White Gold in the Highlands

Nancy McMinn

Angling across part of the south Highlands, close to the new Municipal Hall, is a substantial seam of limestone, at least three hundred metres wide in some locations. Its discovery late in the nineteenth century attracted a number of entrepreneurs and skilled workmen who formed part of the pioneering society of the Highlands. But how did it come to be here in the first place? This story is one that stretches back into the far reaches of geological time itself:

Three hundred and eighty million years ago, while the first reptiles were appearing on earth and giant insects dominated the forests, the building of Vancouver Island began far to the south of here, perhaps as far as present-day Peru. At that time, a portion of the earth's crust known to geologists as Wrangellia, was part of a large oceanic lava plain that supported chains of volcanic islands. Wrangellia included the embryonic Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlottes and southeastern Alaska as well as B.C.'s southern Coast Mountains. For millions of years, intermittent eruptions from volcanic mountains spread blankets of lava and ash over the sea floor. At the same time, the action of wind and tide whittled away the mountain surfaces. As the eruptions diminished, these volcanic islands became eroded to a flat, submarine plateau upon which colonies of marine animals flourished in the warm seas. Gradually, their discarded shells built up layers of limestone. At times, the underlying crust would split apart, while lava squeezed up and spread again over the plateau. Then again coral and clams would colonize the sea floor and again their shells would accumulate, adding to the limestone. More volcanism followed, but the lava by now was largely injected above the ocean's surface. As this magma slowly cooled and solidified into granitic rock, the great heat and pressure caused older, underlying rocks to metamorphose into the type of metamorphic rock known as "gneiss". Incidentally, much later in the Island's history, it was this same gneiss which, thrust up to the surface, now forms most of the bedrock of today's Highlands.

Meanwhile, Wrangellia, including the future Vancouver Island, slowly journeyed northward due to continuous movement and renewal of parts of the earth's crust. From time to time, through fractures in the oceans' floors, molten magma rises to the surface of the sea bed. With each succeeding injection of magma, the walls of cooled lava from earlier injections are pushed apart, creating plates which spread out on either side of a "rift valley" which is formed by this process. Propelled in this way, the plates move at a rate of a few centimetres a year. And so Wrangellia, initially constructed far away in the south Pacific, was carried *north and east* toward the shores of North America. This was a journey that took many millions of years.

At the same time, in the Atlantic, a similar process was occurring. The sea floor to the west of a central oceanic rift was travelling *westward*, bearing upon it, like a giant conveyer belt, the lighter but thicker continent of North America. Great forces were moving these two plates of the earth's crust inexorably towards one another. They were on a collision course! Finally, 100 million years ago, about the time when Africa was separating from South America, Wrangellia crashed into North America. Typically, this geological "crashing" was a slow-motion event that took millions of years: The deeper layers of Wrangellia were drawn far down under the edge of the lighter continent, melted into magma again, ready to erupt once more in volcanoes such as Mt. Baker and Mt. St. Helen. At the same time, Vancouver Island's more superficial layers were crushed and folded by gigantic pressures against the continent's edge. These great earth movements were followed about 50 million years later by two smaller pieces of the earth's crust colliding with the Island. These later collisions, as well as the more recent glaciations, resulted in a formation similar to what we see today. Elements long buried, like the Highland limestone seam, were now exposed.

The story is one of constant change. Crushing and folding and faulting, gargantuan movements of the earth's crust push parts of the landscape up, while glaciers, streams and the action of plants are wearing them down. While new crust forms on the ocean floor, old crust is being forced down into the earth where it melts, only to return through fissures and volcanic eruptions, to build more mountains and broad new plains. It is the ultimate circle game:

And the molten rocks go round and round:
And the landscapes, they go up and down.
We're captives in a carousel of time:
We can't return, we can only look behind
From where we came
And go round and round and round
In a circle game.

with apologies to Joni Mitchell

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Some time after the last glaciers disappeared, people began to move across the Bering land bridge and down the coast. Some settled in our area and became the ancestors of our native people. It was a rich and abundant coast, and they lived well from the land, but one resource they did not use was limestone. It fell to the European settlers to tap the abundant "white gold" that lay exposed like small lenses protruding through

the mass of gneiss which forms the bedrock of much of the Highland and Victoria area. One of these settlers was Joseph Wriglesworth

