

THE FALL OF '52

“I wish to thank you all for your efforts and co-operation in the growth of our Senior Public School and hope that success and happiness may be yours in whatever field of endeavour you choose.” - Principal C.L. Allen, 1951-52 Central Comet.

In spite of those reassuring words from Carson “Cowboy” Allen, we were ill prepared for what awaited us that fall at the Guelph Collegiate and Vocational Institute.

All of the grade nine homerooms were in the old GCVI that had been built in the 1870’s. A long corridor linked us to the new school that had been built in 1923. In the fall of ’52 it took a lot of courage to walk up that corridor in Guelph’s only high school.

Assigned to class IXA General, our homeroom teacher Miss Carleton met us at the door of room S-205. My 24 classmates included Jim Cullen, Mario Beghetto, David Craig, Bill Robinson, Bev McCrae, Pat Ireland, Recia Cohen, Jack Leaning, Marg Daymond, Judy Beaumont, “Duke” Snyder and John Walker.

Miss Carleton was our French teacher. This was to be a daunting challenge for her as well as for us. In an era long before bilingualism, we didn’t study French in elementary school. Most of us had never even French kissed. You couldn’t dial in a French radio station and Quebec was at least a two-day drive away down Highway 2. In Guelph, if you didn’t speak English, you spoke Italian.

We spent most of that year learning the difference between *vous* and *te* and declining verbs. Oral French consisted of repeating phrases *en masse* after Miss Carleton enunciated them properly. We did much better singing *Alouette*.

If you were in IXA your option was music. This in itself was amazing because not one person in our class would ever admit signing up for that course.

“Herby” Peachell was to be our music teacher. In one year he was going to teach us how to play the violin. Good luck.

Jack Leaning and I sat right behind Marg and Judy two of the best-looking girls in grade nine. Maybe this music class wouldn’t be so bad after all. We fiddled each class away trying to entertain them.

If we had spent as much time practising the scales as we did trying to impress the girls, we might have been able to play something by the end of that year. We didn’t but “Herby” passed us anyway. He didn’t want us repeating the course.

“It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.” –Albert Einstein

Lenny Peer was our P.E. teacher. In the boys’ change room we would hurriedly put on white tee shirts and green shorts that had to be purchased from the school. At the sound of the whistle we would form squads in the gym. Mr. Peer would then give us our instructions for the class, throw several basketballs on the court and disappear into his office.

At the end of the period he would re-enter the Gym and blow the whistle. In two minutes, you had changed and were lined up for the bell. In grade nine, no boy would dare have a shower at school.

Your mark in P.E. was based on the ability to do 10 push-ups and making a lay up shot with a basketball. Mr. Peer would come out of his office for this.

Every grade nine boy was in the cadet program and cadet training would take place for us Tuesdays during third period. Doing push-ups had to be better than this. Our officers were from the senior grades and they held us in contempt. We felt much the same way about many of them.

The G.C.V.I. Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps this year has 350 members. There are two companies in the Corps, - Able Company and Baker Company. Able Company falls in, in the third period on Tuesday, and Baker Company, in the fourth period Tuesday. A list of courses and the instructors for each follows: map reading (Mr. Morrison), first aid (Mr. Flint), signals (Mr. Hyland), rifle and Bren Gun (Mr. Cavanaugh) and physical training (Mr. McFadden). – The Acta Nostra Yearbook, 1952.

The cadet platoons were formed in order of height, shortest to tallest. I was very close to the front of the line. Any thought of a military career was drilled out of me. For the next World War, I wasn't going to volunteer.

That year the firing range was opened in an area beside the old and never used indoor swimming pool in the school. Wyatt Earp I was not. I was supposed to wear glasses but I was far too insecure about my self-image to ever do that.

“Just line up the target in your sights and gently squeeze the trigger.” Mr. Cavanaugh would tell us.

More often than not I would hit the clothes peg holding the target. If I ever got a bull's-eye it would have been because my eyes were shut.

You kept your eyes open in Miss Ranney's English class.

“It is better to be looked over, than overlooked.” – Mae West

Our absolute favourite teacher was Miss Ranney. This was the only class were all of the boys wanted to sit at the front of the class. Sadly she would rearrange us in alphabetic order and even more sadly I would end up at the back of the class.

Many decades later, Peter Legate recounted a famous incident that occurred in Miss Ranney's class. Every guy wished that he had been there.

“I remember the day that Miss Ranney fainted in the classroom – poor air circulation – Miss Ranney lying on the floor - and with her skirt somewhat above her knees. Someone had the common sense to open a window and she came around in a few minutes,” he wistfully recalled. Many of the guys were more than a little resentful about such a speedy resolution to this fascinating problem.

In an attempt to make Geography a more interesting subject, “Ollie” Flint made sure that there were maps in every direction that you faced. You paid attention unless you enjoyed doing more push-ups. “OK Snyder, on the floor and 10 push-ups now!” Ollie would order.

“I too had thoughts once of being an intellectual but I found it too difficult.”
– Albert Schweitzer

The Vice Principal, A.L. Laird, maintained discipline. He had a reputation for being tough. If you had ever had a run in with Mr. Laird you went out of your way to make sure it didn't happen again.

GCVI's principal was F.A. Hamilton. We never ran into him. The only time that you would see him would be on the stage at school assemblies.

A school assembly meant that the boys had to wear white shirts and the girls, white tunics. Each class would march in single file to preassigned seats in the auditorium. With a hand signal from F.A., over 1 000 students would sit down in unison.

If you forgot to wear your white shirt, you had to stand in the balcony.

At the Remembrance Day Assembly, the names of all of the former GCVI students who had sacrificed their lives would be read. The list included my Uncle Harold. You made sure that you wore your white shirt for that assembly.

We marched in, and after Mr. Hamilton's remarks and the introduction of Mrs Shutt and Mayor Worton, a hymn "O God Our Help in Ages Past" was sung. Next followed the scripture reading and the Lord's Prayer. Marian Oakes read the names of the Fallen in World War I: Donna Farrell read "In Flanders Fields". Once more the student body rose for a reading of the names of those who died in World War II, by Ed Case; Pat Simmons read us the poem "High Flight". After, the wreathes were placed and the Last Post was sounded; this was followed by a two minutes' silence, and then "Reveille". A pledge was said in unison and we marched out. – Remembrance Day Assembly, November 10, 1952 described in the Acta Nostra

November 11 meant that we had the day off school. After an appearance at the Cenotaph, you would go to a show in the afternoon if it rained.

Guelph had four movie theatres, the new Odeon and the very old Capital both on Wyndam Street and the Royal and Palace theatres across from each other on MacDonald Street.

By 1952, the Capital theatre was soon to be torn down and replaced by Guelph's first department store, Simpsons. It did not matter. We were now far too sophisticated to root for either Roy Rogers or Gene Autry and Hopalong Cassidy had taken his last ride into the sunset. With a student card, a movie was now 25 cents.

In 1952, *Singin' In The Rain* was one of the most popular movies. We weren't going to pay 25 cents to see it. We didn't see *The Quiet Man* either but we did line up to see Gary Cooper in *High Noon* for which he won an academy award. The best movie of the year was *The Greatest Show On Earth* but it wasn't our pick.

"In Westerns you were permitted to kiss your horse but never your girl." - Gary Cooper

Come Back Little Sheba with Burt Lancaster and Shirley Booth was another movie not to see. *Son of Paleface* starring Bob Hope was much better.

In 1952, Brigit Bardot made her film debut and those very tight sweaters that a young Marilyn Monroe wore inspired the "sweater girl" look, a fad that thankfully lasted

through all of our teenaged years. That same year the very first 3D movie *Bwana Devil* was released but unfortunately Marilyn Monroe wasn't in it.

At G.C.V.I. in the fall of '52 there were a number of opportunities to improve our very shaky status with the girls.

