

GRANT, JAMES & Sybil

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- Q. Today is August 4th, 1977, and I'm talking to Mr. and Mrs. Grant up at Shangrila .  
So, Mr. Grant maybe you can start out by telling me a little bit about your father. Where was he born?
- A. In Scotland. He migrated to Canada when he was just a young man, and worked through Canada on the railway.
- Q. The C.P.R.?
- A. The C.P.R. at that time, yes.
- Q. Do you know what town he came from in Scotland?
- A. Dovetown. He was a carpenter by trade and he built this place at Gordon Head many years ago. He farmed all his life.
- Q. He was responsible for bringing the strawberry plant and starting the strawberries.
- A. He was the first man to grow commercial strawberries, that is commercially, in Gordon Head.
- Q. What was the name of the strawberry plant that he started with? Do you have any idea?
- A. Now that's interesting. The Clyde was the name of the one berry. That's an old timer, that's a really early berry. Then we had the Sharpless, another good one and then came the Paxton and the McGoon. The McGoon was the standby that made Gordon Head get it the name as a wonderful shipper. We shipped them all the way to the Prairies, many, many carloads at that time.
- Q. They used to pack them in hallecks.
- A. Yes they went in hallecks, it was twenty-four pounds at that time, it was in those boxes. I forget how many crates there were in a railway car but there was a good many. They got to the Prairies in good shape and Gordon Head got a name for it.
- Q. How far west did it go?
- A. They went as far as... I believe one car, they tried to go as far as Winnipeg, but that's a bit too far. Most of them went to Edmonton, and on to Saskatchewan, I'm not sure.
- Q. At that time do you remember what they were getting for a crate?
- A. Well, not precisely, but probably about **\$1.75 or \$2.00**, something like that.
- Q. I think your father is said to have got \$6 for the first crate of strawberries.
- A. That's something else. This Clyde berry we had was a very early

berry and when I was just a little nipper, I .... on the 24th of May we picked just two crates of these Clyde berries and sold them to Lily's here in Victoria, Lily's Confectionary at that time, and got six dollars a crate for them. But that was extraordinary, we don't get strawberries now until the middle of June. That was the 24th of May, two crates. They were one pound halleks too, they weren't these small boxes.

Q. What do the boxes weigh now?

A. Oh, I don't know, so many ounces. I don't know what they would weigh really, they vary quite a little bit. But in those days they weighed a pound a piece.

Q. I've heard tell that nine berries would fill a hallek. Is that a true story?

A. That's true enough, but not very many at that.

Q. Those wouldn't be the early berries then? Not the Clydes?

A. No. These were the bigger varieties. But that's true what you say. But there weren't very many that big.

Q. You were born at Homewood?

A. Yes I was born at Homewood.

Q. May I ask what year?

A. April 14th, 1891.

Q. And how long have your family lived at Homewood then?

A. Oh, I'd say close on to twenty years.

Q. At Homewood?

A. At Homewood. Then we moved to another house at Cormer<sup>ant</sup> Point.

Q. What was the name of that place?

A. Well let's see, Craigallacie.

Q. I think the name went over to Strangewood. Any idea?

A. Well, person by the name of McMullan bought that, I think it was. One of the owners, I think it changed the name there. I'm not sure about that. I think it was Mr. McMullan that changed the name.

Q. But it was Craigallacie first?

A. Yes.

Q. Your father was a shipwright and worked on Craigdarrock Castle? Is that true?

A. I didn't quite get your point.

Q. Your father, when he first came out to the Victoria area, it said that he worked on Craigdarrock Castle.

A. I wouldn't know that.

Q. I was interested in how your family got Homewood. Do you know who they bought the land from?

A. I believe it was Dr. Ash.

Q. Not the Captain Ash, but Dr. Ash? Or are they one and the same?

A. I'm not sure. I think they are one and the same. As far as I know it was Dr. Ash. He owned a lot of land in Gordon Head at that time. It was subdivided into twenty acre blocks. My dad bought twenty acres and some others bought twenty acres. That was the size of the farm in those days, all bush at that time.

Q. That was the timber. Douglas Fir on the land?

A. Douglas Fir. But there was no sale for that. When we cleared the land we burnt most of these good logs and stumps and everything. No powder. Just burnt them out and used this wonderful timber to burn the stumps out. It was a crime thinking about it these days.

Q. What, the price of the wood?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you used to sell the wood as cord wood?

A. Yes, there was some cord wood sold at that time. There wasn't very much demand for it. But there was some sold. I know my dad sold some from the Cormer Point place. I'm not sure of the price he got for it. It wasn't very much, but then wages in those days was very small. The Chinese labourers used to come and cut it. They probably got a dollar a cord for cutting it.

Q. So you had Chinese men working for you then?

A. Yes, Chinese in those days. Except for the strawberry picking. Strawberry picking was mostly Indians, at first.

Q. They came from Margaret Bay?

A. They landed at Margaret Bay with their canoes, from Cowichan. Some came from Songees in Victoria. A lot of them came from Songees in Victoria. That was right across the Johnson Street Bridge at that time. Just across the bridge. But some of them came down from Cowichan in canoes and they camped at Margaret Bay.

A. Did they spend the summer there, through the berry time?

Q. Well as soon as the season was over they went away and go fishing. The fishing came right after the berry season was over. Then they went hop picking, that's

across the Washington State.

Q. Oh, they'd go all the way down there.

A. Yes they went across to the Washington State for berries and also fishing and hop growing.

Q. There were some hop farms in Gordon Head, were there not?

A. No, there wasn't any hop farms. There was hops growing. They grow lovely, but we never made any commercial move to grow hops. But they did grow nicely and I remember them very well.

Q. The year that you were born, Mr. Grant, your father donated the land for the Gordon Head School. Is that so?

A. I couldn't say for that. I doubt it, I doubt that.

Q. Gordon Head Hall?

A. Oh yes, he donated for Gordon Head Hall. But I don't think he donated for the school. I'm not sure about that point, I don't think he did, I think somebody else.

Q. It said to be on the corner of Tyndall and Grandview. Would that be part of your property?

A. At that time there was only Tyndall Avenue there, there was no other roads. It was built on Tyndall Avenue right opposite our first place, that's Homewood. The school was right opposite. Across the road.

