

LION ERIC BOULTON - IN HIS OWN WORDS

Gabriola Island Lions Club - Charter 1975

GABRIOLA ISLAND LIONS CLUB HOW WE CAME TO BE

**CAPTURED VERBATIM BY
SCRIBE, LION CAROL MARTIN**



Judge Brian Stevenson Fellowship Award 2007

Over lunch in the cozy lodgings of our homes respecting COVID health guidelines, Eric Boulton, Charter Member of our Gabriola Island Lions Club reeled-out many a happenings of the inception of our club, the people who made it happen, the events which brought us together as a community living in harmony most of the time, on a smallish island in the Salish Sea. Respectfully captured verbatim over a period of two days, January 30th and February 1st, 2021. Not to be construed or interpreted as a full historic document of the Gabriola Lions Club, but more to telling of the story as memory serves.



Starting at the beginning when a phone call went out in February of 1975, inviting local Gabriola people to a meeting to discuss forming a new Lions Club. It is the duty of every Lions Club where they see opportunity. And so, three Lions from the Nanaimo Club ferried over and explained to invited dinner guests the benefits of a Lions Club in a community.

They were: Grant Eppy, desk person for the RCMP, Don Eady, a 6'6" slim guy who had been chosen Citizen of the Year in Nanaimo in 1974 and became our first resident policeman on Gabriola in September 1977, and Gil Mouat, a very active Lion from Nanaimo Lions Club.

Through another meeting or two weeks later a call came in to further discuss and see if there was interest. A sheet of paper was sent around to those attending, in favour or against, forming a club. The Yaw's passed. On March 16 1975, our club was born. Thus became our Charter date.

No one would step up to be president. Jimmy Rowan, of a local Gabriola family, declined. Rick Averamenko (Spouse: Carol), a local citizen living on Whalebone and had an intent interest in carving, drove dump truck and road graters, was nominated for President but he declined. And then, Eric Bouton (Spouse: Sue) who had moved to Gabriola from Alberta, TY Ranch, Suffield near Red Deer in August 1948, to give his mum a hand looking after his dad who was ill, was too shy and also declined, and eventually relented.

Luckily, we nominated Derry Cook as secretary (Spouse: Pat). Derry had Cook's Quarterdeck Restaurant which later became the A-Frame in name. Those were the days of \$3 suppers. Ross Leacy, bachelor from Nova Scotia came to Gabriola to cut Christmas Trees. Ross helped Eric for three days and stayed for three weeks, which became three months, and which became 35 years. Eric & Ross shared a living space and thus Ross was nominated as treasurer, honest as the day was long. So we now had a Lions Club, and it was our responsibly to invent what we were to do and keep to the motto of "We Serve". Reminded that clubs are not necessarily the same. We started as an all-male supper club meeting at 6pm at the Quarterdeck Restaurant. After a time, we moved to a 7pm dinner hour to accommodate our members.

When there is a new club forming, the whole district is invited to Charter Night. We celebrated our Charter on May 5th 1975. We sat down to a Roast Beef dinner in the old fire hall. A feast for 196 people it was. A splendid dinner served. At the same evening, we fundraised for our club and ended up with a net of \$2000. This \$2000 were the first monies in our treasury.



In the 16 & 1700's the Canadian government promoted subdivision across the land, and in so doing, taxed landowners producing revenue for the Canadian Government. In 1975, subdivision took place on Gabriola. A lot of people moved in and roads were built along with various needs of a beginning community. You have to feel your way in a new community. It can be a struggle for some; A breath of fresh air for others. The foundation of Gabriola was subdivision. Buy a small lot and build a house. This builds a community. Thank god we had the subdivision before the Islands Trust came into being. This was not without two or more days of meetings in 1972 at the Community Hall, chaired by Dan Campbell, Minister of Municipal Affairs with involvement from June Harrison and Pam Fairchild to name a few vocal islanders. Mostly, it was about water. Testing for the degree of equivalency through drilling wells, in lots small to the larger 5+ acre lots. Quite the hullabaloo.

