



LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR ATTENDS VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY AND AUDITORIUM DEDICATION CEREMONY

Peter L. Smith '49

On the afternoon of November 5, 2003, a memorable ceremony took place in the Victoria High School Auditorium, an event made even more memorable by the gracious presence of Her Honour, The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. The VHS Alumni Association joined with Principal Keith Forshaw, staff members, and students to recognize and honour two of the most remarkable figures in our 127 year history: the VHS Library received the name of H.L. (Harry) Smith and the School Auditorium, that L.J. (Lawrie) Wallace. The late Harry Smith (my father) was represented by family members, whereas Lawrie was present in person with Lois and their daughters to bask in a well deserved moment of public adulation. Best of all, the students of the School – now again grades 9 to 12 – turned out in force to witness and rejoice in the powerful energy of the Vic High tradition.

The Honourable Iona Campagnolo was quite wonderful. Not only did she meet informally with invited guests before and after the ceremony, but she gave a concise and elegant speech to the packed auditorium. B.C. has never had a more articulate Lieutenant



The Smith Family, Barbara (far left), Peter (second from the right) and Winsome (far right) with the Honourable Iona Campagnolo

Governor, and she was able to share some personal memories of her association with Lawrie Wallace during his distinguished career in public service.

Duncan Lorimer, the last “career” Principal of Victoria High, delivered a fine tribute to Harry Smith, Principal from 1934 to 1955 and staff member for a record 41 years. Harry Smith hired that young science teacher; he and Dunc soon formed a mutual admiration society. Duncan’s speech was eloquent, warm and humorous, and his words were much appreciated.

It was my privilege to be asked to express a tribute to Lawrie, my Grade 11 math teacher and a lifelong friend. What a joy to be able to share such a moment with a throng of present-day students! Seldom have I had such a good

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audience; I apologize to Jack Lowther if I took a few cheap shots at Mt. Doug in order to win over those terrific kids. Here are the closing words of my speech, spoken directly to Lawrie Wallace:

After you had staged every centennial under B.C.'s never-setting sun, you capped it with the glorious Vic High Centennial of 1976. Personally, I regard it as your best-ever celebration, and I have a hunch that you might agree. You and Dunc Lorimer got me involved, quite against my better judgment, but no one has ever said "no" to Lawrie Wallace. It turned out to be one of my lifetime highlights, a magnificent event that showed our community the power and the energy and the abiding legacy of democratic public education. It was a love-in like no other, and it launched a new era in the life of this historic School. Not the least of its spin-offs was the Victoria High School Alumni Association, an organization that keeps alive the grand tradition.

To students here today, I want you to know that Lawrie Wallace is truly "Mr. Victoria High". He and Lois once lived in Oak Bay, but wisely bought their present house on Fairfield Road to ensure their children a respectable Vic High education. I think it was Bill Garner who said that when Lawrie nicks his chin shaving in the morning, the blood runs Black and Gold. Our School has never had a more constant, faithful, and enthusiastic supporter. The caption on this commemorative photograph of Lawrie Wallace wraps it up in seven words:

*"The best friend
Vic High ever had."*

Lois Wallace, the
Honourable Iona
Campagnolo and
Lawrie Wallace
(sitting)



GIFTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES AT WORK

Ian McKinnon '66

*"When I talk to students about
bursaries and scholarships, they can't
quite believe that the alumni care
about them as much as they do."*

Jo-Anne Long, Vic High Counsellor

Vic High continues to have a proud tradition of scholarship shown in the awards that its students win. Last year, 28 students from Vic High were Provincial Scholars. Some students won even more prestigious honours. Just to give two examples, Tamina Rioux won a Millennium Scholarship, while Sandra Andersen attended a pre-university summer program at Brown University in the Ivy Leagues on a scholarship.

We can take pride in these accomplishments and congratulate the students for the outstanding results of their hard work. However, the story of Vic High's awards does not end there. The Alumni Association, as well as individual alumni, reunion years and special groups like the 125th Anniversary Alumni Orchestra have all contributed to a vital and generous scholarship and bursary program for the school.

The Alumni Association has tried not to duplicate the major awards given out by the Province and other major donors. Instead, we have focussed on hard-working students who have not won major scholarships and on students in the Career Prep courses at Vic High.

Last year the Alumni Association gave over \$6,000 to students for their commitment and success in subjects as diverse as Computers and Information Technology, Human Services, Biology, Journalism, Mathematics and Coaching.

The Biology Scholarship winner, Natalie Arsenau, is typical in her commitment to her community – active in the Environment Club and the Grad Committee at Vic High, she also volunteered at the Pacific Forest Centre and Folkfest - and is attending UVic this year. Elaine Iversen won a business award and is now at Camosun in their business program. She hopes to continue her business focus and become an accountant.