Q. Your mother's name was Bella?

A. That's Isabella, yes.

Q. And she was known, I think, as Granny. Can you tell me the story behind that?

A. Really I can't. I don't know how she came by that name.

Q. You never called her that?

A. Oh no.

Q. From the Indians at Margaret Bay, did you ever buy their fish?

A. No, there was very little fishing done at that time, I don't know why. The Indians would go down sometimes about once or twice a week to do some fishing, but they never had very much luck. I don't know if fish was scarce or what it was, but they didn't catch many fish. Oh, they got some clams too, clams at Margaret Bay. Good clam bed down there. And spring water, there was springs on the beach.

Q. Where did you get your water from at Homewood?

A. There was a spring halfway down the bank, there was quite a steep bank down to the Bay there. I guess over two hundred feet down. And there was a spring halfway down, right close to our, about half a mile from our house. And my dad used to scoop out the place to make a bit of a cistern pool to hold the water, you see, and that was full up all the time. I remember so well, taking two lard pails and go down there, Oh, maybe twice a day, to carry this water home. We didn't have a well. Until, finally, we got a hydraulic ram, have you ever heard of a hydraulic ram?

Q. Is it a Scotch ram?

A. No, a hydraulic ram. I've never seen them work since, either. But there was good streams down in Cordova Bay, near Cormorant Point, coming out of the wall, all summer long, there was more water there in the summer time than in the winter time. The water was coming out of the wall. And, my dad made a dam there to hold this water, made out of two by twelve planks. And that filled up, it was quite a little body of water, you know, and used that to drive the ram, but there was a two inch pipe. The two inch pipe come from that reservoir. I'd say about 150 feet away, the ram was sitting on a gradual slope for gravitation and from where the ram was there was a one inch pipe to take the water up to the top of the bank. It was pretty near 200 feet, I would imagine, anyhow, 1 inch pipe, and we wondered and my Dad often did wonder too, and I didn't think it was possible to get water up there to that pump from that ram there. But finally it did come up. Just a small trickle but steady. It never stopped.

Q. Did you have a tower, a water tower?

A. No. Just that kind of a cistern about 150 feet away. The ram was lower down you see, so it was getting gravitation from the pump to work this darn ram. But it was a wonderful thing, to this day I often think about it. It was wasteful, there was a lot of water wasted under that system. But it was amazing how it did reach the top of that bank.

Q. Did you use it to water the fields at all?

A. Oh no. We just had a few drums up there. Big iron drums, I guess they would hold about 200 gallons of water each, I suppose. We had three or four of them there and we always kept them filled up.

Q. How did you fill them?

A. Just from this little trickle of water that came up there, steady all day long. But we had a little potatoe patch near there that we did water. We got some wonderful spuds there too. But just very small, cause we didn't have the water really you know, it was just there all the time. Oh it was a wonderful thing.

Q. Who did your father buy the Craigallacie place from?

A. You've got me there. I don't know.

Q. How many acres was it, do you remember?

A. About 27 I think.

Q. Twenty-seven. Did he have it all in berries at that time?

A. Oh, no, no. It wasn't cleared. It was mostly bush. And yes, of course, red apples. We had the first and only apple orchard in Gordon Head at that time. Other people had apple trees, but we had the orchard. A couple of acres or so.

Q. And who did you sell the apples to?

A. They went mostly to the F.R. Stewart and Company on Yates Street. The wholesale company. Slades was right near there too. That's two of the old timers. F.R. Stewart and Company was who we sold to.

Q. Did you sell them by the bushel or box?

A. By the box. I've made thousands of these apples boxes in my day. I was the carpenter, I made the apple boxes.

Q. What kind of wood, out of the fir?

A. Yes, some of them were Hemlock I suppose, but they were good stron boxes. They weighed about seven pounds each when they were made up. A display went to London.

Q. Thats right.

I was just trying to look for it, oh, it's in a magazine (Mrs. Grant).

Q. Strands?

A. Yes, Strands, it's in there. I must go and find it (Mrs. Grant)  
You have looked into this I see (Mr. Grant)

Q. I have looked into it a bit trying to get a picture of the history and there are so many things to ask you about.  
After your family lived at Craigallacie they moved again to Pollock. What year was that, do you remember?

- A. Gee Whiz no, no I don't remember. I don't know what year it was. I know I was probably about eighteen years old at that time when we moved from Cormorant Point, we call it Cormorant Point for legality. That's right. We moved from there when I was about eighteen so I've got to do some figuring up to get how many years ago. I think I was about eighteen when we bought that place. I was just a young feller. That was quite a move, that was 45 acres. It was Pollock Road at that time. There was a good well there, we had lots of water there.
- Q. Did you ever run dry?
- A. No, never ran dry, no.
- Q. How deep was the well?
- A. It was about 45 feet.
- Q. Hand dug?
- A. When we built our house there on Pollock Road. The well was about 45 feet deep.
- Q. Was it already there?
- A. It was already there.
- Q. Who owned the place before?
- A. Pollock, the Pollock family.
- Q. Where did they move on to?
- A. Well, as a matter of fact, they weren't very good farmers. They quit farming. One of the boys went to the States to work and, what a hard luck family, one of the girls died soon after she got married. Another sister, I don't know what happened to her.  
(Mrs. Grant - I pretty near got dizzy looking for this book)  
(Interviewer - That's beautiful, that's great).
- Q. The family went off and sort of dispersed then, the Pollocks?
- A. Well they died off. That house stands today, you can see it today yet. It was built of California Redwood. Brought up from California a long time ago. But that house is still there.
- Q. You had several brothers and sisters?
- A. Yes, I had two brothers and three sisters.
- Q. Was Elizabeth Grant your sister?
- A. No.
- Q. Was it your aunt?
- A. Oh, it is. Mrs. Watson.
- Q. Yes, she married George Watson.

