

EMERALD - "THE GEM" - 1988

NOTES FOR A SPEECH

BY

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It is with great pleasure and some sentiment that I take part in this ceremony this afternoon. As you may know, I left Emerald over 40 years ago. I left in body but not in spirit. To this day, when people ask me where I am from, I invariable reply "Emerald Junction."

You could call this a heritage event. The word heritage has come into prominence in recent years. Everybody is recalling their genealogy or roots. I believe there is a simple reason for this phenomenon. It is to counterbalance the way in which the generations of the 60s and 70s rejected and abandoned the values of their youth.

Even in my own family, when they would come home and relate about who they had met, I would ask "who is his or her father or mother," they would answer disgustedly "what difference does it make!" Now, I notice, that being older they are beginning to understand what I meant and that it does make a difference. I am not crazy after all. Quite often one of them will say "Dad, I met a man from Emerald today." If they can't remember his name I am quite annoyed.

(2)

In my dictionary "Emerald" is defined in two ways :

(1) "a rich green variety of beryl prized as a gemstone" or

(2) "a clear bright green resembling that of the emerald."

Though the first meaning is equally fitting, I suspect that the second meaning is the one that the first Irish settlers had in mind when they arrived here, looked around and dreamed thoughts of their homeland. Ireland is, as you know, honoured in song and in story as "The Emerald Isle." It was a place those settlers would never see again.

The Emerald we know is beautiful. The scenery in this area is second to none. I have travelled some. Nothing I have seen compares to the scenic panorama from various locations around Emerald.

(3)

I didn't appreciate this when I was growing up in the great days of TRAINS with which I associate Carl Hughes, Emmett Clow, Jarvis Trainor and Jimmy Allan, the STORES with which I associate Clayton Green, "Al" Murphy and Harry Ford, the CHEESE FACTORY with which I associate Austin Murphy, George Mayne, the POTATO WAREHOUSE with which I associate Percy Murphy, Jack Cash, Les Trainor, the BLACKSMITH SHOP with which I associate "Dos" Power, the FARMERS of whom the Clarks, the Deighans, the McEntees, the Hughes, the Whites, the Crokens, the Smiths and Mathesons come to mind. Other names I recall are George Arsenault, Max Martin, Emmett Moynagh, Clarence Mohan, Earl McCarville and Amby Corr. I'm sure if I stopped to think long enough I'd remember many more.

These are the names embedded in the roots of Emerald - in my roots. They add up to a patchwork of nationalities and religions - English, Irish, Scottish and French, Catholic and Protestant - living, working, sharing and playing together in one close-knit community - EMERALD. There was no unemployment insurance, no welfare. Those who had milk gave to those who didn't.

(4)

As David Weale says, I remember "them times."

In "them times" there was a deep-rooted sense of community. There was a tremendous amount of inter-action and inter-dependence in a rural society like Emerald. People knew where they fitted and what was expected of them and they aimed to do that well. They worked with one another, looked after one another and gossiped about one another. When they died their neighbours came to their funerals and they were laid to rest midst their families and friends. Quite often, the school was closed for half-day to honor their passing.

I would like to close with this quotation. I feel it captures the raison d'etre of our being here this afternoon:

"To know where I come from is one of the great longings of the human heart. We go back to find in the past the answer to the present. We must all go home again in reality or in memory. When we don't our lives lose their structure. We go back to remember our youth, but also to experience again shelter and safety."