

## Richard McNaughton Lendrum (1911-1976)

Richard McNaughton Lendrum was born January 22, 1911 in Victoria, BC to Edward Godfrey Lendrum and Mary Jane McNaughton. His father had been born in Auckland, New Zealand and his mother in New Westminster, BC. Dick, as he was known, was not quite three months old when his father died suddenly of peritonitis due to complications of appendicitis at St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria.



Dick attended Victoria College 1927-1930, serving as President of the Students' Council in his last year. The notation about him in the College's annual reads: *The president of the Students' Council, an actor, and an excellent student. Dick has filled his important office with a grace and dignity which would well become a bank president or a prime minister. He is the idol of all the freshettes, and no wonder, with that expressive hair and those wavy eyes. Dick intends to take honours in English at UBC, and we all wish him the very best of luck, knowing that he will make a success of whatever he puts his hand to.*"

Dick did go on to UBC in Vancouver where the 1931 *Totem* annual reads: *Dick joined us in our third year, coming from Victoria College where he was president of the AMS. A prominent member of the Players' Club, he starred in 'The Veil Lifts' as the naval officer, and in 'Friend Hannah' as the Duke of York. Dick is this year president of the Letters Club. He is majoring in English and intends to return for Education. With his sterling character and jovial disposition we predict every success for his future.*" Dick served as President of Education during his final year, 1931-1932, at UBC.

Dick's first teaching post was at Duncan High School in Duncan, BC beginning September 1932 with an annual salary of \$1300. Not surprisingly, given his involvement in various clubs at Victoria College and UBC, Dick served as the teacher mentor of the high school's debating and dramatic clubs during his time at the school.

Duncan Elementary School was situated on the same plot of land as Duncan High School and it was not long before Dick met his future wife, Anne Veronica Staples, who had also been hired in 1932 by the Duncan Consolidated School District as an elementary school teacher. Anne had grown up in Duncan where her father, Noel Richard Ponsonby Staples, owned a local sporting goods store, The Jack Pot, and was actively involved with tennis and grass hockey clubs in the area. He had been a former member of

the Irish national grass hockey team. Dick and Anne often played grass hockey together on the schools' staff team against the Duncan High School girls first XI, of which Anne's younger sister, Kay, was a member.



1935 School staff Grass Hockey Team: Dick Lendrum is in the back row, extreme right

Richard McNaughton Lendrum married Anne Veronica Staples on July 10, 1936 at St. Mary's Church, Somenos in Duncan, BC. Dick's brother, Charles Edward Lendrum, also a teacher, was his best man.

*"You can't beat the Irish."* Thus it was proved on Sunday, November 8, 1936 when the Irish team captained by Dick's brother-in-law, Nat Staples, carried off the Staples Cup in the annual grass hockey tournament open to mixed teams on Vancouver Island. Fine weather made the fields fast and some splendid play was seen. The Irish had only one goal scored against them in eight matches. Anne Lendrum and her siblings, Kay and Tony Staples, were all members of the Irish team. Meanwhile Dick played on another team which won nary a game. The following year on Sunday, November 21, 1937, mud flew and shins were battered once again in the annual Staples Cup Tournament to the delight of a good number of spectators. Once again, Dick played on a team that finished last in the tourney!

In September 1938 Dick was promoted to assistant principal of Duncan High School with no increase in salary! His new duties included taking charge of the junior high school in the Cairnsmore School building across the road from Duncan High School. By the end of that school year war was looming on the European front and Dick had been for five-and-a-half years a member of the non-permanent militia of the 2nd Battalion, Canadian Scottish Regiment.



Cairnsmore School, Duncan High School, Duncan Elementary School c. 1932

On Friday, September 3, 1939 Duncan militia units were ordered to mobilize. The officers commanding the 62nd Field Battery and A Company, 2nd Battalion, Canadian Scottish Regiment received mobilization orders simultaneously from the Victoria headquarters of Military District No. 11. Major Richard Gilbert Lewes Parker had been promoted to command the battalion in Victoria with Lt. Richard McNaughton Lendrum as his adjutant.

The local newspaper, *The Cowichan Leader*, reported in its issue of September 7, 1939: *Militia service has called three teachers away from their schools: Major R.G. L. Parker of Duncan Grammar School; Lt. R. M. Lendrum, assistant principal of Duncan High School; and Lt. A. H. Plows, principal of Fairbridge Day School. Mr. Lendrum has been granted leave of absence for the present and Mrs. Cyril T. Pitt is substituting for him.*



World War II resulted in some halfway-round-the-world reunions between Dick and some of his former students. Canadian Scottish Lt. Stewart Ross and Lt. Jack Davie both met up with their former teacher, Major R. M. Lendrum, on the Canadian National steamship *Prince Henry* which in peacetime had served the BC coastline. Stewart did not survive the war, but Jack and Dick remained friends. *"After the war I used to say to Dick that putting him on the beach in Normandy was my revenge for him trying to teach me Latin."*

Dick went to France with his unit on D Day and fought with it until he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and given command of The Royal Regiment of Canada. He won his DSO (Distinguished Service Order) for cool command of a manoeuvre, under heavy fire, in which 600 of the enemy were captured and great gains made.