- He was Reeve of Saanich for many years.
- Q. And she was also the first president of the Women's Institute.
- A. That's right.
- Q. In 1898 at Gordon Head Community Hall. Also, did you have an Aunt Annie?
- A. Yes, I sure did.
- Q. Can you tell me a little bit about her?
- A. Well she lived at Gordon Head on Tyndall Avenue and I think she was the first person who took on the post delivery there. She ran the Post Office in her house, you know. For many years. Her husband worked at the mines at Wellington. He wasn't down in the mines, he was one of the top ones, in the coal.
- Q. That was Dan McRae?
- A. Yes, Dan McRae.
- Q. And, your mother was the second Post Mistress?
- A. Yes, I believe that's right, she was. I don't know who the third one was.
- Q. I think it was your Auntie Liz.
- A. It was either Liz or the Grays. A family by the name of Gray had it too. I think it was my Aunt Liz thought, that had it. I know she had it for a while and finally, I think it was the Grays took it over. On Torquay Drive. Well, it was Pollock Road at that time
- Q. From your house on Pollock where your father had 45 acres, how many did he have in berries?
- A. At one time we had 18 acres.
- Q. All strawberries?
- A. Yes. That was the most we ever had and that was too much. We used to have about 22 or 23 Chinamen out to pick the berries at that time. They lived in the upstairs of the barn at our place. Those were the days. That's after the Indians. We had the Indians first, then the Chinamen came in to do the picking instead of the Indians.
- Q. Why did you change?
- A. Well, I can't say why exactly. But the Chinamen were much more satisfactory. When the Indians came they brought the women, the kids and the dogs. And a horse or two. So it was better to have the Chinese there. There was nothing but the rice and that's all they wanted. They'd work all days like slaves and were very satisfactory.



Some of them used to pick sixteen crates a day and one fellow picked twenty-two crates in one day (Mrs. Grant).

Well I can remember people picking six crates a day, so you can see they had to go to pick that number. My back was sore too. It was hard work.

Q. What happened with the weevils and the berries? How did that come about?

A. Well I don't know how it came about, but it sure came and it came in a hurry. It did come and it sure wrecked the business in Gordon Head. People did all kinds of things to try and beat that thing, you know, but nothing worked. Strawberry patches went down, down, down, from there on on. I used to pick what you called a little fence around, to keep the weevil out. Boards set in the ground with a grove on top and you filled that full of creosote or something like that, so they would crawl up there and get it there and that was the end of them. But that wasn't satisfactory. Then of course they would put bait down, poisoned bait. Some kind of bait they used. Just put a little dab on each plant. An awful lot of work, mind you. But that was alright for a little while but they soon got immune to that too.

Q. Was that just a year it took for them to be immune, or did it go on further than that?

A. Oh no it went on a couple of years. But once the pests started to come, well it was goodbye for the strawberries.

(Then, we used to grow black currants, gooseberries, red currants, Loganberries, boisonberries - Mrs. Grant).

I had three ton of gooseberries one year.

Q. Did you sell that through the fruitgrowers association?

A. They handled it. It went to Vancouver, the jam factory, Empress Jam Factory in Vancouver. Do you know how we did it? We packed them, to harvest them we packed them in 50 pound gunny sacks and shipped them over to Vancouver that way. I think we got three cents a pound for them. It cost a cent or cent and a half a pound to pick them. It's hard to believe it, you know.

Q. Who did you have to help you pick those berries? The Chinese as well.

A. Oh, we had whites too, at that time.

Q. Was that your farm then, that you are speaking about?

A. Yes.

Q. That was when you built across from your father then, at the end of Torquay Road?

A. Yes, that was where we built at Torquay. Pollock Road.  
(They changed it, it used to be Grant Street and they changed it to Kenmore. - Mrs. Grant).

It was Grant Street, but they changed it.

Q. Do you know why they changed it?

A. There was another Grant Street in town and maybe that was why they changed it, I don't know. Anyway it was changed.

Q. When did you marry?

A. 1915. We've been married 61 years. Pretty near 62, coming up in December.

Q. You are a Wesley, right, Mrs. Grant?

A. No.

Q. What was your maiden name?

A. Haulton.

Q. And where did your family come from?

A. Liverpool.

Q. Did you come over here with your family?

A. Yes. She came over first and went to Prince Rupert, of all the places, in those days.

Q. In what year did you move to Victoria?

A. 1912. The year the Victoria Theatre opened. I went to the opening night there. Also, the Odeon.

The reason I met my wife Sybil, was my sister worked the same place.

Edna. That was the horse and buggy days, wasn't it Ma?

It was lots of fun. Then we got a Studebaker.

Q. Did you court your wife in a horse and buggy then?

A. I sure did. And soon after that, motor cars came in. In about 1930 I bought my first Studebaker. It was seven passenger mind you. People used to kid me about it.

(701, that was the number. My son has the plate yet. My eldest son, he's sixty)

Q. Glendon?

A. No, he's next to the baby. We had five sons and one daughter.

Q. And what are their names?

A. Romaine... They all had three names.

Grant, James

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Q. Go ahead tell them all.

A. Romaine James Irvine.

Q. What year was he born in?

A. 1916. Eric William Earl. Marcus Gordon Carlton. Delores Sybil Mavis. Glendon Raymond Maurice. Milton Cyril Randolph. We have fifteen grandchildren and eight grandchildren.

Q. So, then Mr. Grant, you are from a very large family too.

A. Well yes, it was called a large family in those days, I suppose, six.

Q. And you were the youngest son?

A. No I was the second boy.

Q. What was your brothers name?

A. My elder brothers name was Charlie. He's gone, several years ago. And then my sister, Gertie. She's gone also. She was Mrs. Miller. Then Helen, Helen Irvine of Gordon Head, was the next sister. Then there was Stuart, I didn't mention that before, did I? Stuart? And then there's Marion. Marion lives in Victoria yet. That's the youngest one. She's much younger.

Q. The baby of the family eh?

A. The baby of the family.

Q. Did everyone help out on the farm?

A. Oh yes, up to a certain point. Oh yes indeed, they did. Especially my sisters. They were good at ...In the old days we had to cut the runners off the strawberry plants. They sent out these runners all the time you know. You have to cut these runners off about every week. Two weeks at the most. And the girls did most of that strawberry cutting, the runners. They had good strong backs too, I think. But the boys, well my elder brother was quite good with horses and machinery and stuff like that. And when I came along, being younger, well I took over from him. He went to town, he bought a Cadillac car (I don't know if I should tell you this or not)

Q. Go ahead.

A. He got tired of farming and he went to town. He had enough money then to buy a Cadillac car and he bought this Cadillac. And he went on a stand for rent in those times, like a taxi, you know? And he worked at that for a number of years, maybe two years or so, and that wasn't any good. And he went from there on his way to Alberta, farming. And from there, he sold out and he went to Clearwater where my mother and dad had settled.

