

## LOOKING BACK

*Some Major Weather Events*

by Mark Madryga, Meteorologist, BCTV

Lower Mainland residents are well aware of the vast differences in weather from place to place within the region, not only during a given day, but also on average over a month or even over decades. Ocean Park, being well south of the cloud and rainfall-enhancing North Shore Mountains, plus to the lee of the Olympic Range, enjoys more hours of sunshine and experiences less precipitation than most other parts of the B.C. Coast. However, Ocean Park has had its fair share of significant and severe weather events over the past century. There are likely hundreds or more recollections of such events archived in the memories of local residents. Let's open the weather vault and highlight a few of the major weather stories in Lower Mainland history ...

**Fall Windstorms**

Major windstorms occur in the Ocean Park area on occasion, especially during the months of October and November. In advance of a Pacific Frontal System, strong south to southeast winds batter the Lower Mainland, while following a cold frontal passage damaging southwest to northwest winds develop. Storm after storm ripped through the South Coast during the recent autumn of 1998, but none were as vicious as a storm named 'Freda', which hit the Lower Mainland on October 12th, 1962. While high winds and rain hit our area on the 11th of that month, this second, more ferocious storm was battering California and Oregon, and on a rapid trek northward. Just days earlier, it was known as Typhoon Freda, and was located about 1000 miles southeast of Japan. Because the storm developed west of the International Dateline, it was classified as a 'Typhoon' (Hurricanes are the same type of storm, but originate in the Eastern Pacific or on the East Coast of North America). On the evening of the 12th, 'Ex'-Typhoon Freda crossed Southern Vancouver Island and Greater Vancouver, leaving a path of death and destruction with its 150 km/h winds! Record high wind speeds from Freda still stand to this day in many parts of the South Coast.

**Winters to Remember**

Residents may recall two winters of record cold plus considerable snowfall – those of 1949-50 and 1968-69. During each winter, extended spells of bitterly cold weather shattered numerous low temperature records, with readings near 0 degrees Fahrenheit (-18 C.). One of the biggest snowstorms to hit the Lower Mainland in the past century was just a few years ago, on December 29th, 1996 (it is often referred to at Environment Canada as the 'Storm of the Century'). 24-hour snowfall totals ranged from an amazing 30 cm to 60 cm. (one-to-two feet) as considerable moisture rode overtop a huge dome of cold Arctic air over the South Coast which had resided for most of the month. The storm paralyzed the South Coast, but much milder air prevailed over the next few days.

## HOLLAND

My family arrived in Ocean Park in 1944, near the end of the Second World War. We had moved from Toronto, Ont. where my father, Cecil Holland owned two metal foundries, one in Leaside, the other in Don Mills. Just before the outbreak of the war, my father was asked by the German Consulate to supply metal to Germany – he refused. Shortly thereafter the Leaside foundry burned to the ground. Then a large shipment of metal ore was stolen from a train on its way to Cleveland.

Things went down hill after that, as he was unable to obtain financial backing from his family in England, or from the man who took care of my father and his younger sister after their parents had died. The latter was an extremely wealthy metal merchant there – Montague Meyer. Montague had asked my father to go to Vancouver to work with 'a young chap' he had started in the lumber business. His name was H. MacMillan. Dad didn't come west at that time, as when he arrived in Toronto at his aunt's home (my grandmother) – he met my mother and married her. John, Ken, Shirley and myself were born there. Our youngest brother Bill was born here shortly after we came to B.C. Before moving to B.C. we were living Ajax, Ont., where my father began a painting career. It was there he met Lorne and Helen Cheverie, and their daughter Charlotte, who came to Ocean Park about a year later, and lived directly behind us.

My father did quite a lot of decorating for people like Ronald Cliff in Ocean Park, Grant Mahood in White Rock – beautiful homes, which unfortunately, we could never again own. Mr. Cliff and his wife Georgina were very nice to my parents. They had Mother there for tea, and for quite a few years brought us Christmas gifts – large books of art, world atlas, etc., and huge boxes of Huntley Palmer biscuits.

My mother made a good friend of Sally Allanson – a lovely lady. Her son Michael broke his leg riding a cart down the beach trail, so Mom visited their home and read books to him. One of Sally's sons Pete was a chum of my brother Ken, as were Ed Hulks, Don Welch, Don Fitzpatrick and Marvin Gould.

One evening when Ken was on his way to Don's house, he heard something in the bush – it turned out to be a cougar, the same one my Father heard one night. The incredible scream it made woke my parents up. Dad leaped out of bed, grabbed a .22 rifle and dashed outside, thinking it was a woman in distress. He saw nothing, but a cougar was found in Delta shortly afterwards.

When the Korean War broke out, my brother John and his friend Aubrey O'Neill joined the army and were training as paratroopers, but were sent overseas before getting their 'wings'. Ken was too young for the services, but later joined the army reserve.

Our family has stayed quite close to Ocean Park over the years, and although we had gone from 'riches to rags' so to speak, there are things we wouldn't really change.

Ocean Park has gone from a near 'wilderness' with the tiny store, one gas pump, gravel roads, no electricity and no running water – to a very desirable community.

– Irene Coulter, nee Holland

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