

ONLY YOU DAD

CHAPTER 2

HUNTINGDON & POWERSCOURT

The Years That Made Me, 1959–1969

Full Chapter 2 — Reading Copy for Martha

Only You Dad — Chapter 2 |

To My Huntingdon Family This chapter is dedicated to the friends who welcomed a young boy from Montreal into their lives.

You taught me about friendship, hard work, loyalty, first love, forgiveness, and second chances.

More than sixty years have passed, but those memories have never left me.

Thank you for helping shape the man I became.

- Bobby Monette

PART ONE

Finding a Place to Belong

Introduction

When I was thirteen years old, my life began to change.

Every weekend I left the busy streets of Montreal and travelled toward Powerscourt, just outside Huntingdon, Quebec, where my Uncle Gordie lived near the covered bridge on the Chateauguay River. Back then, everyone called me Bobby.

I could read a little, but I could barely write. My schooling ended around Grade 5. Reading and writing never came easily to me. Looking back, I do not blame the schools. My parents never sat down to read with me or help with homework. Home was not a place of encouragement. It was a place where beatings were far more common than bedtime stories.

I never dreamed that one day I would write a book about my life. Yet here I am, more than sixty years later, returning in my mind to the country roads, farms, dances, friendships, and first love that helped shape the person I became.

Those weekends became my escape. They were among the happiest days of my teenage years. Huntingdon and Powerscourt gave me something I had never truly known before: friends, acceptance, and a place where I felt I belonged.

Looking back now, I realize Huntingdon did not simply become part of my life. It became the place where I grew up.

[Photograph to come: A period map or photograph of Huntingdon, Powerscourt, and the covered bridge]

Mike - My Brother

Before Huntingdon, there was Mike.

Mike and I met in 1961 in Sainte-Eustache while riding our bicycles. The full story belongs in Chapter 1, because that was where one of the greatest friendships of my life began.

People sometimes ask whether Mike is my best friend. My answer is no. Mike is my brother.

We have stood beside each other through almost everything life has thrown at us. We grew up together, got into trouble together, learned difficult lessons together, and later became business partners. In 1974 we went into business together, and after all these years we are still working side by side.

When I began spending weekends in Huntingdon and Powerscourt, I brought Mike with me. It did not take long before the area became his second home too. It was there that he met Sharon. They fell in love, married, and built a wonderful family together.

Sometimes I smile when I think about it. One friendship led to another, and none of us understood then that those weekends would shape the rest of our lives.

[Photograph to come: Bobby and Mike as young men]

Meeting Martha

I was about fifteen when I met Martha. She lived with her family on a farm on First Concession, and her brother was Jon. Before long, the three of us became friends.

For a city boy from Montreal, the farm felt like another world. There were horses, barns, open fields, fresh air, chores, and the honest tiredness that came after a day's work. I loved every minute of it.

I often walked about a mile to the farm simply to spend time there. That walk never felt long. I knew that at the end of it there would be people glad to see me.

Martha became my first girlfriend in Huntingdon. We dated for only a few months, but our friendship lasted for more than sixty years. That says more about the importance of those years than any teenage romance ever could.

Through Martha and Jon, I met Donna, Bill, Ian, Peggy, and many others who became my Huntingdon family. Without Martha, there would have been no Huntingdon story.

[Photograph to come: Bob and Martha dancing]

Friday Freedom

Every Friday afternoon, I could hardly wait to get out of Montreal. The city was where I worked and slept, but Huntingdon was where I felt alive.

If Uncle Gordie was staying at his apartment in Montreal, he sometimes let me take his company car back to Powerscourt for the weekend. He worked for Underwood Typewriters as a repairman, and the company supplied him with a Volkswagen Beetle. To everyone else it was a small company car. To me it was freedom on four wheels.

As soon as work ended, I pointed that Volkswagen toward Highway 4 and Huntingdon. With every mile, the tension of Montreal seemed to fall away. I knew what waited for me: the farms, the river, my friends, the Saturday-night dances, and Donna.