After the war ended and he was honourably discharged from the armed forces holding the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, Dick returned to Duncan, BC to resume a position with the school district. The Duncan Consolidated School board named him supervising principal of all Duncan schools at their meeting on December 7, 1945. The appointment was made in a move to prepare for the organizational expansion in the district and the formation of School District No. 65 (Cowichan) which would follow the implementation of the BC government's Cameron report. As supervising principal, the then current principals of Duncan High School and Duncan Elementary School would continue in their present duties as vice-principals to Col. Lendrum. *"You will work under Col. Lendrum and be responsible to him in his capacity as supervising principal; your salary will not be reduced; and you will retain the title of principal of the school. It is clearly to be understood, however, that the duties of principal to be exercised by you will be confined to such duties as may be delegated to you by Col. Lendrum."*

The Board's appointment was made without prior consultation either with the two current principals or with the BC Ministry of Education and did result in some turmoil at both local and provincial levels. The BC Inspector of Schools sent a letter to the Board in January 1946 recommending that for the present term Col. Lendrum be given the duties of preparing for a new high school and the reorganization of Duncan Consolidated Schools for the implementation of the Cameron Report, and that the two current principals be given total responsibility for the administration of their schools until June. The Board chose to stand by its own decision. Complicating Dick's appointment was the later loss of Duncan High School to fire on Sunday, March 24, 1946 and the immediate need to find new school accommodation.

The matter was finally sorted out in June 1946 when the BC Department of Education determined that it did not recognize the position of supervising principal and the new School District No. 65 found itself with too many principals. Dick's appointment as supervising principal was rescinded, after which he was appointed senior principal. The schools under his jurisdiction would be Cobble Hill High, Cobble Hill Elementary, Bench, Sylvania, Bamberton and Shawnigan Lake Elementary Schools, all schools which would be amalgamated with the Duncan Schools to form the new school district. In addition Dick was to coordinate the newly created School District No. 65 (Cowichan) and to plan a new high school to replace the Duncan High School. The later appointment was satisfactory to all and cleared up technical objections in the first appointment.

The following month, July 1946, another setback arose in Dick's life. The cottage in which he resided with his wife and daughter, Jill, burned to the ground as a result of a fire at the nearby Maple Inn. Another small cottage and three cars belonging to guests at the Inn were also destroyed. The family ended up moving to a vacant master's house at Fairbridge School through the auspices of his great friend, Arthur Howard Plows, who had returned to Fairbridge after the war as day school principal. The family lived there until about 1950 when they moved to a house with five acres on Jaynes Road in Duncan.

The accomplishment of a new high school for the school district took almost four years. Dick's goal was realized in July 1950 when he was appointed the first principal of what is known today as Cowichan Secondary School. Cowichan High School, as it was first known, was officially opened by the BC Minister of Education on November 15, 1950. Dick spoke on behalf of the staff and students at the opening, and expressed thanks for the "unrivalled facilities now at their disposal."



About 1951 Dick and his wife realized their two-year-old son, Brian, had a sight problem. Retina blastphoma was diagnosed and both of Brian's eyes were removed to keep the cancer from spreading. Raised by Dick and Anne to enjoy life to the fullest, Brian went on to become a top student at the University of British Columbia.

About 1966 Dick and Anne built a new home on the same property as their former cottage that had burned to the ground in 1946. There Dick enjoyed some solitude tending his rose and bonsai gardens. He also enjoyed getting together with his brother-in-law, Tony Staples, who lived next door to their new home. The two WWII veterans often reminisced together about the intricacies of military strategy.

Dick served as principal of Cowichan High School for nineteen years, moving on to the school board offices in 1969 to assume the position of assistant to the school superintendent. It was in this position that he won the admiration and respect of all with whom he worked: teachers, administrators, trustees and the public. He retired from teaching at the end of June 1973 after 41 years of service in the district.

Dick died at age 65 in 1976 at his home in Maple Bay, BC, just outside of the City of Duncan. His remains were cremated and the ashes interred at the Royal Oak Burial Park in Saanich, BC. Hundreds of Valley students had passed through his classrooms over the years and many fondly remembered him as the benevolent principal of Cowichan Secondary School.

Teachers acknowledged Dick's contributions to the school district with the passage of a resolution at their February 17, 1977 general meeting that the annual Cowichan District Teachers' Association (CDTA) educational bursary be re-named in his honour. Since that time, the CDTA's Col. R. M. Lendrum Bursary has been awarded to one or more deserving students who intend to pursue a career in the field of education.

Written by Carolyn Prellwitz  
Retired teacher, School District 70 (Cowichan Valley)  
Former President, Cowichan District Teachers' Association  
Secretary-Treasurer, Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society  
8 May 2015