

Kids!



Shopping - New Westminster

How much do you write about your kids, and how much of their story do you tell? Safe to say you record their baby years when they were totally dependent, but after that their life becomes their story in increasing degrees as they assume responsibility and maturity. I choose to believe that our children were quite mature when they entered high school and very much in control of their lives, so this will be the point that I choose to end my story.

We just had the two children, Ann and Flynn, or first Flynn and then Ann, neither one planned they just arrived. Family planning was not the pill pop that it is today. If you slept with a girl you soon had a family on the way, like it or not. Flynn came along 10½ months after marriage, and Ann 10½ months after I got back from overseas. My great regret is that we did not have a couple more but we felt that we were older than we were and getting past the age to be having babies. Looking back, how wrong we were.

Flynn was born in Bellville, Ontario, the nearest hospital to the Air Base at Trenton, and thank God he was a healthy baby. The Dr. was a hopeless incompetent, and it still bothers me that I would place such trust and confidence without any appreciation of the mans' competence. They both did fine. Etta was slightly low on her blood count, so he decided to give her an iron supplement, this turned her teeth a chocolate brown. Etta had perfect teeth, not a single cavity, she was at one time an exhibit at a dental convention, Miss Perfect Teeth. A few weeks later we were off to a dance at the Mess, and Etta with my collaboration, cleaned up her teeth with pumice powder, this was the start of 35 years of continuous trouble. Young people sometimes do stupid things!

Flynn was a beautiful child, we read all the books, fed the exact formula, he starved and cried and we lost sleep. All new parents are amateurs, you don't get with it until the second one. I went overseas and left Etta with a little baby, I was away over three years, and when I came home he was now a little boy. I completely shattered his world, I slept in his bed and shared his mothers love, things that are not easy to become used to, but we made out.

Ann came into the world at the Vancouver General. By this time we were in our new house in New Westminster, and smart enough to look for good medical men. The hospital at New Westminster was at that time, undergoing reorganization and not in good shape. A year later Ann was in for minor eye surgery and they lost her! Etta went through the ward like a fury, found her baby, wrapped her in a hospital blanket and marched out with her!





Etta & Flynn, Ft. Langley - 1943

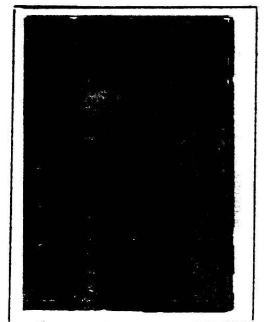
Ann was personality plus almost from the day that she came home. A child that rarely cried, probably because if she did, she was fed or changed or both, and she thrived on all the attention that she could get. I missed seeing Flynn's first steps and all his baby years. This one made up for it. She would come to my bed early in the morning on the pretext of having a last few minutes of sleep, Etta would be up getting Flynn ready for school, and in no time at all she would be holding the top of the headboard and jumping, with feet going up higher than her hands, great fun! I can understand how kids can jump on beds and fly out windows.

Etta kept Ann in french braids up until the time that she went to school. There is a picture of her in her pedal car that Santa brought one Christmas. This was a great favourite and she literally wore the tires off of it by going around the front sidewalks and driveway. Billy was a playmate that would pull her braids and make her cry, and then pedal off in her car, this caused real heartbreak. One day she came around the corner of the

house and found Billy in her car, and a small stick handy. We watched from the window. She went after Billy with a stick, he got up to defend himself and she hid him and he sat down, when he stood up to get out she hit him again, he sat down and started to cry. Well that is when we had to rescue Billy, but there was no more hair pulling and she was top cat in the neighbourhood, no one dared to touch her car or things.

They were lovely children and in the summertime, in nice weather when I would get home early, Etta would have the picnic lunch on the front porch and by the time that I was changed, the car would be loaded and we would set off for the beach, either Crescent or White Rock, have a swim and our picnic. In those days we could have a fire on the beach to cook up "dogs" and things. At other times we would go out to "Lennys' Creek", a stream that was on a neighbour's property. It was here that Etta pulled her out of the water over her depth, not once but twice. At one time she was changing her swim suit when Ann got into the water and trouble and Etta did her life saving act with very little on. Everyone applauded!

