

Westbank Express...

History, events, and local businesses can all be found in your local publication!



Your Informative Newsletter

The Art Deco Building in Downtown Westbank is a Link to our Past

By Gordon H. Ficke

Bob Hughes sits in his wicker cocoon-like chair suspended from the ceiling by a chain, as he waits for customers to drive in. "This is the smallest tire store in North America." He enthused. "I only sell tires, not like the other shops that sell automotive parts and accessories and provide other services like replacing exhaust systems, shock absorbers, batteries, etc."



I came in to have my front tire on my van repaired from a nail puncture. "I get very little call for tire repairs." Bob laments as he loosens the wheel lug bolts with his large chromed tire wrench with multi socket sizes, shaped in the form of a cross. He uses that instead of the traditional air tools used today in the majority of tire shops. "I believe that wheel nuts or bolts should be able to be removed easily by a lady, using the wheel wrench supplied with their vehicle, should they experience a flat tire on their journey."

Hughes rolls the wheel to his vintage tire removing machine and proceeds to roughen the area on the inside of the tire where the nail pierced through the casing. He instructs me to sit in a chair, out of his way in the tiny shop, so he could proceed, unimpeded, with his work. As he applied the patch to the inside of the tire, Bob explained about how he acquired this historic building and business that he currently is winding down.

The art deco styled building at 2471 Main Street, Westbank, that Hughes owns today, was vacant at the time when he decided to lease it in 1976. Bob secured a 5-year lease on the building with an option to renew it for another five years. He had been advised to register the lease with a lawyer. Thankfully, that piece of business advice paid off.

"When I took over the building, there wasn't any hot water, so I had to install a hot water tank." Hughes revealed.

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Youth Ambassadors

The Youth Ambassador program has long been a fixture in Okanagan communities, and last year Westbank saw the return of local ambassador representation after a 25 year hiatus. The competition for the 2016/2017 ambassadors is happening right now. A talent competition and personal speeches event have already taken place and the weekend of June 10 will be the final pageant! Further information about this program can be found at their website:



www.westkelownaambassadors.com

Around the World...



The Mongol Rally is one of the most intense, and possibly foolhardy, car rallies in the world. The event starts July 16 in the British Isles, and participants have under two months and absolutely no support to drive a subcompact car (less than 1000 cc only please) all the way to Ulan Ude, a Russian town on the far side of Mongolia. Poor planning is encouraged and scooters are also eligible. Be sure to pack some Russian phrase books!



From the Westbank Women's Association Cookbook, 1931

"Delicious Salad: To one cup seeded raisins add one cup of diced apples, one sliced banana, half cup chopped celery, one shredded orange. Mix lightly with a generous amount of sweetened and flavoured whipped cream (or mayonnaise). Sprinkle chopped walnuts, and serve on crisp lettuce leaves."

-Mrs. J. L. Dobbin, Westbank

The Art Deco Building cont'd...

By the late 1970s Hughes' new tire business was a successful enterprise and the owners of the building came back with a proposal to tear down the existing building and build a new building that would span across both his and the lot next door where the small house that Betty Charlish lived in. The owners promised that Bob's rent would not go up. However, his existing space was limited because he was changing tires on big trucks, tractors and heavy equipment, Hughes wanted to lease the entire space of the new proposed building.

Bob's answer changed the property owners' plans so they let the option to purchase the house and lot of Betty Charlish, lapse. A short time later they came back and asked if he was interested in purchasing the lot and building. Bob replied, "Sure I'd like to buy the place." He did that by taking over their mortgage.

Bob made a few enquiries about when the building was constructed but none of the people he contacted knew the answer. "However, I have examined the photos of the building that I have, and from a few of the renovations I have made to the building over the years, I have determined how it was built." Hughes remarked. Next to the chimney in the middle of the building, where the barbershop is today, was formerly the office of the Westbank Irrigation District. From the chimney to the back of the building was where their workshop was. The original cement floor is still there and continues to the covered open area where Bob has his tire changing equipment. The small area behind the barbershop was probably used as a storage area for supplies and equipment.



Over the years, Hughes closed in some of the back sections, beefed up the trusses, installed flooring in the upper level in order to store tires, and insulated the building. The original building only had sawdust shavings in the walls for insulation.

