



Admaston Peewee Hockey Team, 1957.
 Back row: Craig Ferguson, Ron Kusler, Don Waite, Coach Ken Bromley,
 Ian Edmunds, Gary Pettigrew, Hugh Foy
 Front row: Barry Riddell, Ernie Reid, Ray Edmunds, Bob Chamberlain,
 Doug Headrick, David Briscoe

the elevator at a time, Dad and I would often be overworked and unable to keep up, since quite often the bales had to be carried long distances in the mow and positioned into place. Mom would forget and pretty soon five bales would be on the elevator at a time. They'd be literally shooting off the end of the elevator. This would become another pregnant situation and a fuse would blow and shut everything down until it was replaced or I would have to leave the mow and tell Mom to slow down. There was always tension during the times when hay was being put in the barn.

I remember a day when Dad was mowing with one tractor and I was raking hay in an adjacent field next to Crozier's farm. Dad got off his tractor and began to shout some instructions at me but I couldn't hear him over the noise of my tractor. I turned off the ignition but still

couldn't hear Dad because he had left his tractor running. As we were yelling back and forth, the vibration of the running motor on Dad's tractor caused it to move and roll down the hill. I yelled, I motioned, I did everything possible, but Dad was determined to get in the last word and refused to look back over his shoulder. When he finally did look, his tractor and mower were just disappearing over the crest of the hill. It was then that he began his "Jesus, Jesus, German-hearted Christ" tirade but it was too late. The tractor with the mower in tow squeezed between two large elm trees and ran straight into the creek. There wasn't any damage but it took Dad, Uncle Gerald, and me the rest of the day to pull the tractor and mower from the creek.

People nowadays probably don't know much about thrashing. Dad planted oats each spring when I was a kid. There was more to it than met

the eye. First of all the soil had to be prepared for sowing. This always began the fall before with the ploughing of the fields. Then in the spring these ploughed fields were disked to break the ground up even more for sowing. When the ground was properly dried, Dad would do the sowing, adding fertilizer at the same time.

By the end of August the oats would be ready for harvest. Sometime in the late '50s Dad and several of the neighbours purchased an old belt-driven thrashing machine on steel wheels. The farmers would move the machine from farm to farm until everyone had taken in their crops. Quite often a large group of men would arrive at our farm to take in the crop. Dad had to synchronize everything well in advance. He had a piece of machinery called a binder which when hooked behind the tractor cut the standing oats and tied them into neat

little bundles called sheaves. It would gather four to five sheaves in a wire catcher and then, when tripped, would deposit them in the field. Dad and Mom would afterwards come along and stand these sheaves up into stooks. When thrashing day arrived the stooks would be picked up with horses or tractor and wagon. Two men would be on the wagon piling and two men would be on the ground to fork the sheaves onto the wagon. A strong man could heave three to four sheaves onto the wagon at a time. As a youngster, I always tagged along in order to kill any mice that happened to be under the stooks. When I became older I either drove the tractor or was one of the men loading sheaves onto a wagon.

That old thrashing machine always fascinated me. Its every piece seemed to move, and it was able to take sheaves at one end and dispense



Unknown, 1957.

Back row: Ralph Tremblay, Paul Thompson, Donnie Waite, Coach Ed Cook, Johnny Wilson, David Vice
Front row: Doug Letang, Doug Scharff (later Golden Gloves boxer), Doug Lavallee; goalie, Reg McMahon, Ray James



The Ottawa Valley Grain Growers Pee Wee Champs, 1957.
 Back row: Ian Edmunds, Ronnie Mick, Donnie Campbell, Eugene Kargus, Coach Ender Waite,
 Gary Pettigrew, Gary Ferguson and Billy Kuseler
 Front row: Alvin Briscoe, Bobby Plaunt, Allan Dick, Bobby Gould, Unknown, Donnie Wait
 & Ronnie Kuseler

oats and straw at the other. Working around a thrashing machine had to be one of the dirtiest jobs on earth. The oats were loaded into an old gravel truck owned by Grandpa McBride. Ian Edmunds, my cousin, and I had the job of loading a bright red Diamond T dump truck, and then afterwards backing it up to an elevator that conveyed the oats into the barn's granary. The trunk had no brakes other than a hand brake. Shoveling the oats from the back of the dump truck and into the elevator was also a sweaty itchy job. It was always delegated to Ian and me.