Flynn's first school was Victor Spencer at 2nd and 6th in New Westminster, not far from home. He loved his school and did very well. Ann had to wait until we moved to --





Flynn & Ann - 1948

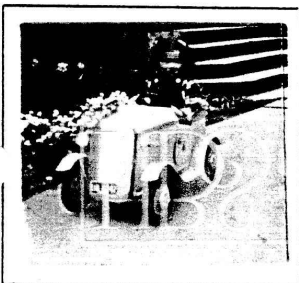
Toronto to start her schooling at Sunnylea school. Ann never enjoyed school the way that Flynn did, I think for two reasons, she didn't get the quality of teacher and secondly she followed him through school. He was held up as the example to be emulated, and that didn't go over very well.

The home that we bought in Toronto was across the road from Sunnylea School and in a nice neighbourhood. The school had a good reputation, this was before the new method of education in the days when they still taught the 3Rs. Some teachers were excellent, others so so, but on average it made for a good school.

Flynn was enrolled that fall and his first teacher was a Mr. Dilworth, a great teacher and a strong disciplinarian; in a couple of days Etta was summoned to the school. Dilworth wanted to know where this boy came from; his arithmetic dreadful, spelling awful, and writing beyond belief. He said that he had not heard his reading but he feared the worst. But he was wrong. Flynn had gone to school because he wanted to read, and having accomplished that, lost interest. He was an avid reader and still is, also he was bright and blossomed under Mr. Dilworth. They became good friends and under the motivation and discipline that he received from this man was able to attain grades that carried him well into university. Ann on the other hand, did not fare as well.

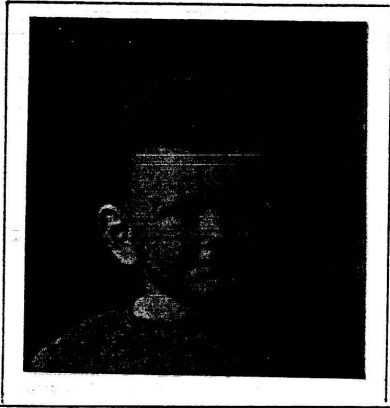
Ann's teachers were motivated either by athletics, or by the social problems of the day, certainly none were interested in horses and dogs and cats, or any of the things that this little one loved. Many years later Ann told me that she never enjoyed her school which is unfortunate as these should be the happiest days in a child's life. Ann was equally as bright but never taught motivation; if 60% was required and she got 62%, then she had worked 2% to hard, no doubt about it. This wasn't laziness, just motivation, or the lack thereof. Saturdays and Sundays were more fun as you didn't go to school, and staying home was more fun than anything.

One of the first things that we did when we settled in Toronto was to find a summer place. The kids did not want to leave New Westminster and all their little friends, so I promised them a summer home on a lake where we could all have fun together. When we looked at the Muskoka Lake area north of Toronto, Etta was frightened by all the rock and deep water, so we eventually settled on a rental at Balm Beach on Georgian Bay, not far from Wasaga where the sand is so smooth and hard that aircraft



used it for take offs for long distance flights. The sand at Balm Beach was clean and wide with large sand dunes, the beach was gently sloping and the water clear for swimming and cold, at least I thought it was. This was a lovely spot, and we spent each summer here away from the heat of the city. I commuted to work and the summers went quickly.





Flynn - Ft. Langley

Our move back to Toronto was because of my working conditions on the coast out of Vancouver. I had been promoted to Captain in 1946 when Trans Canada Air Lines took over the run from Canadian Pacific Air Lines, but it was a poor operation, back and forth to Victoria with an occasional trip to Seattle. There were rumours of new aircraft for the company, and all the exciting runs were out of Toronto to New York, Chicago and Montreal, and Etta looked forward to getting back to Toronto. On the Coast I worked 3 days on one day reserve and one day off. The reserve day was usually a working day, and we had a fourteen day vacation, not the best for a young family, hence our move.

We purchased a good home in Toronto, and settled in for the next seventeen years. Flynn wanted to be a rocket engineer and build rockets for Boeing to fly to the moon. Ann wanted to marry Roy Rogers and look after his horse. The boys built airplanes and things in the basement, and Ann had dogs and cats and birds to look after. Ann still has dogs and cats and birds, but Flynn has yet to build his rocket ship.

The months quickly turned into years, and soon the kids were adults and on their own. Flynn was married with family and back in New Westminster, and Ann was living in an apartment near Stanley Park. The house began to feel big and empty, and maybe it was time to come back West again?



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