My first stop was often Martha and Jon's farm on First Concession. Then I went to Donna's farm. After that, Mike and I headed toward Dundee to collect Ian, Sharon, and whoever else was joining us.

By the time everyone squeezed into the Volkswagen, there could be six or seven of us inside. Some sat on each other's laps. There were no seat belts, and nobody gave it much thought. We looked like clowns climbing into a circus car, but we were happy.

We crossed the border at Dundee and continued toward Malone, New York. The American customs officers came to recognize us. They would look into that overloaded Volkswagen, smile, shake their heads, and say, 'Have a good time, boys - and drive safe.' Then they waved us through.

Life was different in the early 1960s. No one counted the passengers. No one lectured us about seat belts. There was simply a kind of trust that is difficult to imagine today.

[Photograph to come: Uncle Gordie's Volkswagen Beetle]

Saturdays in the Country

Saturday mornings usually meant work. Sometimes I helped at Martha's family farm. I threw hay bales, worked around the barn, or did whatever needed doing. For a city kid, it was hard work, but it made me feel useful. Nobody cared that I had little education or that I struggled to write. If I worked hard and kept my word, I belonged.

By afternoon, we often made our way to the dam near the covered bridge. We swam in the Chateaugay River, splashed one another, laughed, and played games with the girls riding on our shoulders. There was nothing fancy about those afternoons. That is probably why they have stayed with me so clearly.

Then Saturday night arrived, and Saturday night meant the Skyliner.

The Skyliner was about five miles east of Malone. To us, it felt like the centre of the world. There was music, dancing, laughter, and the electric feeling that came from being young and believing life was just beginning.

We danced until late, then drove the girls home. Afterward, Mike and I often met Bill at Pivan's around one in the morning. Bill could order five hot dogs and a large plate of fries as if it were nothing. None of us could understand where he put it all, but he was built like a farm boy and worked hard enough to burn it off.

Over hot dogs and Coke, we solved all the world's problems - or at least we believed we did. Those late-night talks became part of the rhythm of every weekend.

[Photograph to come: The covered bridge, the river, or friends swimming at the dam]

[Photograph to come: Pivan's restaurant or a period street scene in Huntingdon]

A Different Kind of Home

When I returned to Montreal at the end of a weekend, I often felt the happiness drain away. Friday had been full of anticipation. Saturday was friendship, work, swimming, music, and laughter. Sunday meant knowing I would soon have to leave.

I did not have the words for it then, but I understand it now. In Huntingdon and Powerscourt, I had discovered a different kind of home. It was not a house or a piece of land. It was the feeling that people wanted me around.

The friends I made there did not ask me to explain where I came from. They did not judge me because I had left school early or because my family life was troubled. They accepted Bobby, the boy standing in front of them.

For someone who had spent much of childhood learning how to survive, being accepted felt almost unbelievable. It changed me. It showed me that family could also be made from friendship, loyalty, and the simple act of welcoming someone in.

That feeling of belonging is the thread running through every memory that follows.

PART TWO

Donna - First Love and a Lasting Memory

Changing Seats

I met Donna through Martha. At the time, Martha and I were dating. We were only teenagers, and the relationship lasted about four months.

One evening, a group of us were riding around together. Someone else was driving. Martha and I sat in the back seat, and Donna was in the front.

During the ride, Martha turned to me and said, 'Bobby, I don't want to be your boyfriend anymore.'

Well, that was the end of that.

I had always thought Donna was a beautiful girl. When the car stopped, I climbed out of the back seat, opened the front door, and sat beside her.

I looked at Donna and asked, 'Would you like to go out with me?'

She smiled and said, 'Yes.'

Just like that, a new chapter of my life began. I was seventeen. Donna was fourteen. Neither of us had any idea that one simple question would connect our lives forever.

Looking back today, I still smile when I think about that evening. Who would have guessed that changing seats in a car could change the rest of my life?

[Photograph to come: Bobby and Donna, about 1966]

Young Love

After that night, Donna and I became almost inseparable. Whenever I came to Huntingdon for the weekend, she was the first person I wanted to see.