Early in 1862, twenty-two year old Wriglesworth left the Yorkshire farm where he was born, and made his way to the port where a decrepit old immigrant ship, the *Sierra Nevada* was taking on provisions before setting sail for the west coast of North America. It was an uncomfortable journey, tightly stowed as the immigrants were. Wriglesworth was assigned a berth in the steward's storeroom. At meals they had barely enough room to lift their arms. Sailing south towards the Falkland Islands, where they took on fresh water and supplies, they encountered heavy winds and rolling seas, to say nothing of the wild storms as they rounded Cape Horn. They arrived in Victoria in August. Two of the passengers disembarking with young Wrigglesworth were Hannah Maynard, early Victoria's eccentric woman photographer, and her husband, Richard, who had boarded the ship during a stop in Boston.

courtesy B.C. Archives

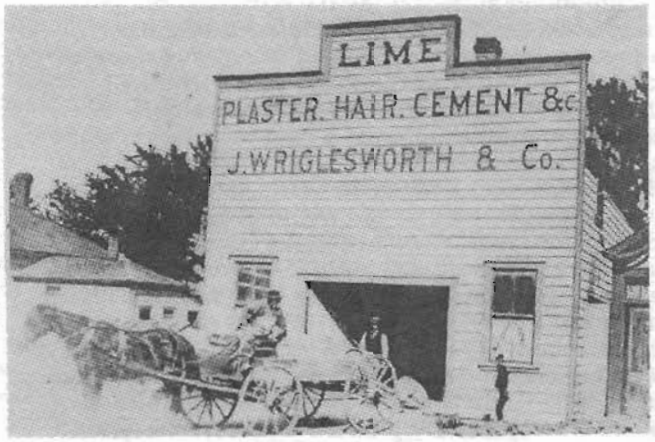
Volunteer fireman, Joseph Wriglesworth

Victoria was bustling. As the supply centre and jumping off point for the Fraser River gold rush, it had exploded from a small community of a thousand souls to a thriving city, incorporated only a few months before. Joseph Wriglesworth saw his opportunity. He set out immediately to build a log hostelry with fourteen tiny rooms on a vacant lot at the corner of Johnson and Broad St.. His London Hotel soon became a favorite stopping off place for itinerant miners and loggers passing through town. Yarns of fabulous wealth in the goldfields swirled in the smoky haze of the Hotel's tavern. It was soon too much of a lure for young Wriglesworth. He ventured into the Interior even before the Cariboo road was constructed, sometimes having to cut his own trail through the bush, but found little or no gold for his pains. He tried farming on Sidney Island, hoping to capitalize on his agricultural background, but here too, he did not find his fortune.

Nothing daunted, he returned to Victoria, where he embraced the young city for its opportunities, both commercial and civic. He opened a liquor store and saloon on Government St. and set up a family grocery on the southeast corner of Blanshard and Yates, where the Capitol Theatre now sits. He ran in the civic elections and for four years served on the city council for the Yates St. Ward. He was credited with having a gate removed from the top of Yates St. In 1863, the year after his arrival, Victoria's first volunteer fire brigade was formed. Wrigglesworth joined and served as an active volunteer for 18 years, during which time he held the offices of assistant chief and chief engineer. In those days, firemen provided their own clothing—his wife sewed his heavy, scarlet wool fireman's coat by hand. They paid dues to the volunteers' company, and were fined if they missed a meeting or a fire. Horses were expensive, so all the fire-fighting equipment—reels, hose and steam-driven pump—was pulled to the scene on a wagon by the crew! Wriglesworth became a well-known man-about-town, engrossed for a time with the city's affairs.