Q. When did they leave Gordon Head then, to go to Clearwater?

A. I don't know what year that would be.

Q. Would it be about 1917?

A. I'm just trying to think.

Q. It was after you were married though, that they left?

A. Oh yes.

Q. You had already built your house then, at the end of Pollock?

A. Yes.

Q. Your father, Mr. Grant, there is some confusion about the date of his death. I was wondering if you remember if it was 1942 or 1944?

A. I didn't quite get the drift of what you said.

Q. When your father passed away, there was some confusion about the date, was it 1944 or 1946? Do you remember?

A. No. I really don't.

Q. Before the war or during the war?

A. I can't answer that one, I don't know.

Q. That's alright, don't worry. Do you know what made them decide to leave? Gordon Head?

A. Lack of water (Mrs. Grant). Too settled (Mr. Grant).

I think the chief reason was the place was getting too grown up. He was a pioneer, very much a pioneer kind of fellow. He wanted to get away where there was more scope, more land, and more water.

Q. He struck on Clearwater.

A. Yes, he liked the place very much up there.

Q. Did he go and visit it first?

A. Yes, I was up there with him, as a matter of fact. I was just married then. That was about 1917, when he went up to Clearwater and I went with him. We toured around there and looked over the place pretty well. I didn't like it, it was too isolated for me. There was only a train in there about once every second day, or something like that.

Q. Did he want you to move up there with him?

A. He wanted me to go up, yes. He would have liked me to go up, but I wouldn't think of it at all. Raising a young family you know, it was too far back. No hospital, no nothing. But he liked it. He developed it, he grew strawberries up there too. He planted an orchard. I can't say I liked the place. But I've got nephews up there

now, they are still there.

Q. Still farming? On the same land?

A. Well, one of them is farming, the other works at the sawmill.

Q. But they took over your father's place?

A. No, they had a place of their own. One is farming yet. One of the boys is farming. He's got a big chunk of land there too. He'll make out alright on the land. The land is not like here so much, but it has gone away up in price too. They got it very reasonable at that time you know.

Q. Your father was pretty responsible for the elevated real estate around Gordon Head area.

A. That's right.

Q. Do you remember what he paid for the place at Pollock?

A. When he bought that twenty-five acres, is what you are referring to, I think.

Q. Yes.

A. I think it was less than One Hundred Dollars an acre. Somewhere around that vicinity. I could'nt say the actual amount, I don't know. But I think it was around that amount.

Q. When your family lived out at Cormorant Point, I think it was, there is a story about your mother going down to do the laundry. Could you tell me that story?

A. You've read this book haven't you?

When she got scared that day? No, I can't..you know that was news to me. But my sister and mother were down there washing that day...

Q. Which sister?

A. Helen. She's living in Gordon Head yet.

They went down there doing the wash that day and all of a sudden Mother looked out there by Cormorant Point and she says "What's that out there?" Then Helen looked and she said "Gosh, I don't know what that is". And they got real scared and packed their washing up and got home, got the heck out of there as quick as they could. They were really scared. Now I don't know anything about that. I never saw the darned thing, I wasn't there.

It was supposed to be Caddy (Mrs. Grant). They wouldn't go back any more. They got real scared about that. They did the washing up top after that (Mrs. Grant).

Q. Having the water out of the cistern?

I suppose.

Q. When you built your place then, where you and Mrs. Grant lived, did you subdivide a piece off your father's land? Or you just built on it?

A. No, he give us some land each, it was forty-five acres, we got five acres each. So we built on that five acres of course. That's what happened. Something like here. We had sixty acres here. I had thirty acres divided up for the boys, the family got it. It's still in the family.

Q. The whole piece?

A. Yes, the whole piece. No, not mothers.

I have thirty acres and he had thirty acres, six five acre blocks (Mrs. Grant).

I had six children, six fives are thirty.

He gave them each five acres. We're going to sell mine and we are still waiting to sell it. (Mrs. Grant).

Q. Have you got any plans to sell it now?

A. Well it's not a good time now. Things are slack right now. We're waiting for the sewage. Can't do anything till they get the sewers in.

Q. Oh, there is no public sewage here?

A. No.

Q. All through the new subdivision, there's none?

A. Sewage? No that subdivision is entirely septic tanks.

Q. I didn't know they still allowed that.

A. Well its a few years ago now, seven or eight years ago maybe, since we built the houses over there, the first ones.

It was allowed then.

Q. What year did you move up to Shangrila?

A. '45 I think. We've been here about thirty years. This house is about twenty-six or twenty-seven years old.

Q. When you first moved here then, what house did you live in?

A. We lived at Gordon Head.

Q. Until then?

A. On Torquay. Terra Nova.

Q. Did you go to the Gordon Head School?

A. Oh, heavens yes. I had to go. In those days you had enough kids, I think it was nine, it was through the Government then you see, you had to have nine kids in the school or they wouldn't open it.

They didn't have the nine at that time, I was four and a half years old, so they drafted me to go to school. We had government teachers see.

Q. Who was your first teacher?

A. Hockey, I think. A fellow by the name of Hockey. Yeah, Hockey. And he ran away (Mrs. Grant). I ran, I didn't like it. I guess it was stupid, these days when I think about it. My father was talking to Hockey there and I took off. I headed for the gates with Hockey after me, and he caught me. I guess I howled my head off, but anyhow I was going at four and a half just to keep the darned school going.

Q. Did Hockey stay very long?

A. No, they changed around quite often in those days. I don't know who followed him, I think it was a fellow name of Clayton, I think. Clayton was another one of my teachers anyway. Hockey was my first one though, then Clayton, oh there were several. They didn't stay very long. Sluggett was another one, he boarded at my aunts place, that was Aunt Annie.

Q. I've got down here that the school was originally built on Tyndall and Grandview and then it moved. When you went to school was it on Pollock and Grant?

A. No it has always been on Tyndall. Grandview, there was no Grandview at that time see, I don't know where Grandview is right now, as a matter of fact.

