

Chapter 9. Summer Jobs in British Columbia 1956 through 1962

a. Trip Number 1, with John and Mary Khadekin with Peter Negraeff 1956

Brother Lawrence invited me to come visit in British Columbia and possibly work for pay. It sounded good. Sister Mary and her husband John Khadekin were going to visit British Columbia and had room for passengers. Peter Negraeff, my teacher at that time, was friends with John and Mary, also became interested. So, the trip was set right after school was out.

It was a marathon trip with drivers alternating, (John and Peter). Everything was new to me as I had never been past Regina. We were on the Trans Canada that was under construction at that time. Seeing the mountains in the early morning was quite an experience for me.

We arrived in Trail in the early evening to the basement suite that brother Lawrence and his wife Mabel occupied at her parent's place, the Soloveoffs on Laburnum Drive, Trail, B.C. It was a happy occasion and somehow, I ended up going with brother Russel and his wife Tillie to her parents (Cheveldave's place), in Castlegar. John, Mary, and Peter stayed with Lawrence and Mable.

So that was the way it continued, I would stay at one place (no rent) and then other, all summer long until late August when I caught the Greyhound bus for the trip back home to Pelly. Lawrence had a company organized L.W. Verigin Construction Ltd. At that time, the company took contracts to build additions and small jobs.

b. Trip Number 2, with Lawrence, Russel, and Families in 1957

It now became a routine for me to go to work with my brothers after school was out. There were no opportunities, locally (Pelly), that I could earn money except perhaps work as a farm hand which paid very little. There was no other work. I realized that I was placing a great deal of pressure on my father, but I left after the crops were in and returned at harvest. Each time were labor intensive. I needed money for clothes, schoolbooks and spending money which was not available from the family farm. So, at the end of June, I was on my way again for British Columbia.

This time it was courtesy of Lawrence's station Wagon with Russel, Tillie, (son Allan), Lawrence, Mabel (daughter Patricia) and the debonair Elmer. This photo was taken looking West. A wooden fence separated the house from the barnyard (located just beyond the "bunkhouse"). The four-stall barn at the rear with pasture beyond. The bunkhouse was used as a large bedroom for all four siblings when the family moved from Veregin in November 1947. About three years later, an addition was built to the house that was located immediately in front and right of the station wagon.

The renovated house had three (3) bedrooms, living room, combination kitchen dining room and a separate entry, cooking and utility room which fronted the rest of the house. No bathroom nor hallways.

In the winter we would walk to the barn to do our number one and two because it would be warm with the four horses and four cows emitting heat. Yes, we had an outhouse at the rear of the house which was built because Mabel's parents were coming from British Columbia for Lawrence and Mabel's Engagement Party. We had to "modernize" so that Lawrence would not be embarrassed. I think the Soloveoff family formed their opinion of Lawrence's family and his upbringing then and never changed throughout his life, he was "the boy from the farm", no matter how talented and helpful he was to that family but that can be another story.



L to R: Patricia in her Deda's arms on the left, Baba, Allan on his father's shoulder, Russel, Mable, Lawrence, sister Mary holding Ron, brother-in-law John Khadekin, Elmer. This picture displays my father in his usual stance as he just loved children. Upon arrival at the farm, Deda hitched the horses to a wagon and took his grandchildren for a ride. Patricia's comments "horses smell!"

Harry Soloveoff (Mable's brother) took the picture

This was a tough journey as we travelled the long way, through Edmonton and then through Jasper and the Columbia Ice Fields.

If you can imagine six (6) adults and two (2) infants in a hot and dusty station wagon, full of baggage and the usual baby stuff, it was a miracle that no one was thrown out of the vehicle as there was always someone crying. Finally, the station wagon started "complaining" on this road that was under construction just outside Radium and just stopped running. We were nowhere near a Service Station and Lawrence started the "old farmer's detective mechanical analysis" and soon discovered that one of the rear shocks had failed and the constant "banging" of car body on axle, crimped the gas line. Brother Lawrence was always good at making things work and with a bit of ingenuity and plain "horse sense" we were able to make sufficient corrections to return to the Kootenays.

It was a "bonding" experience for our family and perhaps was a foundation for the future Verigin Industries Limited and related companies. If any family can survive that trip, then it can outlast normal challenges.

The first full house contract that L.W. Verigin Construction Ltd (Lawrence's first construction company) undertook, was for Bud and Anna Mae Allen, in Warfield. I got the opportunity to be there for all stages of the construction in the two (2) months (July and August) that I worked there.



Russel on the left with friend Philip Sherstobitoff, Elmer, and Lawrence on the extreme right side. Patricia is balancing on her father's nail pouch. It is at the front entry facing North. Philip continued working right to his retirement, eventually with Marbella Construction West Ltd. Lawrence and Philip became the "Finishing Crew" while Russel supervised framing. Russel told me, one Lunch time, "Elmer you will never succeed as a carpenter so you might as well be an Engineer!". End of story.

c. Trip Number 3 by bus with Elizabeth Shukin 1958

This was a sequel to Nora Trofimenkoff attending my graduation ceremonies. When she got home, she told all her friends her experiences to this event. She also told her friend Elizabeth Shukin that I was travelling to British Columbia.