Minnie and Ben Johnson were good friends of my parents. Ben and Dad and some other men built a hunting cabin and every November would take a couple of weeks to hunt. We had a bloodhound named Tippy, and he was one of the best deer hunting dogs in the district. By the time I was 13 or 14, the original Tippy was hit by a car, and with the injury plus old age, Dad told me to shoot him. We went back to the tracks in the gully, and from a distance of not

more than ten-feet I shot Tippy right between the eyes. Then I sat and bawled for an hour. I finally got up and left. It hadn't occurred to me to take a shovel with me and bury him. In hindsight, it was the humane thing to do since Tippy had been in a great deal of pain. This first Tippy fathered several pups and two that were kept by Dad were called Tippy 2 and Sputnik. Since the Russians launched Sputnik, the first artificial Earth satellite, they must have been born in 1957 when I was 13 or 14 years of age. I hunted with these two hound dogs for likely 20+ hours a week from age 14 until I left home to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Ben Johnson worked for Willis Rath's New Holland Machinery dealership in Renfrew and learned that the Massey Ferguson Company was looking for someone to take a dealership in Renfrew. He persuaded Dad to invest in this venture, and it wasn't long before there were a couple of acres facing onto the Trans-Canada covered with brand-new M-F machinery. Ben

became Dad's salesman and Mom ran the parts department out of the garage. Dad did extremely well selling Massey Ferguson equipment and within a year or two had managed to replace all his older farm implements with brand new machinery. He even built a machine shed to house the new equipment. The brand new equipment came in crates and had to be put together in readiness for sale. My job during the summer holidays was helping Ben open the crates and put together the new equipment and that job left both of us with skinned knuckles from working with the wrenches.

Once a farmer from another township visited and since Ben wasn't available he asked me the price of a mower. My bid came in quite a bit lower than the competitor. I had looked up the cost price in the catalogue but had not bothered to factor in the hidden costs of running a small business. Dad was furious with me, but the farmer told him that a deal was a deal and that he'd spread the word if we reneged. The incident left Dad in a real predicament. He had no desire to get in a price cutting war with the M-F dealer in the next township, but he felt obligated to write up the sale. Dad took a 50-percent deposit from the buyer who then drove home in his truck only to appear the next morning with his tractor for the mower. The poor man soon realized that he had a problem in that the mower did not have the proper coupling to hook up to his model of tractor. This resulted in his having to buy an adapter and Dad charged him full price on that expensive piece of equipment.

When I was growing up, the Renfrew Fair was a big event and Dad always took several cattle for exhibition purposes. From the time I was 12 years old I showed a calf as a 4-H Club project. My father was very active with promoting his Holstein cattle and he quite often won the Grand Championship for his cows. I was much more interested in attending the rides or visiting the tent shows with girls than staying at the barns with the cattle. Every year guys would squander money at one of the game tents trying to break balloons to win a teddy bear for a girlfriend. The game cost 25-cents for the opportunity to throw four darts from a distance of 12-feet in an attempt to break four balloons to win a bear. The balloons were blown up to five-inches in diameter and were spaced to take up about one quarter of the

backboard. Players who managed to break four balloons with four throws won a small bear, and anyone opting to spend a second quarter to try and break eight balloons with eight throws could win the bigger teddy bear. For several weeks before the following year's fair I practiced daily throwing darts at a four-inch diameter bull's eye on the side of the woodshed wall from a distance of 12-feet. I found that if I really focused and concentrated on the target, I seldom missed getting the darts inside the eye. My marble playing games from years before no doubt were a stepping stone for this new challenge.

I was 15 or 16 the first time I put down 25-cents to try breaking four balloons with four dart throws, but on the first few attempts I managed to break only three balloons with four throws. The man picking up my quarters kept goading me to put down quarters until I was out of money. I was about to leave when a spectator put down 25-cents to cover my game, and with the added pressure I managed to break four balloons with four dart throws and win his girl a teddy bear. Now another spectator placed 25-cents on the table and I broke another four balloons winning his girl a bear. By this time the number of spectators had increased and I was over my nervousness and totally focused, since people were clapping and cheering as I kept breaking balloon after balloon. I seldom missed and eventually began spending 50-cents and breaking eight balloons in a row and winning the big teddy bears. The carnival manager eventually came over to the booth and refused to allow me to play. A few weeks later I played at the fair at Arnprior and won my first cousin Sharon Menzies a huge teddy bear with 50-cents.

When I was about 15 years old Dad and I had a couple of dangerous experiences with Holstein bulls. I once heard Dad yelling for help from behind the barn. He was shouting, "Don, get the rifle! Quick, get the rifle!" I knew from the terrified screams that something was dreadfully wrong, so I ran and got the deer rifle from the pantry. I grabbed some shells and raced towards the barn, cramming bullets into the gun's chamber while on the fly. Dad had tied a heifer up to a utility pole and then taken our 2,000-pound bull out of the stable to discover too late that the cow wasn't quite ready for a love encounter. Instead of standing the cow broke the halter and ran

off with the bull in hot pursuit, with Dad running alongside the bull and hanging onto the end of a baler twine that was looped through a ring in the bull's nose. It wasn't long before the amorous bull had a massive nosebleed, at which moment his focus changed from sex to kill mode, with Dad his intended victim. In the next few seconds Dad had dropped the twine and accomplished the near impossible: he shinned up a 15-inch diameter utility pole. The pole was at the main entrance into the barn and luckily for Dad had a two-inch diameter electrical pipe that ran vertically down the pole before turning at right angles and entering into the barn loft 15-feet from the ground. Dad had managed to scale the pole and from the precarious pipe perch was screaming for help when I emerged from the house. While I watched from a distance, the bull pawed the ground for several minutes and then walked back into the barn. Armed with pitchforks, Dad and I managed to eventually get the bull back in his stanchion.

