



Arthur Charles Siddall
Reflections of a long Life
A Life Lost, A lifetime Shared
1922 - 2011

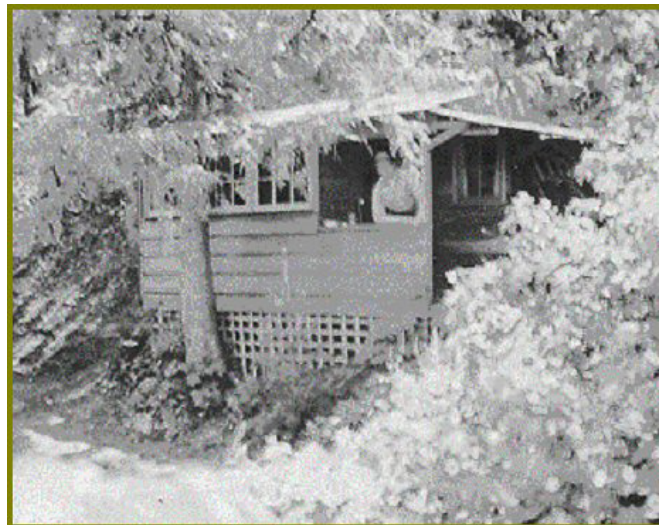
***I**ntroduction*

On a warm July day in 1922, Arthur Charles Siddall, was born, a new little brother for his sister Vivian. Will and Ella Siddall had settled on a small parcel of land on the Yale Road in the small hamlet of Yarrow, in British Columbia's fertile Fraser Valley, about 60 miles east of Vancouver, two years earlier. Will, being a seasoned grocer and merchant was keen to establish a much needed supply outlet in Yarrow, as it was a 10 mile trek on gravel road into Chilliwack for supplies. They were all living in a small shack beside the store they had built, and suddenly another bedroom for young Artie was needed. Mr. and Mrs. Broe, who lived across the road, on the hill, moved to Chilliwack and made their house available for rent. The Siddalls moved into the 2 storey white house on the hill. It had a real toilet and bathtub, a real upgrade from before. No more wash tub in the middle of the kitchen on Saturday night. Eventually, the little shack was torn down. and a new stucco covered house built in its place. It even had the luxury of a fireplace, built with smooth river stones, the ruins of that fireplace remain to this day in the Majuba Hill Heritage Park as a monument.



The following personal dissertation was written by Art Siddall for a family history booklet in 1989.

I am not sure if this dissertation was to be centered around mom and pop or the township of Yarrow, however, as I carried on with my recollections of Yarrow, they inevitably centered around mom and pop as I found the two subjects inseparable. My earliest activity I can recall is walking the mile up the hill to the 'little red schoolhouse'. The reason for this lasting impression was, one day the teacher, Bernice Theimer, was following us and caught me throwing rocks at the Golder's mailbox. That cost me detention and the strap. Very embarrassing because she was staying with mom and dad at the time and I had to face her across the dinner table. Isabelle Marr was my other teacher, and all was smooth sailing for six school years. The little cabin on the hill, across the road from our house was my 'retreat'. Except one night during a terrific thunder and lightning storm mom told dad to come and get me as she was certain I would be terrified. And I was. The cabin was a great place for friends to congregate, and it was here that Curly (last name unknown) got me interested in the radio and electrical field. In fact, dad put his cigar down long enough to find me an old car generator which we installed on a water wheel in the little creek. Neither the water flow, the wheel, nor the generator were adequate to light my cabin so



I rewired the armature and field in series and connected to a 110 volt circuit hoping to create a series motor. This was successful and I learned that theoretically a series motor will race to infinity. As for the water, dad taught me to fish for trout in the creek. I can remember that mom cleaned the fish (and plucked the chicken). A trip to the supermarket is how we do it now. Mother and dad decided I could go to school in Chilliwack for grades 7 and 8. For a while I stayed with the Powells in the Hart Block at 5 corners and for a while Vivian and I lived in a small house next to our grandparents. We always looked forward to the ten mile BC Electric interurban ride home to Yarrow on the weekends. I had a lot of friends in Yarrow and during the summer, one of our favorite pastimes was to go roller skating at Cultus Lake. I can recall being very nervous when ladies' choice was announced, but I can't remember, was it because I couldn't skate well enough or just that I may not be asked. Mom used to bawl me out every night I came home late, and of course I deserved it. After all I was only 11 or 12 years old and I had to get up before 5:00am and bicycle across the valley to work at Eddie's Nursery. The first summer I tied budded roses for 11.5 cents an hour. But next



