

29. **Organize partnership with Voykin Bros Contracting**

a. **Voykin Subdivision, South Slocan**



Jack and Alex Voykin were successful in their logging operations from their location at Slocan Park. We knew and respected each other but did not really associate other than saying hi and that sort of thing.

One day both Jack and Alex dropped in to see me at our VIL offices in Trail with an idea. They owned a property on the East side of Highway 3 A just before the Junction to Highway 6. They would like to develop it as a residential subdivision. Would I do it for them?

They heard that I could do this type of thing and they were not adept in this area. So, I sat down and worked out a budget for development and suggested that my service would equate to 40% of the ownership of the project to VIL. They were in agreement and so I went ahead to prepare a proposal for the Ministry of Transportation and Highways (MoTH) for approval which was the "Approving Officer (AO)" in the non-municipal areas. It is important to note that Jack and Alex were ardent Fast Ball Players and had played against a team from Nelson where the MoTH AO was a player. The story was that they had a fight, and it would be a better idea if the Voykin name was not mentioned so that there was better chance for approval. I thought that was humorous as the land was owned by Voykins so how would I circumvent that issue.

So, the process included setting up a local Water District which would require drilling water wells, installing a storage tank and an Emergency Generator that would permit fire protection via fire hydrants and associated appurtenances. This became involved with approvals from Water Rights in Victoria along with MoTH.

As with just about every project, there were always humorous incidents that took away a great deal of the stress that came with the uncertainty of everything that I ventured into.

Jack and I had to travel to Victoria to see the Water Rights people so that the water system design would meet with their design criteria which were not compiled in any manual. This was especially fundamental as to quantity of water required for fire protection and fire flow for pumps.

The meetings went well with the Water Rights Engineer, and we were walking down the hallway in the Legislature, when I saw the Premier, Bill Bennett and his entourage coming towards us with the bells ringing calling the Legislature to order. Not wanting to interrupt this process, I pulled Jack into an alcove to wait for this astute group to pass. Suddenly, there he was, the Premier, standing before us with that smile on his face, "What have you done now that you are hiding from me?"

Yes, I had met Bill before (see my story on the Doukhobor Village) and so I answered "You have a great deal on your plate today. You don't need any diversions."

"How's things going and why are you visiting us in Victoria?" Bill needed to socialize.

"Jack and I are here to see the Water Rights people," I responded.

"Are you getting the results you came for?" he was curious.

"Yes, we are doing just great!" as Bill nodded and carried on.

Well Jack was beside himself, "you mean you know the Premier?" he was impressed.

We caught the ferry back to Vancouver and decided that driving back to the Kootenays into the night was not recommended and so we decided to stay over at the Blue Horizon, have a nice dinner and a good sleep and drive home the next day. Dinner took us past the Hotel Vancouver and on the way back at about 10:00 P.M., I asked Jack if he ever had been to the "Roof" of the Hotel Vancouver?

His answer was simple, "Sounds like I need to go and see for the first time," and up the elevator we went.

On the way up I informed Jack, "This place is popular and there will be a long wait to get in. We do not have the time for this so you will need to be sharp. You stand in line while I go to see the Head Waiter. Watch for my signal and be ready to come when I beckon you. Got it?"

Jack was puzzled as I left passing all the people in the line who looked at me suspiciously.

I walked up the several stairs that were roped off and quickly, a maître d in the three-piece suit walks up with a quizzical look on his face.

"There are two gentlemen meeting me here", I explained as he opened the barrier and responded, "Do you want to have a look?"

I walked in and sure enough, there were two gentlemen sitting on one side of the table with no drinks on the other side. "Yes, there they are, I will get my friend", I lied.

I beckoned Jack who walked up as any big shot would as the Waiter pushed away the chairs so that we could sit down across from our "friends".

"What can I get for you?" he asked. "Scotch for Jack and I and whatever our friends are drinking is just fine." as he nodded and walked away.

"Hi, my name is Elmer Verigin, and this is Jack Voykin", I introduced ourselves. "We are from the Kootenays."

"I am ___?___ and the Advertising Editor of the Province," the man on the left introduced himself while the other man was some executive from another paper. "So, the next thing you are going to tell us is that you are Doukhobors since you come from the Kootenays," the first one joked.

"As a matter of fact, we are Doukhobors," I reacted on cue. "So where do you boys live?" I carried on as if it was a script.

"I live in Point Grey and my friend is at University Heights." he responded and added "Why do you ask?"

"Well Jack and I are looking for some excitement tonight and we need a house to burn!" as the waiter brought our drinks.

Well, the one fellow could not restrain himself from spilling the Scotch all over his \$100 necktie in laughter. "No shit!" he finally uttered.

Well, you might say 'we broke the ice' and Jack and I had to enjoy their hospitality for three (3) drinks before we excused ourselves and stumbled to the elevator.

All Jack could say is "Elmer, next time you are going to Vancouver, I am definitely coming. This is unreal: first the Premier followed by this!"

All designs were approved, and financing obtained from the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) in Nelson.

Construction started and a sales program was created with a strong contribution from Sam Conkin within the VIL organization.

Yes, we made money and the Voykins got their money for the land and VIL got paid their services. We now had money in a "kitty" and anxious to take another investment.

b. Playmor Subdivision, South Slocan



Jack was always talking about the good times he had at the Playmor Hall when all the dances were held there. So, when Walt Hill decided to sell the property, Jack was quick to suggest that we buy it. I was a bit unsure as to what could be done with it, but Jack was far too convinced that we could bring the Hall back to its previous notoriety, besides, we could subdivide the rest and sell off like at Voykin Subdivision for housing and commercial lots.

Alex was equally convinced, and we proceeded to repeat all that we had to do on the Voykin subdivision.

We spent a great deal on bringing the Hall to present day codes along with the kitchen to meet Health Standards.

We could not sell the commercial lots and it was at this time that the housing markets hit a stalemate.

c. Castlegar Subdivision, Castlegar



The Voykin / Verigin partnership was 'on a roll' and we had cash that needed reinvestment. This time it was Alex who heard about a large piece of land on 9th Street Castlegar that was up for sale.

Financing was available through the CIBC in Nelson, but the market was not favorable, and I suggested we put the project on hold.

The partnership did well on the Voykin subdivision and needed to sell more lots on the Playmor subdivision and owed money on the purchase of the Castlegar property.

We were just starting operations in Vancouver with Marbella and the bonding company for Expo did not approve of a Rempel partner that was in a development. VIL was making payments on interest to the CIBC, and I was unable to see how the situation could change quickly. I negotiated with Alex Cheveldave to sell the VIL interest in the Voykin Partnership for \$10 (never collected it) with a release of all guarantees from CIBC to be taken over by Alex Cheveldave.

It was a good deal as VIL was able to collect on profits from the Voykin Subdivision.

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