

## Preface

My mother was a *raconteur* par excellence. During her life of almost one hundred years, she observed many interesting events and knew a great variety of characters. She could entertain one member of the family or a room full of people with her many stories. But she never wrote any of them down. I also like to tell stories, and several of my friends and family suggested that I record them while I had the chance, as well as descriptions of some of the people I have known and events I was fortunate enough to participate in.

As I was getting started, my friend Norman Webster, a gifted writer and newspaper publisher, said, “Alex, you may be a good *raconteur*, but you are not a writer and may need help.” How right he was! So I consulted all those referred to in my Acknowledgments and, with their help, wrote a selection of stories, taking care to provide enough background to put them in context.

I have always loved to read the memoirs of people who did great things and brought about important changes. I do not pretend to be in their league. But I have known and worked with many such people and many others who, in a more modest but still significant way, have made lasting contributions to the political, academic, medical, and philanthropic communities of their day. I have attempted to pass on particulars of the events these people were involved in that have not been written about elsewhere.

To put these memoirs into context, some background on the evolution of Quebec society from after the First World War to the present would be useful. Brought up in an English-speaking home, attending English-speaking schools and universities, and working in a primarily English-speaking law firm, I had only limited contacts

with French Quebec for many years. While I spent the summers in County Charlevoix, studied French by working in the Beauce and Rimouski, and served on the Montreal Bar Council in the mid-1960s (the council's working language was French), I lived and worked for the most part in English.

From 1970 to 1976, with the adoption of a language law (Bill 101) restricting the freedom of choice in education and regulating the language of work, a message was sent to English-speaking Quebecers that our lives would change. Another key event of those years – and one that sent the same sort of message – was the FLQ crisis of 1970. The kidnapping of a British diplomat, James Cross, and a senior Quebec cabinet minister, Pierre Laporte put everyone on tenterhooks, feeling that only intensified when the federal government sent fully armed soldiers to patrol and guard the streets, building, and community of Montreal. Laporte's subsequent murder horrified the whole population.

In these circumstances, it gradually became clear that to continue to live in an English cocoon within a French Quebec, while possible, would not be desirable. The election of the Parti Québécois in November 1976 forced many English-speaking Quebecers to make a choice. Some decided to leave Quebec and live in English in the rest of Canada or elsewhere. Others, including myself, never considered leaving what had been our home from birth. However, we became more and more involved in Quebec society while fighting to preserve our health, educational, and other institutions. We started to organize ourselves as an English-speaking community, and so the Positive Action Committee, Townshippers, and other similar groups were formed. Finally, Alliance Quebec became the umbrella group and represented English-speaking Quebecers' interests in dealing with the provincial government on language issues.

From 1976 to the Quebec referendum in 1980, we were obsessed with the language issue as a result of the introduction of the French Language Charter, which removed most of our language from outdoor signs, restricted its use in the courts and legislature, and regulated its place in the health, education, and business sectors. The language debates consumed a great deal of our time, but this and all other issues took second place during the referendum campaign of 1980 as we went door to door throughout the province fighting against separation. While the exodus of many friends and, worse, many of our children was deeply disturbing, our joining together with federalist French-speaking Quebecers and those of Italian,

Greek, Chinese, and many other origins to fight for a united Canada was an exhilarating experience.

From 1985 forward, I joined the boards of La Banque Laurentienne du Canada, La Fondation des Grands Montréalais, and SHL Systemhouse Canada/Asie (Québec), and, on each, I was either the sole English-speaking Quebecer or in the minority, with the language of all meetings conducted primarily in French. In my own firm, the language of work had changed from predominantly English to bilingual to predominantly French. The meetings of the commercial law section, for example, of which I am a member, are now conducted exclusively in French, whereas in the 1950s the partnership was composed exclusively of WASPs and there was only one French-speaking partner. Today, I work side by side with lawyers of French, Jewish, Italian, Greek, and Chinese descent.

Through all of this, English-speaking Quebec had to redefine its relationship with Canada. Until the 1970s, I believe that most English-speaking Quebecers thought of themselves simply as part of the Canadian majority. The thought that we were a minority in Quebec never crossed our minds. With the threat of separation, we had to grapple both with our relationships inside Quebec and with the relationship between Quebec and Canada. While we never considered sovereignty as an option, we came to a better understanding of the majority's concern for its language and culture. We therefore fought to preserve a place for ourselves in Quebec but also to make sure that Quebec's place in Canada was secured.

As English-speaking Quebecers, we have evolved to become a more integral part of Quebec than we were in my early days as a lawyer. Along the way, I have rediscovered perhaps the genes of my great-grandfather John George Irvine, who was elected both to the Quebec Legislative Assembly and to the Canadian Parliament over a century ago and was clearly totally involved in the life of Quebec. While I grew up a Scottish Canadian, proud of my Paterson ancestry, over a lifetime I have gained great pride in knowing that my family had roots in other great cultures and religions as well.