The building industry was thriving. In the surrounding areas, most of the suitable land was being actively farmed. Lime was a commodity in demand for both building and agricultural use (to "sweeten" acidic soil). Lime itself is never found native. A product of limestone, its use goes back to ancient times. The early Egyptians used it as an ingredient in mortar and plaster. The Greeks, Romans and Chinese used it for construction, agriculture, bleaching and tanning. It is produced by firing limestone in a current of air, to a red heat, using wood or coal as the fuel. This high temperature must be held for a long period—from one to three days—while the necessary chemical changes take place. Today this is accomplished with modern machinery, but the earlier method was to burn the stone either in heaps insulated with clay and other fine soil or, more satisfactorily, in small kilns built of brick and dug into the side of a hill. It was a process which, though seemingly simple, required great skill and experience.

Limestone sources, such as the Millstream seam, never traditionally exploited by the native people, now became an object of interest and exploration. Though not endowed with the glamour of gold-seeking, the search for limestone was more likely to be rewarding.



courtesy B.C. Archives

Wriglesworth's sales outlet for lime and other products, corner of Blanshard & Yates, during the 1870's

From the time he stepped off the ship in this new country, Joseph Wriglesworth had been searching for opportunities to satisfy his adventurous, entrepreneurial spirit. Limestone—the white gold—represented one of these.

John Grieg, a Saanich pioneer, had discovered limestone on Seymour Hill near Thetis Lake, but it was poor in quality. He then found a seam of higher grade rock at Tod Inlet, but soon realized the disadvantage of this site. Transportation costs from Tod Inlet all

around the Saanich Peninsula to the market in Victoria were far greater than from the limeworks over on San Juan Island, just across Haro Strait. Grieg sold the property and it soon came into Wriglesworth's hands. In partnership with a neighbouring settler at Tod Inlet, Wriglesworth formed the Saanich Lime Company. He built a lime kiln, probably the dugout type, and burned the rock to produce lime. At the corner of Yates and Blanshard, next to his grocery, he opened an outlet to sell his lime, along with horse hair, used in plastering, cement and other products, to the building trade.

Wriglesworth must have discovered that the Tod Inlet limestone seam crosses the water and reappears near the northeast tip of Willis Point, because he purchased land in that area as well. He sent samples of the white rock to England with a view to manufacturing the popular new product, Portland cement, which had been invented there in mid-century. When the report came back that the quality of limestone was excellent for this purpose he sought financial backing in order to set up a plant. Unfortunately these efforts failed, and he sold out to Vancouver interests. They, in turn sold to Ontario cement manufacturer Robert Pym Butchart, and it was left to him to capitalize on the site. The rest is history.

courtesy the Pike family

Charlie Pike, first owner of the Millstream limestone property

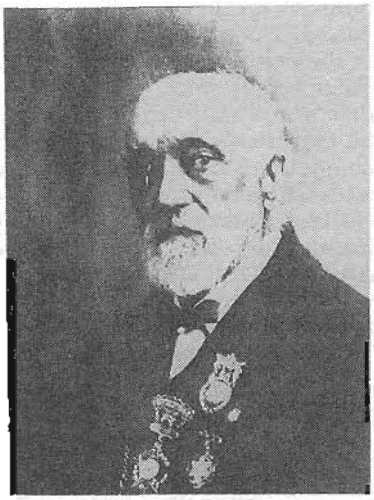
Meanwhile, the Millstream limestone seam, laid down hundreds of millions of years before, in the far off South Seas, had finally been discovered. In 1887, Highland pioneer Charlie Pike, son of old Caleb, had pre-empted sixty acres of land, just south of Lost Lake (now Teanook). This property included part of the seam. Charlie and his brother, Henry, quarried the rock and burnt it in a kiln, built not far from Millstream Rd. In 1888, Pike completed his claim to the property by purchasing the Crown Grant for $60.

That same year, Joseph Wriglesworth appeared on the Highland scene. Adjoining Pike's land was a 161 acre parcel, which included Lost Lake. He purchased it for $161. Did he expect to find limestone there too? No one knows, though his actions indicate that the white rock—perhaps it represented white gold to him—was his driving force at the time. In 1891, his Saanich Lime Company purchased Charlie Pike's land and presumably continued to produce lime and sell it through his Yates Street outlet. About the same time, he was prospecting in the Malahat area, where he was successful in finding a substantial limestone seam around another small lake, now known as Wrigglesworth Lake, the headwaters of Arbutus Creek.