Our first endeavour as a Lions Club, was to participate in door-to-door campaigns for both Cancer and The Salvation Army.

As president, it was hard to get support from the Club members. You had to lead and push. Our Club grew to 38 members including the 20 who originally supported the idea of a Club. We got down to 20 or 22 members and started to move forward with the 'Yay' group. The naysayers dropped away. We evolved.

Eric was president for 18 months. The 2nd president was Casey Strong, an ex-serviceman, married to an Easthom. Gradually, ideas came forward and we began to sprout. There was no recipe. We had to make our own way. Make our own place. Our own territory. We had no budget, and we had no income.

The manager of Silva Bay joined the club with the idea of promoting bingo at Silva Bay. We had 65 game players the first night. The second night we had 30 some odd. The third night we were down to 25. And, 25 people players doesn't make it financially attractive to play bingo. Bob Vezina and Lloyd Knibbs (Lloyd's son Wayne still lives on Gabriola with his spouse, Verenia) were running the bingo. They decided to move it up to the Agi Hall where it became more successful due to the concentrated population at the north-end. It was more successful but it too dwindled because the dedicated players from Gabriola went to Nanaimo where they had \$1000 payouts, instead of \$10 payouts.



Early in the Club's history, our club chose to help defray the cost of dental work for a young girl in a family of four, who had dreadful teeth. The dentist evaluated the cost at \$2100. The Lions paid off the debt early at \$1700. In appreciation, the older sister was prepared to contribute artwork and she did.

CBC on a Sunday morning, covered Josie from Old Crow in the Yukon, a writer who eventually had a syndicated column. She would introduce "Here are the News" and with this one idea, came one of our most unique fundraisers. Turns out that on Saturna Island, the Pearson's had a Christmas tree on the point where the ferries go by, and they had the idea of \$1 per light bulb, so Eric Boulton and Bob Vezina and others made a trip to Saturna to meet with the Pearson's.

Outside of the Agi Hall, a lit-up, bedecked Christmas tree at a dollar per light bulb started with that one idea. The proceeds funded the Cheer Package for Christmas giving, and John Barton made the deliveries to those in need. Then, one year someone stole the lights. It was Bill Hopkin's idea to change the light up to the ferry line-up collection. Over time, the Cheer Package became the Ferry Line-up Collection for the Christmas Bureau organized again by the Lions Club on Gabriola, for the benefit of People for a Healthy Community (PHC). Food vouchers became food gift cards and are disbursed by PHC for those in need during the Christmas season. It all started with an idea, and a broadcast over CBC by Edith Josie, from Whitehorse, Yukon.

Bingo stopped on Gabriola in about 1986, or before. We were invited to go to Nanaimo to the old bus station, exactly where Cameron Island is today. The Lottery Commission deemed that three bingo licenses were required for Nanaimo, subsequently cut to two licences. Cameron Island was shut down and we were allotted space in the Dunsmuir Place building on Albert Street. A small contingent of Lions serviced the tables and there was a professional person there who ran the paperwork and who was eventually caught with embezzling funds. About the same time Dave Stupich, one-time NDP Finance Minister during the time of Premier Mike Harcourt, pleaded guilty to charges of unscrupulous means, and disgraced himself. The Lottery Commission changed the format several times from six Lions to two Lions attending bingo. John Barton was chairman of the Gabriola Lions' Bingo Committee in the late 80's or early 90's. We no longer have bingo but we do apply and receive a grant annually, from the Lottery Commission. These are restricted funds in our budget. Thankfully, Anne Banford handles the application process garnering a grant of approximately \$14,000 each year.



Eventually, we established a \$100 Scholarship for a graduating Gabriola student. It was the first of its kind. During our years of gaining in prosperity, we increased the scholarship money from \$100 for one scholarship, to two scholarships at \$300 each. As we prospered, we increased our scholarships to \$1000, and then \$2000 apiece.