A year later I used a piece of baler twine to lead a young bull out of the barn for the purpose of breeding a heifer that I had tied up to the side of the derelict granary. The bull had been a pet the year before and it never occurred to me that he might get rough. I introduced the bull to the heifer, but she rejected the bull's advances, and in an instant he dropped his head intent on doing me bodily injury. I let go of the twine and grabbed for the ring in his nose, and that decision may well have saved my life. The bull began to throw his head from side to side, swinging me in a 180-degree arc like a rag doll. He then raised his head and attempted to smash me into the granary wall, but I managed to get through the doorway and pass the twine through an opening between the horizontal logs. Once through the door I grabbed the twine and was able to cinch the thin rope tight to bring the bull's nose up against the logs. I tied my end of the twine to another log and then climbed out of the roofless granary. I went and found Dad, who began to reprimand me for being so stupid until I reminded him of his bull encounter the year before. We both had good reason to consider ourselves lucky, as a bull had gored George Reid, an Admaston farmer, to death during this period.

Just before school started in 1960, I took my

\$200 savings from beer bottle collecting and from the Sears catalogue purchased a red kick-start gas-operated moped-bike. Although the moped had a top speed of only 35 mph, I often clocked 300 miles on a weekend. I was too young to have a driver's license but by traveling the back roads I never once encountered a policeman. A short time after getting the bike, I modified the seat to carry passengers. It took me less than a month to get into a serious motorbike accident. I had joined a group of friends swimming at a favourite spot on the Bonnechere River, and upon leaving one of the others suggested a car-bike race. Ian got on behind me and everything would have been fine had he not thrown his head over his shoulder to check out the whereabouts of the car. His sudden movement shifted the bike's balance, I lost control, and the bike went down with me on the bottom and him on top. I jumped up and initially was most upset that I'd taken the knee out of my trousers and had done some minor damage to the bike. Moments later my trouser leg turned bright red at the tear and there was a throbbing in my left knee, so I asked to be driven to the hospital. At first the attending doctor was very careful in tending to my wound. That all stopped when he learned from my mother that I had been racing on a "motorcycle." He used the biggest needle in the hospital and shot half a cup of painkiller into my rump. The liquid did not disperse but instead formed a five-inch diameter bump half an inch high under the skin that was the most painful part of the entire episode. The doctor then dressed up the wound and put me in a cast from thigh to ankle. My first few weeks of convalescing were spent in a bedroom just off the kitchen. When I finally started to recover, I asked family members to help carry me out and onto a couch so I could watch television, with my sister Joan in charge of carrying my injured leg. She was being a little too rough and I yelled at her. That turned out to be a mistake. Instead of performing her task, she dropped the leg and ran out of the house.

That accident got me out of a lot of work. By this time Dad had managed to purchase a combine that made the thrashing machine obsolete. Dad would drive this new piece of machinery through the grain fields, and it would remove

the oats from the stalks and spew the straw and chaff back out into the field. By then Dad's one-ton truck was equipped with a wooden box with which we hauled the oats to the granary. My school chum Bobby Gould volunteered to do my work that fall because I was in a cast. Shortly after the harvest, I decided to use crutches and attempt to go and do some grouse hunting. Of course I fell in the gully and broke my cast and opened the wound on the knee.

During the summer of 1962 the trans-Canada gas pipeline came out from Alberta and wound its way through Ontario en route to eastern destinations. The line cut through Dad's farm in front of the house since it paralleled the coast-to-coast highway. Gas officials came to see my father to negotiate a fee to dig the west-to-east trench past our front gate and on down through the gully. Dad not only managed to get paid for the short-term inconvenience, but he also got me a job with Robert B. Somerville Limited, the contracting outfit laying the pipe between Renfrew and the Dominion Magnesium Mine near Haley Station. I had watched the equipment hauling a 500-foot length of pipe across the Bonnechere River from Renfrew and it seemed to be an intriguing project. A worker on a trenching machine had dug a four-to eight-foot-deep by two-foot-wide ditch the three miles from the river to our gully. Over the next couple of days I watched men unloading big trucks of 40-foot-long by 12-inch diameter pipe at fixed intervals along the route. A pipe layer used a caterpillar tractor with a side arm to stockpile the pipe.