Elizabeth's family had already moved to Nelson that year while she completed Grade Twelve in Veregin. Elizabeth had never travelled alone and the bus trip to British Columbia was a concern for her. So, Elizabeth wrote me a letter and asked if it was okay if she accompanied me on my trip, as she could arrange her travel date to match my plans. I also had no idea what she looked like but was very pleasantly pleased to meet her when the bus stopped at Veregin. She was a knockout!

Needless to say, it was a pleasant trip to British Columbia that year in 1958. So, there I am with a companion now as we arrive at the next stop in Canora. Lo and behold a girl from Sturgis gets on the bus and she is going to British Columbia too! Yes, another knockout!

So, I am in shock as I am the 'protector and escort' for two very attractive young ladies. Later we sat at the back of the bus, and it was not until later that night that I realized I was like a young bull in a herd of young heifers, and I was having great difficulty being a gentleman and not embarrassing all that my mother told me not to do. I don't believe that any level of torture could surpass what I went through that night, but we ended the trip being very nice young people.

d. Trip Number 4 by bus in 1959

This was a straightforward trip and work time for a summer work time with L. W. Verigin Construction Ltd.

Uncle Nick Morozoff and Auntie Anne were travelling back that fall, with Cousin Jane, from holidays in Trail. They offered me a ride to Calgary. I enjoyed a visit with Uncle Andy and Aunty Flo Markin once in Calgary. I even attended a Little League Baseball game where Cousin Allan Markin was pitching. That was the first time I saw him since a visit to Pelly when he was 4 years old.

e. Trip Number 5 by bus in 1960

This is the year that I spent at odds with brother Lawrence as he became disappointed that my career choice in Chemical Engineering would lead the bothers in different directions. So, I was not invited to come to work in the Kootenays. I tried getting a summer job in my field and although I had some bites that never materialized into a firm offer. I had just enough money to get to B.C. as a contingency.

This is the year I met Lorne Tamelin while he was working with the crew hired by Lawrence and Russel



Meeting Lorne provided an opportunity to meet many of the youth in British Columbia. He was a popular young man with a big car that seemed to attract the young ladies. We used to travel on Sunday through Ootischenia, Pass Creek, Thrums and Shoreacres "shopping" as girls showed their "stuff".

f. Trip Number 6 by bus in 1961

I left for the Kootenays from Saskatoon and returned to Saskatoon. This was the year that I made a "pact" with brothers Lawrence and Russel that I would switch from Chemical Engineering to Civil, that would necessitate an additional year and that we would begin a process to organize a construction company together.

My social life was the envy of many boys my age as I would favour a "steady" girl in Saskatchewan before travelling to British Columbia, I always found a "steady". When I returned to Saskatchewan, the situation would repeat itself.

It was that Summer in 1961 that a "steady" named Marilyn, decided to visit me in British Columbia and we became engaged.

g. Trip Number 7 with Marilyn on her 1954 Ford with Marian Verishine and her daughter Marlene in 1962

Marilyn and I were married and decided to travel in her 1954 Ford. Marian, Marilyn's cousin Peter Verishine's wife and daughter asked, if they could join us as Peter had already moved to Crescent Valley and his family wanted to join him wanted to follow him.

The highlight of that trip was when the pregnant ladies, Marilyn and Marian decided that they had travelled far enough from our starting point of Saskatoon and demanded to stay in Natal (the original community just before where Sparwood is now). It was dark and they were tired and would not listen to my protests that the place was covered with coal dust. I lost the argument and we stayed in this hotel that likely had no patrons in a long while as the owner was bartender in the Beer Parlor and when I asked for two rooms, he just about fainted from surprise. Well, we survived but they decided that they did not want to eat breakfast in that place.

Trip home was with a third passenger, our first daughter Nona, born at the Trail Hospital.

h. Trip Number 8

This was the last trip that Marilyn and our new family made from educational places in Saskatchewan to jobs in British Columbia.

This trip was a moving trip (yes this is when I found out that “two cannot live as cheaply as one) and we hired a moving van to move our belongings to Prince Rupert now that I graduated in Engineering.

I needed to serve under multiple Professional Engineers before I could obtain my Professional Engineering status and so I was applied for several jobs and Columbia Cellulose Co. Ltd., was the best offer.

We sported a new car a 1963 Valiant and enthusiastically looking forward to starting my career as an Engineer in a Sulfite Pulp Mill at Prince Rupert.

We first visited in Benito and Veregin followed by a farewell visit with Marilyn’s parents. We then went on to the Kootenays to visit with Lawrence and Russel’s families. On the way up to Prince Rupert we stopped at Williams Lake to visit with my Cousin Helen Peters and her family.

After a bouncy trip down Highway 16 (which was under construction then between Smithers and Terrace) we were able to face the wet years in Prince Rupert.

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