

WHY I LOVE VICTORIA

My love for Victoria is really due to many events that occurred primarily in my younger years. I will, therefore, try to relate some of these in this article.

I was born in 1924 and my early years were during the great depression. I know I was shielded from some of the bad years by my loving parents and grandparents. I do well remember the dedication of these four persons to the Lord Jesus Christ. All four were active in the Victoria Baptist Church. Mother Massie was the pianist/organist all the years I was in Victoria plus many years after I left. It was a total of 76 years and was ended when she fell and broke her hip. It was in this Church that I accepted Christ and was baptized on

I remember the big garden that my Father tended and the help my Grandfather Phelps supplied. Oh yes, I was required to help also. I was allowed to sell surplus vegetables to neighbors. Of course, this was my income and I was taught to give a tithe of that to the Lord.

During the depression years it was almost a daily occurrence for "Hoboes" who rode the freight train up and down the railroad to come and knock on the door asking for a bite to eat. I never saw one of the hungry men leave our home without at least a sandwich. I can hear my Grandmother Phelps say "well, at least we are not hungry".

When I was 10 years old, my brother Edwin came into this world. He grew up in Victoria, spent a hitch in the navy and then worked 52 years on the railroad.

Another memory was that I was given piano lessons, first from Mother and then she felt I needed to take from Mrs. Hawthorn. Well, I really did not like music and finally I was allowed to terminate those lessons.

I was very interested in mechanical, electrical, and woodworking projects. At age 14, I built a go-cart. It was powered by a small Lawson engine from a Montgomery Wards battery charger. My mentor on this project was Ralph Underwood and we became great friends. The go-cart was a real curiosity in the town. No one had seen anything like it. I was even allowed to ride it up town on the sidewalk. Police officer Slayton was a bit uneasy about it but some way put up with me. Yes, I do have pictures of this cart.

Also, during my younger years I was an active Boy Scout. We had a great Troop. Mr. David Y. Paschal was one of our Scout Masters. Thomas Latta was our Jr. Assistant Scout Master. I remember the day I, along with quite a few other boys, were taking our cooking merit badge. I had built a neat stove from an oil drum and was doing well with my meal. Then I discovered I was supposed to have a dessert with the meal which I had overlooked. A good friend, Frances Williams, who lived next door to the scout cabin witnessed the problem and slipped over to her house and stirred up some Tapioca pudding. She brought it to me and I cooked it up on my little stove. I will always be grateful for that good deed.

As time went on, my Father, Hume W. Massie and Mother, Lola Massie, opened the Massie Furniture Store. Ed Massie and Gordon Clark worked there. Then soon after the Massie Furniture Store was established, Dad bought an apple orchard. I remember how the friends in Victoria would turn out in the evening to grade apples. Another good reason for loving Victoria.

Another great memory was building a two tube radio. It was in the February 1940 Popular Mechanics. Yes, it really worked and I still have that issue of the magazine. Again, a friend, Leonard Egelston was my mentor if I needed help. He was the town radio repair man. I always enjoyed hanging out in his shop on 6th Street close to the hotel.

Now one of my favorite memories is purchasing a 1927 Model T Ford for \$15 from my neighbor, Mr. Robert Montgomery. Wish I still had it now.

Another wonderful memory was building a telephone system. Ben Whaley, one of my best friends, and I acquired a big supply of old telephone wire that the phone company had disposed of. They also threw away lots of phone parts. Well, Ben and I built up two phone sets and ran the wire for approximately four or five blocks between our houses. We used doorbells for ringers, electric train transformers to power the ringers and discarded #6 dry cell batteries from the railroad for the power to talk on. What a curiosity. The construction and upkeep problems would take a couple of pages. Ben was drafted from college into the Army during the war. He was a Browning Automatic Rifleman. He was killed in France soon after the invasion. I still grieve over the loss of this friend.

I also had a hobby of Photography. I had a nice little "Dark Room" in the workshop behind the home place. I developed pictures for individuals in town and for a drug store; Size 127 for 25 cents, 120/620 for 30 cents, and 116/616 for 35 cents. My

good friend Ben Whaley, mentioned above, shared the same hobby. He had a "Dark Room" in the Hawthorn Drug Store on the East side of Main Street.

In 1941 I graduated from good old Victoria High School. There was not enough money to go to college but I did go to Bliss Electrical School in Takoma Park, Washington, D.C. I got one of their student jobs to help with the tuition and expenses. My Father had saved his WWI bonus for my education. While at Bliss, Pearl Harbor was bombed. After graduation, I went to work with IBM and soon was drafted into the Navy. After discharge I went back to IBM, a great Company.

In closing I want to add three more names that contribute to my love of Victoria. Jackie Breedlove Clement has been like a sister to me and my entire family ever since she came into this world. Then, John Underwood has been a special friend. I helped him to get his Ham Radio License and build a transmitter out of junk parts. We talked from Victoria to Northern Virginia via Ham Radio. Later, he was part of my life as an IBM'er. He is a mighty good friend. Then there is Gordon Clark. He was a valuable employee at the Massie Furniture Store and is a great Christian friend.

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