Q. It's a new road.

A. It's been put in there since. It was on the corner of Grandview I suppose, and Tyndall.

Q. That's where it was then, but now its been moved down. Do you ever remember the school being moved?

A. No, schools never moved. They burned down. (Mrs. Grant - the hall was moved and they made a cannery of it).

Q. Jam cannery?

A. Loganberries. Well the cannery was there, they didn't make the hall into a cannery. The hall was always there, separate. That's where the cannery was built too. They had an awful time moving that hall. I guess it must have taken over ten days or two weeks, blocking that road up all that time. On Tyndall Avenue.

Q. How did they do it?

A. Just..it was on roller you know. Used some power, used a donkey engine or something like that, I don't remember. (Mrs. Grant - we sure remember the big snow, 1916).

Q. That was the year you were married.

A. No we were married in '15.

Q. Oh, '15, I'm sorry.

A. In December, and January and February that was the time of the big snow.

Q. Tell me about it.

A. Well, there was a drift outside his mother's house, seventeen feet high. It was really something. We dug through it, dug a tunnel through it, Jim and I did.

Q. Could they get out?

A. Well, you could get outside the door, that's all. You couldn't go anywhere. We were snowed in for weeks there. I don't know how many weeks we were snowed in, there was no snow ploughs to open the roads. It kept snowing every day. (Up the top of the fences - Mrs. Grant). We were isolated for a long time. We used to phone in to Scott and Pedens and say "When are you coming out with some groceries and he'd say "When are you coming in?".

Q. Who was that that you got your groceries from?

A. Scott and Pedens.

Q. Where were they?

A. What is it now..Buckerfields now. Do you know where it is? That was Scott and Pedens.

Q. And how did you get there? Did you have your Studebaker then?

A. Did we have a Studebaker then Mom? I think we did. Yes of course I did. But it was no use cause you couldn't drive it. In the snow. The horses couldn't get through it even. (I used to try to get on the horse to go for the mail and I got thrown right off into the snow. Of course I didn't get hurt but that was my first and last time on a horse - Mrs. Grant).

Q. Never rode one again eh? Did you get out of the snow drift all right?

A. (Oh yes - Mrs. Grant.) Oh it was a terrible storm. We had birds in our basement. I used to go out and pick them up. They couldn't fly, they were just about finished, you know.



Skylarks, meadowlarks. They were just dying on the manure pile. They'd get on the manure pile where they would be warm, where the snow would melt. They couldn't fly, they were too weak. I'd pick them up and put them in our basement and after the snow all went we let them out. Quite a few of them died but most of them came through. (We had a lot of grain, so we were well off as far as that went - Mrs. Grant).

Q. Who were your neighbours, do you remember? From Homewood days? Do you remember who your neighbours were, Mr. Grant?

A. Yes, the real old timers was Mr. Summers, Issac Summers. Mr. Wood.

Q. What was his first name?

A. Ed, I think.

Q. Did he farm?

A. No, he was a carpenter. He didn't do much farming. And then there was Strachan, Vantreight.

Q. Was that John Vantrieight or Geoffrey?

A. Geoffrey. That's the pioneer, the old family. The father and mother of Geoffrey Vantrieight. They been gone long ago. But Geoff was still living in Gordon Head, the young fella. A big family there. Later on there was the Wimsomes, Dunnetts and McNaughton and Skillings. But these all came later. The first ones were Summers, Woods, ourselves and Strachan and Vantreight of course. Houlihans, Deans.

Q. What did they do, the Deans?

A. He was an old batchelor. He was a farmer. He had a chicken ranch, he sold eggs. Mostly eggs.

Q. Did you get your eggs from him or did you keep chickens?

A. No, no, he took them to town. In an old horse and cart he had there once a week or thereabouts. An old batchelor. Then there was Edwards, of course this was all later on. Edwards was the bulb grower. The one who grew all the bulbs, started the bulbs. Ursulas father. (I suppose you know Ursula? - Mrs. Grant).

Q. I haven't met her yet.

A. Haven't you? Oh, she's quite a dame. (Wasn't it Mr. Dean that helped you when you went down the well? - Mrs. Grant)

Oh, I guess you've heard about that.

Q. Tell me the story.

Well, there was one of our neighbours, by the name of Stannard, he had an old horse. He was pasturing this horse out by the bank, down at the beach at Cordova Bay. And this horse got too close to the bank and he fell over. We didn't know how the heck to get him out of there. About a week before that I had been down to Dean's place where we used to get the water from a deep well, about forty feet down, forty-five feet down, and swinging trying to get the bucket down there I lost the rope. A brand new rope. So my Dad, when this thing happened, he wanted me to go get the rope, and get the rope around the horses neck to try and help him up the bank a bit. Oh boy, I was sunk. I didn't tell my Dad where the rope was. So, I got Charlie, my brother, and said, "We've got to get that darn rope somehow. How are we going to get it? Well, we'll go to Mr. Dean and he'll have a rope for sure". He did have a rope, not a very good one. So I looked at it and I was pretty scared. But I thought "We've got to get that darn rope down anyhow". So we hooked the darn rope on and Charlie lowered me down. I only got down about twelve feet from the water and the darn thing broke. Oh, I went into that water up to my neck. Oh that water was cold, Oh, boy. So I said to Charlie "I'm in a hell of a mess". He said "Are you alright?" "Sure, I'm alright but I'm awful cold and wet" I said. He said "What am I going to do?" "Well, I said, I'll tell you what to do. There's a rope down here and you take that rope off the windlass. Lay down on your stomach, don't fall down the well. Reach down as far as you can and I'll be able to reach that old rope and the new rope and you can hook the new rope on to it and you can pull the whole thing up and hook the new rope on to the windlass. I can get out of the well that way". Which he did. But, boy, I was a soaking mess, I can tell you. And cold. It was summer time but it was cold down there.

- Q. Did you get the rope? You got your father's rope?
- A. Oh I got the rope alright. But in the meantime the horse started to go down. We were going to try and get him up. He went down and he fell over about a thirty foot drop into blue clay mud. He broke his back. It was a sad case.
- Q. Yes, it was too bad. Did you keep many animals then?
- A. Yes, we always had cows, a couple of cows.

