

ON THE FRONT COVER

Garde Basil Gardom

By Richard Vogel

Garde Basil Gardom, in the eyes of many of the bright eyed, young lawyers practicing today, is old-fashioned. He believes in "putting bread on the water" — not overcharging the client; he believes good manners and courtesy are important; he makes judgments of other people's character on the basis of whether or not they would "pull someone out of the water," if they were in difficulty. This all makes sense if you look at his background and relate it to his professional and public and business career.

His father, Basil, was born in Leamington Spa, England, 1875, of gentleman farmer stock. His father emigrated to Enderby in 1893. He homesteaded in the Deep Creek area, where he farmed 160 acres. Garde's father held several careers each of which fostered qualities obvious in his only son. In 1897, at age 22, he joined the South African Mounted Constabulary, to serve in the Boer War. On his return, he joined the BC Provincial police force. He served and policed an area from Enderby to Pentiction on horseback. For a short time after leaving the police force he dealt in real estate in Vancouver, until he bought a dairy farm at Dewdney, in the Fraser Valley. A wage being crucial given the economic vagaries of farming, he kept the farm but joined the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1916. He drove the tram that ran the 1000 feet from the Lake Louise railway Station to the Lake Louise Hotel. In 1918, he became the Superintendent of Construction and Repair, Western Lines, supervising the construction of all non-railway western construction, the outlying mountaineering camps, Banff Springs Hotel, and even the climbing hut at Abbot's Pass and Chateau Lake Louise.

He there met his wife, Garde's mother, Gabrielle Gwladys Bell, now 93, who was working in the hotel curio shop. Mrs. Gardom was born in Swansea, Wales, in 1900, and came to Canada in 1910. Of this union Garde was born on the 17th of July 1924, at Banff. He had the distinction of being the first white baby born at Lake Louise, and the youngest trail rider. In 1927, at the age of three, this distinguished young man was named Oke Mow Nootska by the band of the Blackfoot Confederacy, at Morley, Alberta.

Garde's father also did work for the CPR in Victoria, where he supervised the construction of the new wing of the Empress Hotel, and the Crystal Garden Swimming Pool across the street from the Empress Hotel. In 1929, he left the CPR to return to the Dewdney farm. Despite the Great Depression, he established what came to be regarded as the best Jersey herd in British Columbia. At the same time he led the fight against milk marketing boards, carrying the litigation all the way to the Privy Council, and losing. Perhaps he thereby instilled a thirst for being on the right side of the counsel table in his son.

His father died at age 86, in 1961. The family scattered his ashes in the poppy bed in front of the Chateau Lake Louise, facing the glacier. The family moved to Vancouver in the mid-thirties. Having started school in Dewdney, he finished his elementary schooling at Prince of Wales. His Junior High was Point Grey, and his High School was Magee. He then did law at the University of British Columbia and graduated with a B.A. L.I.B. in 1949. He articulated at Campbell Brazier (one of the predecessor firms to Davis and Company) to the very distinguished lawyer A.T.R. Campbell Q.C. There

was a tense negotiation between Garde and Tommy Campbell over compensation. It was eventually agreed that Garde would not pay the firm to article, but that they would pay him \$25 per month (in those days it was the custom to pay one's principal for the privilege of articling).

During the summers, he did the usual things that one did in those days to survive, if one was paying one's way at university. He secured a chauffeur's license, and at one time or another drove a truck for Arrow Transfer, worked in the 12th Avenue brewery, and pitched fish at the BC Packers fish cannery. At the fish cannery he met his first explicit example of racial prejudice: the white workers were paid a higher rate than the Chinese. He admitted to working 24-hours straight, in order to buy a pair of Dack's trousers for \$12. He also admits to once having had three paper routes: *News Herald* in the morning, *The Sun* and *The Province* in the afternoon. Prior to delivering the *News Herald*, he used to buy a pie at a bakeshop on 41st Avenue for 10 cents. At quiet times he can still taste those lovely, homemade pies. The best and biggest job he ever had was driving Brewster's buses in the summers at Banff. The one blot on this memory was having to drive the Chicago newspaper tycoon, Colonel McCormick and his companion in Jim Brewster's prized Packard convertible from Banff to the Calgary Airport. McCormick was among his least pleasant passengers. When it came to the tip, McCormick told his valet to "give the kid three bucks." Garde replied directly to the Colonel, "No thank you sir, you need it more than I do."

The same automobile was used by Canada to drive King George VI and Queen Elizabeth through Toronto on their visit in 1939. When Gardom met the Queen Mother in London, during his recent tenure as Agent General for British Columbia, he reminded her of the car. She replied immediately "My favorite—best one we were ever in."

Subsequent to his call to the bar on the 7th of December 1949, he stayed with Campbell Brazier until 1951. That year Garde opened a private general practice. His first office was on the second floor of a building at the corner of Dunsmuir and Granville. He remembers clearly that in the first month, he made \$600 which was double his previous salary. In the second month, he grossed \$1500 and never looked back. He remained in practice until he entered Cabinet in 1975.

He married Helen Eileen Mackenzie on February 11, 1956, in Vancouver. They have one son and four daughters, who, with their respective husbands, have made them grandparents four times. Bringing up four daughters almost turned me into a "mens" libb, he said.