Me and my pet bantam hen

summer I got promoted to a budder. From 1935 to 1940 while attending Vancouver Technical High School, I again looked forward to riding the interurban for a stay in Yarrow. It may be of interest to note that the year after my graduation, Vancouver Technical went co-ed. By now, I was old enough to realize the sacrifices my parents made to send me away to school. As parents I am sure they would have said that 'sacrifice' was not an appropriate choice of word to use. Many of my friends from Tech. came up to Yarrow with me, Norm Rowland, Jim McKay, Ralph Madden, etc., and with mom it was, the more, the merrier. My most vivid recollections began after my discharge from the navy in 1945 and Jeanette came over from Ireland to become my wife in 1947. Most of what follows was Jeanette's input so I will use the terms 'we' or 'our'. We spent Christmas 1947 in Yarrow and it will always stand out as one of the most memorable old Christmases ever. Mom, as usual, had oodles of goodies prepared, and the Mennonite choir came up to



The Day I brought Jeanette home from Ireland to meet my family



Me and My marimba

had the same problem in Siddall's General Store. All I recall of the store when I was really young, apparently I was stealing biscuits and eating them, out of a barrel and later found out they were dog biscuits! We still, and always will, visit Yarrow whenever we get a chance, most recently in September 1994. Many things change, but enough remains that Yarrow will always hold a place in our hearts.

written by Art Siddall 1989

Picnic in Yarrow with Jeanette 1947

the door and sang Christmas carols. On another Christmas occasion, Frances and Jim O'Malley, and Muriel and Stinson Clarke came up to Yarrow, and although some of us got stuck in the snow, a good time was had by all. To this day, they all still talk about it at Christmas time. How mom was able to put up, I don't know. After Sharon was born, we drove to Yarrow quite often and although she was too young to remember, she certainly got excited when we said we were going to visit Nana and Grandpa. On trips in later years, Sharon recalls the houses on Majuba Hill, picking wild berries with Nana, the purple grapes, the apple trees and the creek. She also remembers a lot of shiny gold in white rock, and slippery sheets of some mineral substance. (Probably the fool's gold and mica). Maybe that was the start of Sharon's interest in geology. To retrogress a bit, Jeanette remembers tearing her silk stockings on the wicker seats in the interurban tram. Of course because every conductor knew mom and dad, it didn't take long for BC Electric to replace them. (The stockings, not the seats). Jeanette also remembers Gus Landin, and George 'Mac' McLinden... always aware of our arrival and ready for a chat. We remember mom working all hours in the post office, particularly if the books didn't balance to the penny. I don't know if dad



Biography

The little schoolhouse young Artie attended, always had a full bucket of fresh Yarrow creek water, and a dipper to get a drink. It was a class privilege to get the job of running to the creek to fill the bucket. Vivian and Art had a lot of friends in Yarrow and during the summer, one of their favorite pastimes was to go roller skating at Cultus Lake. They would often have the Ferguson cousins over from Chilliwack for a visit on weekends. Kay English remembers on one particular day, Art was being a rambunctious little hellion, and bothering the older girls to no end. Vivian had had enough, and brought out a bucket of ice cold creek water and doused the little scamp. It was also Vivian's job to take the same bucket across the tracks in the morning to Marshall Knox's cow barn and fetch the fresh milk, cream and all.

Ella and Will decided Art could go to school in Chilliwack for grades 7 and 8. Vivian had attended Chilliwack High School. For a while Art stayed with the Powells in the Hart Block at Five Corners. Vivian and Art also lived in a small house next to their grandparents while attending school. Vivian would move on to board with a family in New Westminster to attend high school, and 6 years later, Art would board with friends in Vancouver and attend Vancouver Technical School. Art wrote home almost every week to his mom and dad from school. Usually complaining he didn't have enough money for lunches, not uncommon in those hard times.

