



**1965 REMINISCENCES ON CRESCENT
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To Live again – even in one’s mind – experiences dating as far back as five decades ago to recapture those early impressions, and to contrast them with those of modern days, is at once a challenging and a pleasurable task.

It was at the beginning of September, 1915, that Crescent Heights Collegiate Institute (as it was called then) opened its doors for the first time and ushered in a group of students who had been looking forward with enthusiasm to this day. A new principal, some new teachers, a new building – all these were interesting features.

We had been a nomadic group. First in September, 1913, we had enrolled as Grade XI’s , along with two classes of Grade IX’s in the King George School, and were officially designated “The North High School”. Two months later we were transferred to Alexandra School. The Class History of the Graduating Class of 1916 mentions our “re-christening Alexandra High School”. (Since official records do not seem to verify this name, we infer that the re-christening may have been the work of students.) At the end of that year we were again on the move, this time to Stanley Jones School. (ed. *In Renfrew*) A dictionary, supplied to the High School by the School Board at that time bears the name “Branch High School”.

But now at last in September, 1915, we had a home and a name. (ed. *A move to the beautiful sandstone Balmoral School Building*) We did not realize then that there was a certain transience of possession attached to both.

We were proud of our new school. The tower especially caught our fancy. Before long it would house a real clock. That the clock did not materialize does not seem now to be too important. Anticipation was very real.

That early Staff we cannot forget – ten teachers, including the principal, (for in those days principals taught too.) It is interesting to catch a glimpse again of those who helped set the tone for the high academic achievement which was to characterize Crescent Heights for years to come – of those who had a share, too, in initiating such special features as the Literary Society,

the Orchestra, the drama Group, the debating Society and the Sports Departments.

Mr. Aberhart was our new principal. Elsewhere in this issue tribute is paid to him but perhaps we saw him in a slightly different role from that in which others observed him. This was his first year of High School teaching, and even the students appreciated his carefully planned lessons and his well-organized school. He was a leader. When he walked into a classroom, he was in control of every situation. His own tremendous industry was contagious.

Mr. Aberhart had a deep respect for scholarship, and his students readily understood that he expected them to do their best work. But his interests in the school encompassed a wider range than just the academic field. He gave encouragement and support to all whose zeal led them into activities beyond those of the classroom.

There were others, besides the principal, who left their imprint on those early days at Crescent. Mr. Dave Andrews and Miss Mabel Taylor had been with our class of 1916 for two years during our period of wanderings. Just the mention of Mr. Andrew' name is enough to call forth stories of his prowess in mathematics, his uncanny capacity for doing mentally, with amazing speed, lengthy processes of computation. "A Mathematics wizard", we used to call him. He was this, and a kindly Home Room teacher, as well.

Miss Mabel Taylor was the unnamed Dean of Girls. Besides teaching French and English literature, she took delight in teaching the girls songs and dances, and especially in initiating them into the secrets of entertaining. Miss Taylor brought a touch of romance into the life of the school. Later we leaned with delight that our prophecies had come true, and that she was resigning to marry Mr. G.R. Dolan, who had been Principal of the Branch High School, immediately preceding our move to Balmoral School.

There were three others who had been with us a year before we entered Crescent. Mr. D. A. McKerricher, Mr. James Fowler and Mr. D.H. McKenzie.

Mr. McKerricher had come to us as a teacher of Latin and English Literature. He know how to stimulate interest in the study of the Classics. The next year he began a class in Greek also. Certainly he succeeded in imparting to his students a real appreciation of Literature, whether English, Latin, or Greek – and his students remember with gratitude the quality of his work.

Mr. McKerricher was not destined to continue long at Crescent. Soon he went on to teach aspiring teachers in the Calgary Normal School. (Mr. And Mrs. MckKerricher have had a long and happy retirement in Vancouver, and

former students have found a warm welcome in their home. Recently Mr. McKerricher celebrated his ninetieth birthday – a silent tribute to the contribution of the Classics to longevity.)

Mr. James Fowler (later Dr. James Fowler had come to us from Olds Agricultural College, as a teacher of chemistry and agriculture. He left nothing to chance. We remember now his zeal in marking and remarking note books. The classes in Agriculture were a novel feature for him and for the students.

Mr. Fowler had a keen appreciation of music, too, and under his direction came the beginnings of an Orchestra in Crescent. Soon the Institute of Technology sought his services, and later he served there with distinction as vice-principal and principal. After his retirement Dr. Fowler devoted himself to the work of the Community Chest.

Mr. D.H. McKenzie was another member of that early group of teachers. He assisted in teaching Mathematics and Science was particularly interested in the boys' activities, and was always a real friend to the students.

Four others completed the ranks of the Crescent Staff in that memorable September, 1915: Mr. J.D. Ferguson, Mr. F.. Woodman, Miss Ethel Alford and Miss C.S. Cunningham.

Mr. Ferguson was a scholarly man, and we recall his fine command of the English language as he walked around the room with a measured tread, and dictated History notes, phrased in flawless style. One cannot mention Mr. Ferguson without thinking of his dry humor, and the kindly twinkle in his eyes when something pleased him particularly well.

Debating was the special field in which Mr. Ferguson guided students; firstly, in Provincial Debates for the Rutherford Cup, and later in the Osborne Cup debates for inter-room competition. As vice-principal for many years, he made an especially fine contribution to our High School.

Miss Alford was a teacher of English and German. She had previously taught in the Normal School in Regina. It was she who had the courage to lead the way in the renting of the Grand Theatre for the presentation of "*As You Like It*". Taking part in plays was a privilege granted only to the good students, and fortunate were those who had the opportunity of training under Miss Alford.