What was it that drew Wriglesworth to the pursuit of limestone? He had become famous all over the Island for an unusual skill—water witching, or dowsing, learned from an old Cariboo miner. In his old age, he claimed to have accurately divined over a thousand wells. Over the years he had so perfected his skill that he could pinpoint a spring under a house from two floors up. But his divining ability was not confined to finding underground water. According to an old newspaper article, he could pinpoint a dollar bill concealed beneath a newspaper, a coin secreted between the leaves of a book, or the exact location of a piece of coal on his living-room floor from the storey above!

According to the American Society of Dowsers, "dowsing is the ancient art of searching for hidden things (water, precious metals, etc.), using one of the senses that many of us are not aware of possessing. Reportedly 80% of us have this gift...but most need a 'prosthesis', a tool that will help us to read our body signals better. This is what dowsing rods are for." Could it be that Wriglesworth turned this ability to good use when he prospected for limestone? Was it a natural adaptation of the skill he had used so successfully in dowsing all those wells?

Though he was prospecting farther afield, Wriglesworth settled at Millstream in 1891 and the following year he successfully petitioned the Federal Postal Service to open an outlet in the rapidly growing Highland District. The Millstream Post Office officially opened on May 1st, 1892 in Wriglesworth's home, as was the custom at the time. He became the Highlands' first postmaster. During the next fifty-three years the post office migrated from homestead to homestead while seven pioneers served the community in succession as its official postmaster. Finally, on the 24th of July, 1945, when rural mail delivery was inaugurated out of Langford, the Millstream Post Office closed forever.



courtesy B.C. Archives

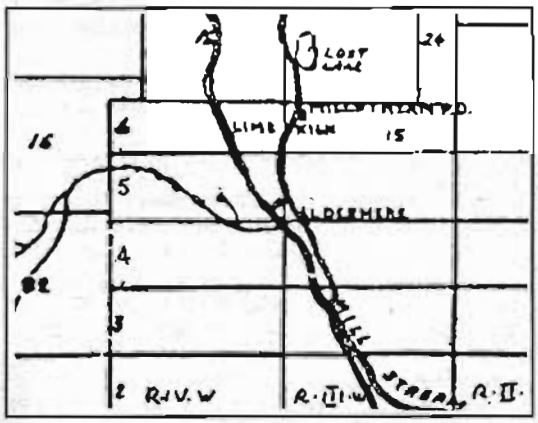
Joseph Wriglesworth in later years.

Meanwhile, Wriglesworth was joined by John Maltravers, a limeburner from Shropshire, who seems to have been in charge of the operation. The limeworks expanded into a small but busy industry. Two quarries were actively worked and lime was produced in several small kilns. Charlie Pike and probably his brother Henry, who lived just up the road in the Pike House, were engaged in the limeworks, too. Maltravers also acted as unofficial postmaster, perhaps when Joseph Wriglesworth was off on his prospecting jaunts. While resident there, Maltravers married Mary Ann Woods, also a resident of Millstream at the time of their

marriage.

The limeworkers, and the other homesteaders in the Highlands, had no one but themselves to manage their affairs. *They* were the community. So, when in 1892 there were fourteen school age children in the district, and no school, they set to work to establish one. John Maltravers was among those who petitioned the government to fund a school and when the petition failed that year for want of one eligible child to make up the requirement, they petitioned again the following year, with fifteen children's names. This time they were successful. When Maltravers' daughter, Edith, was six and ready for school, Mary Ann Maltravers took up the position of secretary of the school board, a post she held until the school closed for a time when the student population again fell below the minimum. During some of that time, one of Joseph Wriglesworth's daughters served as schoolmistress.

