

GEORGE HAROLD SIMPSON

This first section is taken from one of the six copies I have of Harold's 86 page memoirs printed in September 1973. This small portion is written, as there, in the first person.

In my family there were six, Sid, two years older than myself and three younger sisters, Myrtle, Ruby and Rita. A brother, Basil, died in infancy.



Harold, Sid,
Myrtle in
clothing made
by their
mother. And
family dog.

The first home I recall was a log house about one mile from the Police Barracks at Battleford where father was the head cook for the men stationed there. Attached to our house was a bake house with a brick oven in which a wood fire was lit and

when enough heat was generated the wood was removed and the loaves of bread placed in it. The bread was sold to the barracks and also in town.

A team of dogs, Billie and Bouncer, slept next to our home and when the barrack's bugle sounded they howled to waken father. He hitched up the dogs and drove to the barracks to prepare breakfast for the men. The dogs were turned around to go home where they pushed their front paws against the collars to free themselves. The dogs would later be re-harnessed to take us the two miles to school. After our dinner a large box with bread was placed in the sleigh and we delivered it to town.

Billie's worst habit was when running behind and under the democrat. If he saw a woman walking ahead, he would dart out barking furiously. On overtaking her, he would throw his hindquarters sidewise so as to knock the woman over. We were never able to cure him of this habit.

One of the pioneers in Battleford was a man called John Todd. He was a mail carrier who took the mail from Battleford to Edmonton in the 1880's. He travelled by Red River cart in summer and dog team in the winter. He would have the Saskatchewan Herald in Edmonton 12 days after it was published.

Among Harold's many amusing stories is this one:

One day a substitute team had to be hired for a funeral. At the church bearing the casket, the horses became frightened and ran away. When the husband arrived where the team finally stopped he said, "Gee-by-cry. My old woman she sure have one

hell of a fast ride that time!

Homesteads are frequently mentioned in pioneer days. A homestead consisted of a quarter section of land, secured by the payment of \$10.00 It was then required to 'prove up' on the homestead by breaking the minimum of ten acres within three years time. The patent could then be obtained for the homestead.

Harold's book tells about two crops on his homestead. One stood two and a half feet high, ready to thresh and produce a high yield. A hailstorm struck and in half an hour totally destroyed the crop. Rust ruined another crop, ready to thresh. Later rust resistant wheat was developed which solved this problem.

Dad waist-high in field of grain



*Dad removing husk
from grain to
examine kernels*



My personal memories of my Father, Harold Simpson.

I grew up in the 'Dirty Thirties'. One of my early remembrances was of crouching behind Dad and Granddad as they gazed at the dark clouds toward the west, hoping for the needed rain. As the clouds faded away the timeless remarks were, "They're just the empties going home". And yet never did I feel there was a sense of despair. Always there was the certain faith that better times would come.

What joy to walk the nearby fields with Dad while he pointed out to me the various stages of the growing crop. The 'shot blade' was something eagerly looked for and then signs of the actual head.

My Father is probably best remembered for his skill at tennis. I know his and Mother's tennis exploits in only scattered ways. They regularly participated in tournaments in the town of Wilkie, which was fifty or more miles from Battleford. The nine silver cups and many medals now distributed amongst my children and grandchildren and won by both Mother and Father, date from 1915 to 1926. Except for the Provincial cup, Wilkie Lawn Tennis awarded all the small cups.

Our family of five, played tennis when opportunity arose but that was infrequently. That my tiny, four-foot-ten-and-a-half mother was able to compete and win at the game always astonished me. She had the most amazing service. The underhand stoke delivered with an exquisitely graceful flick of her wrist

invariably took her opponents by surprise. Equally astonishing was her father's; Granddad Risdale's agility and skill which lasted until he put up his racquet at age eighty.

Dad's capture of the Provincial championship in 1926 was more than popular with the general public but not with the Regina elite. Most of Dad's practice was against a barn wall after a hard day's work on the land. To be bested by an unknown farm boy did not sit well with them. Presentation of the cup at matches was normally followed by a banquet at which the winner was honored. The only recognition Dad received was to be handed the cup on the tennis court.

