

and had them for friends, the Bernards, the Gaudets and Gradys. They sat around in living rooms in military married quarters in out of the way places such as Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and Moosenee, Ontario, and talked about the Island, who married whom, who had babies, who got divorced. When we came «home» the scene was the same; only the people were different. Mom and Dad sat around at night with Granny and Granddad and with the other relatives who were there and talked again about people, who married whom, who had children, etc. We ate unusual foods like lobster, râpure, chicken fricot, chowder, yellow-eyed beans, bannock and French biscuits. I swear that if there were a fire at our house, my parents would have saved the grinder and râpure pans before my brother and me. When I was dating my future wife, I invited her over for a râpure supper. She's from Nova Scotia English and Upper Canada Loyalist heritage, so I explained to her that if we had any future, she would have to learn to like râpure. Turned out, she loved it! She has even mastered how to make it. In a catastrophe, I wonder if she would not save the pans before the children, or maybe before the husband.

Another influence was that because my father joined the Canadian Air Force shortly after my birth, we lived in several areas across Canada. Despite where we lived, Summerside was referred to as «home». Sometime in February or March, the topic of «Are we going home this summer?» would come up. Now we lived in comfortable accommodations, we had furniture and clothes wherever we lived. We had a roof over our heads, heat and water and four walls. But it was just where we lived. Home was Summerside! We did not own a building here or even land, but it was home!

As a youth, I remember lingering

on the deck of the «Abegweit», the original one, not the modern plastic and fiberglass copy, and also on the «SS Prince Edward Island», just savoring the view of the coast of the Island. It is hard to explain the thrill or the excitement it gave me as the shoreline came into focus. You could smell it, you could see it, and you could feel it. Very, very few of my classmates and friends in Yorkton or Moosonee were from here. They did not take a ferry to go home. The ground of their homeland was not red. They did not know the colour of the Island clay, how it tastes when the wind blows it off the newly ploughed fields, the feel of it being wet and mushed between your toes. I was from a very unique and special place. I knew it then and I still know it now.

We once came very close to living here on the Island. My father was transferred to a place where there were no married quarters available. My mother, brother and I came home to live with my grandmother on East Street. My cousin Darrell gave me some schoolbooks I would need in the classroom here in Summerside. Among them was a history book entitled *The Story of Prince Edward Island* by P. Blakely and M. Vernon. It was in 1965 and I was almost eleven. I read the book during my summer vacation. When we very quickly left to join my father as he had found a house for us to live in, I kept that book. I still have it. It has been read several times.

Another book that made an impact on my life was one my grandmother had on her bookshelf, The title was *Cent Cinquantième Anniversaire de la paroisse N. D. du Mont-Carmel, 1812 - 1962*. She showed me her parents' names in it, and how she was descended from Paul Arsenault, one of the pioneer settlers of Mont-Carmel. I was hooked. I had to know more.

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