I learned that my first job was called a swamper's helper. The caterpillar used to move the pipe was called a side boom and its operator was officially called a side boom operator but the labourers called them swampers. It was my task to accompany the swamper and go into action the moment he positioned his machine alongside a length of pipe. I'd take the clamp from the boom and affix it to the middle of the pipe and then give the thumbs-up sign to the operator who would yank on a lever to activate a pulley contraption to lift the 40-foot length of pipe four feet into the air.

It did not take long to learn why the labourers used the term "swamper" instead of "side boom operator." The pipe laying progressed quickly

on the level ground but slowed in the boggy swamps. I learned quickly that if I hit the centre of the pipe with the clamp it was balanced and I could easily maneuver the pipe through potholes and around trees, unless the operator speeded up and slowed down while transporting the pipe. If I missed the centre point, one end of the pipe was too heavy and dragged on the ground and the other too light and pointed skyward. The large lengths of pipe must have weighed fifty to seventy-five pounds to the foot. If I had a heavy end I'd lift the pipe but if I had a light end I'd sometimes be dangling a few feet off the ground with absolutely no control. All situations involving pipe transportation in a swamp were extremely dangerous, and my only protection was leather gloves and Dad's pith helmet. After working on the job a few days I came to work early and with a measuring tape marked the pipes with an X at the midway point. This simple step took most of the danger out of the job. The caterpillar operator sometimes highballed to keep ahead of the welders and would speed up and slow down, and that would cause the pipe to want to sway back and forth causing great danger to the helper. Once I tripped and let go of a pipe that at first swung away from me only to recoil back like a huge arrow from a giant bow in my direction. The end of the pipe glanced off Dad's pith helmet before continuing on and embedding itself into a rotten tree. The helmet was smashed, but I was not injured.

I was a hard worker on the gas pipeline and was promoted to welder's helper after about a month. Both ends of the 40-foot lengths of pipe rusted between the time they left their place of manufacture and the time they were to go into the ground. As a welder's helper, it was my job to clean the ends of these pipes with a steel brush and steel file in readiness for the welders. Sometimes work progressed along the line at such a rapid pace that I had to run between filing jobs to keep ahead of the army of welders.

The work in the swamps was exhausting, since C-shaped cement clamps had to be bolted around the pipe at regular intervals to ensure that it sank to the required depth. If we were working in a swamp where there was rock, the pipe also had to be wrapped with snow fence in order to protect it.



Me & my new Sears Moped, 1960, age 15.



Kid Billy's first birthday, September 10, 1961.
Mae, me, Joan and Billy.

Once my foreman called me at 4:30 a.m. and requested that I drive out to the job site two hours early and start up several gas pumps to get the water out of the trench. It was real downpour, and I even witnessed a lightning strike on a huge elm tree not far from where I had placed the pump. It proved to be a lesson in futility, and when the foreman arrived he took one look at the situation and gave the crew the day off, as the trenches in the gully were full of water.

Once the work was completed to the Dominion Magnesium Mine, the gas was turned on for testing for leaks. The foreman asked me to walk the 13-miles of line between the Bonnecherre

River crossing and the mine twice daily for about a week to check for welding leaks. My job was to paint the cut-off valves with liquid soap and to watch for bubbles. It was a final safety precaution and I don't think anyone expected there to be any leaks. But I discovered a leak, and it caused great commotion, as a spark could have caused an explosion.

It was a boring job, and because I was given more than ample time to walk the distance, I did some exploring and by a fluke discovered a cave entrance that looked very similar to the Bonnechere caves in Eganville. When I got home I did something very foolish: instead of telling anyone about the cave I put a rope and flashlight in the back of the truck. I went to work the next morning, but after walking the line I took the truck close to the cave and with the flashlight and rope lowered myself 20 to 30 feet down into the cave. At that point the opening became too small for me to go any farther, but from the noise of water below I concluded it was a large cave. I found it much more difficult to get out than it had been to get in, and I was extremely glad when after a lot of struggle I reached the exit. It was dark by now. I walked briskly back to the truck, got in and seconds later got the truck stuck. There was nothing to do but abandon the truck and walk. It was after 10 when I got home, and Mom and Dad's concern turned to fury when I explained what I had done. The cave discovery became a family secret. I learned years later that these caves were known locally as the Fairy Caves.

When my job walking the line finished, I worked with a jackhammer on the cleanup crew near the mine, and on my last day of work there were two labourers and two foremen, and when Somerville shut down I was the third last man to be let go. I had been paid \$2.75 an hour.

