Spotlight on Henry Wheat



November 2026

In 1954 Henry was born at the old Nanaimo Hospital which later became Malaspina College. He has a younger brother born just two years after him and 'a tree full of relatives!' There were nine in his dad's family and eight in his mum's and they all had children as well. He is married to Darlene and they have three children; Lyndsey, born in1989, is the oldest and the boys are Aaron and Martin. He has two grandchildren; Teddy and Cecelia.

Henry has always lived close by and has many happy memories growing up on the Island. He well remembers just how small Nanaimo used to be and is always surprised at how the town and surrounding areas have grown. He had a lot of fun exploring nearby fishing places like Brannen Lake especially as his uncle had a farm there. The Brannen Lake facility was newly rebuilt in May 2024 as a modern campus correctional centre, but Henry well remembers the original 1953 structure as one of his uncle's had a farm nearby. In fact, his uncle would take on a number of these boys to help him out at his farm and in later years some of them would come back to thank and pay him a visit.

One of Henry's favourite memories growing up was with a cousin at that farm at Brannen Lake. At the farm there was a heifer called Bunny and she liked to be ridden so one day Henry and a cousin decided to go for a ride on her. Unfortunately, that day, Bunny wasn't in a very good mood and as soon as the boys got on her, she immediately hightailed it for the big cherry tree. She went straight underneath the branches knocking both Henry and his cousin off her back. Ouch! They weren't hurt but were both moaning and groaning. Sadly, they got no sympathy from his mum or other cousins as all they did was laugh.

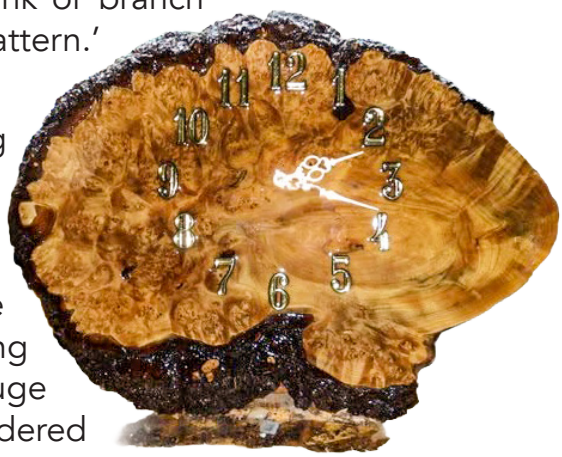
Henry did lots of things when he was growing up. He played softball, and won a couple of championships, and also soccer, rugby and track and field. When he was at Woodlands High School, he was part of the school team that took part in a track meet in Vancouver at the Brockton Oval in Stanley Park. They were entered in the 8x100 yard race, did well in the race and then set a new record in the final with Henry running anchor…'School hero!'



Henry with his dad

To Henry, his dad was a hero who has always inspired him. His dad was always there when he needed him, and both his mum and dad never pushed him hard to do anything but always taught him to be honest and to do his best. Henry admired his dad very much as he could do so many things; he was a great fixer of bikes, built a house and did all the plumbing. When he retired, he enjoyed making all manner of things including burl coffee tables and the clock that hangs in the hall at the Seniors Centre.

'A burl by the way (for those of us that may not know) is a rounded, wart-like growth on a tree trunk or branch where the grain has grown in a deformed, swirling pattern.' Thanks, Google.



Fishing and hunting and swimming at Second Lake were a big part of Henry's life as a growing boy. He recalls a time he built a raft from logs at the lakeside. He tied the logs together and made the raft large enough to hold a four-man tent with two chairs and a BBQ! He enjoyed camping out and one night he was on the raft with a friend and a dog. They had been fishing all day and were getting ready to sleep when there was huge splash nearby and the dog woofed loudly. They often wondered what that splash had been…perhaps a meteor…perhaps a huge fish. Who knows?

The years went by and Henry began work at Harmac. His first two years were in the wood room and the next thirty he worked as a janitor. The first eighteen of those years he worked the 4–12

shift. However, he hurt his back and missed two years with a herniated disc. When he healed and went back to work, he did the 8:00-4:30 day shifts and then took early retirement from the mill. He had worked there for 32 years altogether and took his pension from the mill at 55.

Now, in his retirement, Henry takes part in Tai Chi and line dancing, still loves music, likes to sing and can 'carry a tune and play the guitar and ukulele.' He has been with the Ladysmith Seniors for 17 years now taking part in entertaining the members and for two of those years he was a director. The Grand Old Opry is his first and foremost pride but singing and playing with the Over the Hill Gang, at the birthday parties and many of the Variety and Talent Shows are all special to him too.

If he had his time again, he thinks he would have enjoyed working at something to do with music or entertainment. He especially enjoys singing with the Yellow Point Singers and has also sung with the Ladysmith Singers.

He had a great time singing with the Over the Hill gang as well as The Grand Old Opry which is his first and foremost pride. He has wonderful memories singing and playing with friends like Jack Maier, Les, Ray, Nancy and Dianne. The birthday parties and many of the Variety and Talent Shows are all special to him too. As Henry said, "The Seniors has been such a huge part of my life and all the people and more helped me to get me through a pretty rough time a couple of years ago."



Henry and See Ya Thursday on St. Paddy's Day, 2025



Over the Hill Gang



Yellow Point Singers at the Crow & Gate Pub

Henry would like to thank 'the wonderful, gracious and caring friends I've had the privilege to meet…..never will they be forgotten and special love goes out to Jack and Cora, Dave and Anita, Hilary, John and Senne, and Pat and Linda. There are also a wonderful bunch of new friends….and it's been an honour to know you all.'

Henry's Word of Wisdom for Us All

'Figure out what you've got to do and where you want to go. Follow a straight path and stay honest. Make the path, walk it straight and you'll be alright!'



Edited by **Jan Bradshaw**, Membership Chair,
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