Once again the Grade Niners were guests of honour at a party welcoming them to G.C.V.I. Everyone had a wonderful time. There were dances of all varieties; perhaps the Virginia Reel was the most fun. Those who found the Virginia Reel particularly exhausting took refuge around the outside of the auditorium until they had recuperated from the strenuous activity. The attractions here were Parcheesi, crokinole, Chinese checkers games, and, of course, the ping-pong table. David Blythe led everyone in a sing-song. Finally exhausted, all dashed for home with the wonderful feeling that they were really a part of G.C.V.I. and their years here would be "just perfect". – Margaret Purcell, XIIIIB, reporting for the Acta Nostra

Please, please don't tell me that we went to the Grade Nine party described above. If in fact we were there, hopefully we would have headed for home with the first strains of the Virginia Reel. We were after all real high school guys now and far too cool for the Reel.

One thing that soon became apparent was that grade nine boys had no status at all. No girl at G.C.V.I would be even consider dating a guy in grade nine. You had to be in least grade 10 and your chances improved significantly if you played for the Junior Football team.

The Senior Green Gaels led by Bill Dimson and the Weber brothers won the 1952 Intercounty Rugby League Championship. The home games were usually played in Friday afternoons. The playing field was behind the Ontario Vet College. You had to take a bus to the game but at least it got you out of Mr. Peachell's Music class.

*Guelph, Guelph, Guelph C.V.I.
These are the letters
That we hold high.
Will we win?
Well I Guess!
Come On Guelph,
Yes, Yes, Yes!*

It was at these games that we started to refine our moves. Maybe we could tell some unsuspecting girl from the commercial class that we were in grade 10. We would agree to meet the prospects at the rugby dance that evening. Those commercial girls were a lot smarter than we were. They would go to the show instead.

Would the IXA class party held at Recia Cohen's house provide a better opportunity? Well it sure got off on the wrong foot.

Mrs. Cohen greeted everyone at the door and for some strange reason she asked to see the bottom of our shoes. No problem.

“Lift up your shoe!” Mrs. Cohen ordered. “Aha, I knew that I could smell it. Didn’t your mother ever teach you to wipe your feet before coming into the house?” she asked.

The dog s--t on my shoe set the tone for the rest of the evening. What girl would ever want to have anything to do with a guy that stepped in dog droppings and then tracked it into our very first high school class party?

My reputation if I had one now stunk.

The Sadie Hawkins Shuffle was my next chance to change this image. This was a dance where the girl asked the boy to be her date. It was to be held on November 15 so this would give the girls lots of time to become aware that I was available.

October flashed by and no offers. Still lots of time. Did the girls somehow know that I couldn’t dance? Actually I could as long as it wasn’t the Virginia Reel. November 15 came and went and not one girl showed any interest. In retrospect, up until that point I had never asked a girl to go to a dance so why should I have been so disappointed?

There was one more dance before the Christmas holidays, the last rugby dance of the year.

We looked forward to this opportunity for weeks. Before the big Friday night event, we even had a bath. A thorough brushing of the teeth and a gargle with Listerine followed. A “little dab” of Brylcreem applied to the hair and we were ready. There was no need to shave.

“I shoulda stood in bed.” – Joe Jacobs, manager for boxer Max Schmeling

The dance begins. The DeeJay plays the top hits of 1952 as requested. *“The Little White Cloud That Cried”* by Johnny Rae was too slow for us. We didn’t like *“Wheel of Fortune”* by Kay Starr and *“Glow Worm”* was too fast.

All of the “real men” lined up on one side of the auditorium and the girls on the other. The music plays and the girls dance together. We didn’t.

As usual we stood around trying to be cool. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a girl staring at me. Was she actually looking at me? Maybe she didn’t have her glasses on. She began to walk in my direction. A smile lit on her face as she approached. My heart rate quickened.

“Are you the guy that tracked dog s--t into the Cohen house?” she laughingly inquired.

Before I could answer, she was gone.

“Men forget everything; women remember everything. That’s why men need instant replays in sports. They already have forgotten what happened.” – Rita Rudner

Romance would have to be deferred until 1953, grade X or the slim chance that you might make the junior football team.

*“Life was slow and the Cars were fast.
The 50’s, why couldn’t they last?”*

The early 50's seemed to be simpler. Maybe it was because of our youth and naivety. Or, perhaps they were simpler times.

It is difficult for anyone now to believe that you never locked the doors to your house. If you were looking for the car keys they would be always be in the ignition where dad left them. Mothers didn't drive.

It was simple. Almost every treat that a kid liked cost a nickel. Cokes, candy bars, bubble gum with baseball cards inside and ice cream cones could be had for a nickel. A hamburger at the Treanon Restaurant did cost 25 cents and a game at the bowling alley was two nickels.

Everything was either black or white. There was no grey area when it came to defining right or wrong.

Everyone knew his or her role. Dads were expected to know everything and Moms had to know how to cook and clean. There were expectations for us as well. As kids we would go to school and get a diploma or drop out. Only three percent of us would ever graduate from University. You would get a job, get married, have kids and save enough money to buy a house. A perfect life as long as you did it in this order.

The fifties were the very best decade to be a teenager or were they? There was a reassuring predictability about life but little did we know that huge social change was just around the corner.

In the early fifties, segregation was still part of the great American way. Anti-communist paranoia was at its height in Canada as well. We lived under the constant threat of instant extinction by nuclear war. The sexual revolution, civil rights, protest marches and women's liberation were beyond comprehension. The church and government institutions were beyond challenge.

Were we as young teenagers upset by the inequities and injustices of the 50's? Probably not. We had bigger issues to deal with. When was the next G.C.V.I. rugby dance or is that a zit on my nose?

Maybe just maybe that "*Leave to Beaver*" world really did exist for us in the fall of 1952.

*"Memories pressed between the pages of my mind.
Memories sweeter through the ages just like wine."
- from Memories, by Elvis Presley, 1969*

Like Elvis, my memories of the fifties have improved over time.

Mrs Helmer – former teacher

In 1957 just before Christmas, Don Ferguson who was the head of the history department had a heart attack and was not able to come back to teach in January. Mr. P.E. Reid who was the principal at the time phoned my Mom upon hearing that she had teaching experience and that history was one of her teachables and implored her to finish out the year for Mr. Ferguson. She agreed and much to my dismay I found myself having my Mother as the history teacher for the rest of the year with my desk right in front of Mom's desk.

Mom on occasion would ask me on the way to school if I had mastered the lesson from yesterday for she was going to ask me a question that morning and didn't want to be embarrassed with an answer "I don't know". Things went rather smoothly, although my sister and I had to do the dishes every night since Mom would head for the study to get her lessons ready for the next day and we were to keep relatively quiet while that exercise was being done.

Besides teaching me, Mom also taught my younger sister, Beth, in grade 9 and several of her nieces and nephews as well. Those 6 months passed by rather quickly and when Mr. Reid found out that Mr Ferguson was not coming back at all, he asked Mom if she would like to return to take Mr. Ferguson's place permanently. She agreed since she had done all the work re lessons etc. in the previous 6 months, this year would be relatively easy.

I believe Mom's home room was 105 which was located behind the stage to the auditorium and She and Mrs King shared the back hall with Miss J. Reid. One of the things that I'm sure bugged some of Mom's homeroom students was that if Mom was in the classroom and at her desk they must greet her with a "Good morning Mrs. Helmer" as they came into the classroom otherwise they had to go back out and reenter with the greeting. During homeroom when the national anthem was played everybody was to sing. The wearing of hats(especially boys) was certainly forbidden in Mom's class. I'm sure that erked some of the male members of the class.

What kept Mom going each year was the fact that during the summer months both my parents would travel extensively to different parts of the world and of course take many pictures along the way (slides) so as to show her students the following year when that part of history was being taught. This certainly made history alive for the students that had Mom. Those same slides are at the school today being used by the history department to show students parts of the world they may never see personally.

One year when the timetabling of the students went awry Mr. Reid came to Mom and said that he would have to transfer 10 students from another history class to hers and he was going up to that class to get 10 volunteers. When Mr. Reid asked for the 10 volunteers in the class, 24 hands were raised from which Mom then selected the 10 best, of course. What a marvelous class in grade 11 she had that year.

Many a year Mom would have her senior year up to a picnic on the back patio of our house since the students had been such a delight to teach during the course of the year. Of course back then you didn't have semesters in the schools.