I finished writing my last grade 12 exams one morning at the end of June in 1961. As a reward, that afternoon my parents allowed me to take the 1957 Dodge up to Foresters Falls all alone to see Grandpa and Grandma Waite. It was a wonderful summer day and on the way home I was daydreaming about a date that I'd made for a few nights later. I was speeding and it caught up to me the moment the pavement turned to gravel at the Kerr Line. I lost control, fishtailed

a couple of times, and then went off the road and into a boulder-strewn ditch. A nearby farmer by the name of Moore [whose grandparents were the adoptive parents of Grandma Waite] heard the crash and immediately drove over on his tractor to inspect the damage. The car appeared fine, so he ran out a cable and towed me back onto the road. I checked the car over, and it didn't have a scratch. So I was beginning to think that no one would ever have to know about my accident. But I began to drive away only to have a sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach. Something had to be wrong with the undercarriage of the vehicle as it drove like a cement truck. I drove home at a snail's pace and confided to Dad what had happened. One thing that always struck me as odd with my parents was the chain of events that followed my announcement that I was in trouble for one thing or another. If I confided in Dad he would tell me not to tell Mom, and if I confided in Mom she would tell me not to tell Dad. On this occasion Dad gave me the expected verbal spanking and then, true to form, said, "Don't tell your mother, I'll get it fixed." Before Dad could get the car into Stitt's Garage, Mom took the car into town and came home complaining that the car didn't run right. By noon the day of my date Dad had the car fixed. I took it out and told Mom that the car drove fine. She took the car for a test drive and came back into the house scratching her head.

My Dad bought a brand-new 1962 white Chevy Impala with red interior shortly after I ditched the old Dodge. I must have impressed my parents by doing a man's work on the pipeline, because Dad allowed me to take the car out on weekends. At the end of June I attended someone's wedding reception at the Orange Lodge at Foresters Falls and met Elaine Wickens. I was 17 and she was 15. My mother called our relationship puppy love, but whatever it was, I fell head over heels in love. Elaine lived at Stark's Corners near Shawville on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River. In July and August of 1962 I was either working on the pipeline or dating Elaine.

I'd done well in high school from grades 9 through 12 and when in grade 10 managed to obtain first class honours in grade 13 zoology. The following year I took botany and managed

to obtain a second class honours. I excelled in track and field and reached 8-feet before being eliminated in the pole vault. When I went into grade 13 for the first time I was only 17 and my confidence was at an all time high.

At this time I was seeing another girl as well, aside from Elaine. Her name was Betty Nesbitt, and she was in the same grades as I was for grades 10 through 13. Her uncle had a small cabin on the Bonnechere River on neighbour Cecil Crozier's property. I often saw her sun bathing when I went hunting, but at first I never had the courage to visit them. Besides, she was dating a boy named David Stewart. In grade 12 David and I were roughhousing for the benefit of Betty in the school hallway, which resulted in a shoving match with me pushing David into Miss Johnson, our English teacher. She reported us to Mr. Seeley, the principal. Later that afternoon the principal called Stewart and me into the middle of the gymnasium during physical education and gave each of us a pair of boxing gloves. He told us to "glove up" for three rounds of boxing. Since Stewart was often instrumental in disrupting classes, I knew that



