

ON THE FRONT COVER: J. PARKER MacCARTHY

By Gordon Turriff

When J. Parker MacCarthy left lovely Cobble Hill for Quebec City in mid-August this year, he went as one of Vancouver Island's more experienced and admired general practitioners. He returned a little later as President of the B.C. Branch of the Canadian Bar Association—a fitting tribute for a fine person. He is the first President from the Island and only the second from outside the Lower Mainland.

Parker was born at Vancouver in 1949 but he was raised in the Fraser Valley, in Burnaby and in West Vancouver. He began his career of service early and was Student Citizen of the Year when he graduated in 1967 from West Vancouver's Sentinel High School. While it could not be said that Parker was heavily influenced by the ultra-liberal '60's (there is no evidence that he went to the Faculty Club with Jerry Rubin and the pig), still his time at U.B.C. (B.A. 1971; LL.B. 1975) was not wholly mis-spent because there he developed his now considerable ability to listen patiently, to recognise acutely what is really needed and to propose with polite authority what has to be done.

Parker's affability (rather than the fact that his father, Jim, was a senior B.C. Hydro employee) had won him summer jobs as a tour guide at the Peace River Dam and as a bus driver and tour conductor for Pacific Stage Lines. Those close to him are still sometimes treated to hilarious snippets from a Vancouver tour, with Parker at the wheel of the family Jeep. Some of the older members of the profession who check their clothes closets may find garish suits or jackets into which Parker was able to insinuate them when he worked during the famous Christmas sales at Margetson-Lee Ltd. Incidentally, Parker's collection of colourful summer slacks is unrivalled in Western Canada, but, to his credit, he almost never wears white shoes. He is quite persuasive. He is known, Tom Sawyer-like, to have enlisted friends to prepare his almost vertical backyard for a lawn and to clean out his septic tank.

For a break during law school (where, in time, he was elected External Vice-President of the Law Students' Association), Parker travelled widely in Europe with friends, including his future wife. He returned refreshed and worldly, but he had not lost his natural charm or his ability to know and understand people on their terms, qualities that have undoubtedly helped him in becoming a very respected resident of the Cowichan Valley and in keeping many friends of long-standing.

Parker had had the good fortune while at university to be introduced to Virginia (then Castner), to whom he has been married for 19 years. Virginia is a person of considerable achievement in her own right (B.Ed., M.A., specialist in elementary education, instructor at Malaspina College in Nanaimo and part-time lecturer at the University of Victoria), all the more remarkable because the support she has given Parker could not be measured on any ordinary scale, just as his support for her has been wholly unselfish. Parker and Virginia are the parents of Cameron, 11 (he has, fortunately, his grandparents' athletic ability), and Alexandra, 8, affectionately called Missy. They all ski together, often at Mount Washington. Summer weekends are usually spent at the family cottage on North Secretary Island, still (intentionally) without power, phone or fax.

Parker was articulated to Gowan Guest in Vancouver at what was then Alexander Guest

etc. but in 1976, after his call and admission, launched his legal career at Duncan with Williams, Davie & Company, he and Virginia having said that they would give Vancouver Island a six month try (they claim to have lost their return tickets). That venerable firm, still in its red brick heritage building, is now MacCarthy Ridgway, with six lawyers, including Parker's two partners, Glen Ridgway, Q.C. and Bill Younie. Parker manages the firm. His own practice, while general, is heavily oriented to the solicitor's side.

Parker has worked prodigiously for the profession and particularly for the Canadian Bar Association. He has been President of both the Cowichan and Nanaimo County Bar Associations and he has been a member of the C.B.A. Provincial and National Councils since 1987. In 1989 he began an unbroken string on the B.C. Branch Executive Committee, rising steadily on merit through the table positions while at the same time having been, among many other things, chair of the B.C. Branch Communications Committee, a member of the C.B.A. National Task Force on Para-Legals and a member of the C.B.A. National Executive. He has recently been a director of the Legal Services Society and a member of the Law Society's Planning Committee. Outside the profession, he has been president of the Cowichan United Way, a founding director of the Cowichan Home Support Society and chair of the committee of stewards in the Duncan United Church. He also coaches Little League baseball and swims daily to keep fit.

In Parker's mind, everything can and should be improved. We can expect him to be creative and dogged in his work as B.C. Branch President. And if one of the President's chief jobs is to be an ambassador for our profession, then no better choice than Parker could have been made.

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