When Dad was getting ready to retire from John F. Ross, Mom decided that she too would call it quits and only taught two classes each day the last year of her teaching. In the years just before retirement she helped guide the new history department head who had asked for her help.

Woe betide you if you came to Mom's class without your history homework completed. It didn't matter if you had a rugby practice or after school job, your homework would be completed after

school that day and no excuse was accepted AT ALL! After the word got around that Mom stood her ground very few students ever came without their work done.

Mom will be 94 this fall and with the exception of her short term memory she is as sharp as a tack and plays bumper pool twice a week at the retirement centre. She makes sure that she is signed up for all the outings on the retirement lodge's bus.

Although she would be unable to make the trip down to the reunion in 2004 she sends her best wishes to all the retired staff and the students that she taught during her tenure at GCVI.

Cheers, Richard Helmer '60

High School: Gathering of the GAELS

In 1955 I moved from grade eight at Senior Central School to the pinnacle of the city's schools, the mighty G.C.V.I. (Guelph Collegiate and Vocational Institute). Established in 1839, moving to its present location on Paisley Road in 1854, it was the province's third oldest high school and for years, the region's only accredited sectarian high school. Some of its illustrious graduates have included the US railway magnate James Jerome Hill (1852-56), Arthur Cutten, the Chicago financier, the aforementioned poet John McCrae; Metropolitan Opera director Edward Johnson; and in later years, contemporary humorist Joey Slinger, three Rhodes Scholars including John Macalister who was shot in 1943 by the Gestapo while working for SOE (Special Operations Executive) in France on behalf of the French Resistance. Macalister's SOE instructors had rated him highly: "Quiet and reserved, but with plenty of acumen. He gives the impression of easy-going urbanity, while in reality he has a particularly tough scholar's mind, logical and uncompromising in analysis." Another school war hero was Charley Fox, who was one of the foremost Canadian air aces and is credited with attacking General Rommel's staff car in early 1944 resulting in his suffering severe head injuries that prevented him from dealing effectively with the Allied invasion. By coincidence, Fox died in 2008 at age 88 as a result of a car accident.

Most of the worthies in the Guelph power elite over the last 150 years were educated at G.C.V.I.. The school was also the focal point of political rallies attended by numerous Canadian politicians from John Diefenbaker to Lester Pearson. To the best of my knowledge there have been no serial killers, terrorists, brazen criminals or international embezzlers (like the notorious Toronto-born Conrad Black). We were not trained to do those things. [or perhaps trained too well they were never caught.]

The basics--simple and direct

Student life at G.C.V.I. was simple and uncomplicated by SAT tests, competition for summer internships, racial tension, "Establishment" social climbing, metal detectors and the myriad of pressures facing present-day high school students. The teaching day of 8:45 to 4:00 pm was similar to middle school: 50 minute classes filled with course work; a very civilized hour and a half lunch period which allowed me to walk home for lunch. Friday was usually the day reserved for a school assembly in which all boys wore white shirts and girls extremely conservative dresses. Principal Gordon Reid would read a long pious passage from the Bible (which we all considered to be on par with reading Shakespeare to guppies) and lecture us on the niceties of hard work and sturdy moral standards. Teachers patrolled the aisles like Prussian undertakers to guarantee that no one ran or laughed or deviated from "clean living." Students were not allowed to wear hats in school at any time, nor chew gum, nor declare Friday "Bagel Day" where food could be eaten on school time. [Alas, such are the customs at a nearby wealthy suburban Needham, Massachusetts high school.]

The school year stretched from early September to the end of June with no teacher conferences, no half-days, and no "early release." A February spring break to relieve the harried students of traumatic academic stress was unthinkable compared with the current favorite in the northern USA, "snow days" (where an inch of snow will cause pandemonium and the immediate closing of schools) or even recently in Boston, a "cold-day" when schools were shut because outdoor temperatures had fallen to minus 10 degrees and fears arose the precious hothouse-raised youngsters would suffer horribly shuffling from Mom's heated SUV to the school building.

In fact, fifty years ago, a snow storm was a welcomed event as we knew a portion of the students would be snow-bound leaving the rest of us living nearer the school a whole day of word games, quizzes, and extended phys-ed periods. For a 14 year old, laboring through a foot of snow is an adventure and not the dangerous torture current school administrators and insurance companies would have us believe. Even on those snow-filled days, almost trudged to school. It was distinctly uncool to be driven by a parent.

Most of the teachers were competent and some more so; the erudite and friendly Donald Ferguson whose lessons delivered in a wry tone with an expression of melancholy gravitas settling on his elfin face, enlivened many classes in modern European history; Isabel Cowie's Grade 11 intensive English grammar classes indelibly laid down the proper rules for gerunds and dangling participles; Ross Pauli's effort to teach us the unabridged version of Thackeray's Vanity Fair in Grade 10 was hugely appreciated; no beat generation samples such as Jack Kerouac's On the Road for us. French was acceptable though without much flair from any of the teachers. The German course (using the old script) given by Margaret Carleton was very decent though it required an interest in South Bavarian dialects. One of our texts was "Paul Puppenspieler" [Paul the Puppeteer] an absolutely idiotic nineteenth century story much loved by Bavarians. I happened at that time to be glancing through the first section of Hitler's Mein Kampf and the author lamented that the Viennese dialect had badly mangled the great German language and grew homesick when he thought of South Bavarian speech from his Munich days. Listening to Paul and his family speak would drive anyone to do insane things.

Latin and even Greek at the noon break for the few who wanted to give up lunch basketball, were well taught as the Latin Head and classicist, George Hindley, had written Ontario's main, albeit sadly uninspiring, Latin grammar book ironically entitled "Living Latin." Nevertheless, he was an expert at making visions of the "Aeneid" and the Gallic wars resonate in

Latin. I even began Russian lessons after school with a kindly émigré who worked at the local Public Library and she introduced me to the strange and mysterious Russian world though at that time I had no idea I would spend the next forty years in its grip.

A few social problem areas

Our curriculum was a mixed bag. The problem was that the school's somewhat bland and out-dated curriculum was set by time-serving apparatchiki at the Department of Education Headquarters in Toronto who were disinclined to jeopardize their cushy jobs by embarking upon a massive curriculum reform project.

Our city's School Board mirrored their attitude and showed little academic imagination. Unfortunately, science and mathematics suffered terribly as indeed they did in almost all of Ontario's high schools. The physics book was written in 1941, no calculus was offered, chemistry was rudimentary and biology consisted of peering at a tiny, dormant snail or a one-legged asthmatic ant through an ancient microscope. While we had a decent modern history text, it unfortunately left out Canada's role in the world at large. Who knew that almost 20,000 Canadian troops invaded Russia in 1918-1919 in an effort to overthrow the newly established hostile Bolshevik regime? Who knew that Canada's participation in World War I involved over half a million men? Or that 60,000 died? Or that Winston Churchill offered Canada permanent stewardship of the West Indies in 1939 if Canada would immediately enter the war against Germany? Or that Lester Pearson, the Canadian Prime Minister in the 1950s, became Secretary-General of the United Nations and earned a Noble Peace Prize? Or that almost 1700 Canadians defied their government and volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War and four hundred died there? We certainly didn't read about this although we knew a lot about the rise of Babe Ruth and the heroes of the American Revolution A fair tradeoff??

G.C.V.I. had few summer programs, grades were inflexible, a foreign language was mandatory despite one's vocation and ability, and a single subject failure could often cause the student to repeat the entire year which was obviously a total waste of time for those who showed no aptitude for the subject. There was little streaming of classes, no Advanced Placement (AP) program, and no connection with the local university, and minimum attention given to music and art. The intellectually good, the bad and the ugly were all bunched together in a utopian effort to have them all float---whether to the top or towards the bottom was never clear.