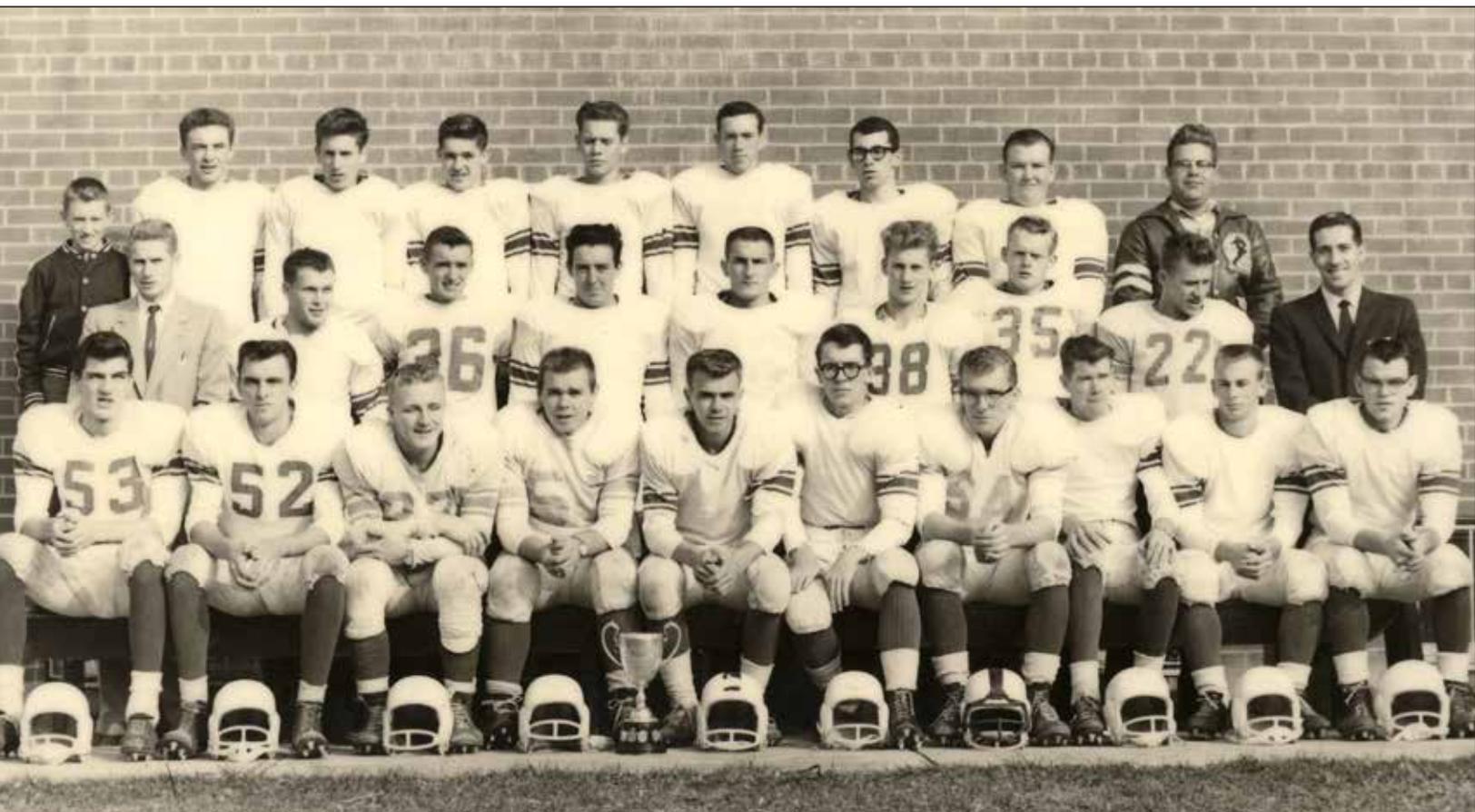
First cousin Ian Edmunds, 1962.

the principal wanted me to teach him a lesson. About a minute into the first round I managed to give David a left hook that landed him on the floor, and since he was slow to get up Mr. Seeley stopped the fight. A few years earlier I had sparred with Doug Scharff, a local golden gloves boxer, and had learned the rudiments of boxing. The results were much different a few weeks later in another school brawl in which I was involved, but this time my opponent was Johnny Wilson, the captain of both the football and basketball teams. The boys of our home-room were having another physical education class but on this occasion were broken up into two groups to play basketball. Wilson, playing on the opposing team, was on the sidelines with the ball and I was jumping up and down in front of him trying to foil his pass out to one of his team. He bounced the ball off my chest,

caught it, and then made his pass. It really hurt. A short time later it was my turn to pass the ball out to one of his team and Johnny was jumping up and down in front of me. I made the mistake of bouncing the ball not off his chest but off his nose. Instantly Johnny reacted and gave me a black eye before Mr. Seeley had a chance to intervene. I didn't attempt to carry on with the fight as I knew in my mind that I had done wrong and that I deserved the black eye. My fight with Johnny made me realize that knowing when one is in the right instead of in the wrong has just as much to do with winning a fight as experience or strength.

Betty managed to get me into trouble at a school assembly in the high-school auditorium. As I was a charter student in Key Club International (Junior Kiwanis), Mr. Seeley asked me

if I would sit up on stage with the teachers and thank the guest speaker, in this case Father Preene, whose talk was "What is the Church for?" It happened to be a most boring talk and I was being challenged to think of an appropriate way of thanking the man of the cloth for his enlightening speech. As I looked out into the filled auditorium I happened to lock eyes with Betty and she puckered and threw me a big kiss. I looked away and then unfortunately looked back at her just as Mr. Seeley took the microphone to ask me to conclude the ceremonies with the thanking of our guest speaker. Betty was really enjoying the moment, knowing that it was a pregnant situation, and she threw a second kiss with her hand. I couldn't help myself and started to laugh just as the principal turned the microphone over to me. The next several



The Renfrew Collegiate Senior Raiders, 1962

Winners of the Upper Ottawa Valley High School Football Champions

Back row: Tom Egan (Assistant Manager & Waterboy), Kevin Crozier, Paul Thompson, Chummy Welch, Daryl Mooney, Ed Hanson, Jeff Spooner, Alvin Stewart, George Young (Statistician)

Middle row: Principal Clair Seeley (Coach), Murray Humphries, Guy Jamieson, Jack Wilson, Jim McCabe, Don Waite, Doug Eady, Gary Whyte, Barry Carswell (Assistant Coach)

Front row: Bill Wren, Jack Twolan, Lawrence Gutz, Denzil Moore (Co-Captain), Richard Rodgers (Captain), Don Angus, Hugh Miller, Lindsay Stewart, Jim Handford, Jack Abercrombie

moments became very awkward as I grinned and simultaneously thanked the speaker. Other members of the Key Club were Murray Stark, a life-long friend whose grandparents founded Stark's Corners; Brian Wainman, Ron Watson, Ray James, Les Bradley, Stu Jack, Jake Ootes, Allen McLeod, Ron Blackwell—and about five other students whose names I can't remember. I was distantly related to Blackwell through my mother's grandparents.