We did not need expensive dates. I often brought her a small gift, but the things that mattered most cost nothing. Our dates were country roads, farm fields, swimming at the dam, Saturday-night dances, and long drives through the back roads around Huntingdon and Powerscourt.

Sometimes we sat for hours talking at her farm after her parents had gone to bed. Sometimes I stayed in Powerscourt. Sometimes we said very little at all. Just being together was enough.

Those years were innocent in many ways. We held hands. We kissed. We dreamed about the future. We believed love could carry us wherever we wanted to go.

Donna became my first great love. She trusted me, and I loved her. That is the truth at the heart of our story.

I also have to be honest about another truth. As the years passed, I was not always as faithful as I should have been. My choices hurt Donna, and I carried regret for a long time. I cannot tell my life honestly if I include only the good parts.

Age has taught me that forgiveness does not erase what happened. It allows us to face it, learn from it, and try to become better. When I remember Donna now, I do not want the mistakes to be the loudest part of the story. I remember her smile, the dancing, the river, the country roads, and the feeling of being young and in love.

[Photograph to come: Bobby and Donna together]

Expo 67

One of my favourite memories was going to Expo 67 in Montreal with Donna, Mike, and Sharon.

For young people from a small town, it felt as though the whole world had come to Canada. Every country seemed to have its own pavilion. There was music everywhere, people from around the world, new inventions, and bold ideas about the future.

We walked through the crowds taking it all in. Yet when I look back, I think the most important part was not any particular pavilion. It was that we were together.

Expo 67 promised a bright new world. We were young enough to believe that the future would be simple. We had no idea how quickly our lives were about to change.

[Photograph to come: Donna, Bobby, Mike, and Sharon at Expo 67]

Our First Apartment

As we grew older, life began to change. Mike and I rented our first apartment together for twenty-five dollars a month. We thought we were grown men.

The apartment was not much. It was cold in winter and had few comforts, but to us it meant independence. We could close the door and feel that the place belonged to us.

It was there, after nearly three years of taking our relationship slowly, that Donna and I became physically intimate.

I do not remember that time as something casual. We were in love, and we believed we had a future together. Looking back, I understand how much trust Donna placed in me. I wish I had always deserved that trust.

[Photograph to come: A simple period photograph of the apartment building or

Montreal street]

A Life-Changing Winter

By the beginning of 1967, Donna and I were deeply in love. Like many young couples, we believed nothing could ever separate us. We were young, we were in love, and we thought we had all the time in the world.

A few weeks after that cold winter day in the apartment, we learned that Donna was pregnant. Everything changed.

For both of us, the news was frightening. Donna was only sixteen, and I was nineteen. We loved each other, but love did not give us the power to make the decisions that followed.

Donna carried the weight of almost everything. She tried to hide the pregnancy for as long as she could. By early summer, it could no longer be hidden.

Her family took control. Donna was removed from school and sent to the Catherine Booth Home for Unwed Mothers in Montreal. She never returned to Huntingdon in the same way.

Today, young people may have choices, counselling, and support that were not available to us then. In the 1960s, shame and secrecy often decided what happened. The adults made the decisions, and the young people were expected to obey.

I often think about how lonely and frightened Donna must have felt. She was a young girl carrying a burden no one her age should have had to carry alone.

The Little Park

While Donna stayed at the Catherine Booth Home, there was a small park down the street. Each day, she was allowed to spend about an hour there.

Whenever I could, I went to that park to be with her. For one hour, that small patch of grass became our whole world.

We sat together, talked about the future, and tried to imagine how we could keep our little family together. I kept asking Donna to run away with me so we could raise the baby ourselves.

I was young enough to believe that love could overcome anything. Donna wanted to believe it too, but she was frightened. She was afraid of her father and afraid of disappointing her parents. She had almost no power over what was happening.

Looking back, I understand the impossible position she was in. We were two teenagers trying to make adult decisions in a world that was not prepared to let us make them.

In the end, the decisions were made for us.

[Photograph to come: The park near the Catherine Booth Home, if a historical image can be found]

Our Daughter

On October 30, 1967, our daughter was born at Catherine Booth Hospital in Montreal.

Donna named her Donna.