The two large tennis cups in the picture with Dorothy in one are kept for the year. A largish one is the Provincial cup the winner keeps but sadly it is lost.



Harold & 6-month-old Dorothy in cup. Provincial Cup
& 8 from Wilkie Lawn Tennis and medals.

Pictures of Grandfather & Harold on farm tennis court



I have been moderately successful in locating the Wilkie Lawn tennis cups.

Mark has a beat up one. I have three and gratefully I have a cup won in 1917 by Mother for Ladies Doubles. Bonnie has one and I think also Rob Hannah has one. The two I have for Mens' Doubles are dated 1924.

SIMPSON IS RATED NO. 1

Plate 14

Mrs. Fenstein Given Place At Top of Women's Division

BY BACK COURT

It has been the practice for years on the other side of the line to issue a list at the end of the season of the ranking tennis players. The writer therefore is going to try to do this. In advance he profusely apologizes to any budding Tildens, Locostes, Borotras and more especially to any embryo Suzanne Lenglens or Helen Willis who may feel that they have been slighted. This list does not pretend to be official. It's the private opinion of a tennis player who has been playing for some 25 years and who has had the privilege of watching some great tennis players in Canada and other countries. Let's go.

MEN'S SINGLES

Harold Simpson by virtue of his win in the provincial tournament at Saskatoon and his win at Wilkie from a more or less classy field is given first place. Of course Dr. Weicker of Regina is a close second. Simpson in his provincial matches showed that he has bulldog determination staying powers second to none, a defensive game that is a delight to watch and the ability to come from behind and win against great odds. At Wilkie Rowe took the first set from him and was well on his way to victory in the second when Simpson took a brace and the rest was history. The same thing happened at Saskatoon in his final with Dr. Weicker. For third place Ellis McMillan of Saskatoon is chosen although his play in the provincial tournament was disappointing. However, he made up for this in the Saskatoon City Tournament. Rapelle of Assiniboia, Forster of Regina, Arscott

Newspaper clipping 1926

See "Tennis Anyone?"
Chapter 15, Page 36

Simpson's win on Saturday was very popular and it was only achieved after a great uphill fight. He lost the first two sets and Weicker had him match point in the third three times, but a determined stand brought the game into deuce and he eventually won the set and then took the two following ones. For a final match, it had all the frills and thrills of championship tennis. But all credit for winning the title goes to Simpson for his determination and fighting against tremendous odds. Seldom has a challenger been so close to defeat and rally to come through with a victory as Simpson did on Saturday.

The first set was very even, both players feeling their way cautiously and 14 games were played before the set was decided. Weicker won his service four times and lost thrice, the figures being reversed for Simpson. Simpson won the ninth game in love and lost the 11th without gaining a point.

The new champion developed a streak of wildness in the second set and lost by 6-2, mainly through hitting out of the court. He outed many times and lost a number of chances to score points through hitting too hard.

Weicker's forearm drive worked to perfection in this set and he scored many placements, besides keeping Simpson running all over the court.

SENSATIONAL SET

The third set was sensational. Simpson started by winning the first two games. He lost four in a row and then won the next pair to tie the count. Simpson lost his service to give Weicker the lead at 4-4 with Weicker serving, it looked to be all over. Weicker got the first two points. Simpson scored two beautiful placements to make it 30-all. The next point went to Weicker. With match point in his grasp, Weicker drove Simpson's return into the net and it was deuce. Three times Weicker got the add to have the lead and match point, but each time he lost it and Simpson broke through with two fine strokes to win the game and tie the score at five-all. Simpson then took his service and the following game on Weicker's service to win the set at 7-5.

Weicker suffered a falling off of his form in the third set. He lost three straight games before he broke through to win on his own service. The games alternated until the seventh was reached, Simpson then taking the eighth and ninth to win the set by 6-3 and tie the score at two sets all.

