

Tape 1, Side A

R: *What is your full name, Morgan?*

M: Morgan Wright Thompson

R: *And you were married?*

M: 1967 to Lillian (Peggy) Margo. She goes by Peggy. Her previous married name was Gibson. She had five children. Her husband died. Her birth name was Peggy Forrest.

R: Your parents names?

M: Oscar Wright Thompson and Sarah Edna Thompson, nee Morgan. That's where the Morgan comes from.

R: *And you were born in Ontario, in what year?*

M: 1930 in Kitchener.

R: *Any brothers and sisters?*

M: I have a brother and a half-sister still living in Kitchener. Oscar James and Marion Janet.

R: *And where did you fit in?*

M: I was the youngest of six. There's only two living now—three counting me.

R: *Did you grow up on a farm?*

M: No, I grew up in Kitchener. I'm a city boy.

R: *You moved to the Sunshine Coast in 1954—was that your first visit?*

M: Yes.

R: *And what brought you here?*

M: My cousin's husband, Bill, had the theatre and I went into business with them in the theatre. In the spring of 1954, and then in November of 1954 we opened a men's wear which was on the waterfront.

R: *So he just wrote to you and you came out?*

M: No, it was the other way around. I wrote to him. I really just came out for a couple of years, and stayed for 48.

R: *What had you done before that? Did you go through school?*

M: I went to grade 12 and then worked for the bank and then Goodrich Rubber Company in their retail division.

R: *How did you travel here?*

M: By air.

R: *Flew to Vancouver, and then?*

M: The ferries were running—by car and ferry. The way you would do now.

R: *And what was that first ferry like?*

M: It was small. It had a kitchen and so on. They had really good lunch facilities.

R: *Did you tend to know everyone on it at that time?*

M: No, I was a stranger.

R: *What was the road like when you first came?*

M: When I came it was paved to Sechelt. In succeeding years they paved through to Earl's Cove—a year or two later. That's when they opened the run from Earl's Cove to Powell River.

R: *So what was your first impression of Sechelt?*

M: I arrived at night and my first impression was coming around and onto the waterfront at Wilson Creek or Davis Bay, whatever you want to call it, and seeing five or six street lights. That was my first impression of Sechelt. I can still see it.

R: *Was that your first time living in the country?*

M: Yes.

R: *Did you think, Oh my goodness, what have I arrived in?*

M: No. I always wanted to live in a small community and I found it.

R: *So Dorothy Parsons was your cousin. On your mom's side or your dad's side?*

M: Well, it would be on my mother's side. Dorothy Parsons really was my cousin. And Bill, of course, her husband.

R: *What brought them to the Sunshine Coast?*

M: I don't know that part of it. I just know that they saw an ad in the *Farmer's Weekly* or whatever it was living in Winnipeg or Kenora. He came out and bought the theatres, which was Gibsons and Sechelt, and one day a week up at Pender Harbour.

R: *Where did they put films on at Pender Harbour?*

M: In the hall. It was a 16 mm portable.

R: *Were they still doing the three when you came?*

M: No. They'd gotten rid of the Pender Harbour one, and Bill sold the Gibsons theatre.

R: *Where did you live when you first came to Sechelt?*

M: I stayed with Dorothy and Bill Parsons.

R: *Where was there house located?*

M: On the waterfront in one of the old Union Cottages. There was only one left, and that's the one Mr. Cooke rented.

R: *Green cottage?*

M: Yes.

R: *Later you moved into what had been Dr. McColl's office?*

M: Yes. That's where the men's wear was. The building was called the Pavilion.

R: *How long did you live there?*

M: About 7 years and then we sold the building and the business, and in the interim I had moved to the Main street.

R: *So you went into that onto Cowrie Street?*

M: Yes. I went into their old grocery store.

R: *What was it like in those early years running a business?*

M: I enjoyed it. From 1955 to 1962 I was running the show and the men's wear, so my day was fairly full.

R: *You ran the projector quite a lot?*

M: I was the projectionist.