We wanted to keep our baby. But wanting something and being allowed to choose it were very different things in those days.

Donna's father made the final decisions. Our daughter was placed for adoption.

A loving family from Lachine welcomed her into their home. Years later, they moved to St. Albert, Alberta, where she grew up.

At the time, neither Donna nor I could have imagined that one day we would find her again. That reunion belongs later in this memoir. Here, in 1967, all we knew was the loss.

The birth of our daughter joined our lives forever, even as circumstances pulled us apart.

[Photograph to come: A respectful family photograph connected to the 1967 birth, if available]

After the Birth

After the adoption, Donna returned to school and moved to Fort Covington, New York, where she lived with a kind family.

It was there that she met a young man named Mac. They eventually married and built a life together.

Years later, Donna told me that the marriage became difficult and abusive. At the time, I knew very little about what she was experiencing. By then, our lives had begun moving in very different directions.

My life also moved on, but the memories did not disappear. First love rarely vanishes completely. It becomes part of the person we carry into every chapter that follows.

When I think about Donna today, I do not remember only the sadness. I remember changing seats in that car. I remember waiting all week for Friday. I remember the covered bridge, the river, the Skyliner, hot dogs at Pivan's, Expo 67, and long conversations in the country.

I remember a young girl who trusted me and a young man who still had much to learn.

Most of all, I remember being loved.

Only You Dad — Chapter 2 | THE YEARS MOVE ON

The Arrest - 1964

In 1964, I was going to Huntingdon to take Martha to a prom. John and I were in my car, heading south on Decarie toward Sherbrooke Street. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon and already getting very dark.

My car had been giving me trouble with the generator and battery, and the lights were getting dimmer and dimmer.

As we approached Sherbrooke Street, I noticed a Montreal police officer looking at my car. The light turned green and I crossed Sherbrooke. Sure enough, the police car pulled right in behind me. Then the flashing lights came on.

I pulled over.

The officer came up and asked me about my lights. I told him I was having trouble with the generator and battery and that I planned to stop at the next service station.

He asked me for my driver's licence and started walking back toward the police car.

I looked at John and said, "Let's hope he doesn't ask me to open the trunk."

We had a problem. There were stolen car parts in the trunk.

The officer had also noticed all the tools lying in the back seat. When he came back and asked me to open the trunk, John and I knew we were toast.

Once he saw what was inside, he placed both of us under arrest.

We were taken to Montreal Police Station 15 for questioning. They separated us and put us into two different rooms.

Station 15 and Parthenais

The police at Station 15 were actually very nice to us, and I was nice to them. They asked us about the stolen car parts, and we told them where we had gotten them.

John and I were charged with 18 counts of grand auto theft.

I don't remember a lot about the questioning after that. One thing I do remember clearly is my father, Jack, and Gordie showing up with a carton of cigarettes.

From Station 15, we were transported to Parthenais Detention Centre, officially known as the Centre de prevention de Montreal, where we were held waiting for a bail hearing.

The next day, we were brought before the court. Bail was set at \$10,000.

There was no way we could make that kind of bail, so we went back to Parthenais.

Parthenais had cellblocks with eight cells, and there were four men in a cell. I was eighteen years old and suddenly living in a jail with men I didn't know.

At one point, I got into a fight. Once again, all those years of boxing and everything I had learned about taking care of myself at Weredale came back to me. After that, nobody bothered me.

Two weeks passed before my next court appearance.

This time, my mother was there with her new husband, Fred Riley. Mom and Fred were living in a house in St-Eustache, and they both worked at the bank that would later become part of CIBC.

My trial was set for about four months later, so once again we asked the court for bail.

Fred Riley put their house in St-Eustache up as security for my bail. That was something I never forgot.

Because Fred was willing to put their home on the line for me, my bail was finally secured. After two weeks in Parthenais, I was free to go.

My Day in Court

While I was waiting for my trial, Martha dumped me, so I started dating Donna.

About four months passed, and finally my trial date arrived.

Before we went into court, my court-appointed lawyer had worked out a deal with the Crown. As I understood it, I was going to receive three years in jail.