The fifth set was a battle all the way. Simpson hit his best form of the match and was carried to vic-

This account of my Father would be incomplete without pictures of his many horses he loved and cared for so well.



Lindquist Wheat Pool elevator

Following the Provincial championship little is heard of tennis again. I guess it was because in 1926 the Lindquist Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Elevator was opened three quarters of a mile from our farm and Dad became the agent.

I would be four or five when I went there regularly to feel the excitement of grain being delivered. The elevator was connected to the office basement by a raised walkway beneath which ran belts connecting the two. As soon as we saw a load approaching Dad would go down steps to the basement to start the engine. Was it a gas can or an oil can he used? Then he would stand within the huge wheel and give it a mighty pull. Slowly, slowly the engine would start to power everything in the elevator itself.

Doors would be opened, boards curled around the vehicle wheels and it was raised to empty the grain into a pit, from which a vertical shaft elevated the grain to a numbered bin above.

Grain cars on an adjacent rail track would eventually receive the grain. The cars were "coopered" with thick sheets of brown paper and as the cars filled, doors were added to the top. Finally car doors from each side were closed and sealed with stamped aluminum strips. Cars were moved by hand down the track with a large winch, where they waited to be picked up by the next train.

Many years later I penned this poem:

MEMORIES

Dear Dad - dozing in your T.V. chair.

Fond memories filter back to me.

I search for best loved ones -

Mother's voice - "Time to meet Dad."

So off I run

Across the parched dry garden path,

Through barbed wire fence

And on to dusty road.

Oppressive weight of mid-summer sun,

Grasshopper songs that run abreast of me

Now blend in natural harmony with

Three bars or four - nothing more

Repeated o'er and o'er.

But happy notes that lift my heart

And speed my skipping feet

Till we are side by side

And you have clasped my hand.

Joy of life bespoken

In the easy swinging stride;

In the open face with laughter by its side.

No need for words to greet.

Companionship complete. Dec 12,1976

And now it's time to write about my mother

Florrie Elizabeth Risdale

Mother was the youngest of six children. Lucy, Ann, Nellie, Bert, Sidney and Florrie who was born on August 10, 1905.



Her mother was Isobel Picken and father John Risdale. Her father and Sidney preceded the family to Canada. Her mother's brother, John Picken stayed with others to help them while they remained in England.

John was simply known as "Uncle Picken" to all of us. My first book of memoirs relates my own experiences with him, a man who became blind in one eye and hard of hearing.

The family sailed to Canada in 1910 but I have been unable to learn the ship that brought them. Mother tells about many being seasick and how, when grandmother came to unpack her china, she sat down and wept as most of it had been broken on the trip.

Nellie had T.B. and one account is that part of the reason for coming to Canada was because it was considered the climate would be beneficial. Be that as it may, by the time mother was 20 she had lost Nellie, Sid to pneumonia and her mother, possibly to cancer.

Where did mother learn to be a secretary so she was able to work at the Livingstone Law Office, reaching it by bicycle in her ankle-length gowns?



There are also pictures of mother and her constant friend, Freda Light,

Dressed as soldiers,



As indians
and linemen



Linemen in sailor suits

They bathed in knee-length, elbow-length suits. Harold tagged along to make a threesome but it was mother he eventually married in 1918.



Alex Lockhart, Rita Simpson,
Florrie & Harold Simpson

The only part of a farm-wife's skills she didn't manage to acquire was to kill and dress a chicken or to milk a cow.

Canning garden produce she grew; picking and making jams and jellies over wood-burning stoves in scorching July weather; canning meat and chicken, peaches, pears, plums, and rhubarb; making butter from farm cream; and raising three children.

However, despite heavy farm and elevator work, Dad often helped her.

When Dad was overly busy at the elevator, Mother prepared a hot dinner to deliver to him in the family car. They were a well-matched team and remained so until Father died in 1979 and mother in 1980.

The greatest blessing in my life is to have had them as parents.