

Page 76 - Dawn Fraser, Writer Selections

ISSUE: Issue 45

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1987/6/1

On July first in the year 1888 there was born in the town of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, to Mr. and Mrs. Simon Fraser, a male child, and it was soon evident to observers that this new citizen was go? ing to develop into a disagreeable, aggressive ad? dition to the world's population. For as soon as the infant's eyes were open and he glanced up into the world, he frowned hideously and let out a howl evidently in protest against being born. Some days later when a rather romantic maiden aunt took him to church to be named, she chose the name of Oswald and it is on record that at this mistake the child howled even louder. Later, when it had returned to its modest home and the name Oswald was being discussed, the child bab? bled some baby talk, like, "Goo Goo Boola Camera Hascha." This interruption was ignored by all pres? ent except the child's uncle Archie Chisholm who was a "braw Scot" and something of a gaelic schol? ar. This gentleman insisted that the wee laddie had spoken in the gaelic tongue and what it ut-tured was, "Oswald, that's a hell of a name to tag on a wee helpless Scotchman." And it soon devel? oped that few in that atmosphere could get their Scotch tongues around the word Oswald. The nearest most of them could come to it was Arse-well. Howev? er, with christian patience the child bore the dis? grace of not carrying one of the popular Scottish names of John, Duncan, Dougald, or Alex. Nearly all Scottish children were called after their fa? ther, mother or grandparents. As the boy developed to school age it was soon evi? dent that he possessed an inquiring but not a sub? missive mind. If he had one virtue it was his great love of truth. This did not necessarily a- rise from any moral sense but it seemed that he had a terror of being deceived and in his opinion even his school teachers were trying to deceive him. An instance of this: there was a schoolbook called The Health Reader. On one page under gues? tion, "Ought a Boy to Use Tobacco?" We were as? sured that such a habit stunted the growth and if we wanted to develop big and strong we should a-void the poison weed. But the contradiction to From Dawn Fraser's Autobiography this was right before our eyes. At the next desk sat big Ronald Chisholm. He was big and wery well developed. He could beat any boy in the sclrool, yet he smoked and chewed tobacco at ewery opportun? ity. And nearby sat Duncan McDonald whose father had a store where he could steal enough tobacco to keep him and his pals supplied at all times. Dun? can was also big and strong and a terror on the football field. Now, here was falsehood flung right in our faces, and it made young Fraser lose confidence in his teachers and others who took the same attitude. Why were adults trying to fool us? There was a small book called A Brief History of England. It gave a review of the Chinese Opium War, which did not occur in the darker ages but in the reign of Queen Victoria, probably about the year 1860. This book revealed or confessed that British merchant ships had been smuggling opium into China from In? dia. The boy emperor of China wished to stop this traffic which was making dope slaves of his people. He seized one British opium-laden ship. England at once declared war. Beat the Chinese in battle, stole the island of Hong Kong and forced the Chi? nese to open three more ports for them to peddle their drug. Now that is substantially what



we read in the school book. But a short time later we were sing? ing some patriotic song about how "England's flag has always stood for justice." Now when a young person finds such deceptions in his youth and in the school room, is it remarkable if he is suspi- WELCOME TO THE FULLY LICENSED Harbour Restaurant A Good Selection of Seafood OPEN ALL YEAR 'ROUND Dining Room Overlooking Cheticamp Harbour Cheticamp, Cape Breton * 224-2042 "'ZqX CO-OP Building Supplies Manufacturers of Quality HARBOUR HOMES STATION ST.. PORT HAWKESBURY - 625-2600 KING'S ROAD, SYDNEY - 539-6410 COOP PATIO DECKS MIH) Pointing the Way to Better Living We've been building quality into our homes for more than 32 years. Over 40 Home Plans to Choose from Paints and Stains I we OIMflI Feature Quality Paints & Stains for Every Need 76)_ You've Got Experience on Your Side