Scouts from the University of Toronto's Faculty of Dentistry had visited the Renfrew Collegiate Institute and I was the only one shortlisted to visit the university from Renfrew. I went on a bus with students from other schools that had been picked up along the way. I remember watching students in their final year doing dental work on patients and also being taken to a laboratory that had a large glass vat containing formaldehyde and a complete cadaver. My curiosity got the better of me, and as the other students moved off I carefully examined the body floating in the big clear tank. Much later this turned out to have been a big mistake.

To gain entry into the prestigious university a student needed to pass nine grade 13 subjects in one year, but since I had already passed two of the prerequisite subjects I was told that I only needed to pass seven. I started the school year naïvely believing that I could easily deal with seven subjects, since I was one of the better students and because I only needed seven courses. I decided to try out for the senior football team, and as I was one of the younger and smaller players on the team I began working out with weights. Between weight workouts, football practices—and staying out late on the weekends with Elaine—my grades began to slip and I never caught up. Our team had an extremely good year and managed to win the Upper Ottawa Valley Football Championship. I may have done well in sports and romance in 1962–1963, but academically it was a disaster.

During the 1963 summer holidays I was working for Adam Laird tearing down a section of the Lindsay feedlot. Adam was a general contractor, who later purchased my father's Massey-Ferguson dealership. His wife was Joyce McFarlane, my mom's half-sister through a romance that my Grandpa McBride had with

an Elsie McFarlane néé Guest after his wife's death. Grandpa McBride eventually married Elsie after her husband passed away. After Adam's death, Joyce married Clarence McBride, Grandpa McBride's brother's son, and so the marriages and interrelationships of my maternal in-laws became rather complicated.

After work one afternoon I ventured into town to see if the grade 13 results had been posted in the Renfrew Advance newspaper office window. What was not in that window was forever indelibly imprinted into my mind. My name was not there. I had managed to fail all seven subjects. All year Dad had done the chores alone so I could do homework and study. Consequently, when I did return home the rules had changed with respect to the family car. My use of it was drastically curtailed.



Sisters Elaine & Dianne Wickens, 1962.

During the summer holidays I was beginning to fear that I might spend the rest of my life without a professional career. My parents had a long talk with me, and they persuaded me to repeat grade 13, aware that even if I did manage to pass all my courses that I'd not necessarily be eligible to get into the University of Toronto. I agreed not to do any sports and that I would go back to doing farm chores both before and after school. But they did let me go out on dates a couple of weekends a month during the school term.

I was with Elaine when in the summer of 1963

I had a couple of brushes with death. One of these incidents involved my first cousin Carl Waite. I sometimes visited with him and his brother Bobby at Foresters Falls. Carl was a few years older than Bobby and owned a 1957 robin-egg blue Chevrolet Impala. He was also a mechanic, and the car, his pride and joy, was all “souped up” and was as fast as or faster than any other vehicle in the county. One evening Elaine and I were out driving with Carl on our way to pick up his girlfriend Linda Lyons, when Carl met up with an acquaintance who owned an identical car right down to the paint colours. The two young men used to drag race on the back roads, and this encounter was to be no exception and resulted in some high-speed driving. Carl positioned himself right on the tail of the other car and was looking for a straight stretch on the paved roadway in order to try to pass. The two cars were likely doing in excess of 100 mph, when all of a sudden the pavement stopped and the two speedsters continued down a gravel road. Although both vehicles slowed slightly, Carl stayed right on the other car’s bumper. He had no option, as the cone of dust thrown up by the lead vehicle would have engulfed the car we were in and, not being able to see, Carl would have gone off the road. During this dirt road drive Elaine and I lay across the back seat of the car—me protecting her with my body—waiting for an impact or a rollover. After what seemed like an eternity the two cars slowed down and came back onto paved roadway.