I went into that courtroom believing I was going away for three years. But that isn't what happened.

The judge listened first to the Crown. When the Crown finished, the judge turned to my lawyer and gave him an opportunity to speak.

My lawyer stood up and told the judge that sending me to jail for three years was the wrong thing to do. This was my first offence, and he had three character witnesses who wanted to speak on my behalf.

The judge agreed to hear them.

Gilles Tessier

The first person to speak was my boss, Gilles Tessier, from Bechtel Corporation on Pare Street in Montreal.

Gilles was the manager of the printing department. By then, I had been working at Bechtel for about three years and was responsible for running the printing equipment.

Gilles told the judge what kind of worker I was. He explained that I sometimes worked as many as 70 hours a week. There were times when I even slept at Bechtel because there was so much work to get finished. But the work always got out.

Most importantly, Gilles told the judge that if I was allowed to remain free, my job would still be waiting for me.

My Uncle and the Police

Next, my uncle spoke. He told the judge that if I was released, I had a place to live at his house.

Then the police were called to speak.

They told the judge that John and I had cooperated with them from the beginning. We had answered their questions, told them where the stolen parts had come from, and property had been recovered and returned.

Then the officer told the judge that putting me in jail might be the wrong thing to do.

The judge listened to all of it and then asked me to stand.

He went over what he had heard - the charges, what the Crown had said, my first offence, my job, my family, my cooperation with the police and the people who had come to court to stand behind me.

Then he gave his decision: three years, but suspended.

The judge made it very clear that this was my one chance. He told me he never wanted to see me standing in his courtroom again. He said he saw something in me and was giving me the opportunity to prove that his decision was the right one.

I walked out of that courtroom with my uncle.

I never stood before a criminal court again.

The Plymouth Satellite - 1967

In 1967, Mike and I were at my father's house in Athelstan, Quebec, about five kilometres south of Huntingdon on the River Road, near Powerscourt.

My father, Jack, was living with Joan at the time. He was working as a steel salesman for Richler Steel, and I believe the car he had was a company car.

It was a beautiful red Plymouth Satellite - a two-door hardtop with a leather roof and a 318 engine.

Dad looked at Mike and me and said, "Here are the keys. Take the car out for a spin."

Well, in those days we liked fast cars, so naturally we wanted to see what this thing could do.

I said to Mike, "You know, Sonny Deer used to take the next corner at about 90 miles an hour."

So I came into that corner doing close to 90 miles an hour. Almost immediately, I knew the Plymouth wasn't going to make it.

There was a hydro pole right at the corner. I pulled hard to the right to miss it, and the car went sideways. Then I pulled too hard to the left, corrected again to the right, and suddenly we were heading straight off the road toward a farmer's field.

We went through the fence, taking out about 15 fence posts and a whole lot of barbed wire. The Plymouth bounced across the farmer's field, and I figure we were still doing around 50 miles an hour.

Finally, about 50 yards off the road, the car came to a stop. There were no seat belts holding us in.

The Farmer Saw What We Couldn't

For a few moments after the car stopped, I just sat there in shock.

Mike got out first, looked the car over and came back. "Not too bad," he said. "We can take it to Carrigan's. He'll have it fixed in no time."

I finally got out and looked at it myself. I thought Mike was right.

Then the farmer came over. The first thing he asked was whether we were all right. We told him we were.

I explained that the Plymouth belonged to my father. The farmer looked at the car and said, "I think you're in big trouble."

We asked why. We still thought Carrigan's could fix it. The farmer said, "I don't think so. This car is a total wreck."

Mike and I couldn't see it. I think we were both still in shock.

The farmer called the police.

The Police Arrive

The police arrived and started taking their report. The officer asked who was driving, who Mike was, and all the normal questions.

Then he asked how fast we were going. "About 60 miles an hour," we told him.

The officer looked toward the road and said, "By all those tire marks, I don't think you were doing 60 miles an hour."

He asked for my father's telephone number and called a tow truck to pull the car out of the farmer's field.

Facing My Father

About an hour later, my father showed up with my Uncle Gordie to see his new Plymouth Satellite - a total wreck.