Time went along and a bursary was set up in the name of Joe Brake. A spirit of friendliness was the original intent of the Joe Brake Bursary provided by Dan Brake and his wife, in memory of their son and awarded to a Gabriola student, girl and boy. Dan Brake and his wife looked after their son Joe, who had Downs Syndrome, as if he was the most precious on earth. He had talents, was always cheerful.

We chartered as a men's club, however there was no reason why we could not have women in the club, and it's been all the better a club. Olga Korinek was our first female in an all-men's Club, joining in 1999. Betsy Banford's, mother Clara Jackson transferred into the Gabriola Lions Club in 2001. She was a charter member of the Fort Langley Pioneer Lionesses when the Fort Langley Lions refused to allow women to join. So, they started their own club. Now you know how Jackson, Betsy Banford's grandson, Victoria Banford's son, got his name. Clara often said there was no friendlier club than ours. Linda Olsen, Judith Henderson, Nanda Gano, Ruth Loomis, Phyllis Nygaard, Ann Soy, and Joan Ensor joined along with many other women. There wasn't any thought of splitting into two clubs. We worked as one.

Ideas for fundraisers looked to the community for what was in need at the time. In 2006, we funded Dry Grad. We also advertised a Free Skate in Nanaimo but forgot the cost of skate rentals, so we made those rentals included in the Free Skate for 15 years in during the Christmas Holidays. Many Gabriola kids learned to skate because of the Lions generosity.

Eclectic Bazar, a fundraiser of all the paraphernalia collecting dust of which a household didn't want, came about in 2007. Digby Jones, husband of Rose put his hand into this, held at the Community Hall and then the AGI Hall. We figure about \$5000 was raised. Both have passed. We miss them. Great people. Great Lions.



A fundraiser in the way of a raffle came up, and Eric gave a side of beef to help generate the sale of the raffle tickets.

Eric has the first notes about starting a doctor's office on Gabriola. Built strictly on faith, our new Medical Clinic came about with people like Fred Geater, Harvey Graham, Brenda Fowler and Eric Boulton having many a discussion, moving the notion to reality. Eric gave up his doctor in Nanaimo and went with Dr Bossman here on Gabriola to show his support, and was mighty glad he did. Much has been documented on the Gabriola Health Care Foundation and the Medical Clinic. A jewel in the crown in rural health care. The Lions on Gabriola along with many dedicated individuals held fundraising events with monies going to the clinic build. On Saturdays, you'd find the Lions raking rocks in preparation for landscaping. Rocks kept coming up. We kept at it, until there were no more, and finally the area around the helipad, was grassed, shrubs planted.

Robin Keen, a Lion, retired from the Hydrological Service bought a waterfront lot in the Whalebone area. After two years, his wife wanted to move closer to the grandchildren. They put their home up on the market for sale and Bill & Donna Hardstaff fell in love with the property and had to have it. However, Robin said he would agree to sell only if Bill would join the Gabriola Lions Club, so Bill did, and the rest is history. Bill Hardstaff was a CEO from the oil industry in Calgary. After moving here and joining the Club, he sat very quietly through several meetings. After Christmas, Bill came with a ¼" thick sheaf of notes for each Lion proposing a ProAm Golf Tournament. Bill's drive swung into action. We cannot bring these high-profile golfers and celebrities to Gabriola without some quality entertainment. So he brought in Gary Fjellgaard with the stage set on the back of a flat deck truck. High profile, celebrities such as Nancy Greene Raine, Karen Magnusson, Steve Podborski, Rick Cluff attended from the CBC and many other Canadian icons Bill knew on a first name basis. Karen Magnusson, her husband and 2 children billeted with Sue and I. And, Rick Cluff did as well, one of the years.



When Bill gave us the sheaf of papers, we wondered what he was smoking. Donna & Bill Hardstaff single-handedly, ran the ProAm and entertainment. Each team had 5 players: 3 locals, a professional and a celebrity. The Tourney was on Friday as the pros needed to be back to their home courses for the weekend. Entertainment was the previous night. ProAm in this scenario, continued for about 8 years. After Bill stepped down from being chairperson, there was an unnamed chairperson who didn't provide the same return, so we then elected Harold Jenner as a chairman, a quieter but efficient approach. ProAm ended with the loss of major sponsors. There was a gap of one year, when a Lion by the name of Don Clark (Spouse: Judee) organized the golf event for the benefit of Diabetes, as he had a personal tie to diabetes. In the next year, we decided to drop the ProAm golf tourney and just do the entertainment portion on Thursday. This became the Concert on the Green.