Wriglesworth was postmaster for nine years. But his presence in the Highlands was dependent on his limeworks. He had started out with high hopes, first at Tod Inlet, then at Millstream. These two were the earliest active limeworks in the Victoria area. For a few years there was little competition, except perhaps from the quarries on San Juan Island. Soon after the turn of the century, however, other seams were discovered and began to be exploited. The competition became keener. Some of these sites—Rosebank, on the west side of Esquimalt Harbour (now part of the DND property at Colwood); Bamberton; and Parsons Bridge—were on tidewater. An Atkins Rd. site was on the railroad. The higher costs of transportation by road from the Millstream site made the operation increasingly uneconomical. In 1901, Wriglesworth, probably disheartened, left the district. The post office closed. The Maltravers family apparently departed too, as neither is mentioned in directories for Millstream after that date. But clearly Charlie Pike remained at the Millstream site for a while, since Highland settler, Jesse Bernard wrote in her diary in May of 1903: "sold 1 dozen eggs to Pike of the lime kiln."



Early map showing location of lime kiln and post office

Before long, Wriglesworth sold his interest in the property. In subsequent years it was held by a number of firms and individuals who had connections with the industry: the Frewing brothers, well known stonemasons and plasterers; John Raymond and Sons, the most prominent firm in the turn of the century lime business; and Evans Coleman and Evans, dealers in construction aggregates. Little if any industrial activity, however, is reported. Much later, members of the Scafe family, Highlands pioneers, tried to resurrect the business for awhile. During the late 40's, miner William Dixon, a grandson of Caleb Pike, had excavated a small mine on the Gowland Range, high above Finlayson Arm. Following the news that a smelter might be built in the Victoria area, he wrote the Minister of Mines, pointing out that limestone, also used in the smelting process, could be found nearby. But the smelter was never built. The Millstream limestone industry had essentially died with the departure of the colourful, ebullient, adventurous entrepreneur, Highlands' first postmaster, Joseph Wriglesworth.

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Just across the road from the Millstream quarries, and close to the new Municipal Hall, are other signs of human activity—the remains of a barn, some fruit trees, the remnants of an avenue of cedar trees, the foundations of a very large house, an old barn, and a tennis court—even a small dugout lime kiln. Their history involves a wealthy publisher, a famous pioneer doctor and an accidental death. But that is quite another story. ❀

COLD BLOODED

A newt makes his way to hibernation in the woods
leaving the lake where he has spent the warming months,
if he can cross a road
spotted with tire-squashed bodies of his kind.

When nudged by human fingers, he simply stops.
When prodded, he rolls over reveals his bright orange belly
a warning to predators of the poison in his skin;
the cars that journey home at dusk pay no heed.

Slow and stead has over eons served him well
but does not provide for the two unseeing eyes of an automobile.
His brain is tuned to the minute increments
of drifting continents.

Elliott Gose

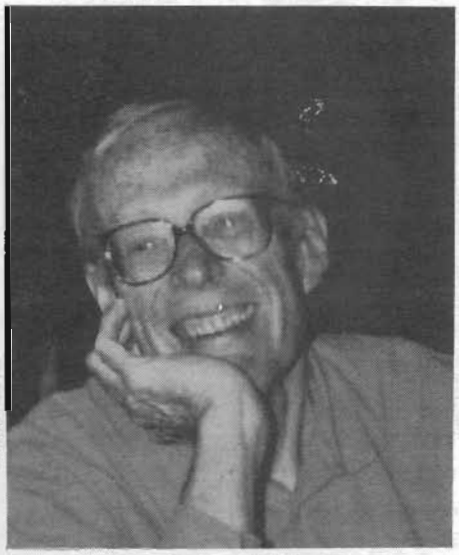
Highland Artists: Part One

Thelma Fayle

Poets, music composers, potters, and silversmiths are just a few of the artists practising in the Highlands. In spite of our small population, there is plenty of talent tucked away in these rural parts. Here are just three of the people who either make their living from their art, or simply live to make their art.

ELLIOTT GOSE

Elliott Gose started writing poetry at nineteen, kept it up into his twenties, and thought of himself as a poet even then. As a young man, his mother encouraged him, unlike his army officer dad, who was more inclined to merely tolerate poetry! He went on to earn a masters and a PhD and became an academic in English literature. He published four books of literary criticism, on such subjects as Irish fairy tales and children's animal tales. It was only when he retired in 1991 that he switched from writing prose, and turned seriously to writing poetry. After the publication of a few pieces in the Gowlland Journal and the Highlander, and some enjoyable poetry readings at Pike House poetry evenings, Elliott began to compile a collection that is now under consideration by a publisher. Although publishing is not all-important, Elliott says, "It is nice to be appreciated."