Upon graduation, Art answered the call to duty and joined the Royal Canadian Navy. He took the troop train across the continent, and was stationed at the naval base in Halifax, Nova Scotia. With his electrical knowledge to his advantage, he was made midshipman, electrical first class, but no means an officer. Art's heart for adventure would be tested for the duration of the War. He was assigned to a flower class corvette called the Rivier Du Loup (River Wolf). Similar in size and speed to the U.S. PT boats, the sole purpose of the corvette was to escort the all-important merchant marine, transporting the goods, vital to the war effort in Europe, back and forth, across the icy, stormy, and furocious North Atlantic, between safe harbors Halifax, and Belfast Northern Ireland. Art wrote home to his mom and dad at least once a week, mostly complaining he had no money, but not much to spend it on anyway.



Art & his mother, Ella while on leave in 1944

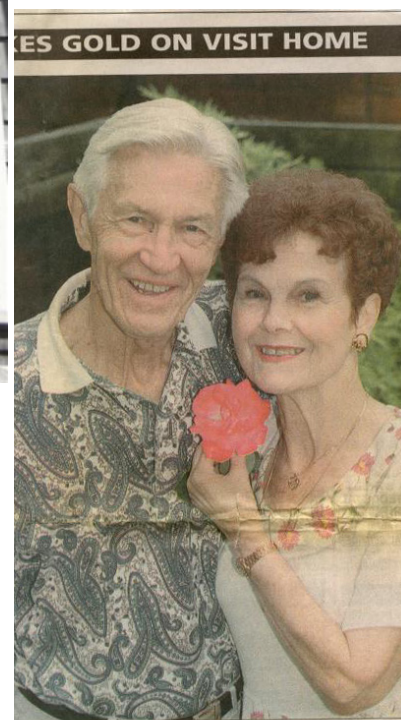
It was in Belfast, Arts life would change forever. Taking shore leave one particular evening, Art "borrowed" an officer's uniform jacket and hat and walked into a local community dance being held in honor of the naval officers. Strictly forbidden to enlisted men, Art eluded authorities, and played the part, surveying the young and pretty Irish ladies also invited to the dance. Art spotted one particularly pretty young girl across the room and asked her up on the floor. Growing up in Yarrow, in his mother's house, music and dancing were quite common entertainment, and Art showed his familiarity with both. Young Nettie McFettridge, the daughter of a Belfast shipyard worker was very impressed, and Art danced her off her feet. During a break, Art, sitting next to one of his crewmates, looked over and vowed, "I'm going to marry that girl".



Young newlywed and former Miss

Art and Nettie wrote back and forth, for the duration of the war, and before long he was discharged, and headed home. He proposed to Nettie, and mailed her an engagement ring hidden inside a bag of puffed wheat cereal. The cereal arrived intact in Belfast, as did the ring, and Nettie wore it forever.

Soon Nettie was on a ship herself, heading for Canada and a new life with Art. The Siddalls were married and settled in Vancouver, and Art found a job with Hume and Rumble Company, as an electrical designer. They were blessed with the birth of Sharon Francis in June 1951. Sharon was their everything. Opportunity came knocking, and Art got hired on with the mighty Bechtel Corporation in San Francisco, and the young family was California bound. The Siddalls grew quite accustomed to the warmth of central California over cool and often rainy Vancouver, but they made the trip north time and time again, for visits with family and friends. Just as often, they made the journey back to Belfast, Newtownabbey and Newcastle, visiting Jeanette's large extended family, the Hunters, Robinsons, Cunninghams, Neil/ & Best families. Reno, Lake Tahoe, and Hawaii were favorite destinations, but Walnut Creek would be their home. Art found hobbies in a small garden on rationed water, and on Sundays sang in the church choir. Jeanette's sister Frances (Bambi) and her husband, Jim O'Malley were a big part of their lives. Art and Nettie's last trip to Belfast, was the most special of all, celebrating their Golden wedding anniversary with all their nieces and nephews and extended family. The Siddalls, Art, Nettie, and Sharon were a tightly bonded family and with their ever beloved pomeranian dogs, lived, and loved life to the fullest. They were all about family and friends, living their lives with class and grace, seeing only the good in people, and putting others before themselves. War may have brought them together, but love kept them together, and now they will all be together forever in the Lord's House.



Golden days: Art and Janet Siddall celebrate their golden wedding anniversary
Picture: Jan. 1951