A digression is in order here: The Rindge and Latin High School in Cambridge, Massachusetts (my home state) has just set out on yet another utopian effort of mixing good and bad students to achieve "diversity". The results are not encouraging. A further example: When I finished my MA at the University of Toronto in 1966, I taught English and Latin at Monarch Park High School in Toronto, one of the city's more progressive public schools. During the year, I was fortunate to have an "empty" two week free period in my Grade 10 English class and decided to copy Ross Pauli's example of teaching a special off-course novel. I chose Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, a masterpiece of docudrama concentrating on the tragic events in Kansas of two criminals kidnapping a farmer and his wife. I purchased twenty-two copies for the class. While graphic, it was a psychologically penetrating and extremely well written book and the students were riveted even without knowing some of the more sordid facts of Capote's personal life and how he had "persuaded" one of the criminals to fess up. Alas, the principal received forty two complaints from parents some of whom had no children in the school! I was not rehired.

Social and cultural scene in the late 1950s

When the cultural revolution of rock and roll hit us Grade Niners in 1955, we immediately adopted this music and accompanying style and since our parents totally rejected this new culture, its alluring stature soared. The music freed us from the stifling grip of their older-fashioned increasingly alien culture based on songs by Patti Page, Doris Day, the Mills Brothers and others deemed b-o-r-i-n-g and predictable. Indeed, one historian described it as "the dynamite that blew apart the structure of an industry." Frank Sinatra denounced the new sound in 1957 as "written for the most part by cretinus goons." He goes on: "By means of its almost imbecilic reiteration, and sly, lewd, and dirty lyrics," he declared it "manages to be the martial music of every side-burned delinquent on the face of the earth."

Right on Frankie!! (We will, however, resist the urge to delve into your outrageously immoral alleged Mafia-filled life.) For all those reasons, we loved the dynamic music and lyrics that American artists, especially the southern white country boys and young black vocal groups introduced (although written for the most part by Jewish songwriters, with varying degrees of musical training, and mostly from Brooklyn), Elvis, the Diamonds, the Coasters, the Shirelles, Gene Pitney, Jerry Lee Lewis and the Everly Brothers were wildly popular at our weekly Friday night dance hops and quickly became the mantra for everyday conversation. I even went to a rock-and-roll concert in Kitchener to see Jerry Lee Lewis stand on his piano and bend backwards to play "Great Balls of Fire." Amazing talent and absolutely hair-raising for a fourteen year old like me to experience. The fact that Jerry Lee was about to marry his thirteen year old Mississippi cousin was of no concern to us.

The apogee was Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" (first played in the 1955 teen-movie "Blackboard Jungle") and was so iconoclastic the song still brings frissons of excitement. This was our mantra and these performers helped us define ourselves. They reinforced values and conditioned our life-choices, especially style, thereby forever liberating millions of early teenagers like myself from the shackles of the aging adult cultural dinosaur---a major and seminal cultural turning point for Canadian and American youth long before the Beatles arrived on the scene.

Was it a class aspect? Possibly as Guelph was hardly the richest city in the country. Elvis and the others were the voices of the pop of the white poor and black gospel music. Even Protestant church-going temperance abiding Canadians could understand the raw feelings in much of the music. Alas, it was the last moment of definitive innocence before the onslaught of the 1960s, Civil Rights, Vietnam, sexual freedom and television in every home.

The school's social night life was tame but helpful. I attended all the dances and proms, had some girl friends although in an era where few drove cars, alcohol was rare and drugs non-existent, and buoyant blow-out hairstyles were unknown, boy-girl social activities were mainly confined to snogging at class hay-ride parties or secret hand-holding behind the theater stage. In short sex remained obstinately hidden within ourselves.

Fridays in the winter often involved a trip to the local hockey arena to see the Guelph Biltmores (the Junior A farm team of the NHL's New York Rangers) play some hapless team. Guelph's biggest draw was toothless Eddie Shack ("Clear the track here comes Shack") whose normal game tally was six goals, four fights, and eight penalties. The rousing game was followed by chips and gravy at the local beanery. In fact, it was Hobson's choice as there were no fast food stops, no Mexican or Thai restaurants or anything remotely hinting that of the exotic.

I played poker with my in-group of friends once a month although trying to persuade Brian Downes to think about the odds before betting wildly was a long and hard-fought futile battle. For my own special time at home, I often retreated to our family recreation room to build some monster bridge with my Meccano set while listening to endless LPs of pop rock and even Montevani and his orchestra. Meccano set you ask? Yes, there were such things and mine even had an electric motor that allowed the drawbridge I built to rise and fall. Readers in the twenty-first century should remember that in 1955, there was "elementary" black and white television on screens that might go up to 21 inches if you purchased the top model. DVDs, CDs, pocket tape recorders, computers, Wi-Fi, i-Pods were twenty years away. Few had a personal car and recreational drugs to while away the time were strictly forbidden. No outside jobs at McDonalds, no all-night alcoholic parties, few cars and even fewer abortions. For the vast majority, the agenda was basic. We studied, ate and slept. We gave our best effort, accepted plaudits graciously, and prepared to do it day after day.

Football: King of Sport

Friday was also the usual day for interschool sports competition. Boy's football (no girls allowed) was the predominant sport and I earned my school athletic letter playing defensive tackle for five years. While we never came close to a Texas style "Friday night lights" atmosphere with evening games and parades and 10,000 people in the stands, we did live for the game day. This began with one of the school's early massive pep rallies in which not only the cheer leaders but also some of the school's most popular teachers participated. The team's standout backfield was introduced to a mighty din of shouts. Enthusiasm ran high and a record number of students often came out for the game. Parents were less in evidence although my father always tried to attend shouting an endless stream of good-natured advice to me and my teammates. Overall, our teams had average win-loss records for we could never quite muster enough scoring power to beat regularly the powerful high schools from Kitchener (Eastwood and KCI) although our 1956 Junior Varsity game against hated rival KCI was a memorable event for the entire school. We all were richly rewarded with a sparkling 7-6 victory.

Regrettably other years were less spectacular. In my senior year, our team should have been commended for our perverse, consistent, unremitting uselessness from start to finish. We lost all our games, save one, beating our hapless cross-town rival John F. Ross. The worst loss was to Kitchener's Eastwood Collegiate 65-0. Doubly insulting was the fact our Junior team had been routed an hour before by Eastwood 71-0. It was the worst drubbing in the history of G.C.V.I. football. This losing season was severely disturbing as our team had been loaded with top players and this was to be our fabulous winning year! We had Joe Rhys, who had transferred from the Catholic High school and had been that school's most valuable player; a great backfield with Ralph Klinck, Larry Cohen, Bill Mitchell, protected by me, brother David, Scotty Vickers and the unstoppable Brian Palmer as the 240 pound (enormous for the time) pulling guard.

Why did we lose so many games? Unfortunately our beloved phys-ed teacher, Jack Burnett, whom we trusted and worked so hard to please, was unable to coach and the school assigned us Connie Milne, a first year teacher with little understanding of football, team dynamics, and student psychology in general. Each game day he would provide us with some threadbare grainy speech about school pride that was so lame it might have been better performed by a privately educated parrot. Consequently, as a result of these one-sided humbling defeats, jittery provincial athletic officials

revamped the league and relegated G.C.V.I. to a lesser division of smaller and less potent area schools. It was the lowest point in the school's hundred year athletic history. To say it was disappointing is really not to do justice to the boundless possibilities of disappointment. It also had much to say about the role of a superlative coach in high-school. Burnett was a person and mentor we all wanted to please and work hard for because he had an innate ability to encourage and demand more from his players.

I also played basketball as a journeyman forward for, in this sport, we were a genuine power house for several years thanks to coach Burnett (who moved on from football). Our star guard originally from Kentucky, Dick Norton, aided by center Merv Bolton, and forward Alan Fox dominated the league and we won the CWOSSA championship in 1959--a major achievement for the school. My other seasonal activities including golfing in the summer, then curling and badminton, both of which are ideal sports in bridging the seasons between the big varsity sports. On Saturdays, most of our basketball clique would congregate at the local YCMA to play non-stop for four-five hours followed by another marathon session of floor hockey which I particularly enjoyed since I had some talent in scoring goals. When not shooting hoops, my brother and I joined Cam Allan, Barnaby, and others in rousing weekend touch football games in a park near our house; in the winter our group played street hockey for hours. We did not lack for exercise.

