after he had gone home and spent the afternoon drinking and swapping stories. To me, the room had a nice atmosphere, as all the walls were taken up with books and huge volumes of the back issues of the paper. It was as though we were surrounded by history. People came and went during the afternoon, and by evening the diehards retired to Fawn's Cafe or to one of the Chinese restaurants on 97th Street.

I had never been much of a drinker, but while at the *Bulletin* I acquired a taste for rye and Madame Brizzard's blackberry brandy. The Saturday afternoon sessions usually centred upon rye or scotch. In later years, one of the editors told me I looked like a scared fifteen-year-old when I started at the *Bulletin*, instead of a worldly eighteen-year-old. But she also said that after a year, I looked my age, which says something about life at the *Bulletin*.

One of my duties as copy boy had been to make deliveries and pickups from our engraving plant, which was located about four blocks away. There I became good friends with Ed Jackson, the engraver, and spent a lot of my spare time there. I learned quite a bit about the engraving business at a time when everything was shot on zinc plates which had been covered with dragon's blood and then etched in acid. Next door was the *Bulletin's* photo lab under

Eric Bland, who immediately impressed me with his red MG sports car. I got to know the other photographers, Chuck Ross, Bud Dixon, Laddie Ponich, and Danny Scott, and later worked with Chuck Ross when I was with the Alberta government.

I was still painfully shy and although I had had two or three girlfriends during my high school years, there had been nothing serious. At the *Bulletin*, I found female companionship in the waitresses at Fawn's Cafe. One shift ended at 7 p.m. and I would sometimes take a girl to a movie but more often I was able to get free tickets from the Sports Department for boxing or wrestling matches. If I had an extra ticket, I would give it to my brother Glen. In later years, Glen said he went to the matches as much to find out what kind of a woman I was bringing as to see the show itself. I know that some of them were pretty tough but I was still a very innocent youth.

Interestingly, I never went out with the same girl more than two or three times and in most cases our relationship seldom got beyond a goodnight kiss. I suspect they were all much more experienced than me and were wise enough to understand that I was too shy to be much of a threat. I guess I was something of a change from the usual guys who tried to pick them up.

Four waitresses stand out in my mind – Beryl Black, Marie Trembley, and two others whom I recall only as Ann and Marg. One evening, Ann and I left Fawn's and were en route to the Dreamland Theatre when a man jumped out of an alley and pointed a knife at me. He told me I was stealing his girl. Before I had time to act (I don't know what I would have done), Ann lit into him with a tongue that was far sharper than his blade. She backed him right into the alley and although I didn't hear exactly what she said, I do know he took off like a frightened rabbit.

"That was my old boyfriend," she said, matter-of-factly. "We split up."

"What are we going to do now?" I asked.

"Why," she said, "let's go to the show, of course." And we did. I must confess that I was looking over my shoulder when I walked her home, and we never went out again.

Marg was a waitress who told me that she hated her work; she wanted to be a stenographer but couldn't afford to take a typing course. She was a farm girl and none of the commercial courses had been available at her one-roomed school. So I got a bright idea. During evenings after work we went into the business office of the *Bulletin*, where I gave her typing lessons. We became quite good friends, and although she had the best of intentions of bettering herself, I found she simply didn't have the necessary education. After about

a week, Marg realized this herself and was more disheartened than if she had never tried. A short time later, she told me she was going back to her parents' farm. Perhaps that was best, as the life of a waitress so close to notorious 97th Street could be dangerous for an impressionable young girl.

Beryl, on the other hand, was quite a hard case. We saw a couple of sporting events together and sometimes went to the *Bulletin's* engraving plant to drink beer. But like other dates, it lasted for only a short time.

As for Marie Trembley, that was a whole different story. Early in 1950 I dated her a few times and then moved off to other fields. In April, when the *Bulletin* carried a story about a woman named Marie Smith being arrested for the murder of a Chinese merchant, I didn't think anything of it, but when I saw her picture in the paper I knew it was Marie Trembley. According to press reports, Marie had innocently stopped to buy groceries and was attacked by the merchant. She resisted and stabbed him nineteen times. At this time she was living about a mile away and did not seem to know the man, yet when I knew her she roomed less than a quarter of a block from the store and must have shopped there. Anyway, she was found not guilty.