

# A Farewell to a Pioneer of British Columbia

Henry Benjamin Morley, father of editorial writer Alan Morley, died Sunday at Penticton.

I have been very fortunate. Not many people live as long as I have with a father they can turn to for



ALAN MORLEY

was a pioneer of this city, this province, and even Canadian commercial life, more than most people who advertise themselves as such.

He was, in 1893, I think, the first Canadian travelling salesman to go over to a fair, now General Steel Wares, of Toronto, sent him to Australia to sell stoves and other manufactures. It was then he saw Vancouver and fell in love with it.

## Settled Here in 1890s

After a second trip Down Under, where he made enduring friendships, he settled down here in the

He built a house in the 1200 block on Seventh Avenue. It is characteristic of him it was well and thoroughly built so that to this day it is the only house in the block fresh and clean and well-painted.

On the terraces he planted a rose garden which gave him as much satisfaction as anything else in his long life. In June and July people drove their buggies and gigs and high-trotting horses down the avenue just to look at it.

He was always, modestly, an adventurer. After establishing two flourishing businesses in Vancouver he lost interest in each as soon as it began to make money.

We went to Armstrong, where he went into the hardware business. That is where I first remember him, when he took me to the memorial service for King Edward VII in the Presbyterian church.

## Partner of Tisdall

Shortly after that we came back to Vancouver, where he became junior partner in C. E. Tisdall's famous sporting goods store. Tisdall went on to be mayor of Vancouver and finance minister of B.C.—a rigidly honest man who began business as a gunsmith, sleeping under the counter of his own shop.

Old Miss Scott tied trout flies that they sold around the world. For a boy, it was fascinating to watch her sitting at an old roll-top desk with feathers of every imaginable color and design in every pigeon-hole.

she would make you a little feather posy and pin it to your lapel.

There were 5,000 rifles and shot-guns in the racks down one side of the store, three tiers high.

It was years later before I realized it, but Dad and Tisdall were making small fortunes supplying guns for the Sun Yat Sen revolution in China.

"Coolies" who were anything but coolies would bring gunnysacks full of silver "shoes" up to the office in the mezzanine floor, drop them there with a polite bow, which Dad returned, and leave without a word.

## Ingots of Silver

The "shoes" were half or quarter pound ingots of silver from Hong Kong, so-called because they were shaped like Dutch wooden shoes.

I never knew the ins and outs of the trade, but for Dad, it was the

beginning of an enduring friendship with Chinese in B.C. He respected them and they trusted him.

I have known him to spend many a night puzzling over the bills of lading for shipments of the bones of B.C. Chinese hoisted up in casks and sent home to lie in the graves of their ancestors. It was the least he could do for them.

"Humm—ha—humm," Dad would say if you asked him why he did these things. "Good customers and well, and what damned business is it of yours?"

That was ever his way. He did good by stealth and was always irritated and embarrassed when it came to light.

By 1917 he had fallen out of love with Vancouver. It was too crass and commercial.

We went to Penticton, where he bought a hardware store.

## Far From Civilization

It was about as far from civilization as a merchant could get. The Kettle Valley Railway had just reached the town. There wasn't much farther he could go to dodge success.

He changed from hardware to insurance, to a gamble in mining that paid off, to ranching, which he had to give up after a heart attack.

He became reeve of the town, against his own wishes, and grand master of the Masonic Order in B.C.—which he prized above rubies. I asked him why.

"Humm—ha—humm," he'd say. "Only religion I've got. Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. If

you live by that, boy, you won't go far wrong."

He did live by it. Miner, mason, bootblack, prime minister were his brothers. Women—rich, poor, respectable or the reverse—had from him always courtesy and help.

I remember my mother berating him for stopping with her on the street to speak politely to a woman who had gained herself as much notoriety as a small town like Penticton could grant.

"Em," said Dad quietly, "you have earned yourself respect from everyone. She desperately needs a little from someone."

It was for his quietness, his courtesy, his kindness and his unfailing honesty I shall remember him.

## Second Marriage

He married for the second time at the age of 79. It was the best thing he ever did but, characteristically, he apologized to me for it. Him apologize to me? That was the way he was.

And at 82 he left Penticton, too, for the Islands.

Getting too damned junior-board-of-tradish," he said. "Can't stand it."

So for the last eight years he and Mary lived contentedly beside the beautiful lake below the blossoming orchards of Boswell. Last year they returned to Penticton to be near a doctor, and in March I visited them.

For the first time Dad spoke of death and his approaching end. Quietly and drily he told me the disposition he had made and that he wanted me to do. As he had done all his life, he hid sentiment behind gruffness.

He was a very great gentleman and a man whom I have never known to do anything mean, selfish or dishonest. I hope when my end comes, somebody can say half as much for me. I told him so.

"Humm—ha—humm," he said. "Stop talking nonsense. Let's go home, boy—Mary will have tea ready."

## LEGAL HINTS

QUESTION: If a person died intestate, leaving two children, four grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews, how would the estate be divided? What would the government costs be to administer the estate? How would these costs compare with the situation where a