Dad was pissed. He looked at me and yelled, "How fucking fast were you going?"

"Sixty," I told him. He didn't believe me.

Mike and I didn't know what to say. My Uncle Gordie took me back to his house.

After that day in 1967, I didn't see my father again until my wedding to Joyce on August 30, 1969. He came to the wedding and sat in the front row.

After that, it was about 25 years before I saw him again. He never knew his grandchildren while they were growing up. He eventually saw Karrie when she was about twenty-five and Nancy at around the same age.

I only saw him two or three more times before he died.

I don't tell that part of the story because I feel sorry for him.

My father was a womanizer. He drank, beat women and beat his kids. I had watched what he did to my mother when I was growing up, and Joan later told me about the beatings she took from him too. Joan and I both worked at Bechtel.

Eventually Joan left him. I believe Dad also lost his job sometime after the Plymouth accident. He retired and ended up first at the cottage and later living in a house trailer on the Chateauguay River in Huntingdon.

Some people might look at the way his life turned out and feel sorry for him.

I don't.

After everything I had seen him do to the women and children in his life, I looked at it differently.

I called it payback.

Churchill Falls - May 1967

In May 1967, Bechtel sent me to Churchill Falls, Labrador, to work on the project there.

I was working the telephone switchboard, one of those old systems with cables that you plugged in and pulled out to connect calls. On top of running the switchboard, Bechtel also put me in charge of the mail.

So I guess you could say that for a while, I was the postmaster of Churchill Falls.

Since I was still with Donna back home, I called her every night. We would talk for hours. I never gave much thought to what those long-distance calls were costing because the telephone system belonged to Bechtel.

Bechtel gave me a truck, and every day I had to make the run to Twin Falls, where the airstrip was located. At about one o'clock in the afternoon, the plane would arrive from Wabush, Labrador.

I'd meet the plane, collect the mailbags, throw them into the Bechtel truck and drive back to Churchill Falls.

My home up there was a trailer that I shared with members of the RCMP.

Once I got back, I'd sort all the incoming mail. Then I'd open the wicket and the men would come by to pick up their letters and packages from home. They would also bring me outgoing mail to send south.

My Churchill Falls Whisky Business

I hadn't even been at Churchill Falls for a month when I figured out there might be a way to make some extra money.

There was no booze available up there, so I called Mike.

"Hey," I said, "there's no booze here, and I'm sure we can make some money selling it."

I told him to send me a case of Black Velvet whisky through the mail. Back then, I could buy a bottle for about eight dollars. At Churchill Falls, I could sell that same bottle for fifty dollars.

The men started getting drunk, and that got the attention of the RCMP.

One of the officers came into my office and said, "When you get parcels, I want you to shake them and listen for gurgling."

I called Mike and told him what had happened. After that, the bottles being shipped to me were filled right to the top so they wouldn't make the same obvious sound when the parcels were moved.

For a while, everything went fine. Then one of the bottles broke in the sorting area at Wabush.

At about the same time, Donna found out that I had been fooling around with other girls after taking her home at midnight.

Double trouble.

One morning, at about eight o'clock, one of the workers told me the RCMP were looking for me.

I left Churchill Falls that morning and made my way to Wabush, where I caught an Air Canada flight back to Montreal.

I arrived in Montreal at about six o'clock that evening. I half expected to find the RCMP waiting for me at the airport. They weren't.

Mike picked me up, and I stayed at his house for a while until things settled down.

The next day, I went to see Donna. I wanted to talk to her, but she was very cold toward me.

The RCMP never did catch up with me.

Fired by Bechtel

There was one more consequence from my sudden departure from Churchill Falls.

Bechtel fired me.

I had left my job without telling them and flown back to Montreal. Sometime afterward, Bechtel sent my final cheque to my mother's house.

I had worked for Bechtel for about five years, and I loved that place. It was a great job.

I had started in Montreal, worked long hours in the printing department, learned to run all the printing equipment and eventually was sent north to Churchill Falls.

And then I screwed it up.