R: *I read in Helen Dawe's Sechelt that Bill was in town?*

M: Yes. Once I got established here, after 3 to 4 months, Bill had a job selling forklifts. He would come home on the weekend and do the book work.

R: *How long did your partnership with him last?*

M: I can't remember now. Probably when he sold the theatre, about that time, I bought out his interest in the men's wear. I really don't have a date.

R: *When you were running the theatre, it said in Helen Dawe's that the skunks used to come.*

M: Oh, yes. We had skunks and . . . (chuckles) . . . we don't talk about the rats . . . Any

building on the waterfront was generally plagued with rats, and of course the popcorn and things would bring them in. The skunks weren't too much of a problem usually. But they were there.

R: Did you have to worry about fire in those days?

M: Yes. Not as much as they had previously. By the time I started running the machines they had the safety film. It was a nitrate film that was the real scare.

R: Did you have any mishaps during those times? Film broke?

M: Not really. Oh, the film was always breaking and missing cues. Nothing serious. The usual mishaps. You're running two machines and you missed a cue mark or the film broke or you ran out of light. The usual dumb mistakes you made by not paying attention.

R: Bea Swanson said you used to have Wednesday operas? Like Nelson Eddie?

M: No, I don't know where she got that idea. The only thing we used to have was Country-Store-Night, where we gave away a couple of bags of groceries to two or three people that were in the audience. But no audience. That may have come with John Hayes who bought the theatre from us, but not with us.

R: Did you have lots of people come?

M: To start with and then television came in and of course that cut the viewing audience down. And in that era were the big mega movies like *Que Vadis* and *Cleopatra* and they weren't making that many, and we were running three shows a week, so we were hard-pressed to find good shows to put on. That didn't help. Just a combination of things. But it survived.

R: What made you think of getting into men's wear?

M: We bought the building that the show was in and there was this great space not doing anything. Bill and I looked around and decided there wasn't a men's wear, so we would open a men's wear, and that's what we did. There wasn't any real motivation except need of the community.

R: And you stayed with it for how many years?

M: 40 years less a day. I didn't realize it was that close. I knew it was around 40 years, but if I'd have kept it one more day I could have said 40 years.

R: Did you enjoy it?

M: Yes I did. I didn't have a bad taste in my mouth. I stayed too long, because things have changed so much in 40 years, but I still enjoyed it. Like meeting the people and so on.

R: What was in Sechelt at the time that you came here?

M: Retail wise? There would be a drug store, two hardware stores, two grocery stores, Union Store was still open, it was on the waterfront. Notary Public. TV shop. A couple of gas stations. Bank of Montreal.

R: *Where was that at?*

M: Well, originally it would be where the Petro Can Agency was towards the waterfront on Wharf.

R: *Where the tanks were?*

M: Yes. It was a subagency from Gibsons that came up Tuesdays and Thursdays.

R: *So that's where the Bank of Montreal was. Was that building moved?*

M: Yes. I think that became the village office, but I'm not sure. And the bank moved into where Tony's Lock and Key is. [Note: Tony's Lock & Key is now 5651 Cowrie]. And of course there was the doctor—we had a Dr. McColl. And a drug store.

R: *Was the Credit Union in those days, or did it come later?*

M: It came later. Not much later, but a little later. It was across from the Cenotaph where Mr. English's office was. The old Credit Union Building was removed.

R: *Were the picnic grounds still there when you arrived?*

M: No, they were gone.

R: *Where was the Legion?*

M: It had been closed down, and then it opened at the foot of Selma Park Road just off the Reserve. But previous to that it was on Mermaid Street in that building—the big building behind the Medical Clinic on Inlet. Then it moved to Wharf.

R: *Were you in the armed forces?*

M: No.

R: *So how was laundry done? Was there a laundry in town?*

M: They had a Laundromat—a coin laundry—and I'm just trying to think of when that started. I don't remember having difficulty doing my own laundry, being a bachelor. They were certainly there by 1960, I know that, and it was possibly there before. I can't remember.

