

Westbank Express...

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Your Informative Newsletter

Westbank Elementary School Remembered

By Gordon H. Ficke

I arrived late that sunny day on June 19th, 2003. Teachers, former teachers, students, former students, parents, parents of those former students and some interested local pioneers were packed inside the Westbank Elementary School Gymnasium. I, along with a few mothers with their small children peered through the doorway as the ceremony unfolded. Westbank history was being made that day. Sadly, this would be the last assembly conducted in this school.



I watched the final tribute to the school I attended from the late fifties to the end of my grade 7 year in June 1965. Each of the presenting students mumbled a few words into the microphone before solemnly depositing a coffee mug, pen, tee shirt, etc., emblazoned with the official "Westbank Wildcats" logo, into the time capsule. Even though their poignant nostalgic memories of this place struck a note with me, I felt strangely disconnected to this generation of elementary school students.

The open door leading to the playground, beckoned me. I stepped into the warmth of the bright sunshine. The familiar narrow strip of lawn between the single row of five large elm trees adjacent to the original school building, and its' counterpart on the west side of the school, were the only grassy areas on the whole playground during the mid 1950s through the late '60s.

In those days, the south woods that lay beyond the downed barbed wire fence boundary of the playground was like a magnet for us kids. We were imaginative and industrious, building rudimentary forts from rotten logs, defending them from renegades and capturing rival fort members, confining them until the bell rang. The next day the real-life game resumed where we had left off. We were having the best time of our lives! As we explored deeper into the forest it became more difficult to hear the school bell. Consequently, the principal declared that the woods were now out of bounds. We were now relegated to confine our activities to the playground area.

During the spring and summer we engaged in mixed scrub softball. My batting and catching skills were not up to par with many of the more athletic players, but I learned from them and my skills improved over the years. Most of the boys and a few competitive girls played marbles on the level dirt playground. It was understood that the winner kept all the marbles. It was a hard lesson I learned losing my first game! The children in the higher grades taught the younger kids how to burn their names into an old log that lay on the north side of the school grounds. **Cont'd on Page 2...**

Westside Daze 2016

Due to circumstances beyond the control of the excellent organizers of Westside Daze, West Coast Amusements did not bring any rides to the Canada Day Long Weekend event this year. However, that did not prevent the organization from hosting one of the Okanagan Valley's premiere community events. A car and truck show and shine, climbing wall, petting zoo, dog agility competition, and more made the Westside Daze a hit. Great live music made it all the better! Check out their website as plans are made for next year!
<http://www.westsidedaze.com/>



Around the World...



The Boryeong Mud Festival in Korea during late July is every bit as messy as it sounds. The entire event revolves around the mud taken from regional mud flats that is touted as rich in minerals. It was conceived in 1998 as a promotional event for cosmetics producers who use the local mud, but has grown into an impressive celebration including various mud themed activities, demonstration of health and wellness services, live entertainment, and a fireworks display.



From the Westbank Women's Association Cookbook, 1931

"Cherry Cake: Half pound butter, four eggs, one cup sweet milk, two teaspoons baking powder, quarter pound citron peel, half pound cherries, one and a half cups white sugar, quarter pound almonds, three cups flour, one teaspoon vanilla and one of lemon, quarter pound crystallized ginger. Combine in the usual way, and bake in a slow oven one and a half hours."

—Mrs. J. L. Dobbin,

Westbank Elementary cont'd...

Magnifying glasses were tilted at the perfect angle to focus the sun's rays into a pinpoint laser beam, resulting in a thin thread of smoke and blackened wood. The girls meanwhile, were adept at the game of jacks, hopscotch and skipping rope.

During the early '60s a rectangular asphalt pad was laid down on the east side of the playground, between the grassy area and George Pringle Secondary School's raised sports field. Two basketball hoops were then installed, one at each end. In the warmer weather that hard surface became very busy, as kids claimed their space to engage in their recess and noon-time activities from skipping, playing hopscotch to playing basketball. In wintertime that piece of pavement was converted into a slick ice slide, with all the students competing to see who could skid the furthest.



After more than forty hot summers and cold winters, this piece of pavement was now showing its age. Through neglect and lack of maintenance, the surface had numerous cracks and the nets on the basketball hoops were frayed and torn.

The assembly was still in progress when I re-entered the building. One of the teachers spoke about some of her personal highlights while she taught here. I wandered down the familiar hallway, glancing at the class and school pictures lining the walls. Unfortunately, there were no class pictures prior to the early 1970s.

