

John Gough interview Part 2

[Judith Windle interviewing John Gough in 1978]

00:00 John Gough: These school gardens that ... we ... developed under the nature study program ... unfortunately didn't produce any crops until we as the graduates had left the school, so we never did have any opportunity to sample ... the results of our efforts.

If you walk up the concrete driveway of the school today, you will see ... you are in an avenue of ... lovely trees, and in passing it might be noted that credit for these trees should be, planting of these trees, should be given to ... W. J. Gibson, who for a year or so was the temporary principal of the ... of the normal school. ... He ... was also associated with the Department of Agriculture, of the province, a great tree lover, and I think he did a great deal in ... helping to promote the planting of trees, particularly on school grounds, ... throughout the ... province.

Further to members of the staff, let's not forget V. L. Denton, who later was awarded ... an honorary degree doctorate ... from his university in the Maritimes. ... He served as vice principal under Dr. MacLaurin for several years, and then became principal of the school, to my good fortune to work under him. But I, I and others have certainly admired the valuable contribution that he made to ... written geography, and ... his ... the text in geography which he produced ... with the assistance of A. E. Lord, was ... a member of the staff of the Vancouver Normal School, ... always been recognized as a monumental work, geography text, and ... for a long period of time ... this book, "World Geography", was used in the secondary schools of ... the provinces ... the province of British Columbia ... many provinces throughout ... Canada.

Well, so much for, for the staff that I can recall well. There was MacLaurin, Denton, Freeman, Dunnell. There was a member on staff whose name I don't recall at the moment, who had the difficult task of trying to teach students in my day, particularly the men, how to teach a lesson in music, in the ... at the elementary school level.

What about physical education at the school? As far as the staff, is, was, was concerned, there was ... this was not assigned to any regular member of the teaching staff, ... so to speak, but instead it was ... the responsibility of ... two ... men who came to us from ... the armed forces, with their base ... at Macauley Point, in those days.

... It was necessary that ... student teachers ... learn how to teach physical education in their future schools. And so ... they were given course in this by ... in my day, two sergeants who ... came from ... who were sent there by the ... militia, the military, subsidized by the ... by the federal government.

05:06 And ... one of these men ... took the male students, the other the female, and then there came a time when ... a member of the staff, a female member of the staff, taught this work to the girls, but the ... male student teachers still received their instruction from ... this member, this sergeant from the ... from the forces.

We were all ... my day and generally speaking throughout the whole program at the normal school, as ... students were ... given a course in first aid. And, when they grad [graduated] ... they were not given a graduation certificate from the normal school unless they had ... qualified ... in that particular field, in first aid, and had passed the examination given by the -what?- St. John's Ambulance Association.

I think I ...

I think one of the highlights ... of our acti [activity] ... of the school program, the program at the normal school for the students and staff ... were ... was the morning assembly. And for long period of time, staff and students, over many years, staff and students would meet, first thing in the morning, for, in the auditorium, for announcements, for a song, to listen to a record, possibly have some member of staff comment on the record, a bit of music ... appreciation, etc. This usually lasted about 15 minutes. Generally speaking, opened with the Lord's Prayer. It was a daily event, and having been together for that short a period of time, I think we all ... it all helped to develop a better esprit de corps and a feeling of camaraderie so to speak, and after about 15 minutes together then, the students went to their various ... classes.

Graduation banquets were held ... consecutively, and certainly up until 1940, always in the school. It was just unthinkable, although students at times, I believe, students advocated this, just considered unthinkable by the staff that a graduation banquet should be held anywhere else.

... Elementary ... home economics, so to speak, taught over a number of years ... It was very elementary, and ... there were ... adequate facilities, and so at the end of the year, everyone tucked in, so to speak, and ... or with perhaps with the assistance of a caterer at times, it was possible to put on a ... a very fine banquet in the auditorium of the school ... to which ... maybe two to three hundred people would ... would sit down.

At graduation time, it was customary for a presentation to be made to the school by ... by the students who had collected funds for this purpose. Not much evidence remains of some of the presentations were ... which were made. For a long time, the ... sundial, presented by one group, ... stood in front of the ... school, possibly a state of decay by now, and that I can recall that for many years on the grounds of the school, again almost in the shadow of the 10:05 clock, there stood a very fine ... stone bench, which had been presented by ... a class, but again time has had its, its effect.