The one thing I was very proud of was the Banner Board which is mounted up behind the stage. Before we just hung our sponsor's advertising materials on a clothes line wire, which amounted to a bunched up conglomeration. The display was lacking some, to say the least. I visioned a jigsaw design PBV poles and connectors. It worked well, and is put together every year.

Appointed by his son, D'Arcy Boulton, a young lad at the time, Eric was volunteered for the first WI (Women's Institute) Harvest Day auctioning off vegetables fresh from our farmers. The proceeds funded a water project in Malawi, East Africa. The Sunday school asked Eric to put on his auctioneer hat, and he did. Items donated for the Concert on the Green came under my auctioneering drawl, and by then, I had a good roll of the tongue going. Not too fast, but fast enough to move the crowd of enthusiastic bidders. We did well. Through auctioneering, from the first fund raising event to pre-COVID (2020 Pandemic) Eric raised somewhere between \$250,000 - \$300,000 for charity. Guess you could say I was a natural. No longer very shy. It was always for a good cause. I enjoyed every minute, and so did those who emptied their pockets.

A club evolving, we launched the World Cup of Golf in 2008. Doug Cavill and many other Lions were dedicated to this fundraising fun, event. The Lions Foundation was developed, a society registered with charity status, in September 2008, so that we could give out tax receipts. Paul Kuszyk was key to bringing about this important status. Other than a 2 years gap, the World Cup of Golf ran continuously for over 10 years. Teams of five represented a country or state. Costumes and antics were encouraged. It was a full-on day with a silent auction items donated by sponsors, and ending with trophies at a steak dinner at the Golf Club. Successful event. We raised approximately \$4000 - \$8000 annually. Monies held in the Foundation could then be granted to registered charities on Gabriola, for the benefit of its citizens. We supported the Gabriola Health Care Foundation (Medical Clinic), Scouts & Guides and PHC (People for a Healthy Community).



Eric is able to think outside of the box instead of narrow confines of the norm. Growth of the club has come about as new members have come into the club offering their unique blend of experiences and foresight. You cannot deny the value of people like Mike Phillips, Doug Cavill, Bill Hardstaff, John Barton, John Roman, John Coleman, Paul Kuszyk, Dixon Kenny and numerous others – every person who has come into the Club has brought something positive even by being here. Team work. The Club is likened to a lightning rod to the community. The Lions lead by example – positive leadership for the community, evidenced by anonymous donations. They still come in. We must be doing something right!

Project development comes from the imagination of the members. The Lion running Silva Bay came with the idea of bingo. That could have been Tom McConkey. With revenue earned, we were able to increase funding for scholarships. A Christmas dinner, called “Mamma Claus” was started 25 years ago, by the owner of the pizza place. Pancake breakfasts started well before the Theatre Festival.

Sasha Colby was a Grade 11 student with music/lyrics and instrumental ability. She sold out at the Community Hall with her performances. After a few years, the accumulated revenue was \$10,000 which was given to the Lions, and Eric Kenny had the pond built at the Gabriola Garden Homes. Through an association with Dairyland we got a tub of ice cream. Eric was raked over the coals by the secretary of the Community Hall because he hadn’t rented the hall, so the ice cream was served outside to the kids. Unrelated, but you get what I mean. People. Ideas. Moxy. Get’r’don.