To get a sense of the difference that the scholarships can make, here is part of a letter from a recent award winner who had secured an apprenticeship:

I will be attending my first six-week course at BCIT in September. I will be using the money that you have given me towards schooling supplies and specialty tools for the machining trade. I am grateful for people like you who help young graduates like me who know we are capable of starting a career young. In the future, I hope to contribute financially to a fund that supports high school graduates in the trades area.

Finally, we know that as our society changes, new needs develop. As surprising as it may seem to alumni from other times, as many as 65 students at the school are living independently, usually by force of circumstance rather than by choice. Fortunately, we have members of the Vic High family who stepped in to help. In 2001, the father of a Vic High alumnus established a memorial fund to honour his late wife by providing the principal with discretionary money to aid students who were in particular need. This fund provides \$100 per month to a student as long as he or she stays in school. Recognizing and helping these students as they struggle with difficult circumstances may make the biggest difference of all.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 7, 7:15 P.M.
VIC HIGH STAFF ROOM
EVERYONE WELCOME

VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL ARCHIVES

Peter L. Smith '49

The Victoria High School Archives are now splendidly housed in part of the former Home Economics area at the east end of the ground floor, near the Vining Street entrance. The room is open to students and the public every Tuesday morning from 9 to 12 during the school year.

Regular volunteers (all retired) are Jim Connor, 28 years as a School District 61 employee, with 12 years as Vic High's Chief Engineer; Frank Taylor (VHS 1955), formerly Capital Plumber for School District 61; and Peter Smith (VHS 1949), 38 years on faculty at UVic. All three are passionate about Victoria's heritage; Jim and Frank are experts on local industrial history. Students seem to love the room, and they can easily persuade Jim to give them guided tours of hidden areas in the building. Alumni visitors are always welcome.



A special project this past year was the installation of the historic VHS steam engine – once used to compress air for the school's heating system – as a stationary exhibit on the fourth floor. Jim had lovingly restored this machine in 1991, and it was relocated to make room for the new elevator shaft. Many thanks to Principal Keith Forshaw and to School Board carpenters Paul Brown and Peter Roland.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Roger Skillings '68

Vic High continues to hold a special place in many of our hearts. Whether driving by and being impressed by its architectural presence in Fernwood, or coming to a school event and walking along the old school corridors, Vic High evokes a flood of mostly happy memories.

For those of us fortunate enough to serve on your Alumni Board, we have the pleasure of regularly interacting with Vic High's current students, staff and administration. Vic High continues to be known as a tolerant and accepting school with increasingly impressive achievements in many diverse areas. These include its choir, dance, drama and visual arts programs, the Rhythm and Blues Band, athletics and its vocational and academic programs.

I want to thank Doug Cunliffe for his effective leadership as Chair of your Alumni Association for almost 10 years. Doug, along with Honourary Chair, Lawrie Wallace, is to be given much of the credit for the Association's strong financial situation. He spearheaded strategic fundraising programs and events, including the 125th celebration in May 2001. Doug's energy and commitment to building the Vic High Alumni Association has been truly impressive. The new Board plans to build on the solid foundation that Doug's leadership provided.

The new Board, elected in June 2003, has spent time listening to the needs of students, staff and members of the school's administration. We intend

to work closely with the school and will focus our activities to support these identified needs. Fundraising continues to be our priority. As the needs of students grow, it is important that the scholarship and bursary fund grow with it. Thank you for continuing to provide your donations. They are making a significant difference in the lives of many students, as Ian McKinnon explains in more detail in his article in this newsletter.

Over the last few months, we have spent considerable time developing a new approach to communications. We are creating a new website that will be up and running soon and the next newsletter will be available electronically. So please take a moment to fill out the form and provide us with your current e-mail address.

This last year has seen a number of important events at the school, including the May 2003 Gala, awards ceremonies in June and November, the Remembrance Day Ceremony and a spectacular Evening of Fine Arts in December. However, the highlight for me was the Library and Auditorium Dedication Ceremony held in honour of Harry Smith and Lawrie Wallace. To have Her Honour, Iona Campagnola, the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, join

with Duncan Lorimer, Peter Smith and today's Vic High students, to pay tribute to two of Vic High's most prestigious and devoted members was indeed a special moment in Vic High's history. Thanks to Peter Smith for bringing the ceremony alive in his newsletter article.

Finally, I would like to thank all Alumni Association members for their commitment to supporting Vic High and its students. Your donations will be carefully used to enhance this goal.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Principal's Message – Keith Forshaw

Vic High has changed. The change, however, is a little bit like “going back to the future”. Vic High now has over 1100 students from grades 9 through 12. This change is directly related to a Greater Victoria School Board initiative to “reconfigure” the school district. The District is now more than half way through changes which will result in every elementary school enrolling students from kindergarten to grade 5, middle schools enrolling students from grades 6 to 8 and secondary schools enrolling students in grades 9 through 12.