Looking back over my life, there were a lot of times when things were going well and somehow I managed to screw them up. Even today, I sometimes wonder why I did some of the things I did.

Was some of it connected to my dyslexia? Was ADHD part of it? I didn't understand any of that when I was young.

Maybe it played a part. Maybe sometimes I simply made bad decisions. Probably some of both.

But losing Bechtel was my own doing.

It was a job I loved, and after five years there, I threw it away.

And if there's one thing I've learned about myself over the years, it's that I didn't always learn the first time.

Donna and the Road to Vancouver

This is one of those places where, after all these years, I'm not completely sure I have the dates in the right order.

But I remember what happened.

Donna became pregnant and was eventually placed in a home for unwed mothers. Around this time, she was staying in Fort Covington, New York, with friends of Martha's parents.

I still wanted Donna back. After everything that had happened between us, I went to Fort Covington to see her. I was hoping that somehow we could straighten things out and get back together.

That didn't happen.

So I did what I seemed to do a lot in those days when things went wrong. I took off.

This time, I headed west - all the way to Vancouver.

Vancouver - 1967

Later in 1967, I picked up my friend Ian Dagg, and the two of us took off for Vancouver.

We made it all the way across the country and found ourselves a place to stay at the Welcome Hotel on Hastings Street in Vancouver.

The price was right: one dollar a night.

Once we had somewhere to sleep, the next thing we needed was work.

Ian and I went down to the unemployment office looking for jobs. The man we saw gave us simple advice: go home, because there was no work there.

In fact, he gave each of us a \$25 cheque to help us get back home.

But we stayed.

I started looking for printing work, something I already knew how to do from my years at Bechtel, and I found a job.

Ian couldn't find anything. After about a week, he became homesick and wanted to go home.

So I said, 'Let's go.'

I quit my job, and we headed back east.

The Trip Home from Vancouver

Ian and I left Vancouver and headed back toward St-Eustache in my 1958 Ford with the big Edsel engine.

As we came through the mountains, the transmission gave out. We were left with basically one low gear, good for about 20 miles an hour.

We coasted downhill until we found a repair shop.

I asked the mechanic if he could fix it. "Edsel? I can't get the parts," he told me.

I asked about a scrapyard. No luck.

Finally, I asked, "Will you buy the car?" He said no.

Now I was really in a pickle.

So I made him another offer: "Please, just buy the car for the price of two train tickets home."

He agreed.

That was the end of my 1958 Ford with the big Edsel engine.

Ian and I got on the train and headed east. It took us five days to get home.

When I arrived, Mike picked me up. He was driving a white Ford Falcon, and I went back to his house.

Not long after that, Mike said, 'Let's go to St. John's, Newfoundland, and see if we can get work.'

So we did.

St. John's, Newfoundland

Not long after Vancouver, Mike and I left for St. John's, Newfoundland, where much of my mother's side of the family lived - the Pippys, my Aunt Babs and Uncle Ernest, and my cousins.

It took us about three days to get across.

When we arrived, we got a room at the Newfoundland Hotel.

From there, we went out to a bar. The man at the entrance told us we couldn't come in without a tie.

We said, "We don't have one."

He told us there was another bar upstairs where we could go without a tie, so upstairs we went.

There was a beautiful young woman there wearing a very short miniskirt. She asked what she could get us.

"Two beers," we said.

We got talking. She asked our names and where we were from. We told her Montreal.

I asked her name. She told us to call her Linda.

We played some pool and kept talking. She told us she had worked for Playboy magazine before coming home.

That night I told her we were staying at the Newfoundland Hotel and asked her to come back with me. She did. We got Mike a separate room.

It was a wonderful night.

I saw her again before leaving and told her, 'If you ever get to Montreal, look me up.'

Aunt Babs and Uncle Ernest

The next day, Mike and I went looking for work in St. John's.

We ended up at my Aunt Babs and Uncle Ernest's house, where they lived with my four cousins.

They ran what I remember as the largest flour mill and chicken operation in Newfoundland.

We asked about work. Aunt Babs asked us, 'What can you do?'

One possibility was sexing chickens. Nope.