Damon Carter

Elliott does not work with a set theme, preferring to write whatever strikes him. It might be about nature, dreams, childhood memories or any number of things, serious or humourous. For those who think of poets as creative souls perched in a comfy chair by a scenic window all day, and busy only with their own picturesque thoughts, Elliott is not such a man. He is a very involved and dedicated member of the community in his role as Chair of the Advisory Planning Commission. A few years ago he was part of a small group that worked with Western Forest Products in their first development in the Highlands. Shortly after that he sat on the Parks Advisory Committee which formulated the Gowlland-Tod Park management plan. When that was finished he joined the park's trail committee. Elliott is a busy man!

PATRICIA SPELLACY

Patricia Spellacy was an occupational therapist in Victoria for many years. As part of her professional training, she studied ceramics and various fabric dyeing techniques. Once retired, Patricia was able to participate fully in her lifelong interest in art. She established a dedicated home workspace that was once earmarked for a garage, installed a big bathtub for batiking, and placed all of her tools nearby.

On one project Patricia worked with a group of Highland women to produce a shiburi quilt that was raffled as a fund raiser. "Shiburi," says Patricia, "is an exciting process. You tie, bind, sew or fold the cloth in any number of ways prior to dyeing it in an indigo bath, and the result can be quite surprising and very beautiful. The intensity of dye in the vat or the length of immersion can create different hues of blue, from pale to very dark. For the quilt, each of us made sample squares which were then sewn together and quilted."

Frank Spellacy

Recently, Patricia enjoyed teaching batik, another fabric dyeing technique, to a young neighbour. "With shibori, you dip only once," Patricia explains. "The intricacy and beauty of the design results from the many ways that the fabric can be drawn or folded together to resist the dye. With batik, the cloth is dipped in many dye baths. An image is drawn on the fabric and hot wax applied to areas of the design where you want to resist the dye. I use a combination of beeswax and paraffin. The material is immersed in a series of dye baths, while the resist wax is applied to different parts of the design between immersions. The fabric may go through many baths and the order of these can produce different hues, so an understanding of colour development is essential. For large areas I use a variety of brushes to apply the wax, and for detailed work a special tool called a tjanting. This is a handle which holds a small copper bowl with a narrow spout, in which I melt chips of wax over an alcohol flame."

Using a tjanting is a special skill, and Patricia has not yet tried teaching it to others, but offers to try if anyone in the Highlands is interested. Just call her!

She has always been interested in drawing and creating ceramics (garden pieces and wall plaques) as well. She has done some portraits and even a recent successful series depicting an onion as it grew older! "All of my artistic efforts are undertaken purely for my own personal pleasure," says Patricia.

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KEN WILLIAMS

Ken Williams, a professional musician since he was eighteen, composes music for television and film. Ken's first instrument, in elementary school, was the clarinet. In high school he moved onto the electric bass. Today he plays synthesizers, samplers, piano, flute, sax and guitar as well.

His career started with a high school band some thirty years ago. He entered the Fine Arts in Music program at Uvic, but soon was offered a great starter job that gave him a practical education—with pay. He and his high school band "Shylock" were playing outdoors in Bastion Square when they were approached by Ron Birmingham, owner of the nearby Dixieland nightclub—The Barbary Banjo. The club's regular group, the famous New Vaudeville Band, best known for its hit song "Winchester Cathedral", was off to Las Vegas for the summer, so Ken and the boys were invited to fill in. It was a popular club and they were well paid. It was a thrilling experience. Later, Ken also had the opportunity to fill in for the band's absent bass player.