G.C.V.I. encouraged a wide range of the usual clubs including the usual suspects: Rifle, Debating, Orchestra, French, Radio, Camera, and Drama. The latter was particularly successful with our obligatory high school production of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" featuring Ron Holiday and Carol Anne Wood in the lead roles. I played the lowly undertaker to perfection. The performances ran for a week and even the drama critic from the Guelph Mercury graciously praised its "professional approach." The Club also had a lively backstage support group including a most unusually exuberant exchange student from Argentina, Carlos Sienkiewicz, who used to take us for wild and crazy drives in his 1950 Ford across the lawns and walkways of the school at midnight.

All the boys were required to participate in a holdover from World War II---the Cadet Corps. This involved marching about in platoon order on the back playing field with empty rifles wearing uncomfortable, brown wool, pre-owned army uniforms. It was an unpopular activity for most of us but we did receive some useful training in the accompanying military communications seminars. It was in one of these that I first came into contact with the Russian language. Our large tank radio had been manufactured in 1943 with only Russian markings and indicators. The school instructor, a former army officer, said that thousands of radios like ours had been made in Canada to aid the Russian war effort but for political reasons, the Russians did not want their soldiers to see any English language markings nor to know the radio's origin. This initiation into the world of deception was exciting as I realized that "truth" in the pursuit of a worthy goal (in this case, the winning of the war against the Nazi invaders) assumed many guises and forms.

Some of my friends even started a successful weekly newspaper, "The Green Door", (little did we know that "behind the green door" is a phrase long used to refer to intelligence units in the military!) under the editorship of Ron Holiday and the school suddenly exhibited a new sense of purpose and confidence. This new direction was particularly important as behind "The Green Door" stood academic advisor Ross Harding. In the issue's first editorial he indicated a lack of school spirit because there were few sweaters, jackets or colors worn by the students; athletic attendance, especially basketball, was poor and few students showed up for the drama and orchestra productions.

The cultural downside

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of Guelph's system was the total lack of contact with other social and ethnic groups. There were few student exchanges with other schools, no school ski or language trips abroad, and absolutely no contact with French Canada. While we were taught French (simple academic), I cannot recall the school ever receiving a French visitor or any contact with Quebec. Additionally, the city in the 1950s, had few Blacks, Hispanics or Asians, and only a handful of Jews. But the biggest omission was the avoidance of any relationship with the city's parallel and separate Catholic school system including the Catholic High School. This was a legacy of a century's feuding between the Catholics (mainly Catholic Irish in Ontario and the French-Canadians in Quebec) and the Protestant majority (mainly Lowland Scottish Presbyterians) who were adamantly anti-Catholic and anti-Pope. In the 1870s, Ontario's Parliament granted Catholics the right to run their own separate schools but without provincial financial support. Thus over the years Guelph's Catholic schools remained impoverished, bereft of good teachers. Consequently a number of smarter Catholic students would finish up their high school education (including taking Grade 13) at G.C.V.I.. Of course, as the intellectual elite, we native G.C.V.I.ers treated our Catholic guests as pond scum with scorn and derision. It was only several years later when I met one of these despised Catholics, Donald Carmichael (now Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alberta), did I realize that perhaps we G.C.V.I. mavens had missed out on the vibrant culture of one half of the city's population.

Adding to this cultural isolation was the penchant for Canadians to stay at home. For my friends, life was centered firmly in Guelph and they traveled little. Few possessed passports and fewer went to Europe; family ski holidays at St. Moritz or trips to London were incomprehensible. A foray to Florida would bring buzzes of admiration. It was not necessarily a

matter of money for many were quite wealthy by Canadian standards. It was simply a matter of staying put in a community that seemed safe, secure and unchallenging.

Anchoring this behavior was our wonderfully cockeyed belief of the superiority of Ontario's school system over the American version, especially our much-vaunted fifth year of high school the mighty Grade 13. We scoffed at our contemporaries like Roy Mason, who bolted to American universities after Grade 12 and felt they were not bright enough to endure the rigors of another school year and certainly too dull-witted to gain acceptance to Ontario's premier universities that required Grade 13. (now eliminated by popular demand).

Lingering cultural vandalism

Regrettably I have one last complaint about Guelph's school system. Some of our classes were held in the original limestone building that housed the first high school in 1854. Unfortunately, over a hundred years later, the city remained absent from the cutting edge of historical preservation and the city's Board of Education voted to demolish the building in 1958 despite desperate pleas from an old alumna Mrs. Greta Shutt who addressed the school assembly in a passionate speech about "saving the past." But with her black dress, matronly appearance and white gloves, she appeared to come from another world. We considered her an ancient fossil, who could not compete with the frisson of the moment. Consequently there was no ground-swell support; no banners, no student action group, no editorials in our student newspaper-nothing. The building was duly torn down and in the process the developer also persuaded the feeble Board of Education led by Fred Hamilton to allow him to demolish the equally historical and elegant Senior Central School, replacing it with a dreary one story ranch-style elementary school thus leaving a permanent void in the city's history.

This was a brutal act of cultural vandalism which began to gnaw at my sensibilities only years later. Indeed, I feared that many of my fellow Canadians were oblivious to historical preservation. This was later confirmed when Toronto needlessly tore down a good part of its old inner city area and more definitely when those ambitious property developers, the Reichman brothers, a somewhat dubious transplanted family from Tangiers, of all places, led the drive to rip out the heart of old Montreal in the 1970s in favor of several non-descript modern office towers. Incidentally, while destroying old Montreal, the developers also obliterated my grandfather's old home and foundry on William Street.

I felt abused by all these actions. This cultural isolation pervading the Ontario educational and social system weighed so heavily that I knew I had to break out or I would wither away. "A man's grasp should exceed his goals or what's a heaven for" set the tone for my eventual ticket out. I simply had to bide my time.

But there were substantial benefits...

Did I enjoy my years at G.C.V.I.? Absolutely yes. Despite all the perceived inadequacies, the school was an oasis of calm and moderation, with a proper amount of fair but stern discipline. There was no ambiguity. Certain well-known rules could not be broken or punishment would inevitably take place. As a result, there was little student unrest or what the British would call a "Bolshie attitude" towards authority. My school friends were decent and hard-working, and I genuinely liked most of them. None, to my knowledge, suffered from acute depression, or any major illness that caused their personalities to change. Popping pills for various ailments such as ADD or obesity did not happen. Autist and overweight diabetic students were rarely seen or heard. As day became night, our universe had unwavering rules: Grades were given, class rankings were set, and exams took place at Christmas, Easter and in June. We knew who was best in the subject and who fared the worst. Often teachers would hand back exams in order of high or low marks. There was no all-encompassing "satisfactory" or "pass." I maintain that my constant competition with my class colleagues throughout high school for highest marks in French, German and History contributed significantly to my ability to sit down and concentrate for hours on end.

While there was no streaming per se, unruly students or slow learners, now called by the current euphemism of "developmentally delayed" or "intellectually disadvantaged" were simply placed in the back rows of classes or in technical courses. Of course, that policy may not have been overly enlightened. One of our favorite "punks" was Bill Grey whose black leather jacket and wavy hair automatically gave him negative status in the classroom even though he was inherently a bright fellow.

Our parents did not divorce even though some should have including my own. Church attendance was encouraged, and school started each day with the Lord's Prayer. While we were encouraged to continue our learning at a university, there was no overwhelming social pressure to do so. The new American SAT tests were not yet fully in use in Ontario and so no one worried about "early decision" or, for that matter, any decision at all since no university commanded the magnetic pull one sees in the Ivy League in the US. Many of the seniors finished their formal education upon G.C.V.I. graduation and most did not suffer great pangs of social inferiority for that decision.

Nor did we show much interest in international problems. Since Canada was not a big power on the world's stage, we had no conscript military nor overseas wars which avoided the dreaded draft problems facing American high-school students.

Lastly, none of us had to face the unremitting pressure imposed on untrained minds of relentless television and video entertainment. There were only three major channels, and many of us did not even own TVs until the late 1950s. Thus we were spared the insidious onslaught of the video revolution.