He first ran for the legislature in 1966 in Point Grey. He defeated, in what was then regarded as an upset, Bob Bonner. He was re-elected in each of 1969, 1972, 1975, 1979, and 1983. He never lost, always ran in Point Grey, and takes pride in the fact that on each occasion his running mate was the Honorable Dr. Pat McGeer (a fraternity brother). He served 20 years, 20 months and 22 days in total in the BC Legislature. He served three terms as a Liberal. the following three terms he served as a member of the Social Credit Cabinet. He was Attorney General from December 1975 to November 1979 and as BC's first Minister of Intergovernmental Relations from 1979 to 1986. He was an extremely active member of the legislature. In opposition he held the record for the introduction of Private Member's Bills and was one of the most frequent speakers. He championed over a long period the introduction of a full Hansard (a transcript of the parliamentary proceedings) and television in the Legislature. After crossing the floor, in addition to his ministerial responsibilities, he served 11 years as chairman of the constitution committee and as chairman of the legislation committee. He was, according to Ian Horne Q.C., long time senior legislative clerk, the longest serving House Leader (10 years). He was also the co-chair of the committee of Indian Affairs, and served as acting Attorney General and Acting Minister of Labour while Minister of Intergovernmental Relations, in the absence of the Minister.

The decision to cross the floor was not easy for Gardom, Allan Williams Q.C. or Dr. Patrick McGeer. They each had a long commitment to the Liberal party, and more importantly, to public life and British Columbia. Eventually the latter two pulls won. The role this group played, from the opposition bench, and particularly in government, at the cabinet table, has never been publicly discussed or analyzed, as far as I know. Those who watched from the inside reckon that the hard work of this group in Opposition (led by Ray Perrault and assisted by Alan Macfarlane and Barrie Clark) kept the Social Credit government on its toes. Certainly while in government, this trio kept the government in the middle of the road. Their loyalty to each other, their intelligence and professional background made the election of December 1975 much easier for William R. Bennett to win. It can be argued that in 1983 the break up of the group (Williams left Spring 1983; Gardom and McGeer left in 1986) deprived the government of a centre and led, in the absence of their replacement, to the defeat of Social Credit.

Williams was acting Attorney General for Gardom and vice versa. The traditions of the office were understood by both. Their own values and their loyalties to each other made it easy for virtually everyone, who understood this, to work with them. They took the work of the office seriously to the point that they both developed a personal relationship with professor John L.J. Edwards, author of *The Law Offices of the Crown* (1964; Sweet & Maxwell), the bible of common law Attorneys General.

Two incidents illustrate this atmosphere:

- (1) During Gardom's term (December 1975 - November 1979) and at the conclusion of an investigation into the conduct of a cabinet minister a full briefing was arranged in his office for him. He invited Williams. The whole circumstances were reviewed carefully. Charges seemed appropriate. Gardom wished an outside opinion. Harvey Grey and David Sigler were retained. In due course the group re-convened and the opinion was read aloud. The opinion strongly recommended charges but concluded: "If charges are laid you will have grave political problems". Charges were laid, there were political problems.
- (2) During William's time (November 1979 - May 1983) Cabinet officers with senior public servants, while in New York on government business, were reported in the press as attending theatres, restaurants etc. at public expense. Williams was asked by press gallery members whether the appropriate regulations had been contravened. After a review of the facts Williams confirmed to the gallery that regulations had been contravened. At a later cabinet meeting he was moved against by one of his colleagues. Gardom immediately intervened to say: "what business is done by the Attorney General in his office is no concern to those at this table." The discussion ended.

Legislation introduced by Garde included the Ombudsman Act, the Family Relations Act, the Land Titles Act the Securities Act, the Good Samaritan Act, the Expropriation Act and many others. He took time to foster new ideas such as the new Oath of Office for MLAs, and the Government House Foundation. He actively promoted the association of ex-MLAs, the Order-in-Council Patient's Review Process, and the Real Estate Foundation Act. One further idea which solved a longstanding problem was the Doukhobor Consultative Committee.

The concept in which he takes as much pride as anything was that of "Counter Attack." This is an idea which has gone around the world. When he first proposed the idea it was not regarded as being particularly condemnatory to be drunk in charge of an automobile. Today, it is common to go to jail. Garde remembers: "When I was practising I would see these horribly injured people, permanently maimed by a drunken driver whom society did not consider a criminal. The penalties were inadequate." In order to implement his idea, which was developed in 1976/77, he had to bring to the table and encourage the participation of a number of governmental agencies including the

police, the prosecutors, the schools, the Superintendent of Motor vehicles, and the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia. It was a mammoth job which succeeded brilliantly in fundamentally changing attitudes to drinking and driving.

Do we remember the introduction of the Bat Mobile (Breath Analysis Testing Vehicle)? Or the appearance of the Attorney General at a Counter-Attack roadblock with the dreaded testing devices on hand? These heralded prosecution, higher insurance rates, and automatic suspension of driving privileges for the offender. Soon, children were telling their parents not to drink and drive.

In June of 1987, Garde was appointed as British Columbia's 22nd Agent General in London. Garde and Helen served with great distinction until December 31, 1992. Garde brought new energy to this office. He realized that British Columbia lives and dies by export. He was determined to market British Columbia not only to England but to our historic market of Europe. His tireless initiatives, with the help of able staff workers, helped to raise exports of manufactured goods from British Columbia from \$10 million in 1986, to \$125 million by the time he finished his term.

In summing up, Garde says of himself "I was lucky. . . I have had a cheery life. I have never had to practise cash-register law. I had fun in my practice and in my public life." It isn't quite so simple. In looking at the ease with which he has achieved his accomplishments one realizes that there is a fierce and independent intelligence behind his easy manner. He has perfected in a very personal way an "aw shucks" aura. He has shrewdly, and pleasantly, managed a complex life, retaining many loyalties and a wide circle of friends. May he climb many more mountains.

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