Judith Windle: When you were a student in the normal school ...

JG: Beg pardon?

JW: When you were a student in the normal school, were you taught home ec [economics]? Were the men taught home ec [economics] as well as the ladies?

JG: Um ... Yes. Well, it was, I think we went in and just made a, made a, perhaps a few ... a few doughnuts or something like that. Not much. ... It was largely, so that if we went out ...

Do you want this again?

... I would like to emphasize that ... as far as the reference to home economics is concerned, that it was very, very ... elementary, and not a great deal of time was ... spent on it. And for many years, the program was in charge of ... of a Miss Isbister. Miss Isbister.

... I think the program was geared largely to making sure that when the men and women teachers went out into their ... districts to teach that they would at least be able to ... sustain themselves by ... making a, a nutritious meal. The men ... had an opportunity to take a ... a few lessons from, from Miss Isbister, but as a, I'd say, I think the program was geared largely, largely in that, in that direction. It was certainly no attempt to ... produce ... teachers qualified to teach home economics at the ... junior/senior high school level.

JG: Ow ...

JW: Ow ... There were two pools downstairs in ...

JG: Mm-hmm (yes)

JW: ... in the locker rooms. Do you remember in ... times ...

JG: It's always surprising that when anyone ... talks about the normal school, or reminisces about the normal school that they, that questions are asked about the swimming pools. I can recall, as a student at the normal school, 1922 or thereabouts, that these ... pools existed. I know that that was true in the men's section of the building, and ... there's no doubt that there was one at, at, at the other end, used by the ladies. The pool, the pools were, oh, I suppose, roughly ... six or eight feet by about ... fifteen. And ... they were, they adjoined, the ... washroom section and the ... showers, shower section of the ... of the buildings. Downstairs. One at the east end, one at the west end on the, on the ground. Basement floor. Basement floor level.

If you go there today, you'll find that ... almost difficulty, it's almost difficult to locate these, but if you spend a little time, it soon becomes obvious that a, a concrete capping had been placed, has been, has ... cappings have been placed over ... over the pools. I don't know when this occurred, but I'm just wondering if this did not take place, if the pools were not sealed over, at the time that the ... school was used by, used as a convalescent home for, for veterans.

JW: There was one other question - I was wondering ...

[inaudible crosstalk]

JG: Well, I just find from the interviewer that ... the ... closure of the pools came at a much later date than I have ... than I suspected.

JW: Ah ... the other question I wanted to ask you - When you were a student there, was there a lunchroom downstairs on the bottom floor for the students [inaudible] to have a [lunchroom?]

14:56 JG: I can't recall. I think largely, because I perhaps went home for lunch. Uh, no, I just don't know. I know that there was a lot of changes downstairs, would you like me to deal with that?

JW: Mm hmm [yes]

JG: Um ... During the last ... last few days, and I'm referring now to ... a period ... about October 20 to 25, I had occasion to go through the normal school, or Camosun College rather, largely to visit the, visit the library. Of course, the library is now operating in the, what we call the auditorium, a very, very delightful ... room. Certainly a suitable atmosphere for a, for a library.

But I've been ... and so I'm conscious of the changes which have taken place ... in the building. In one instance, I ... note a change in the ... in the doors leading to the classrooms, which ... this having been ... this being necessitated by ... the fire marshal. Up until ... a few months ago, there was only one door to each classroom. Now there are two. In place of the, the type of door has changed. Formerly the door, classroom door, the upper half, had ... windows, lights in it, and one could look through, from the corridor, unless ... paint had been put on the window. We now have solid core doors. And, with the result that the ... corridor, now carpeted - couldn't afford carpets in my day evidently ... the corridors, corridors are much ... darker.

Downstairs, I found great changes, and I know they have not taken place ... within the last few days, but go back to the time when Camosun College came into existence, and found it necessary to acquire more and more teaching space. But downstairs on the south side ... not so obvious today but ... Below the general level of the corridor on the south side there was a semi-subterranean area so to speak, where you went down steps, four or five steps, to get down to the classrooms. There were two or three rooms, or should I correct it, there was one large room there, in the middle of the building, on the south side, and that was the room in which manual training equipment was to be found, and that was utilized by the students in the model school, never by the teachers, the male teachers in training themselves, but just by the students of the model, model school. Today you'll find that that subterranean area so to speak has been ... boarded over, and ... several classrooms exist where, where formerly there were, there was one.