If we felt we were not in the poshest of schools, knowing that there was always an ephemeral school paradise somewhere else that seemed better, I am comforted by the fact that even in the best of British public schools, life could be very marginal indeed. Paul Foot writes in the London Review of Books (Sept 5/1996) of his memory as a 14 year old at Shrewsbury School in the 1950s (same time as I was at G.C.V.I.) where the headmaster Anthony Chenevix-Trench (who later became Headmaster of Eton) would beat boys regularly in his study. He would usually explain that there was a choice: the cane, with trousers on; or the strap, with trousers off. "There was no choice, really though Trench enormously enjoyed watching me do it...he had a habit of insisting before delivering each blow that his victim must not contract his buttocks in anticipation. 'Just relax' was the persistent growl from the great educationalist," writes the laconic Foot.

Even closer to home, 65 miles to be exact, Peter Newman's memoir *Here be Dragons* (2004) describes similar experiences at Upper Canada College in the early 1950s seem to be from another world. "For every infraction, real and imagined, teachers caned our bare bottoms with malicious delight [with] a distinctly savage undertow of sexually charged sadism to these beatings. Among the brutes {one} presented me with dice. 'Roll 'em,' he said. I complied. 'Six,' he wheezed, clearly delighted. 'That means six of the best. Bad luck.'

Well, fortunately my school was spared such sadistic experiences.

Overall, G.C.V.I. was successful in helping us to mature gradually in a free, relatively calm environment that gave us time to decide what we wanted to do in our lives. We learned to think and rationalize. Our behavior in many ways was tied to the sociological view of "practice theory" in which we were unaware of how our behavior was determined by political and economic systems. Why should we? Is not a rigorous three R-curriculum enough for a head start in life? What more could a student want in a high-school education?

At my school graduation, the most prestigious prize was the Durrant Cane, awarded yearly to the best all-round male graduating student showing academic and scholastic worthiness. The 1960 deserving winner was Ron Holiday. The winner three years before was Jim Farley who later gained a University of Western Ontario Rhodes Scholarship; his contemporary Michael Hamilton also joined him at Oxford. Their adventures in England were compelling and I was determined to follow their lead.

POSTSCRIPT:

My brother David and I attended the school's 150th Reunion in May 2004. And a splendid occasion it was with many old friends in fine form as were some teachers including the indefatigable George Hindley, a spry 88 years old.

To my surprise and secret relief, I found my complaints about the school and the city somewhat at variance with the new reality. G.C.V.I. looked fresh and invigorating with its modern double gym, auditorium and "wall of fame" where photos of famous alumni were placed. The athletic teams seemed to have come to life and championship banners festooned the gym. There was even a plaque for the school rugby team which had traveled to Britain and Ireland for international matches, quite an unheard of event forty years ago. I liked the atmosphere and the abiding sense of deep regard for the school's proud past and academic achievements.

I was interested in the fates of my old friends, none of whom I had seen in forty-five years. Some looked the same; others had morphed into unrecognizable shapes. Bill Grey showed up cheekily parking his new Cadillac in the Principal's spot. Another class-mate, Wally Jergins, became a business consultant and had just returned from Riga where he visited the mansion that belonged to the interwar President Ulmanis---the very house that I and some business colleagues had contemplated buying in 1990.

Most had stayed in the general area or at least in Ontario. A good number had gone through marriage and divorce; family size tended to be one or two children. It seemed this group of alumni had deemed large families as unnecessary or undesirable. There were the usual selection of doctors and lawyers; few had followed a military career and even fewer had gone into politics or the church.

Several had made lasting contributions to education; Cam Allan and Scotty Vickers became renowned teachers and athletic coaches; they attributed much of their vigor and success to the examples set by their G.C.V.I. teachers. It is a legacy that reverberated when Toyota of Japan announced in 2005 that it was building a billion dollar plant in southern Ontario rather than in Alabama or several other states vying for the project because of the "high educational level of the workers living in the province." I like to think G.C.V.I. and its graduates contributed to this high standard.

Even the city has awakened from its deep slumber. The center of town now highlights its many impressive nineteenth century limestone buildings and there are no jarring empty lots or incompatible buildings. The prosperity of the University of Guelph, with its large and impressive campus and increasingly cosmopolitan student body, has also helped change the atmosphere. I felt comfortable that both the school and the city had found themselves and were nicely placed to compete in the twenty-first century.

Life after High School

When I left G.C.V.I. in 1960, the choice was simple: going to the University of Toronto or the local favorite, UWO, the University of Western Ontario in London. I had graduated with Honors including a History mark that was third highest in the province. Since several of my close friends were going to Western, I joined them and enrolled in Honors English. A wise academic choice since two of its best professors taught the Renaissance and Romantic courses. I also took Russian as an extra foreign language but, for the most part, my day was taken up writing essays on John Skeleto's poetry and reading Spencer's *Fairie Queen* and deciding whether John Milton wanted us all to perish before or after finding paradise.

Nonetheless, I disliked UWO for it seemed to be a grandiose extension of high-school and lacked the intensity and seriousness I longed for in a university. Also my recent engagement required leaving Western.

Engagement? In the summer of 1961, my father arranged for me to work as a student gardener at Chateau Lake Louise, the Canadian Pacific Railroad's show-piece posh hotel in Alberta. The job was typically student-resortish---a gardener planting 15,000 poppies and tending flowers with my colleagues (also from eastern universities), flirting with the tourists, and partying most nights. What a range of girls! The hotel employed dozens of college students as chambermaids, waiters and the like including Sheila Kindellan from Montreal. She had a sparkling sense of humor, smile and *joie-de-vivre*; I was captivated and after several romantic weeks, we became "unofficially engaged." Our parents, especially both fathers, were not "officially" impressed when informed of this rash act but, nonetheless, held back disdain until our return. Meanwhile, many heart-to-heart talks with my close friend Don Carmichael convinced me that I had to transfer to Trinity College, the preppy, Anglican conservative heart of the University of Toronto. While I wanted to be closer to my fiancé, pressure from our parents and the realization that we had, perhaps, been a bit hasty in our actions, led to less contact and finally silence. Never mind I thought, for life at Trinity was rapidly to assume the style I had so eagerly wanted to find. I lost interest in Ms Kindellan and found a new love of a big, rich University with all its advantages. I had made the right choice.

From The Other Side of The Counter—Memories From A Secretary

by Mel Finkbeiner, Secretary, 1963 - 1984

On Mother's Day in May 1963, I received a phone call from my friend Mrs. Evelyn Carleton. We attended separate schools at the same time. She went to G.C.V.I. and I attended Loretto Academy in the 1930's. We played basketball against each other and later at the Y.W.C.A. we were on the same team. She was working in the Principal's office at G.C.V.I. and she was the only secretary on staff. The Board of Education informed Mr. P. G. Reid, Principal of G.C.V.I., that he could hire an additional secretary for the office. He asked Evelyn to look around for someone to fill the position and she thought of calling me.

A lot of water had flowed under the bridge since we played basketball together! I was now a married woman and the mother of five daughters. The oldest was 16 and the youngest just five years old. I had been seriously considering the possibility of going back to work. My mother-in-law was living with us and my sister and her family lived just around the corner. They had both offered their services as my babysitters if I ever decided to return to work. I was away from the work field for sixteen years and my skills as a secretary were at an all-time low. I accepted Evelyn's invitation to come to G.C.V.I. for an interview with Mr. Reid the following day.

It was an excellent interview and it was suggested that I come in to start work the next day. Mr. Reid said we could try it for a week and see how it would work out. I agreed to this suggestion and if I didn't like it I'd let him know. It worked out very well for both of us and I stayed for 21 years. In July 1984 I retired at the age of 65, one year after my husband's death in June 1983.

By the time I retired there were four more "girls" in the office besides Irene Simmons who had replaced Evelyn as Head Secretary, and myself. They gave me a wonderful Retirement Surprise Party at the Holiday Inn in June, 1984 with over one hundred former staff members in attendance. It was GREAT!

