

Torquay Credit Union 50th Anniversary

Today we are here to celebrate fifty years of continued service to Torquay and surrounding communities.

Torquay Credit Union began 50 years ago, on November 22, 1954.

It was with great insight by a number of community minded gentlemen who saw the need, and jumped in to build a service much needed by the community. They did not jump into make a tidy sum for themselves, as the remuneration was not much. They were paid eleven cents a mile, out of pocket for lodging and \$6.00 per day for meals while they were attending some function for the Credit Union. The Directors were paid \$5.00 per meeting, as were the Credit Committee and the Supervisory Committee.

We need to pay tribute to all those pioneers who saw the need for a Community Credit Union and persevered in the early effort of bringing this Credit Union from infancy to what it is today.

The story begins, as told by a former General Manager, Fred Lockhart.

Several people likely feel they were responsible for starting the Torquay Credit Union, and they are all right.

Louie Lloyd, who moved to B.C., and whom none of you probably remember did much of the footwork for the Department of Co-Operation.

George Dressler certainly was one of the early local promoters as was Mel Wallin.

Father Rubens, and a priest from Radville certainly can claim a big role in its origin, and many, many others had a share in the birth of this community corporate citizen.

In spite of the memories that many people have, Fred Lockart states that he had very little to do with starting the Credit Union.

Like many others he put in a \$5.00 share for his membership #11, and sat back to watch, and see if it would grow.

Our dear friend, Arne Vinge was the first Secretary Treasurer or General Manager as it is called today. The municipal office was a very handy and central spot to drop off our deposits and to make the small loans that were made at that time. It also served as an ideal place for our Board of Directors to meet.

One day, Arsene Marcotte the President of the Credit Union came into Fred's office with a very sad story. He was shocked to learn that Arne Vinge had cancer, but he was totally unprepared for his next remark, which requested that they move the Credit Union to his office, and that he would take over as Secretary Treasurer. In fact, it startled him so much that he did not have an answer for two or three days.

This is how the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool office, also became the Credit Union office. He wouldn't want you to get the wrong impression. The assets were less than five thousand dollars, and some days he didn't have any member visits to the Credit Union at all. This went on for two or three months, and he was getting pretty frustrated. It just had to grow faster than this, or it would silently disappear. At the next meeting of the Board of Directors, he laid a plan out on the table that was to be the turning point of our Credit Union.

The assets as of December 31, 1954 were \$1,304.00. These funds were stored in a wooden cigar box for safe keeping. Today our assets are over \$27,000,000.00, and we have a little bigger safe keeping box. As a note of interest we have kept this cigar box as a memento of the past.

There were 16 people, including the original directors who were Arsene Marcotte, Arnold Pederson, Dan H. Schnell, Jim Groshong, Cyril DeConick, Leo Stepp, John Kiniak, Clare Hedegard, and George Emmel. The Supervisory Committee of Joe Phillips, Melvin Wallin, and Rev. P. Rubbens. The Credit Committee of Fred Lockart, Ted Shelstad, and Art St.Onge. They all choose a partner, and set out on a blitz. They had drawn a map of the Outram, Torquay and

Bromhead districts, (Tribune would be added later), and divided into sixteen sections. They had advertized well that they would be visiting every home in each district on the day chosen for the blitz. The day had arrived, and early in the morning sixteen cars with the sixteen teams left with deposit slips and receipt books for their chosen district.

The team he was with came in early so that he would be ready to tabulate the returns of each team. They had a target in mind, but the many thousands of dollars that came in was far beyond their wildest expectations. Cream cheques, grain cheques, many one hundred dollar bills, and five one thousand dollar bills in one package.

The last team came in at eleven o'clock at night. There was no way to get all that money counted and into the bank in Estevan who were handling the account, so it lay in a tin grain sample box under his pillow all night. Needless to say he didn't sleep a wink, and as early as possible was sitting in front of the bank in Estevan.

As he states this was the turning point of the Credit Union. Since that time the Credit Union has never looked back. Almost immediately the Credit Union bought the old post-office building from John Bergum. They built a huge vault behind it. Pop (Ed) Marchand was his right hand man and they tried to keep up with the work load.

It wasn't easy. After his working day at the elevator, and often without supper, he would go straight to the Credit Union. Most nights he would be there until midnight, and open for business too, as members could see them working, because they couldn't afford to purchase blinds.

He was amazed that the Credit Union didn't get held up on a regular basis, but he suspects that there were fewer crooks in those days, and that none of them came from Torquay.

The Credit Union grew rapidly. It was almost more than he could handle with both the elevator and the Credit Union to take care of.

The time soon came that he had to make a decision to drop one or the other.

At about the same time, Arsene Marcotte and Fred went to a Credit Union convention in Saskatoon. The principal of the Co-Op College persuaded Arsene to send Fred to a course at the college where he rubbed shoulders with some managers from Federated Co-Op, who offered him a career in public relations.

The decision had been made for Fred and he decided to move on to a career with Federated Co-Op.

He states that several local people needed the job he had vacated, but the credit union was at cross roads, and could settle in to become a tidy little community organization, or with the proper leadership, could become the largest business in the district.

Mel Wallin had been pretty tough opposition to him in the elevator, and more than once had brought him to tears with his aggressive nature. But, because they had worked together on the new rink and many other community projects, he knew there was only one man that could do justice to the job, so he recommended Mel to the Board of Directors.