The rear door from Miss Gorman's former classroom creaked, as I swung it open. There was the same cloakroom from my childhood days, smaller than I had remembered it. Backpacks now hung from the brass coat hooks instead of shoulder bags. The same desks were now facing away from the windows, instead of to the front of the class. Back in the 1960s the students from the whole school were escorted into this one classroom on Friday afternoons to watch films! In those early years there were only five classrooms in the whole school, with perhaps 20 to 25 students in each class. However, the seating was still tight as we watched those 16mm health and safety educational flicks, interspersed with a few travel, safety and science documentaries. Jiminy Cricket features were my favourite!

The dedicated teachers that taught here left an indelible impression on me. Miss Dobbin, a short, vivacious woman, always had a kind word for each child in her grade one class. Mrs. Owehand, a very thin, reserved woman, showed us how to write with those requisite Ad Pac pens in grade two. For grade three we had Miss Beet, a no nonsense teacher, and Mrs. Anderson, who taught grade four, was more lenient. Miss Gorman, the grade five and six teacher, enjoyed reading a chapter to us each day, after lunch, from popular children's books. The indelible memory still lingers with me from that cold 22nd day of November 1963, while we were in her class that we learned of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Schools were officially closed for the rest of that Friday. Mr. McCulloch, our Principal and grade seven teacher gave us our first social studies project. I built a replica of the Greek Parthenon (with a little help from my dad, of course). Today, it has a home on top of a small bookcase in my garage.

One of the last memories I have as a student at Westbank Elementary School was in the summer of 1965. All the students lined up, in our respective divisions, outside the front doors of the school, as we always did at the beginning of each school day. Our elementary school had no public address system so the principal or other teachers would use these opportunities to make important announcements to the students. After the assembly was over, each division was directed to march into their respective classroom, ushered the beginning our school day. However, on this particular day instead of raising the ubiquitous Union Jack up our flagpole, the new Canadian maple leaf flag was hoisted.

Today the buildings are all gone. On the footprint of the former Westbank Elementary School that was built in 1955, along with the gymnasium that was constructed in 1965, is a community garden and a dog friendly park. A children's water park occupies the flat scrub brush area, beyond the former fence to the west of the school. The row of five large elm trees on the former east side of the school, are the sole remnants of that era. For those students who spent their early lives at Westbank Elementary School, the memories they accrued here will continue to linger in their minds for many years to come.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUGUST

WESTBANK

Art in the Park

Quail's Gate Winery (Boucherie Rd.), August 6 @ 10 am - 3 pm

Celebrate West Kelowna art and culture Saturday, August 6th at Art in the Park. We will be taking art to the outdoors where you can meet the artists, appreciate their work and experience West Kelowna's beautiful natural surroundings.

Dinner in the Vineyard

Quail's Gate Winery (Boucherie Rd), every Wednesday @ 6 pm - 9 pm

Quail's Gate is excited to host this signature event Dinner in the Vineyard, every Wednesday evening this summer. Enjoy a delectable multi-course menu paired with a special selection of Quails' Gate wines served between the rows of grapes. \$165 all inclusive groupbookings@quailsgate.com

Westbank Farmers Market

Westridge Shopping Centre,
Saturdays 9 am - 2 pm

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

Music in the Park

Memorial Park, Fridays @
6:45 am - 9 pm

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

Live Music @ Whiski Jack's Whiski Jack's Pub (2442 Drought Rd.), every Fri. and Sat. @ 9 pm

Hear some live music acts at Whiski Jack's Pub every Friday and Saturday night! August performers include Colt 45, J.L.B., Bluesfoot, and Rumble100. See <http://whiskijackspub.com/events/> for more information.

Michael Bolton @ Mission Hill Mission Hill Winery, Aug. 5 & 7

Michael Bolton has worked with some of the greatest music stars of the last century and is a superstar in his own right. Mission Hill Winery has added a second show for his 2016 visit to the Okanagan and you can still get tickets for the August 7th performance! See <http://www.missionhillwinery.com/2515.aspx> for full information and to purchase tickets.

PEACHLAND

Rattlesnake Island Swim

Swim Bay, August 6 @ 7 am

The Interior Savings Rattlesnake Island Swim is a 3.1km and 7km challenging swim across pristine Okanagan Lake in historic Peachland, BC, Canada.

See <http://rattlesnakeislandswim.com/> for more info.

SUMMERLAND

Live @ Crush Pad Summer Music Series

Okanagan Crush Pad Winery,
Aug. 11 & 25 @ 7 pm - 9 pm

"You're invited to join us for our Summer Music Series on the Crush Pad, enjoy a magical evening with a glass of wine, watching the sun dip down over the lake and vineyard while enjoying an entertaining musical performance."

<https://okanagancrushpad.com/upcoming-events/>

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