Then she suggested maybe we could repair some roofs. We said yes to the roofs.

That didn't last long.

The next day, Aunt Babs gave us \$100 and told us to go home.

Which we did - the next morning.

One Last Night in St. John's

The night before we left, I asked Mike if I could use his car. He said yes, so I went back to the bar.

It was about one o'clock in the morning when Linda came out. She got into the car and we sat together saying goodbye.

The Ford Falcon was parked on a hill in front of a steel parking meter.

At some point I pushed in the clutch. The car started rolling and smashed into the parking meter, damaging the left side.

I said goodbye to Linda and gave her my telephone number in Montreal.

The Drive Home

The next morning, Mike and I started the long trip back across Newfoundland.

At one point I was driving in a blizzard. Eventually I stopped and slept for a few hours.

Then Mike said he would drive. He got out and saw the damage to the Falcon.

I looked at him and said, "What did you hit?"

Mike said, "I hit nothing. It was you."

I never told him the real story until years later.

Anyway, we made it home, and I was living at my mother's house.

Six Months Later

About six months later, the telephone rang at my mother's house at around ten o'clock at night.

It was Linda.

"I'm at the Montreal airport. Come and get me."

So I did.

We went to a motel for the night.

The next day, I called my Uncle Gordie and asked if we could stay at his house. I told him about Linda.

He said okay for a few weeks, until I could find a place of my own.

So Linda and I moved into Uncle Gordie's house.

Six months after saying goodbye in St. John's, she was back in my life - this time in Montreal.

Uncle Gordie told us we had 2 weeks to find another place to live because there were already too many people there. So next morning we had a game plan. She needed to find a job because I didn't make enough for an apartment. Off I went to work and she looked in the newspaper for a job and apartments. It took about 2 weeks to find both. I also found the apartment we found was furnished and down the street from my uncle. It was a one bedroom with kitchen and had its own entrance. We moved in within a couple days. She got a job at Super Sex, a sex club in downtown Montreal. She started work at 4 o'clock til midnight, 4 days a week, so we didn't see each other much. When she was off during the day, she would hang out with my uncle because he was not working. Little did I know, at the time, she was messing with my uncle. I didn't find out this until years later. I also discovered she was doing "extra" work at the club.

I always looked forward to the weekends because we all headed out to Powerscourt, My uncle, aunt and kids. Mike would meet us there. Back then, we all had our own cars. Bobby Kibee was driving a beautiful 2 door Ford Galaxy convertible 1963. He was dating Lori Dagg, Ian's sister. They lived at a farm in Dundee. Sharon's family also had a farm there. Donna lived just the other side of Dundee in Port Covington. Her boyfriend's name was Matt. Tommy Shandly came out alone and would go home the next day. He didn't have a girlfriend but caused a lot of trouble. Bill, Martha and Jon, Patsy and Pat H all lived at their farms in Eglin. Eventually Pat would marry Peter Dagg and Bill would marry Peggy and Donna would marry Matt.

Then there was the neighbour of Uncle Gordie, last name Birow who had a son named Denny, same age as me. So Saturday nights we would all head to the Skyliner in Malton New York for drinking and dancing. I went there basically to show off my new Playboy girlfriend and to make Donna jealous. It didn't work out the way I wanted but the boys certainly drooled over her, especially Denny. I later learned she caught Denny's eye too. We all continued going to Huntington every weekend for the next 5 months. Linda and I separated after 6 months. She

went to live with Denny who had a good job and lived in downtown Montreal. I never saw her or Denny again. I go back to live with my mother in St Eustache.

End of Chapter 2

A new chapter of my life was beginning in St-Eustache in the fall of 1968.

One weekend, Mike picked me up and we headed to a lodge in Lachute. Mike was with Sharon, Bobby was there with his girlfriend, and Malcolm was with us.

We arrived at the lodge around eight o'clock that night. It was a swinging place with country music playing.

That's when I saw a beautiful blonde named **Joyce**.

Malcolm introduced us.

I didn't know it that night, but Joyce was about to become a very important part of my life.

And that story belongs in **Chapter 3**.