

## Growing up with Langley Memorial

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Jim McGregor – a thirty-six-year veteran of the fire services, including Fire Chief for the City of Langley, British Columbia – still lives just two miles from the hospital campus where he was born.

On March 6, 1949, Margaret Stewart McGregor [nee Cole] gave birth to her fourth child and second son, James (Jim) Stewart, at Langley Memorial Cottage Hospital. Her family physician, Dr. Gilham, was on a house call, so a young nurse delivered the baby.

Her name was Iris Mooney.

Fast forward to 1975, Jim anxiously awaits news of his firstborn, a son called Christopher.



Dr. Aspinall, the family physician, was in surgery, so a very experienced nurse delivered the baby. Her name was Iris Mooney, the very same Iris Mooney who delivered Jim.

Growing up in the 1950s, Langley was a rural community. Jim's dad, John Albert McGregor, worked on a nearby dairy farm on 232 Street before becoming a truck driver and milkman for Seal-Kap Dairies, a job he did for 30 years. Jim recalls that some of his favourite memories are waking up early to join his Dad on a milk run.

When he was 16, Jim split his spleen roughhousing with his brother and neighbours playing football. Being young and invincible, he did not realize how badly injured he was until later in the evening when the pain became unbearable. Dr. Gilham did a late-night house call and sent him to the hospital, where the attending physician instructed him to lie flat on his back and not move for 48 hours.

Taking the instruction to heart, he dutifully rang the nurses' bell when he needed assistance to relieve himself. To his horror, a young 16-year-old candy stripper arrived to see to his needs. She was a girl from his class at school.

“She puffed up my pillow while chatting away at me, and I was too embarrassed to tell her why I had rung the bell. She cheerfully kept me company, during which time I thought I would burst. When she finally left, I disobeyed the doctor's orders and hobbled out of my bed and made it to the toilet.”

Jim spent ten days at Langley Memorial, flat on his back under the careful supervision of the nurses, while his body slowly healed his split and seeping spleen.

Since then, his son, daughter, and two grandchildren have been born at Langley Memorial, and both his parents died there in palliative care.

His mother, who delivered three of her six children at Langley Memorial, was a stay-at-home mom and Jim doesn't remember a day that he arrived home from school without his mother and the delicious smells of baking or cooking greeting him in the kitchen.



“My schools were close enough to walk to, and my paper route was long but easy to pedal. I never missed a customer. On cold, wet, rainy, or snowy days, I would return home halfway through my paper route and swap out my socks and mittens with a pair my mother kept warm for me in the oven.”

“I think of Langley Memorial as a safe place – a trusted place. Most especially, I remember the compassionate care my parents received in palliative care. Over the years, I have been in and out of LMH for stitches and medical check-ups. My kids have been in and out for broken bones and other minor issues. To have a hospital near your home where you can visit your loved ones, receive treatment or attention in an emergency is invaluable.”

During his 35 years as a first responder in the Langley City Fire Rescue Services, Jim had professional interactions with Langley Memorial staff.

“Fire Rescue Services often gets calls to assist people with long-term chronic illnesses and respiratory conditions or falls from beds, wheelchairs and or in bathrooms. As first responders, we help until the ambulance arrives,” says Jim.

“We got to know people in the community on a first-term basis, and we got to know the hospital staff who received them if they needed care. We also dealt with serious accidents and critical situations, working closely with the paramedics, the ambulances and the LMH emergency staff. Our firefighters sometimes rode with patients in the ambulance, and I met them at the hospital. At times we would arrive, and the ER would be full and busy. I was always impressed by how organized, adaptable and cooperative the staff were,” Jim recalls.

“I have lived my life in the Langley community and seen the hospital grow from the Cottage Hospital to the newly built and recently expanded hospital. I have witnessed the hard work of the staff, experienced their compassion through personal loss and seen first-hand how they adapt and work together when times get tough.”

When Jim retired as Fire Chief, he started a second career as a writer. In 11 years, he wrote 600 columns entitled “McGregor Says,” submitting 575 words every Tuesday morning to the Langley Times. He has also co-authored successful poetry and books such as “McGregor Says Special Days Make Lasting Memories” and “McGregor Says Hold On to Your Small Town Values.”

“I would never have accomplished anything without the help of family, friends, teachers, and mentors, each of them instilling in me the honesty and integrity of their small-town values.”

Jim has always lived in Langley and in the same house for 50 years. In that time, he has surrounded himself with his family and the many friends he has made professionally and as a father, family man, and volunteer.

This year he turned 74, one year shy of the Hospital’s 75 years. “We kind of grew up together,” he comments.