Mr. Frank Woodman was the teacher of Physics in that opening year of Crescent's history. When he came to our school he had very recently

graduated from University. Students thought that he was young and clever – and soon appraised him as an excellent teacher. Boys welcomed his assistance in their sports. Soon Central High School claimed Mr. Woodman. There he served as vice-principal before moving to Western Canada high School, where he served ably for years as principal of the school. Former pupils have been glad that Mr. Woodman chose to retire in Calgary, and teachers rejoiced when, following retirement, he served on the Calgary School Board. No one was more qualified than he to serve in that capacity.

Miss Carrie S. Cunningham was another member of that original Crescent Staff. She was a real asset to the new school, and a tireless worker in the Composition classes, which she conducted nearly every period of the day. She was a most understanding person, and soon won a place for herself among students and teachers.

Of that original group of ten teachers, Mr. McKerricher, Mr. Woodman, and Miss Cunningham are still enjoying retirement. Nothing could please ex-students more than to welcome them personally to our Jubilee. (ed. 1965)

There was one other teacher who seems rightly to belong with that initial Staff. True, she was not there in 1915, but she came to Crescent Heights in 1916, and "Crescent" was her prime interest from that time until her retirement in 1949. Miss Kate McKellar, an outstanding teacher of Mathematics and beloved friend of students and teachers. It was she who organized the Girls Association in the school. It was she who pioneered in Inter-School Sports for Girls. Nor was she less interested in the boys than in the girls. Her home was always open to the students of the school. Not just in the class room, but in Sports, In Drama, in the Operetta, wherever she could be of service, Miss McKellar gave a helping hand to one and all.

Many happy memories have come flooding in as we have recalled the Crescent of fifty years ago – and now our thoughts momentarily bridge the gap of half a century, and we take a closer look at the Crescent of today.

Wherein are the two schools alike? Wherein are they different? What are the conspicuous changes which have taken place?

Unquestionably, the most apparent change has been in the over-all pattern of the school. From a completely academic school, with a staff of ten teachers, it has grown into a composite school, with a staff of sixty-seven teachers...and it is still in the growing stage. (Crescent is to have another addition in the near future.) Another addition will mean more pupils and more teachers. The increasing diversity of the programmer attracts to the school a much larger percentage of the Teen-Age population than in earlier days.

Let us have a quick look at some phases of Crescent activity today. In one wing boys are working on a car. They are enthusiastic about this repair job. In another room girls are making pies, or buns, or candy. Others are completing new dresses for Graduation. Elsewhere typewriters are responding to the ever-quickenning movement of student fingers. In the Library a number of students are examining references.

Lessons in academic subjects are being taught in many rooms. Students are learning to delight in English Literature and to appreciate the study of Foreign Languages. Mathematics and the Sciences receive their full share of attention, too. History has been changed to Social Studies in the curriculum, and other modifications have been made. Indeed, for the gifted student, an enriched programme is offered today.

There is an increasing effort being made in the schools to discover the pupils' aptitudes and to provide the training best suited to individual needs.

Nor must we omit mention of one exceedingly encouraging feature in today's educational world. Whereas in the early days many deserving students were not able to attend university for financial reasons, today, with the multiplicity of scholarships and loans available, a university education is being brought within reach of those students who have not only more-than-average ability, but also a corresponding capacity for work.

Students today have more money than students of former days. The student parking-lot is a silent witness to this fact. Part-time jobs, after school, used to be rare. Today, they are common. With this change has come the temptation for the weaker student to misplace the emphasis in the daily apportioning of his time.

Extra-mural activities of students have played an increasing part in the programme of today's school. Nor were these over-looked in the early programme... but there were variations in emphasis. What then were the distinctive features of those days? The Skating Parties, the Literary Society, the lively interest in Debating, these stand out in memory. (Of course Crescent students still skate, but skating does not enjoy the wide popularity of former days.)

The Literary Society had a mission of its own to perform. Any student with a little talent in singing, in playing a musical instrument, or in reciting, was sure to be invited to contribute to the programme of the Literary Society. Those who were fond of acting had their turn, too. Within the school, the Literary Society was the parent of modern clubs. We should add, also, that

elections for the Literary Society were most exciting. Students' Union elections are the only elections comparable to them today. The Literary Society met the students' needs in a very special way.

Time brought changes. Along with the increase of student population and of staff, there came a certain specialization in these extra-mural activities. It is a fascinating story to read about the growth of the Operetta in Crescent, the history of the Orchestra and the Glee Club, the record of successes in Sports.

Debating was a focal point of interest in those early days at Crescent. As stated previously, Mr. J. D. Ferguson sponsored every Debating activity. It was largely through his efforts that Crescent Heights, on several occasions, was awarded the Rutherford Cup. It was presented by Hon. A. C. Rutherford, Premier of Alberta, to the champion debating team in the province. (Mention should be made too, of the help and encouragement given to student debaters by Mr. W. M. Davidson, editor of the Morning Alberta in Calgary.)

Mr. F. E. Osborne of Calgary was another man who later took a keen interest in debates. He sought to encourage student participation in debating by presenting the Osborne Cup to the champion team in inter-room debating. This was a stimulus which helped for many years to maintain a keen interest in debating.

Obviously, over the years a great variety of clubs has come into being at Crescent – each with its own particular appeal. Who is interested in chess? – or table tennis? – or basketball? – or photography? Newcomers will be sure to meet a warm welcome in the group of their choice.

The school of today, with its programme of work and of play, is especially equipped to meet the needs of all young people, and is providing training-ground for our citizens of tomorrow.

- Mabel C. Giles