Believe it or not, the Lions were instrumental in building a golf course on Gabriola. Originally, the idea was of Paul Zanet who had the property opposite Paul Kuszyk, before the chicken farm was developed in 1969. Peter Bell was an employee of Bill Coats, and Peter was a Lion and the school bus driver. He started clearing and burning the land for our future golf course. Sue Boulton showed Jo and Eric Kenny the March Meadows Golf Club in Honeymoon Bay, on Vancouver Island. An idea was formed for our community on Gabriola. Many Lions were involved in getting this done. Volunteer hours amassed. Lloyd Knibbs was a Lion and he and many more, put a lot of effort into getting the golf course up and happening. The land was leased from Clyde Coats. This facility is still on lease from the Coats’ Family. All improvements were done by those interested in having a golf club. So, the development of Gabriola wasn’t a bad thing after all. The golf club came to be, hand in hand with the benefits garnered from subdivision which included roads and necessary amenities of community in the throes of growth. It was all about leadership; Tone of the community.

Gabriola’s Golf and Country Club opened in April, 1981. The golf club had a fundraiser and who would win it but the non-drinking, Eric. Of course, it was a Texas Mickey, and it all became the joke of the day. He and Sue were away at the time vacationing in England. More to the story, 30 years later at the 30 year celebration of the golf club, the Mickey was donated back to the golf club. Drinks were auctioned off at \$50 a drink. A handsome profit to the golf club. The bottle had been opened twice in the years Eric held on to it for the wedding of Sue and Eric’s daughters. There was half left.

The golf club prospered at that evening fundraiser. BTW – A Texas Mickey is a very large bottle of hard liquor, holding 3,000 ml (106 imperial oz. or 101 US oz.), or, formerly, one holding 133.3 oz. That’s a lot of booze.



The Gabriola Lions Club, in about 1998 was looking for a project. Lion Ron Smith came up with a retirement complex for people who wanted to stay in the community but wanted to down size. John Coleman's cousin was involved in a similar project in Brentwood Bay. We liked what we saw and decided it would be good for a Gabriola Lions project. But, we had to have the good-graces of Islands Trust and that took 2 years. The 36 unit project was cut back to 24 units, by Islands Trust. Then, it took 2 1/2 years for the permit and 6 months to build. It wasn't built by the Lions Club. A society had to be created for this project. Monies originally came from risk capital and the project was covered by CMHC. The idea of people purchasing the units would come from the sale of their own homes on Gabriola. Originally, 22 people signed up. Due to time delays, we missed the market, and in the end only 14 of the 24 units were confirmed sold. Lions members stepped up and personally bought additional units in order to move the project forward. And then, as the units sold, the Lions members got their money back. The project become more expensive as time moved along, and Eric Kenney (Spouse: Jo) was worried that you could buy a cheaper unit in Nanaimo. But the people buying-in wanted to stay on Gabriola regardless of price. Eventually, we declared voluntary bankruptcy as opposed to being placed into bankruptcy. At that point, we lost control because it was then managed by a private investor.

The Judge Brian Stevenson Fellowship Award was presented to Eric on June 25, 2007 by the late PDG Peter Thomas at the Club's summer potluck held at the home of Mike Phillips. When Eric was nominated for the award he refused saying John Barton was the more worthy Lion, and so John Barton received the award. At the next opportunity for awarding the Judge Brian Stevenson Fellowship Award, again Eric was nominated and refused, however this time with a non-refusal clause in place, he accepted the award. Dixon Kenny was our most recent recipient.



Over the 45 years, Eric brought in 15 new members. Every Lion brings their capabilities and ideas. With the hard work of many a Lion, we have turned huge profits which allows us to provide financial support to groups and individuals on Gabriola.

Members have brought their expertise and shared willingly. Every member is sponsored by a Lion. As a sponsor, it is your responsibility to inform and encourage. Lead by example. This could lead to interested new members and that is how we continue to grow. The invitation for people to be invited into the club was best carried out by the personal approach, face-to-face. Those individuals who became Lions have brought something special to the club.

That's how we started. Apart from following the lead of the Lions International Headquarters located in Chicago, we invented our Lions Club according to the community's needs. The Lions bring people together. That is what it is to be a Lions Club.

Our motto "We Serve"



**ERIC'S PERSONAL MOTTO:
"TOGETHER WE CAN"**