R: *I guess you listened to the radio a lot in those days.*

M: Yes.

R: *Did you get good reception?*

M: Yes. I didn't—as I say, I was working till 11 o'clock each night. But most of the stations were Vancouver. Nanaimo, CHUB, was a good station also.

R: *So, who were your neighbours? Your friends? What social group did you go with?*

M: Well, I belonged to the Kinsmen. I lived in a little cottage in Selma Park and the landlord lived in a house above the Jonas. But most of my friends were in the Kinsmen group. Sunny Benner. Ed Renie. Wilma and Ralph Stephanson. And wives of course. John Hicks.

R: *What did you do for entertainment?*

M: Well, here again I was working the show six days a week, so I didn't have much time. Dances. My evenings were always tied up.

R: *Was the first election over when you arrived?*

M: For village council? No, it was formed after I was here. 1956. Have you got this? [Newspaper about the council's 25th anniversary in 1981.]

R: *Were you involved in that?*

M: No. I didn't know enough about it. I thought it was the only way to go.

R: *Did you know any of the councillors?*

M: Oh, yes. I knew them all. By name. I didn't know them personally.

R: *Did you have a business association?*

M: No.

R: *You and Bill served on a Coroner's Jury for a while?*

M: Well, he didn't very long, he was only here for about 18 months. But you were called for a coroner's jury whenever there was a sudden death. It wasn't an appointment that lasted for a year or anything.

R: *How many did you do?*

M: Oh, five or six.

R: *Was there anything unusual?*

M: No. One was a logging accident, and two were car accidents. It was that sort of thing.

R: *No murder mysteries or anything?*

M: No. One was an elderly lady walked out from behind the bus and a car hit her and killed her, that sort of thing. One was a body they found out on Trail Islands. They had an idea of who it was, but it was only half a body. Crabs and so on had got ahold of it. That sort of thing. It was interesting.

R: *What other community organizations did you belong to?*

M: Chamber of Commerce. Celebration Days. May Day. Timber Days. About all I can think of.

R: *What was your first car?*

M: First car was a 1947 Ford Coupe.

R: *Out in Ontario?*

M: Oh, no. The first car that I ever owned was a broken down 1937 Chev. The first car I had

out here was a Coupe.

R: Did you get it here, or in Vancouver?

M: Here.

R: How did you learn to drive?

M: With my brother. As they do now.

R: There was a gas station here when you came? Was that Solnik's?

M: Yes. Well, there were three. There was one on the corner where the Esso is, and one across the street where the Daily Roast is, and Solnik's or whatever you want to call it, where the Shell Station is now. And it was a Shell Station.

R: Who owned the other ones?

M: Well, Standard Motors, I think. I don't know who opened Standard Motors, but it was later owned by Orv Moscript, Butch and Tommy Ono, and Sam McKenzie. They could tell you who they bought it from. I can't remember.

R: Do you know which was the first garage in Sechelt?

M: I would say the Shell garage. Looking at old pictures, that one seemed to have been there for a long time.

R: Did they have the bus going when you were here?

M: Yes.

R: Did you ever meet any of the pioneer people, such as Edric Clayton?

M: Edric, yes.

R: What was he like?

M: Just a great guy. I can't say enough about him. Very kindly. One time I forgot to pay the rent and he came to me and said, check with your accountant to see if I had paid the rent. I said, "No, I forgot. I'll go and write you a check right now." He said, "Oh, no, no. Don't bother. Just write me double next time." You know, that sort of thing. It was a pleasure to know him.

And Jack Mayne, he was an interesting person. The notary public. He'd been in Sechelt quite a while.

R: Did you do any fishing or anything like that?

M: No, I'm not a fisherman. Or a hunter.

R: Did you ever meet Thomas Cook?

M: No. He was long gone.

R: *How about any of the Bert Whitaker family?*

M: I knew Ken, that's the only one, and he died a couple of years after I arrived on the scene.

R: *What was he like?*

M: I didn't know him really.

