

WELCH

We moved from Burnaby to Ocean Park in 1942. Dave and Alice Welch, our parents, decided that Ocean Park would be a good place to live and bring up a family. I was then 5 years old and my brother Ken was two. My brother Ray was born in 1946.

Although White Rock was more developed at the time, only a small number of families lived in the Ocean Park area that was basically forest with trails and narrow gravel roads. I recall the use of kerosene lamps for light, wells for water, and outhouses in lieu of indoor facilities. A trail beside our house later became Welch Road, named after my father. Welch Road (now 127th St.) was initially one block long between Howard Road (14B Ave.) and Giblin Road (15th Ave.). It was later extended for one more block from Giblin Road to Horner Road (15A Ave.) and was the shortest road in the area.

A small grocery store was operated on the corner of what is now 16th Avenue and 128th Street. The smallest post office in the country (approx. 6'x 14') was operated near the foot of 16th Avenue. It had a few padlocked mailboxes accessible from the outside. Ours was Box #8.

The Ocean Park beach was a focal point in the summer time with swimming, campfires, hot-dog roasts, crab boils and good fishing for sea trout in small punts along the shore. In winter, ice-skating in the open air was provided at Shannon's pond. I particularly remember the ice-skating at night with campfires at the edge of the pond. The Ocean Park boys challenged the Crescent Beach boys to an annual baseball game that was played at a ball park – now an open field at the northwest corner of the Ocean Park United Church camp (now Camp Kwomais). Crescent always won the game.

The Ocean Park Hall was a focal point for the residents at the time. Dave Welch, my father, was president of the Ocean Park Community Association for many years. Albert Welch, my grandfather, painted the rural scene mural on the stage curtain that is now mounted on the back wall of the stage. Various get-togethers, dances, whist drives and the like were held regularly at the hall. Plays were performed at the hall by an Ocean Park players group. An Ocean Park boys' club used the hall for sports and athletic activities – basketball, boxing and tumbling (springboard and mat).

My initial school days were at the Crescent School (Annex) at the corner of 24th Ave. and Ocean Park Road. An old wood stove provided heat and a well was used for water. I recall collecting water from local residents in a wagon when the school well went dry in summer. We had the use of outhouses located behind the school. Each row of the school was a grade that, I believe, went up to about Grade 4.

After graduating from Semiahmoo High School, I left the area. In 1966, I returned with my wife Marjorie and family and have resided in the area ever since. My brother Ken moved east and lives with his wife Fran in Burlington, Ontario. Ray and his wife Jane now live in Delta. Our parents both passed away in 1983.

Things have changed over the past 50 years. On arrival at Ocean Park there was no TV. I recall a small group of us as youngsters would go to the Carruth's to watch television about once a week. I think they were the only people with a TV in the area. Deer, pheasants and grouse were in abundance. Large runs of salmon came up all the local rivers. There was little criminal activity and no drug related problems.

The area has changed considerably in terms of life style and ambience. I suppose that could also be said of life in the area in the early 1900s as compared to the time we first arrived at Ocean Park. In the early 1900s there would be no cars and the occupations would be mainly logging and perhaps fishing. The old corduroy roads for horse and donkey machine logging and the springboard notches in giant cedar stumps provide evidence of the logging of first growth trees in abundance at the time. Again, a different life style.

Change is inevitable and generally brings both advantages and disadvantages, but one thing remains. The south Surrey area is still a great place to live and looks even better when you are returning from many other parts of the world.

– Don and Marj Welch

Crescent Legion #240

Nine Ex-Servicemen met on July 14th in the old Fire Hall, later the Senior Citizen's Building, now demolished, at Crescent Beach to plan for the formation of Branch #240 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

At this meeting Comrade W. A. Normoyle was elected the first President of the new Branch, which was called 'Crescent' and the Charter was received on August 29, 1951. First meeting rooms were held in the Archbishop and Spencer homes and shortly after that, meeting rooms were established in part of Mr. R. L. (Pop) Taylor's home at McBride and Beecher Streets.



A Ladies' Auxiliary was formed, Mrs. Edna Johansson being elected the first President. The ladies held their meetings in the Ocean Park Hall and received their Charter September 19, 1951.

By June 23rd, 1954 property on Stevenson Road (128th St.) was acquired and, with the help of much volunteer labour the present building was constructed.

First General Meeting of the Branch in its new building was held December 13th, 1955, with the Official Opening taking place on January 27th the year of 1956.

Since its inception the Branch has had a slow but steady growth, and over the years members have taken an active part in many of the Community efforts sponsoring sports for the young people of this area, entertaining World War One, Vimy Veterans, and for a number of years organized the Community's May Day.

The Ladies' Auxiliary to the Branch entertains the Veterans of World War Two with an Annual Dinner in September, and once a month the Veterans who reside at the George Derby Centre visit the Branch and are provided with a hot luncheon. Catering to various functions, funerals, parties, clubs, etc. plus donations to various charities keep the Branch busy all year. But our greatest contribution to the Community is made by helping the veterans who need our help in their declining years. They deserve our remembrance for the sacrifices they gave.

– Alma Savage and Ivan Smith

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