He states that we all know now that this was the best move that ever was made for the Credit Union. Mel nursed the Credit Union through its growing pains, and had it on its feet before his untimely passing.

Gary Manley was hired to replace Mel Wallin.

The ground work had been done to make it the multi-million dollar success that it is today.

The whole community has prospered with the Credit Union.

The final and perhaps the finest compliment came when he met Frank Schnell on the street one day on one of his too infrequent visits to Torquay. "Fred", he said, " I must admit that I was one of the non-believers when you started the Credit Union. But, we were wrong. I would hate to think of what we would be now without it."

Fred Lockart has passed away since he wrote these memoirs, but we will always remember his contribution. His memories include:

Memories of a parish priest who became his friend, and gave him an understanding that has helped him ,many times in his carreer.

Memories of a young lady, who had nothing to offer as security, but hope and faith, who borrowed to purchase a piano and pursue a musical career, and who still years later sends thanks to him in a Christmas card.

Memories of a young man who had reached the bottom, and to whom the Credit Union should not have given a loan. They did, and today he is one of our better farmers.

Memories of several young people who wanted to attend university, but had no hope unless outside help came to them. We provided that outside help, and are proud of it.

Memories of a young couple who borrowed to buy their first home, and after his death in a car accident a few months later, the Credit Union Insurance paid off that loan, and left her with a home for herself and her child.

Those are the kind of memories he has. Not of dollar bills, nor vaults and safety boxes, but of people.

That is why he and others worked so hard to make it a success, so that every person in the community can truthfully say, I am one of the owners of the Torquay Credit Union.

The past fifty years have seen Arsene Marcotte, Jim Groshong, Wilfred Walkeden, George Marcotte, Jerry Walkeden, Margaret Ordahl, Norma Erickson, and at present Steven Berg serving as President for the Credit Union.

Arnie Vinge was the first General Manager, followed by Fred Lockart, Mel Wallin, Gary Manley, Rick Kozmanuik and at present Ann Favreau.

By 1967 the Board had been approached by many members from the Tribune area requesting that a Branch be opened in Tribune. Jim Groshong was the President at that time, and as Jerome Ordahl conveyed to me the Board of Directors put on another blitz, and so, the Branch came into being on July 17, 1967 with Pop Marchand at the helm.

The first home for the Credit Union was the former jail and fire hall. It was rather cold in the building so the staff wore their boots every day during the winter, and probably sweltered in the summer.

It didn't take long for the assets to grow warranting a bigger and better building. Not much bigger mind you, but much warmer with a vault and a manager's office which brought the much needed privacy to the members, and better facilities for the staff.

I remember coming to work for the Credit Union with Mel Wallin as Manager and, Irene Craig as his assistant. Irene would manually enter the daily entries into the general ledger, Gladys Hanson posting the accounts up to date, and because Kay Tenold had become ill, I was hired as a teller to fill in for her. Pop Marchand drove daily to Tribune, and brought back the transactions for the day for Gladys to post on the posting machine.

I remember her telling a story of Mel and Pop playing a joke on her. She had gone over to the post office to pick up the mail and when she got back there was Pop laying on the board room table. Pop had very bad teeth at that time. When one became loose Mel just used his plier and

pulled it out, as the story goes. Well, Irene got back from the post office to find Pop layed out on the Board room table. She screamed, "I knew you would do it some day. You have killed him this time". At which time Mel and Pop roared with laughter much to Irene's surprise, so it was not always just work and no play.

Two young men worked at the main branch and after Pop retired, Dennis Gregoire went to Tribune as Branch Manager followed by Gordon Friess, and later Tom Mossing. More exciting fields called these young men so we were looking for a Branch Manager again.

Allan Frank had sold his store, so he was the perfect replacement. Everyone in the community knew him, and like Mel Wallin, Allan was the right one for the job. The Branch grew quickly under Allan's supervision. I remember how excited Allan got each time the assets grew another \$1,000,000.00. We would get a collect call each time, and of course back then you couldn't see who was calling so of course we accepted the charges, and when it reached \$5,000,000.00 there was extreme excitement. Allan brought the Credit Union along to greater heights, and was missed by the community when he retired.

Times were getting better and assets were continuing to grow, so once again the Board decided to build a bigger and better building.

This building has been remodeled a few times and is now the present dwelling of the Branch. The present facility has been upgraded to provide the members with a modern, professional looking premises with more privacy for the members.

One day as the Tribune staff were getting ready to close for the day, July 9, 1986 at 4:00 p.m., Dianne went to shut the vault door, after having set the timer. As she shut the door and went to swing around, low and behold her dress was caught in the vault door. What should she do now? Laugh, cry or scream. I think she did a little of all three. As it was closing time the girls sent Allan over to the post office with the mail, and pulled down the blinds. Pam ran outside and pulled the van around to the back door while Alice made sure that Allan didn't come back to soon. Dianne quickly got out of her dress, put on a jacket that had been left at the Credit Union, making sure no one was watching and jumped into the van. Next she had to go home and explain to her mother what had happened, and wait until the next morning for the timer to go off so she could open the vault door and get her dress out.

Irvin Hoffman followed as Branch Manager until his retirement to Regina Beach, followed by Stacey Diehl, and Terry FitzGerald. Each one bringing their own qualities and personalities to the community.

Today as one of the members and owners I am proud of our Credit Union and its accomplishments.