- Q. What kind of cows?
- A. Oh, they were Jersey. Just scrub cows, more or less. They weren't pure bred at all, just scrub cows.
- Q. Was this your Dad's house or your house?
- A. This was at....I'm referring to the olden days at Homewood. At our first place. Then we had a horse. That's all we had though, a horse and a cow.
- Q. No chickens?
- A. Yes we had chickens, yes.
- Q. So your mother would make the butter?
- A. Yes we made butter.
- Q. Cheese?
- A. Many a pot of butter I've made too. In the old fashioned churn. That's a relic in these days. I don't think you can find one anywhere. And of course, we churned the cheddar in a crock, up and down like this. Then we had a smaller churn, we had three churns. One you turned like this, wound it up and one year.... oh it was cold, there was icicles one winter there and trying to make butter. There was icicles all over the house and the windows you couldn't see out of, frosted all over, when those north wind storms came up. I tried to make butter that night and I think I turned that darn churn for an hour and no butter. I finally set it on the stove to get it warmed up a bit. Well I got butter all right, it wasn't very good but I got butter after awhile. Had to work for it that time I'll tell you.
- Q. How did you heat the house? Wood?
- A. All wood, yes. But we only had the stove, there was no fireplaces in that day. No fireplaces, one stove to heat all that house. Boy, it was cold sometimes. (We had a fireplace built - Mrs. Grant) Yes, eventually we had a fireplace built. That was our first house.
- Q. Do you remember Mileva Todd?
- A. Oh, we knew her very very well. Yes indeed we did. She was a good woman. She had many good points. Oh, indeed we knew her very well.
- Q. She helped to bring electricity to Gordon Head, is that right?
- A. Oh she pulled heavy for that.

(Mrs. Grant - I must tell you about Miss Mileva Todd. This is our first family group - thats Glendon, thats Pa, that's Eric, that's Marcus, that's Rome and that's Milton. And this was a family picture we were having taken and we were going to Gibsons and the only day we could get them all together was a Sunday. So we all went down there on a Sunday and we waited and waited and no Mr. Gibson turned up. Do you know Wilf Gibson? So Mrs. Todd came along and she said "What are you all doing here?" I said "We're waiting to have a family group taken and I think Mr. Gibson has forgot us". So she said "Oh I know him" and she went and phoned him and he was down in half an hour. (Mr. Grant - And he lived at Mechosin).

Q. He made good time.

A. She was a good sport, she'd help anybody. So that was the day that picture was taken.

Q. She really helped out there. She was a Red Cross Worker.

A. Yes, she was very good that way.

Q. Do you remember how she used to go about? Did she visit all the families?

A. Oh, she had a horse and buggy in those days. It was just before the cars came out you know. I don't know how she got around. I don't know if she had a motor car at that time or not. It was very early.

Q. I was talking to Mr. Houlihan and he was saying that his father used to raise race horses. Do you remember that?

A. No. Mr. Houlihan? raised race horses?

Q. Yes, Jim Houlihan.

A. No, I don't think so. I think something is wrong there. I never heard of that one.

Q. Who was the Vet for the animals in the area?

A. It was a Dr. Hamilton. A Dr. Hamilton in town, Victoria. It was him we had out whenever we had a horse. We had Dr. Hamilton out. He was the Doctor at that time. He was a good old fella. Came out in a horse and buggy. That was before the cars.

Q. Did you grow your own hay for the animals?

A. Yes, I grew my own hay. Sometimes we didn't have quite enough to do it though, enough land cleared for it. We had quite a bit of hay alright. Then we bought this farm at Pollock Road, about 45 acres. We had all kinds of hay then. It was all hay at that time.

It was just growing wild. It had just gone back. They didn't farm it at all for years. It had just gone back, forget about it. We had all kinds of hay there. (Mrs. Grant - We had an awful fire once. We was making the lawn. I was making the lawn and had a little fire, all by myself, where the lawn was going to be. You know, I was raking it up. This fellow here, decided he would have a little fire. He was about four years old. And he lit afire the barn. Eight ton of hay went up. And he (Mr. Grant) wasn't home.

Q. What did you do?

A. Well, Glendon was a baby then and some neighbours came down, but they couldn't do anything. But Romaine had an apron on, he had been doing something, and he said to me that if he could have only got that apron off his head that fire could have been extinguished, but he couldn't get it off. Neighbours came and the fire engines couldn't get anywhere near the place. It was way down you know, in the fields. He wasn't home, he was plowing.

Mr. Grant - Marcus was the one who lit the fire, it was Halloween. He wanted to have a Halloween fire to himself. He made it too near the straw you know, and it went up to the barn. That's what happened. Wasn't it Halloween?. (Mrs. Grant - No it don't think it was Halloween. No, I'm sure it wasn't Halloween.) I saw the fire from way up where I was working on Tyndall Avenue. I was plowing up there and I saw this smoke and I just tied my horse up to the fence post there and beat it home. I had a feeling I had to go. I knew what was happening. (Mrs. Grant - I remember our eldest boy was nine years old and he backed the car out of the garage. Only nine years old and he backed the car out of the garage. He could drive at nine. )

Q. Was he off to get his father?

A. No, he just backed the car out to save it. To save the garage. He had a job driving for Sadlers when he was twelve years old. (Mr. Grant - that was the grocery man at that time) Sadlers, the little store at the corner. Sadlers used to run it.

Q. Is that where you got most of your supplies? Your dry goods? From Sadlers?

A. No, most of it from Scott and Pedens. Do you know we used to go to town every week for groceries, when we had the car that is. Taking the kids along and the wife of course. I used to do the

shopping, the groceries and Ma, she used to buy the meat of course. That wasn't my line. Do you know how much money we had to go and do it? A ten dollar bill. That was all we had to spend. Ten Dollars a week for buying groceries. That was something in those days, I'll tell you.

Q. Were those hard times?

A. Hard times was right (Mrs. Grant). I should say.

Oh we had enough to eat and the kids were all big hefty kids. We lived pretty good on it. Oh we had lots of milk and chicken eggs. Fruit and vegetables.

Q. How many cows did you keep?

A. We kept two, sometimes three.

Q. Did you ever slaughter them for meat?

A. No, we slaughtered the bullocks. When we had a bull calf we'd raise it up to a fair size and we'd slaughter that and had it in the cold storage.