The Vice-Principals, when I started in 1963, were George Hindley and Wally Hetherington and Ross Pauli was the Guidance Councillor. The new addition and major renovations had just been completed and the staff and students were getting used to all the new facilities. The library was still on the main floor where the present Guidance Office is located. The swimming pool was piled high with junk gathered from other schools; old desks, chairs, blackboards and odds and ends. It was a sorry site to me because I had been able to swim in the lovely pool before it developed the crack. It was opened to the general public on Wednesday night for a small admission and I was a regular patron in 1929 and 1930. I was a witness to the formation of the present P. G. Reid Resource Centre, a few years after I started to work at G.C.V.I., right there in the old pool area.

The Guidance Office moved from the main office to its present location when the old office was renovated. The Nurse's office was moved down to the main office area from room 210 on the second floor. There was ample room in the main office to accommodate the Gestetner and copy machines which were moved from the run-off room located at the end of the corridor on the main

floor.

The auditorium was remodeled and closed in and the stage area was renovated and improved to accommodate the new Theatre Arts program on the curriculum. The boys' washroom on the lower level was turned into the present staff room and the girls' washroom became the science lab room 1.

The new gymnasiums were a welcome addition to the school. It was no longer necessary to use the auditorium for basketball games or Phys. Ed. classes as has been the custom. The students and staff welcomed the fine new cafeteria with its improved kitchen and seating facilities. The new addition made room for the Business Education wing with all the new computers and business machines that were included in the set-up.

Changes were also taking place in some of the classes. I can remember when I first saw boys in the Home Economics classes. Boys cutting out patterns and making themselves sport shirts, jackets and pants in the sewing room and tea biscuits, cookies and full course meals in the cooking room upstairs. They often brought a sample of their goodies to the office for the secretaries to taste. At the same time the girls were able to enrol in the woodworking or auto shop classes.

One of my jobs in the office was answering the phone and very often I was mistaken for a man by the person who was calling. I can remember one time when a mother called to discuss a problem about her son. When I answered she thought she was speaking to the Principal I guess because during the conversation she said "I'm sure as a father you know what I mean" and I replied "No, not as a father, but as a mother I do." Another part of my job was to give admit slips to students who came late or who didn't bring a note for their absence. Sometimes I believed their excuses and sometimes I didn't. One girl I do remember very well. She lived just two blocks from the school and she often came running into the office all out of breath to say that she let the dog out in the yard while she had her lunch and she had trouble to get him to come back in the house when she left for school and that's what made her late. She was never more than a few minutes after the bell so it became her routine to simply say "That darn dog again!" and I would hand her an admit slip. She was a student at G.C.V.I. for five years and she used this excuse about once a month. When she finished Grade 13 and came in on her last day to wish us farewell she was very anxious to tell me that she had never owned a dog!

A boy came in one Monday morning to have the note from his mother approved by a Vice-Principal for his absence on the previous Friday afternoon. The note read "Please excuse my son for his absence on Friday, P.M. he kept his appointment at the hairdresser's to get an Afro!" Mr. Hetherington came right out of his office to inspect the hairdo and he said it was the first time he ever admitted a male student who had time off from school to go to the beauty parlour.

My twenty-one years at G.C.V.I. were very special for me. I made many friends and their friendship is very dear to me. I have kept in touch by attending retirement parties and showers for staff members as well as reading the G.C.V.I. Gazette. Bob Hohenadel keeps us all up to the minute in the newsy little paper. Our 1994 Reunion was a huge success and I'm eagerly looking forward to attending the next one in 2004.

As a token of appreciation for my many happy years at G.C.V.I. I left behind two special awards for Grade 10 students. The Finkbeiner Public Speaking Award and the Finkbeiner Spelling Award. The winners accept these awards at the Honours and Awards Assembly.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to jot down some of my precious memories from my years at G.C.V.I. It has been a real pleasure.

My High School Years - Past and Present by Marlene Congi ('72)

I remember vividly that last day in June when the final bell rang to signify the end of my high school years. A few of us had gathered in the auditorium for those final moments together. We were finally free of the tension that had built up over the last few weeks. I can still hear Mr. Hetherington saying as he passed me in the halls, "only ten more days to go, Marlene!". Some of the Guidance teachers bought us a cake. Written on it were the words, "You Finally Made It." It was the year of the "LONE RANGER" episode. Someone in our class had discovered a way to tap in the P.A. system. For the last few weeks at 3:15pm music was played and it was announced how many days were left to go. It was obvious how claustrophobic we felt within those walls, and how anxious we were to start our adult lives. My exact words upon leaving were, "I'll never walk back into this school again!"

At that time, I had not had visions of having children nor them being old enough to be attending high school. Yet, I now find myself walking through these halls and sometimes sitting in rooms for Alumni and School Council meetings, where I once sat many years ago as a student.

Having grown both in age and wisdom, I have come to realize the importance of our high school years. I now see the school not only as a place of learning, but a place with a lot of history and tradition to be proud of.

GCVI Story or Two March 14, 2003
David Jeffrey Class of 1990

In the Catacombs:

One afternoon when the school was pretty much deserted, a certain teacher (who will remain nameless for security reasons) allowed two friends and I to access the sub-basement of the school. Not everyone knows this, but there is a level underneath the basement, accessible through one of the boiler rooms. Being the adventurous sort, we asked if we could go under, and being the wonderful teacher that he/she is, he/she let us go. And so, we explored the area, and what we found was surprising. If you go into a classroom, in the "old school", you'll see that there are vents in the sides of the wall. Anything that goes into those vents falls down and eventually ends up in the sub-basement. And so, we found the announcement sheets from decades before, and all kinds of other things that students had thrown down the chutes. After we had satisfied our curiosity, we returned to the boiler room, to find our harried teacher worried because of the length of time we'd been gone. But it was a great adventure, and placed us in a rare echelon of GC students – those who had been into the catacombs.

Election Day

It is said that in order to win a student government election at high school, one has to win the grade nines. And based on this principle, I planned my speech very carefully. Assisted by my debating partner, Jason McVittie (91) on the microphone, introducing me..."Out of the gloom, and despair, comes the chosen one...", with the music of *Phantom of the Opera* playing in the background, the smoke machine and spotlight in action, the curtains opened to reveal me in an awesome suit of armour designed and built by Kevin Smith (90) and Scott Drennan (90). I intoned "The knight is the chosen one – the defender of the helpless...."

And then, I took the helmet off, said "And now that I've got your attention...." And launched into the rest of what I had to say.

P.S. I did win the election.

A Happy Family

One thing I've always appreciated about GCVI was the family feeling – the way that various groups existed at the school, with very clearly distinguishing characteristics, and yet we all got along. In my desire to classify, I created names in my own mind for the various groups, depending on where they gathered and/or smoked. There was the clique tres chic, the clique athletique (ever see someone bounce their head off the files in the "athletic corridor"?), the clique de musique, the clique dramatique, the clique technologique....and so on. And yet, we still got along as a happy family. That's one of my best memories of G.C.V.I.

A New Instrument

One day in music class, Mr. Watson announced that we had a new instrument that we needed to take care of. It was a brand-new bass drum and it was very expensive, costing \$1,050.00. After a pause, one of the students piped up: "So.....it's a (singing) 10-50 DRUM!" (a la the CHUM radio station commercial).

Personal Reflections

What to say? Old "Grover Clover" is just a great school with a lot of good memories, and especially the people. From the administration to the custodians G.C.V.I. has a spirit of tradition that indeed is proud of its past and confident of its future. I remember band tours and debating tournaments – "You don't have to tear the whole house down, just to fix a hole in the wall," right Jason? I enjoyed Mr. Bruce's chemistry class with all the rulings from IUPAC "on the sunny shores of Lake Geneva". I appreciated Mr. Kaczorowski's weekly reminders encouraging us to develop our spiritual dimension. The dramatic productions were great – Buzz, Gord, Aftermath...And I think one of the most fitting reminders of GC that I will have are some of the cards that say "Thank you for making GC a neat place to be... Valid for one free item at the Burger Lift" – used by Senate members who observed someone picking up garbage around the school. A school full of memories, and one could reflect forever, but this one won't.

