



Highlands Gal

Ah, yes; I remember it well!

By Pattie Whitehouse

At a presentation I gave recently, I was passing around one of my personal history books to show the audience how adding pictures, newspaper clippings and other documents can enhance the telling of a life story.

On an open page was a brief news article that mentioned CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training). The book came to one tiny, little lady — and she burst into song. While the rest of us listened in delight, she trilled one of the ditties she used to sing when she was a CGIT member, perhaps 70 years ago.

It was clear that seeing the mention of CGIT in the newspaper article had opened a door to many happy memories of her adventures as a teenager in the company of other girls.

Memory triggers can take many forms. Photographs, of course, are very helpful, especially when you ask not only who is in the picture, but what the occasion was, what the people were like, what thoughts the photo brings to mind.

Other triggers can be even more evocative.

Sound: A popular song from years past conjures up events that took place during that period. (I will never hear the Harpers Bizarre version of “Feelin’ Groovy” without thinking of sitting on pillows in a gym, listening to the group in person — and of the handsome young man who took me to the concert!)

Touch: What do you recall when you stroke a rough piece of wool? A kitten’s soft fur? A smooth piece of beach wood?

Smell: Do you have memories that are evoked by the aroma of baking cookies or the scent of skunk cabbage in the spring?

Taste: What was the flavour of summer when you were small? (Grape Crush and green Popsicles!) What were your favourite Hallowe’en candies — and what did you do to get them?

Engage the senses when working on a personal history. Gather the photo albums, the family documents, the diaries and letters. You’ll be amazed at how well they trigger memories of times, places, people and events you haven’t thought of in years.

A professional personal historian is adept at using memory triggers and skilful questioning to unearth recollections long buried under the layers of years. Get in touch if you’d like more information.

Pattie Whitehouse, a personal historian since 1992, helps people save their lives in books so generations of wide-eyed children, as yet unborn, will know where they came from. She is active in the Association of Personal Historians as well as her Highlands community.

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Highlands is on its way to getting a community hall.

Since long before we incorporated in 1993, community events have been held in Caleb Pike House (built 1883) or, more recently, the Highland School House (1893). Gatherings of more than 50 people have to be held in the fire hall.

Recently, Highlands council approved a rezoning that will allow a property owner to develop 11 lots instead of the two currently permitted in exchange for donating 20 acres of land to the district for a community hall. Both sides benefit!

Highlands has a government grant that will contribute \$400,000 towards the construction of our community hall. If Highlanders contribute volunteer labour, too, that grant could go a long way.