

The History of Randerson Ridge: From Yorkshire to the Queen!

George Frederick Randerson was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1902, the eldest son of a coal miner. George married Joyce and had a disabled child Jeanne, and, deciding mining wasn't for him, left his family for Canada in search of a better life for them. His first stop was Toronto, where he found work as a machinist. He sent for his wife and daughter, who arrived in Canada on October, 1929. 5 weeks after they arrived, George was crushed in a horrendous work-place accident. Joyce was told that if he lived, he would never walk again.

Joyce became the sole supporter for the family as a seamstress in the sweat shops of Toronto. Eventually George's stubborn Yorkshire will succeeded in him being released from hospital. 6 years later George was finally able to stand and walk on his crushed spine, albeit dragging a foot. This didn't dampen his determination for life, and he got another job with C.N. He and Joyce saved their money, and Jeanne had an operation which enabled her to walk, despite her paralysis. By the end of the Second World War, a second child, Joy, was born.

In 1946 George sent Joyce on a car trip to Vancouver Island to look around. Joyce couldn't understand how so many people could live surrounded by so many trees, but, nevertheless, she decided she would like to move to Vancouver Island.

On December 6th, 1946, in a 1939 Oldsmobile with a travel trailer, the Randersons left Toronto to see North America with their friend Smith Winchester and dog Queenie. 3 months and ten-thousand miles later, they arrived in Nanaimo, greeted by over 12 inches of snow.

George and Joyce purchased what would be considered today a huge lot, lot 27G, stretching from Pleasant Valley Hall on Doumont Road and up Turner. They cleared the lot with a converted Model T Ford. In the Summer of 1947, they built and opened a service station on the corner of Turner Road and Metral Drive and later established Nanaimo's first trailer park. The trailer park was expanding, so purchasing another lot was necessary, and a large parcel which adjoined Lot 27G was acquired, Lot 30. It ran from Sparton Road along Metral to meet 27G and on up Turner Road to the "chicken farm". So successful was the Randerson Mobile Home Park that he became the first importer of mobiles on Vancouver Island.

Another service station, an import trailer dealership, and, in April 1958, a coffee shop all opened. In 1960 the coffee shop became “Dot’s Coffee Stop”. Currently, there is a community garden where the old Esso Station and Dot’s used to be.

In 1959, upon request, George and Joyce had a luxurious 10 foot wide mobile home built and transported up from California for Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Phillip to stay in while visiting Vancouver Island.

George Randerson died on March 9th, 1961 at age 59, and Joyce died on January 25th, 1989, at age 85.

Prior to George’s death, Joyce gradually sold off parcels of the land. One specific parcel was sold to Mr. Cliff Jackman, a land surveyor. This is the parcel of land which eventually was bought by School District 68 to accommodate a new Elementary School: Randerson Ridge Elementary School, built in 1995. On one side of the school was a chicken and sheep farm; on the other, an orchard. Some of the orchard trees are still visible on the properties to the north-west side of the school (along Nelson Road), and the sheep used to roam around the pond on the south east side of the school.

Fittingly, George Randerson and his wife, Joyce, were pioneers of great spirit, who chased their dreams, and proved they could accomplish anything if they tried hard enough, despite some serious setbacks. There were two elements that George instilled into his family: you can do anything you want, be anything you want to be, if you try; and, whatever you try – do *your* best – be the best *you* can be at whatever you do. This is a mantra that all students and staff at Randerson Ridge try to live by.