Steve McGill, who worked for the Westbank Irrigation District from 1970, remembers the old office building. "Although I didn't work in the office, I would come in to the building, like the other employees, to collect my pay cheque." Claire Small was the clerk and accountant for the Westbank Irrigation District at the time. The office was small and was heated by a wood stove. The customers, who were mostly fruit farmers, would collect their money in cash, twice a year from the packinghouse they sold their fruit to and would come in to pay their irrigation fees, also in cash. That is how business was done in those days before the introduction of credit cards and personal lines of credit by the banks.

"One of the things that was in that office was a very large black ornate vault in the back of the office to store the large amounts of cash that was collected from the customers." Steve recalls. "That vault is ingrained in my memory. Once the big vault door was opened, there were several little doors and another larger vault door, when opened, revealed where the cash was kept." McGill surmises that at times the bank and other big businesses in Westbank stored large amounts of money in that vault. Claire Small was also a Notary of the Public and accepted fees from land transactions, licenses, burials in the Westbank Cemetery, etc.

"When the big grey vault was constructed in the new Westbank Irrigation Building on Elliott Road, the old black vault was moved inside that vault, where it still resides today.

Today, Bob cannot compete with the big tire stores and box stores that sell tires. He operates his business from the back of the only art deco building in Westbank. Hughes sells only used tires and also provides a drop off service for people getting rid of their old tires and rims. Bob leads a contented uncomplicated life, with little stress. With the unending demands most of us encounter each day, few of us, during our lives, will ever realize Hughes' enviable lifestyle.

Before I left, Hughes hands me a green and gold sticker, declaring 40 years of Hughes Tire Store in Westbank, B.C., 1976 – 2016. I proudly attached this sticker to my automotive tool box as a reminder of yet another piece of Westbank history.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JUNE/JULY

WESTBANK

Spring Tracks

Gellatly Nut Farm, every Tues. & Thurs. @ 9am-10:30 am until June 23.

This free spring 'Tracks Walking Club' is a 12-week beginner graduated walking program. Join us as we travel around the Gellatly Nut Farm Regional Park off Whitworth Road in West Kelowna. There's no cost to sign up and members receive a walking journal, walking tips, seminars and motivational tips that keep you moving. People at a beginner fitness level are encouraged to take part gradually increasing their health, stamina and walking duration to 60 minutes. 'Tracks' is recognized as a BC Heart and Stroke Foundation 'Hearts in Motion' walking club. To register email eeco@cord.bc.ca or phone 250-469-6139.

Go Fish!

Shannon Lake, Sat. & Sun. @ 10am-3pm

Here's your chance to introduce the young members of your family to the sport of fishing! The 'Go Fish' program returns this spring with the program running each Saturday and Sunday until June 19th inside the special netting fishing area in Shannon Lake Regional Park.

The program offers youth age 15 and under a chance to catch one rainbow trout each day without a fishing license. A limited number of rods, reels and bait will be available each weekend! For more information please visit the Regional District website regionaldistrict.com/parks or contact the EECO at 250-469-6140.

Tourism Industry Expo

Lions Hall, June 9 @ 1pm-5pm

The City of West Kelowna will be hosting a Tourism Industry Expo for the Westside tourism industry. Showcase your business, have your frontline staff connect with Westside tourism product offerings as well as network and connect with industry colleagues. For more information, contact Cameron Weir at 778-797-8853 or cameron.weir@westkelownacity.ca

Westbank Farmers Market

Westridge Shopping Centre,
Saturdays 9am-2pm

Starting June 25, come to the corner of Main St. and Elliott Rd. for the local farmers market, featuring new activities each week!

Westside Daze

Various Locations, June 30 - July 3

Westbank's premiere community event will feature lots of live music, a midway, food, arts and crafts, a show & shine, and much more!

Music in the Park

Memorial Park, Fridays 6:45am-9pm

Bring your lawn chairs, come and enjoy some great Music in the Park every Friday evening through July and August!

PEACHLAND

Canada Day

Peachland Waterfront, July 1
Enjoy the Peachland parade and events celebrating Canada Day!

SUMMERLAND

21st Annual Summerland Bluegrass Festival


Summerland Rodeo Grounds,
June 10-12

Featuring workshops and band Prairie Flyer!

BUSINESS SECTION



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