The results of the reconfiguration have been very good for Vic High. Many Vic High Alumni fondly remember the days when the school was “1500 strong”. During the 1980’s and early 1990’s Vic High was apparently anything but “1500 strong”. In fact, the student enrollment dropped below 400 students and the reputation of the school was not what it once was.

During the 1990’s, the school worked hard to successfully change Vic High’s reputation. But in September 2003, when Vic High re-opened its doors to grades 9 and 10 and once again became a grade 9 –12 school, things changed. In order to accommodate hundreds more students than had been enrolled for decades, modifications and improvements to the facility were required. More equipment, supplies, furniture and teaching material were needed. Eight new classrooms were created

(including three computer labs). Hundreds of student desks, dozens of teachers’ desks and thousands of pounds of books were rounded up and shipped to the school. School district staff have worked with loving care on all of the building projects. Historical style and colours have been honored. The school facility looks very good indeed – both inside and out!

The academic program at the school is very strong. A disproportionately high number of students win provincial scholarships and bursaries. The staff continue to effectively assist students who are experiencing academic, social or emotional problems. Our Fine Arts program makes news around the city. The Industrial Education department continues to be well respected throughout the province. With the grade 9’s and 10’s being part of the school again, we are starting to see our sports teams surging ahead. Our girls’ field hockey team just won back the May Tulley Shield that has been absent from Vic High since 1991. Our junior boys’ basketball team recently finished second in “the City’s”.

The students who are attending Vic High are the most culturally, religiously and racially diverse body of students on Vancouver Island.

As a group, they are incredibly respectful of the history and values that Vic High represents. Students are proud to report “I go to Vic High”.

I invite you to come by the school sometime. Enjoy a tour of the school and meet some of our very energetic students!

The artwork appearing on pages 4 and 5 was created by Victoria High School students.



REUNIONS

Ken Leighton '48

2004

Class of 1949, 55 year reunion:

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

UVic Commons

Bar opens 5:30 p.m.; Dinner 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 24th

Cedar Hill Golf Course

Brunch 10:00 a.m.

Contact Vera Creelman at 250 382-8876 or

eugene_creelman@telus.net.

The Class of '49 will also hold its regular lunch at Samuels on April 21, 2004.

Class of 1954, 50 year reunion:

July 31, 2004

Uplands Golf Club

Bar opens 5:30 p.m.; Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Some '54s are staying over for Symphony Splash on August 1st. For more information, contact Val Coulter (Speed) at 250 652-5130 or valcoulter@telus.net. Send your \$50 registration fee to:

Bob Darnell
1506 Bywood Place
Victoria, B.C. V8S 1X8.

Class of 1984, 20 year reunion:

Friday, July 2, 2004

"Meet and Greet" at the Vic High Cafeteria 6:00 – 10:00 p.m. (grads only)

Saturday, July 3

Pot luck picnic/barbeque for families (location to be determined)

12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Cocktails and Dance

Velox Rugby Club

7:00 p.m. – 2:00 a.m.

Contact Sean Bateman at 250 472-8245 or

stickshifts@shaw.ca or yahoo.ca/Victoriahighgradsof84

2005

Class of 1955:

Plans are being made for an Alaska Cruise to celebrate the 50 year reunion. Contact Irene Harrison at 250 727-0097 or ireneh@islandnet.com or

#304-651 Jolly Place,
Victoria, B.C. V8Z 6R9.

The usual Class of '55 dinner

will be held at Samuels on June 10, 2004.

Class of 1965:

A 40 year reunion is being planned for 2005. Contact Frieda Ericksen (Gilstein) 250 382-3467 or ericksen@pacificcoast.net.

Class of 1985:

A reunion may be held in 2005. Contact Tarsam Basi at 250 383-2217 or tbasi1@shaw.ca or Kim Basi at kbasi@telus.net.

Note:

I get frequent enquiries from Vic High grads who want to know if their class is having a reunion. When a class has appointed a representative, I can assist by referring them to the rep. However, when a class has not named a rep, I cannot appoint one. Most classes have a rep in place at least a year in advance of a planned reunion.

Please let me know if you have reunion information to be published. I can be reached at 250 652-2686 or kenleighton@telus.net.

VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI BOARD

Lawrie Wallace	Honourary Chair	Gillian Wallace	Vice-Chair
Duncan Lorimer	Honourary Vice-Chair	Stephanie Lister	Secretary
Reg Reid	Honourary Director	Michael Bradley	Treasurer
Ron Lou-Pay	Honourary Solicitor	Ken Leighton	Reunions
Ross MacKinnon	Honourary Auditor	Fred Packford	Membership
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Anne McKeachie	Vice-Chair	Ray Orchard	Media Liaison
Ian McKinnon	Vice-Chair	Keith Forshaw	Principal



Alumni News
VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL



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