On the other side, on the north side of the main corridor in the basement floor, you have several rooms ... and again, you have a depressed area where the gymnasium ... exists and ... and is still, still in use.

Upstairs on the third ... second floor upstairs, again, great changes have ... I notice ... several major, major changes in the ... particularly in the creation of ... additional offices and small rooms, and ... the ... what we might call the home ... home economics area, area on the west end of the upper corridor ... I think has been subdivided and ... more intensive use. 20:05 This is all good ... I must agree.

... I'm amazed at what is going on at Camosun College. I'm happy to see every square inch of it in use, so to speak. Because there was ... for many, many years ... we students and staff, almost rattled around in the building, so to speak, there was so much space. And it was a, a very delightful atmosphere in which to, to work.

I think in the 1920s, and the 30s, and the 40s ... the staff and students had ... a delightful setting in which to work compared with the crowded conditions on which, under which the norm [normal], the Camosun College students and staff operate.

JW: Could you tell me where the library was situated?

JG: Well, the library in those days, what a contrast to what you have today. The library was just to the west of the present library. In other words, to the west of the old auditorium. And, believe it or not, it was approximately half the size of an ordinary classroom. No more, no less. It was probably about thirty-five feet by something like twenty-five feet. And I can remember it was a pretty crowded situation. But it was ... it was a good library, and I think ... we owed a great deal to ... the staff in, in building up some, a fine set of reference books and so on. But

what a ... what a wonderful library you have today.

JW: Could you tell me about the dances and the picnics?

JG: Beg pardon?

JW: The dances and the picnics that were held at the normal school?

JG: Dances and picnics... In the early days ... there were no dances ... I am sure. I don't know where to draw the line as far as years are concerned, but I'm sure that in the ... for a long period of time ... no dances were held within the school itself. I can't recall any picnics. I'm, I'm no authority on that. ... I do know, that in the, in the thirties, and here I'm referring to the period when I was on staff myself, ... as far as picnics were concerned, I ... I remember what might be called informal get together, oh, get acquainted picnics so to speak, were held particularly at the beginning of the year, where after, after the students had been in session for a week or two... staff and students would go down to Cattle Point, or Cadboro Bay, or Willows, and have a, shall we say, a barbecue, something of that nature, and spend the evening, bonfire in the evening, evening together.

... I suppose the fact that we, that the students, that when the ... the time came for the students to ... return to their respective areas, ... their homes ... for practice teaching on a month basis, shall we say, in, in May, and so on, that perhaps ... made it difficult to, to ... hold a picnic, but I don't think there were dances were commonly held at the school until perhaps, well, maybe about 1930 or thereafter. And there again, we did have them occasionally, perhaps once a year, in the course of the year, perhaps at Christmas time, I can remember ... dances being held. And then of course, grad [graduation], with the graduation ceremony, that was so.

JW: When the students went, in May, went to teach, in their own hometown, then they returned later to the normal school, did they, for a ...

JG: Yeah, I think so.

JW: A period ...

JG: Yeah, I think so. For the graduation, the graduation itself. I think that was the, that was the case.

25:04 JW: I was told by one teacher who taught in the 50s, right up until the end of the Provincial Normal School, and he said that at the end of the year, the teachers were given ... the power to become Justice of the Peace, so that they could administer ... the oath to the students so that they were Canadian citizens ...

JG: Really?

JW: ... when they went to teach. Now they didn't do this in ...

JG: No.

JW: ... the 30s

JG: Oh no.

JW: ...or the 40s when you were there

JG: No, no. Well, I do want to emphasize that ... my ... reminiscences I won't ... been dealing only with ... how the school operated in a general way, and developments that took, that took place up until 19 .. 1942 because it was at that time that I, that I, that I left, left the school. Any other references I have made to changes ... with regard to ... the Adult Institute and ... Camosun College ... [inaudible] of the institute come from as a result of associating with the Victoria School Board at the time, that the Adult Institute was being, brought into, brought into being. ... I had no association with the operation of Camosun College because by the time it came into operation I was no longer associated with the Greater Victoria School Board.