Thanks, and God bless.
Dave Jeffrey Class of 90

Memories from Both Sides of the G.C.V.I. Office Counter – by Wendy (nee Dickieson) Darroch

Since I retired on March 1, 2012 I have been asked by the Alumni Executive to write an article about my life and times at G.C.V.I. both as student and office secretary.

It has been suggested to me that I must be one of the longest running staff members at G.C.V.I. with 41 years at the school which includes my 4 years of high school and 37 years of employment. My research, however, indicates that Principal Emeritus James Davidson with 14 years as a teacher and 31 years as a Principal gave 45 years of dedicated service.

I started grade nine in 1971 with the newly introduced credit system. Everyone had an individual timetable with eight classes they attended on a daily basis. We had a new Principal, John F. Burns who replaced P. G. Reid who had devoted 15 years as Principal of our school. At that time there were no orientation programs in which feeder schools like Willow Road would bring students over to GC to tour the school, visit classrooms and receive information to prepare you for your new high school life. I arrived on the first day of school like every other grade 9 student with an anticipation of what high school would be like in this huge building that encompassed the whole block and comprised of 1,500 students. The classes were always full when school started each year. Sometime students didn't even have a desk to sit at during the first week of school until classes were reorganized.

During my high school life I was on the basketball team, track and field team and I participated in the badminton club. All my coaches throughout my high school life were approachable and influential to me as a student. I truly enjoyed the extracurricular activities that G.C.V.I. offered. I also volunteered after school at St. Joseph's Hospital as a "Candy Striper" on the fifth floor and the Chronic Ward serving supper trays, feeding and visiting with patients. This was long before the 40 hours of volunteer service was a requirement to graduate with an OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma) today.

Girls did wear miniskirts and we were also allowed to wear blue jeans to school. We wore platform shoes and long hair--guys included. Long straight hair parted down the middle was in style for girls. My hair was curly, which I didn't like, so I used to have it straightened. This was also the era you got together with your friends and listened to your favorite albums playing on your turntable. Music was live bands playing at school dances. Groups like Edward Bear and April Wine. Many of these groups became well known and you could buy their albums downtown at the music store. I remember and respected people like Head Caretaker, Lorne Pernfuss, who always took the time to chat, help and befriend students and along with his crew kept the school sparkling clean. As well all students knew and loved Mrs. Mel Finkbeiner, secretary in the main office. It was amazing how she seemed to know all about you, your siblings, your parents, and relatives. She handed out the ever hateful late slips and had an effortless ability to handle students. Even though she had a soft heart, you didn't get away with much. She had a wealth of knowledge about the school and long before she retired in 1984 she was a GC legend. As a staff member working side by side with Mel she was a mentor for me,

although I never did follow in her footsteps and take up smoking in the ladies washroom in the main office. As a student it was easy to tell both Lorne and Mel cared about G.C.V.I..

I went on the senior Phys. Ed. class extracurricular field trip of the year to Kandalore. In my senior year I went on the March Break trip to Spain. Mrs. Clutchey who taught me geography was our teacher supervisor. A great lady who taught in the classroom and outside the classroom. Field trips outside the classroom allowed you to get to know the teaching staff on a slightly different level and I appreciated the experience.

A spectacular sight was the auditorium which was in the centre of the 1923 school building. It was a grand and magnificent space. The auditorium had a stage at one end and was open on all three sides on the main floor. There was a balcony surrounding the auditorium on the second floor that overlooked the first floor and a skylight was in the ceiling. In 1974, my graduating year, renovations started to happen to enclose the auditorium and remove the skylight. The era of this glorious open concept auditorium had come to an end.

In my graduating year it was time to decide on college or the world of work after receiving my SSGD (Secondary School Graduation Diploma). I had taken several business courses during high school and near the end of the school year there was an opening for the position of Receptionist at G.C.V.I.. I applied and was hired by Principal Jack Burns and started work on June 24, 1974 after classes ended. At that time, if students received 65% or higher in their courses they were exempt from writing their formal final exams. As time progressed, I moved into the position of Vice-Principal Secretary and then Guidance Secretary and then in 1985 Bill Scott hired me for the position of Head Secretary. Since that time, Bob Bradstock became Principal in 1988, Dave Euale in 1996, Judy Sorbara in 1998 (G.C.V.I.'s first female Principal), Wes Coffey in 2008 and Julie Prendergast in 2011. I have worked with six Principals in my 27 years as Office Coordinator.

There have been numerous Vice-Principals and they number 23, who have also been an important part of the administration team since I started working at the school. The Administrative team since I was a student and staff member has consisted of the Principal and two Vice-Principals. Jess White was the first female Vice-Principal in Wellington County. She came to G.C.V.I. in 1978 and had to break into the "old boys club." There were only male administrators back in those days.

It was an interesting year in 1985. I was in my new role as Head Secretary and in September of that year the 51 day secondary school teachers strike took place in our Board. I remember we had two Commencements in 1986, one in February and then again in November. It was also a time of technological change. When I started work in 1974 I was using a manual Underwood typewriter. Now I was replacing my electric typewriter with the first computer workstation in the main office.

Back in 2000 the school secretaries in the secondary and elementary panel started to be cut back based on school enrolment and due to the provincial government funding formula.

G.C.V.I. was no exception, and cuts were made yearly until we lost 25% of our secretarial staff and a secretarial position was also eliminated. These were tough years and the events surrounding the secretarial changes were unpleasant.

I have been through 3 main office renovations which updated furniture, equipment, entrance locations and internal office locations, like the health room, Principal and VP's offices, OSR (Ontario Student Records) room and suspension room.

As I reflect back, many things have transpired over the years at G.C.V.I. since 1974. The auditorium was enclosed by 1975 and this was a positive effect on GC's well known Drama program. In 1975, GC moved to the semestered school year. In 1979 we had the addition of tennis courts added to the back campus. In 1980 the grade 13 art class designed a memorial mural painted on the wall in the main hall honouring those G.C.V.I. students who gave their lives during World War I and II. In 1983 a 10 year construction project commenced. The original stonework archway from 1879 and its 1906 addition was excavated from the Japanese Gardens and installed to create a ceremonial arched entranceway with oak doors that opened into the auditorium. In 1986 the Honour Roll Society was created to recognize and encourage superior scholarship. Students, who earn an average of 80% in all their completed G.C.V.I. courses, have their name inscribed in the leather bound Honour Roll book placed on display. In 1992 the G.C.V.I. Alumni Association was established and I continue to remain on the executive since that time. The Alumni has held two reunions since it was established. In 1994 the 140th reunion was held and again in 2004 we held the 150th reunion. These reunions were extremely successful. In 1996 the Wall of Fame was unveiled which acknowledges significant accomplishments of G.C.V.I. Alumni. In 2003 was the double cohort school year and the loss of the grade 13/OAC year. In 2005 a two year project began to obtain our school Coat of Arms from the Canadian Heraldic Authority in Ottawa. The Armorial Bearings of The Guelph Collegiate-Vocational Institute was granted in 2007. In the school year 2006-07 the G.C.V.I. football team attained the top standing achievement in Ontario by winning the Western Bowl. In my student days this would have been considered winning OFSSA. It was described: "Gaels turn a decade of disappointment into a Cinderella Season." In 2009 the tennis courts on the back campus were replaced by basketball courts. Currently in 2012 the school is looking at creating a school mascot. G.C.V.I. staff members maintain an admirable role in the continuity of our school life. I have been positively influenced as a student and staff member by teachers, secretaries, custodians, child & youth workers, attendance counsellors, cafeteria staff, outside resource people like health professionals and police officer's. GC's strong staff character from the past and present will continue to evolve and improve because that's just what we do. We are resilient and effective together.

On March 1, 2012 I retired from G.C.V.I. but my passion for this school is still strong. Upon my retirement my colleagues presented me with a custom-made pendant that incorporated key features of the school: the school colours in the diamond and the emerald, the school arches in the gently shaped silver loops, and the school logo engraved in the centerpiece. This is a gift I will forever treasure. After 37 years of working at GC, I am retired but after 41 years at GC I am leaving home. I have literally grown up at GC and there is really no place like home.