I came even closer to an accident a short time later on the same roads but with a different cousin. I had picked up Ian in my Dad’s brand-new Chevy and driven over to Shawville to see Elaine. Ian hooked up with Elaine’s older sister Dianne, and the four of us ended up at the drive-in theatre or “passion pit” that was located midway between home and Renfrew on property that once belonged to Bobby Gould’s parents. Ian and I were taking the two sisters home when I shot straight through a stop sign at the Magnesium Road and Queen’s Line intersection. My car narrowly missed the taillights of a car that was crossing the intersection right in front of me, and a second vehicle, travelling in the opposite direction, just missed my rear bumper as I cleared the Queen’s Line. All three vehicles

were probably doing more than 50 mph. The expression “thread the needle” took on a whole new meaning. I pulled off to the shoulder of the road and sat in shock for several minutes.

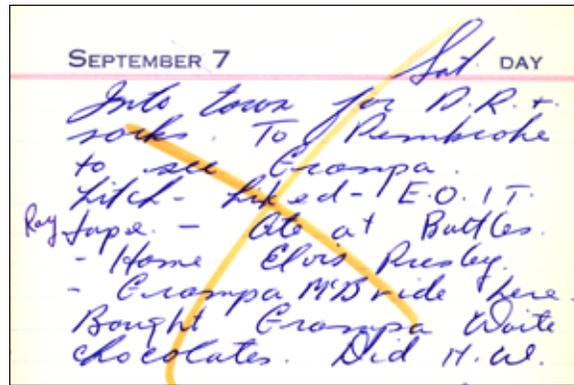
On one date with Elaine I stayed out almost all night. I thought I could sneak into my bedroom without waking anyone, but Mom had boob-trapped the hallway and I tripped over some noisemakers alerting everyone in the house. Dad didn’t say much, but an hour later he got me up to help with the milking and then after breakfast told me to help Grandpa Waite dig and tile a ditch. It was an extremely hot day, and as I matched Grandpa shovel for shovel, I began to pray that something would happen to get me off the wrong end of the spade. Dad left me out there to ditch with Grandpa all day and then had me help with the evening chores. I was dead tired and went to bed around 8 p.m. I should have learned a lesson, but a few nights later I came home even later than on the previous occasion. This time Dad was furious and told me that I was no longer allowed to drive the car. My wings had finally been clipped.

Although I rarely ever traveled to Pembroke, in the late summer of 1963 I found that I had a reason for making a trip to that village. Just after returning from ditch digging at our home, Grandpa Waite was admitted to the Cottage Memorial Hospital in Pembroke with heart failure. On September 7 I hitchhiked to Pembroke to see Grandpa and give him a box of chocolates. After the visit, I walked out to Highway 17 and stuck out my thumb to hitch a ride home. My first lift took me as far as Cobden. Upon being dropped off, I took the opportunity to stop in and visit with Ulna and Harry Buttle, my mother’s aunt and uncle. But it turned out that the high point of that day was to be the ride between Cobden and Renfrew. As soon as I got back out on Highway 17 and put out my thumb, almost immediately a 1957 red and white Edsel pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. There were two occupants in the car. I didn’t know who the passenger was, but as Elaine and I had seen the movie “Kid Galahad” a few months earlier, I right away recognized the driver as Elvis Presley. As soon as the car stopped, the passenger slid into the middle of the front seat and I climbed into the car beside him. For the next half hour I engaged in small talk about girls with the mov-

ie star and his other passenger. At no time did Presley identify himself nor did I acknowledge being aware of his identity. Once home I told Mom what had taken place, but she advised me to keep the story secret since no one would believe me. I used to keep a diary. The notes for that day were: "September 7 Saturday Into town for D.R. [dairy ration] + socks. To Pembroke to see Grampa [sic] hitchhiked – E.O.I.T. [Eastern Ontario Institute of Technology] Ray Jupe – Ate at Buttles – Home Elvis Presley – Grampa McBride here – Bought Grampa Waite Chocolates. Did H.W. [home work]."

In the spring of 1964 I began making enquiries into joining the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as several of my school chums had joined up. There was a second reason. My application to get into dentistry at the University of Toronto had been declined. They simply didn't want someone who had taken two years to get through grade 13.

In order to make a good impression I joined the local militia to learn foot drill and rifle practice. Although after an oral interview on 5 May 1964 Superintendent J. R. Parsons told me that I looked too young to be a policeman, I decided to give it a try. Parsons told me that I should join the local militia and learn how to march, as that would probably help me if I were to be accepted into the force. I consequently joined the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Militia in 1963 and 1964 for about 8 months. I remember being issued with a kilt and going on nightly winter maneuvers in army trucks. It was very cold sitting in the back seat of a truck with the only protection being a camouflage canvas tarp.



A page from my 1963 diary.



My cap badge from when I was with the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Militia in 1963. The top motto, in German reads: Ich dien - meaning "I serve" while the second and third mottos, both in Latin read: Nemo me impune lacassit" and "fac et spera" meaning "No one provokes me with impunity" and "Do and Hope" respectively.

Following two pages: My children's family tree.