R: *What would you say was your greatest difficulty running a business in Sechelt?*

M: I can't remember having any great difficulty. Other than the skunks and lack of money. I'm teasing when I say lack of money. Just the ups and downs of the economics that you get with anything.

R: *What do you think of the changes in Sechelt over the years?*

M: I'm glad to see them. When I came there wasn't a barber in Sechelt. We had to go to Gibsons. We had to go to Pender Harbour to the hospital, or go to Gibsons to get a case of beer or bottle of wine. I'm glad to see these changes, and unfortunately with population comes changes in the environment and so on. You can't have one without the other.

Sechelt's been good to me and I've enjoyed it.

R: *As a Kinsman, what did you do?*

M: We started tiddling up Hackett Park, had some work parties there. Put up Christmas decorations for a while. A number of small things, because we weren't a very big club.

R: *How long were you with the Kinsmen?*

M: I'd say till I got married. And I was on council at that time.

R: *How long were you on council?*

M: I'd have to go to the village records and look. Seven years. Then I resigned and ran for mayor against Bill Swain. Didn't make it, thank goodness.

R: *What kind of things did you do on council?*

M: There wasn't a lot to do—there was only a 350 population in the 1960s. Just ran the village and kept things flowing in the right direction, we hoped.

R: *How long were you with the Chamber of Commerce?*

M: I don't remember. I was president two or three times. I guess I finally decided to get out, I'd been there long enough. They were looking to me for direction, and they needed some new ideas. Time to step aside.

R: *How did you meet Peggy?*

M: Oh, I don't know. Needed a date for a dance.

R: *Where did she come from?*

M: She was living here at the time. She was born in Roberts Creek. She and her first husband were living in Kitimat when he died and she moved back here with her five children.

She is in Totem Lodge now, with Alzheimer's. At least she's not in pain. I don't know if I could take having a partner who is in pain and great discomfort.

R: *Did you ever grow a garden?*

M: Oh, a little garden. I mow the lawn. Put a few vegetables in. Just enough to get outside and meet the neighbours.

R: *Do you think people were friendlier when you first came here?*

M: No, I don't think so. They seemed more friendly because you "knew everybody." So if two people were talking, a third one would come along and join in, sort of thing. But I don't think it was a case of being more friendly now than it was forty years ago. It's just that you knew them and knew what was going on with them.

R: *You didn't feel like an outsider coming into an established group?*

M: Oh, yes. You always do. I would say there were very few that immediately melted into the community, and of course, working as much as I did, I had very little chance of meeting the people. I survived, and I enjoyed it.

R: *Do you have any other memories?*

M: No, I think you've covered most of it. Anything to do with Sechelt. You asked me about businesses. There was an Insurance office and a Real Estate office.

R: *Your pavilion must have been like the first mall in Sechelt.*

M: Well, it was an entertainment place.

R: *It started like that, but then when you took it over—*

M: No, there was just the theatre and the men's wear. There was a restaurant, but that was a long time before. They built a new building, the Sechelt Tea Room, and the Whispering Pines and so on. Parthenon.

R: *And that was all in the same area where the pavilion was?*

M: Yes. The Union Store and a tennis court, and the pavilion, and the Parthenon Restaurant, then half a dozen Union cottages on the other side.

R: *Where did they have the dances you used to go to?*

M: Roberts Creek Hall. And Gibsons. We didn't have any major hall here.

R: *I'd have thought people would use the pavilion?*

M: Well, it was in pretty tough shape. It had been used for roller skating and the floor was pretty badly worn out from the skating, and not suitable for dancing.

R: Did you have to do major repairs?

M: No. It was all right for walking on, but not for dancing and a crowd. It wasn't that big, really.

R: What kind of music did you have?

M: Oh the music of the time. Music of the 60s. Orchestras would come up and small groups in the area.

R: Thank you for this.

M: Good. Glad we had this time together, as the song goes.

Note: As I was packing to go, Morgan said that his dad was the Ford Motor dealer. They had an altercation and his dad left and became a fur producer, raising silver fox first, then mink. He died when Morgan was ten.