Q. Where, on the farm?

A. No cold storage at Wilsons. Cold storage in Victoria. I'm glad you mentioned that because it was very important in those days.

Q. Everybody in Gordon Head used to use Wilsons?

A. Well, I don't know if they did or not. But we did. No not every body would do that but we started out, as I say, when a bull calf came along. It was a big help to us in those days too. To have meat and just go in there and get it out of the cooler you know.

Q. How did you father store his meat? Your Mom? From Homewood, how did you store your meat there? Was Wilsons then?

A. Well, I don't know. We didn't have much meat as a matter of fact, very often. Bacon, maybe. But in those days, you see, you only had a horse and wagon, and they never went to town, only about once a month. Went you went to town you bought a whole bunch of stuff. Like Scott and Pedens. You used to go down there in the Fall of the year, near Winter time, and you'd buy three or four barrels of flour, hundred pounds of sugar, a whole cheese. A big round cheese of about three pounds. Sacks of rice, split peas, butter, bought by the box from New Zealand. You didn't have to go to town, you had your store there for the wintertime.

Q. Where did you store it?

A. At the house, a separate room you know. No ice, just a storehouse, that's all.

(Mrs. Grant) Then we started a store in the market.

Q. In 1932?

A. I guess it was about '32, yes.

Q. Yes, your vegetables are world famous.

A. Yes.

Q. You had quite a touch with the garden Mrs. Grant.

A. Oh yes, and flowers. Do you know how we started out?

Q. Tell me how you got started.

A. Well, he grew a wonderful crop of cauliflower. Beautiful big ones like that. Didn't know what we were going to do with them, so we got Lee Die out, you know, Lee Die the Chinaman. Well he ran a wholesale place and we wanted to know what it was for those cauliflower and he said ten cents a piece. For those great big cauliflower. Well, nothing doing, it thought that was just too much for me, so we just said no. So, I made up my mind I was just going to sell them myself, so I went down and I got a stall in the market and I sold them.

Q. Which market?

A. The old Victoria Market where the Centennial Square is now. And I was there for thirty-three years. Then we started to grow things, we grew everything. We were growing all the berries then anyway, every kind of berry. And I made butter, sold butter. Made jam, pickles. So that's how we started at the market place.

Q. How did you get about to Strands, the magazine from London.

A. Oh, I'll tell you how it got to come there. Milton has those greenhouses, the youngest son, has those greenhouses out at Shelbourne Street for tomatoe. And, one of the Ricco's, Mr. Ricco's boys sold this magazine in the basement and he was looking through it and he saw this about us. The book was all moldy, I fixed it all up. I asked him if he would like to sell it, "Oh, he said, I'll give it to you, I don't want it". So I cleaned it all up, took the mold off and then, what year was it? 1910 wasn't it. So he saw that and realized it was Milton's grandfather, so that's why he gave us it.

Q. So Gordon Head strawberrys and fruits were world famous.

A. Oh yes, they were beautifully packed too.

Q. That was the Chinamen that did it?

- A. No, no, the Grant family. You can see how well they were packed in different ways. (Mr. Grant - my Dad did the packing for that himself . We had Chinese packing fruit at that time, you know, they were all packed, you know. Not just chucked in, they were all packed. We had Chinese packers out to pack apples.) (Mrs. Grant - Jim's Dad used to cure fruit in these jars, you know, for the Museum. That was very interesting. I loved that). That was wonderful you know, they don't do that anymore.
- Q. How did they do it?
- A. It was some chemical they had, preserved these. We sent some local stuff in there, like a spray of peaches or plums. Just put them in this stuff and they'd last for years. You don't see that now-a-days. I don't know if they still do that or not.
- Q. Did you dry any of your fruits for the winter use?
- A. Yes, my mother used to dry the fruit.

INTERVIEW BY SHARON MANSON



JAMES EDDIE GRANT - 4877 Wesley Drive

He was born in Gordon Head on April 14, 1891, on Tyndall Avenue.

His father, William Grant, who came from Banffshire, Scotland, arrived in Canada in 1883. He joined the railroad crews who were laying the tracks of the C.P.R. railway to Vancouver. At one time he was a cook's helper. He was on the scene when the last spike was laid at Craigellachie. From there he came to Vancouver Island and his mother joined him in 1888. They first took up residence on Wark Street in Victoria. There, with his shipwrights' skill, he was employed on the fine woodwork of Craigdarrock Castle, under construction.

Late in 1889 his first son Charles was born and his desire to become a farmer intensified. He found 20 acres in Gordon Head between Torquay Drive and Tyndall Avenue, where he hewed a farm from the forest and built a home for wife Bella and son Charles. There they grew strawberries, gooseberries, red and black currants. There were no loganberries at that time.

When James Grant was a boy living in this home, Homewood, there was mostly bush around, Tyndall Avenue at that time being a cordwood trail. By that time a schoolhouse, located at the south side of the present junction of Granview and Tyndall Avenue, was in existence. It was built in 1891 and James' father, although only 29, was one of the original trustees and held office for 13 years. There had to be a certain enrollment for the school to remain open and when James was four years old the enrollment had slipped, so James was drafted to school at age 4. At that time the following pioneers lived on Tyndall Avenue: his grandmother, who had come over from Scotland, owned the first house; then there were the Somers, Woods, Deans, Vantreights, Strachans, and Hoolihans.

In 1898 W.C. Grant donated a site on Homewood for the building of a community hall.

Soon after this W.C. Grant moved his family to a new location on Cormorant Point. The new 2-storey house built there was called Craigellachie (now know as Strangewood). They farmed nine acres and strawberries were the main crop. Indians from the Songhees and Kokisilah

James Eddie Grant - Cont'd.

Tribes came to help harvest the crop. The Indians camped by the streams. It was from these same waters that James and Charles had to carry water for use at the house. The only blessing was they did not have to carry the weekly wash water. His mother, Bella, carried the wash down to the stream, along with her washboard. One day, while doing this family wash (the family now numbered eight) with her daughter, Bella sighted a huge, fast-moving animal in the water - not one of the usual water mammals - but something entirely different. It was the CADBOROSAURUS! They picked up the wash and fled. That was the last time James' mother ever did the family wash down there. James relates that there was more water in the springs in summer than in winter. After the beach washing episode, his father placed a ramp to pump water up the 200 foot bank. This went into barrels at the top of the bank. The water ran steadily. They just made a dam to hold enough water to keep it going.