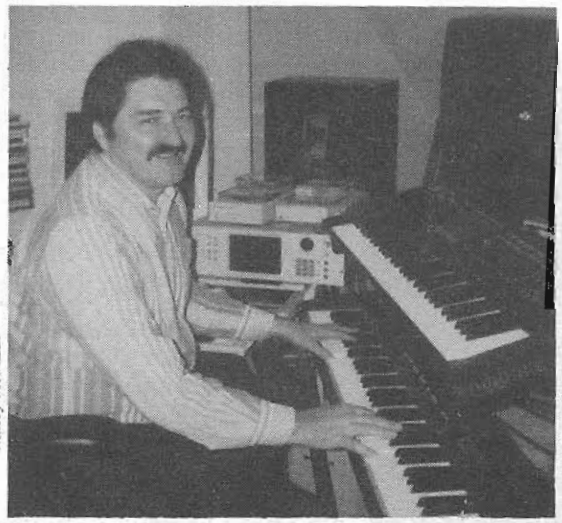
Through the years, Ken went on to play in various rock, pop, rhythm and blues bands, while composing original music as well. A favourite stint was one with B.C. Ferries. The Dave Barrett government hired bands to play in the forward lounge on Victoria-Tsawwassen and Horseshoe Bay-Nanaimo crossings. Ken and his friends, Ted House and John Demers, played two round trips for seventy-seven consecutive days (that's more than three hundred performances!) for two summer seasons. As a bonus, "all you can eat" buffet meals were thrown in. It was a ball.

With the exception of spending a short while in Nanaimo and Vancouver, Ken has lived in Victoria all of his life. He loves it here, but found the studio work opportunities in Vancouver "awesome." While in Vancouver, he and Ted House and John Demers played various lounges to keep the wolf from the door, while recording original music at Mushroom Studio, including sessions with Mike Flicker and "Heart" guitarist Howard Leese.

Back in Victoria around 1980, Ken played locally at Harpo's in a popular eight-piece R & B band called "Zipper." But Harpo's was by no means his only venue. Ken says he has played every place in Victoria "at least a million times." He has backed up Howie Mendel at the Royal Theatre, played with Wilf Carter at the Jaycee Fair, performed in "Jesus Christ Superstar" during its popular three week run at the Macpherson, as well as doing month-long stands at a number of popular Victoria area nightclubs.

In the early 80's, Ken, John Demers and pianist Karel Roessingh (also a member of "Zipper" and now a fellow Highland resident) were hired on as the Canadian dance band for the famous Princess ships—the *Loveboats*, cruising along the Mexican Riviera, through the Panama Canal, and throughout the Carribean.

In 1987, Ken, with Karel Roessingh and three others, formed Legacy Music Ltd. and started producing commercial sound tracks in a downtown studio. For a time they were producing 70-80 songs a year for the aerobic program "New Body Moves" as well as scores for a children's series, "Take Off" and a CD album for Butchart Gardens. The digital revolution that allowed them to do electronic orchestration eventually allowed Ken to work at home since a specialized recording environment was no longer necessary. A virtual symphony orchestra could now reside inside his computer. Ken departed from Legacy and he and his wife, Janet, formed their own company, Kayum Sound Inc. He settled into a career doing what he loves best, using his enthusiasm for *all* instruments, and his unusual memory for sound, to compose scores for a wide variety of productions.


Nancy McMinn

After making an important contact through the internet, Ken secured an agent in Hollywood and landed his first big project, the musical scores for the TV series, "Police Academy." More recently, he has written scores for the Disney prime time series "So Weird" as well as "The Magician's House," a BBC/CTV production filmed last summer at Royal Roads and to be seen this Christmas.

Working seven days a week for both TV and film, scoring for many Hollywood stars, he has never been so busy. Twelve years ago, he and Janet, a keen horsewoman who is dedicated to preserving continuous trails, found time to build their own home high on a Highland hill, surrounded by Garry oak and arbutus. According to Ken, son Trevor is not necessarily following in his musical footsteps, but "is constantly doing something on the computer."

Ken is grateful for his success and very happy to be able to do much of his work from home. He tries to hire local people whenever he can get the budget. From where Ken sits, life is good!

Thelma Fayle works for the Ministry for Children and Families as the Multiculturalism Advisor, writes for the Highlander, and after being a closet poet for many years, is preparing her first poetry submission for the annual CBC Literary Competition. ❀