A note about places. These memoirs do not describe our life or surroundings either in Senneville, where we lived for twenty-seven years, or in Knowlton, where we have lived for the last twenty. In the 1960s and 1970s, Senneville was a small village of less than 1,500 people, the majority of whom were English-speaking. We lived a privileged, idyllic, and unique life where traffic was limited and both children and animals could run free. With four children

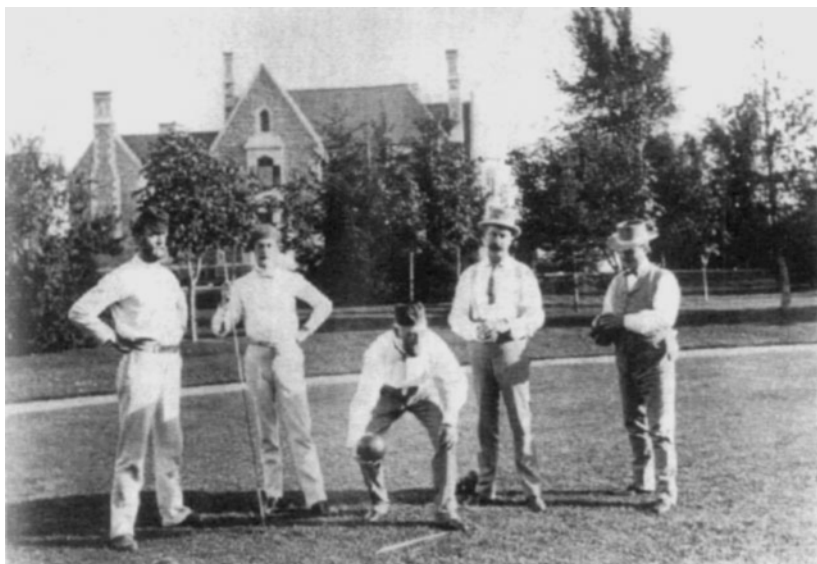
and a series of black labs, that was paradise! The commuter trains were friendly club cars, golf courses had no starting times, and children's sports programs were conducted with few rules, no uniforms, and unaggressive parent spectators. The three policemen, including Chief Ernest Portelance, were known by their first names and were strict but friendly to everyone.

I was the municipal judge and neighbours had no objection to paying fines when they were caught without dog licences; nor did they object strenuously when they were fined for going through stop signs or exceeding the speed limit. My life on the bench was not very challenging, although once I had to send to jail a thief, shortly before Christmas, who had stolen the Mother Superior's coffee pot from the school in Senneville where she worked. Nevertheless, the next day, my wife and the wife of the town lawyer, who had opposed bail, collided when delivering turkey lunches to the jail for the prisoner. When we moved to Knowlton, after our children had left home, we said *au revoir* to many friends and neighbours in Senneville but never "goodbye."

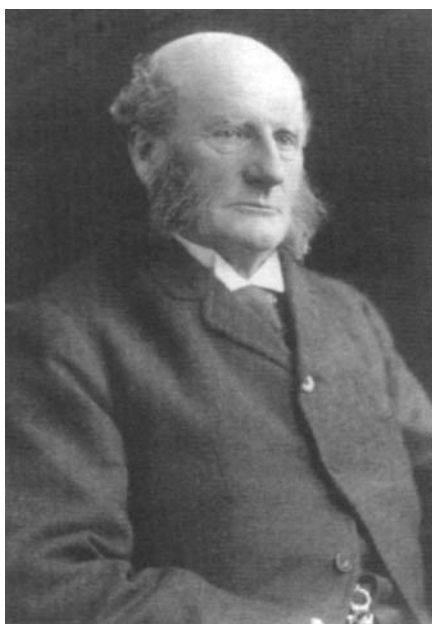
In the winter of 1985 we rented a house in Knowlton and searched the Eastern Townships every weekend for a cottage. We had almost given up when we were shown a house on Spring Hill, overlooking Foster Mountain, with a sloping lawn that led to a large pond. We could envisage our grandchildren tobogganing down to an ice-covered pond where skating would be continuous. In the summer, the pond would turn into an ideal swimming place for all of the family.

When we moved there in August 1985, Knowlton had a famous pub, an excellent small library, a historical museum, and the requisite Anglican, United, and Roman Catholic churches. At about this time, a theatre was built, boutiques sprang up, and an IGA arrived. The golf club has recently added nine holes, so now we have a full-size eighteen-hole course. Knowlton is now to our grandchildren what Murray Bay was to our children, with skiing, swimming, touch football, and badminton available on the property.

Finally, the word "luck" does not appear often enough in these memoirs. I was extremely lucky in the profession I chose, the partners I had, and the friends and colleagues I found throughout my career and in volunteer work. While the law is a hard taskmaster, it does provide an opportunity to do other things, and that is why I have entitled these memoirs *Life at the Bar and Beyond*.



Lawn bowling at the residence of A.J. Brown, founder of the law firm now known as Ogilvy, Renault, c.1885. From left: Mr Torrance (first name unknown), my grandfather (Alex Paterson), Albert Brown, my great-grandfather's brother-in-law Hartland MacDougall, and my great-grandfather Alexander Thomas Paterson. The house is now the Forest and Stream Club, Dorval.



My great-grandfather George Irvine.



My grandfather Alex Thomas Paterson.



My great-uncle, Acheson Gosford Irvine ("Uncle Attie").



My grandmother Katherine Irvine Kennedy.



My grandmother Isobel Mackenzie  
Paterson.



My mother and her sisters. From left: Kathleen, Brenda, Jean (my mother), Sybil, Hazel, Cora.



On my grandfather Kennedy's knee in 1934, aged two, with my cousins and my sister Katherine (seated on the far right).



My mother, Jean Irvine, as a VAD in  
1918.



My mother, Jean Irvine Paterson,  
1985.



My father, Hartland MacDougall Paterson, 1960.



At age five in Percy Walters Park,  
Montreal.



On the stage, acting in *Charley's Aunt*,  
1948.



Scout troop, 1942. I am in the back row, far right. With me are my friends Gordon Sharwood (middle row, third from right), Alan Aitken (middle row, second from right), and Charles Bronfman (middle row, far right).



Our wedding, Murray Bay Golf Club, 1955.