Bella, James' mother, did not have an easy life. She made her own soap and vinegar, candied peel, dried prunes and apple rings and put down all her own vegetables and preserves.

Every article was precious in those days and James' relates the following story about a lost piece of rope: "Our neighbour had an old plug of a horse who fell from a bank. The neighbour asked Charles and I to help him get the horse either up the bank to the top, or further down it to the bottom. For this we needed a rope. That brought to mind the fact that a week previous I had lost a rope down John Dean's well. I was afraid of the consequences if I told my father, so the rope was still there. So, off my brother and I scrambled to retrieve the rope. Charles lowered me in the bucket down the 45 foot well, but about 10 feet from the bottom, the rope broke and down I went. Fortunately, it was a dry summer and there was only about 4 feet of ice cold water in the well. I called to Charles to let him know I was not hurt - but how to get out! We could not call my father because it would mean telling him of the lost rope. I felt if I retrieved the original rope and spliced it to the broken rope, Charles could then take me back up in the bucket. I could see above me a projection in the cribbing, so I shimmied up to it, holding on to the newly found rope and spliced it to the one in my brother Charles hand. When that was accomplished,

James Eddie Grant - Cont'd.

Charles put the rope back on the windlass and brought me back up in the bucket. This took some time, and when we returned to where the horse had fallen, the neighbour informed us it was no use, the horse had broken its back in the fall." James said they never did tell their parents about the lost rope or the episode in the well.

By 1905 W.C. Grant was tired of living at Cormorant Point, so he purchased 45 acres of land at the northwest corner of Pollock (now Torquay) and the unmade Grant (later Kenmore) Roads. They built another home (now 4320 Torquay) and even had it wired for electricity, although electricity did not reach the area until 1921. The Pollock house was the only other one besides theirs on that road.

James always worked on the farm and on this, as the others, it was mostly fruit they grew. They dug a well 60 feet deep before hitting water and at one time there was a fire near the well which burned the cribbing, so they were without water for a while. They caught rainwater in barrels and even packed water by pail from the beach at Cormorant Point. Sometimes there was not even enough water in the house for a cup of tea! The orchards were not irrigated, but my how they were cultivated to retain the moisture! James worked with his father until 1915, when he and his father joined together to build near the northwest border of the property the new home (4380 Torquay) "Terra Nova", where James later brought his wife Sybil. The well at that site was only 25 feet deep and water was pumped into the house. Every morning James' first chore was to pump about 125 strokes for a days supply.

There were no trees left on this property, it was all cleared land. They had 30 cows, two teams of horses, plus chickens, and they grew most of their own vegetables. Their meat for the winter came from the calves, and was kept at Wilson's Cold Storage. They went into town to get supplies. \$10 in those days would feed a family for a week. They used a horse and buggy for travel up until 1913 when James bought a Studebaker car, a 7 passenger beauty. When that wore out he bought a Ford "Tin Lizzy". James and his wife Sybil lived there for 35 years and their 5 sons and 1 daughter were born there.

James Eddie Grant - Cont'd.

The 1930's were a hard time for a man with a young family. They sold their berries and fruit to F.R. Stewart and Company, next door to Slades. In the strawberry season there were times when they had 120 crates (24 hallocks to a crate) a day to take in. They had Chinese pickers at that time. Deer were a problem, so fences, 5 boards (6"wide) high with barbed wire on top, were erected (lumber was cheap at that time). The deer loved the strawberries and apples.

They grew fruit and vegetables, and at one point during the '30's they had a very bountiful cauliflower crop. Lee Dye came out to look at them but he could only offer 10¢ each. Sybil was not about to let them go at that price, so went down to the Victoria Public Market and got a stall. She went there on Wednesdays and Saturdays all year long for over 30 years. Of course they did not have fruit and vegetables all year long, so she started making preserves, lemon cheese, chutney and anything else she could think of. They even sold dogwood trees. St. Joseph's Hospital property still have two growing there. They started a greenhouse and sold tomatoes and small fruits to Mount St. Marys, the Angela (a rest home), and St. Ann's Academy, as well as to the hospital.

In 1947, Sybil became impatient with the shortage of fuel, at having to bake her bread by the unreliable heat of broken boxes. This led to the purchase of property with trees for fuel. On the heights above Cordova Bay, James found 30 heavily forested acres that seemed to guarantee unlimited home baking. James found the ideal location for the house by climbing up a 150 foot high Cedar tree. Sybil was not too happy with the property until the trees started falling and she saw the view. It was indeed Shangri'La, and that is what they called their farm. James advises it is not the best land for vegetables but, through perseverance, he took many prizes for vegetables at fairs and exhibitions. At one time they had 32 varieties of apples, two or three varieties on one tree by grafting.

James did not clear this 30 acres by hand, but got a bulldozer in for any clearing. He blew all the stumps by himself though, some were six

James Eddie Grant - Cont'd.

feet across. These 30 acres were purchased through agents from a man named Bell, who lived in England. Sybil bough 30 adjoining acres from Dick Oldfield, who was logging at the time. This property bordered the Rithet Estate. There was water on James' property, even a well with wooden cribbing. The big timber off the property was sold to pay for the house.

The new farm was not won without pain. The worst was the time when a log being horse-hauled home from the bush hit against a stump and whipped around to give James a badly shattered leg. On this land, so recently cleared from bush, James raised crops that won him those many trophies at the Fairs. In 1965 he won total points for fruits, vegetable and flowers.

When James and Sybil purchased the first 30 acres it was all plotted in 5 acre lots and that land has been given in the original lots to his five sons. The daughter will get her property soon, as the other 30 acres has recently been sold for subdivision as James, 90, and Sybil, 88, feel they can no longer farm the property. The house and some property around it will go to the daughter.

After all those years of farming, the Grants took their first holiday together in 1970 when they went to the Old Country. They have 15 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

Interviewed by Jo-Anne Morrison  
August 13, 1980.