

Heritage Alive Proj XXII, XXIV Interview Rev W. Percy Bunt

1975

The Bob Stewart Archives

The United Church of Canada, BC Conference

Acc. No. 2006-EX

Box No. 1919

File/Vol. 31

XXIII
XXIV

A
Interview with: Rev. W. Percy Bunt
By: Rev. L.G. Sieber
Date: October 16, 1975

Boyhood in Ontario; W.W. I experiences; Theological training in McGill; marriage to first white child born in Chilliwack; pastorates in Grand Forks, Kaslo, Mission, Nanaimo, years as Superintendent of Home Missions with memories of Indian work up the coast; Japanese evacuation during W.W. II.

Sieber: That sounds like the North Country?

Bunt: Well, it was cold enough in that area at times, there was no doubt of that. My early education was in the elementary and high school of Collingwood, Ontario, which is in the neighbouring County of Simcoe, and I speak of that as my home town because my parents lived there when I was very young and lived there all their life, and were buried there in the cemetery at Collingwood.

Sieber: Did your father work in the shipyards there?

Bunt: Yes, he did. **TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW RECORDED AT:** which today, people probably would retire, and as a matter of fact, I had a job in the shipyard. **3705 WEST 22nd AVENUE, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1975.** In my life I was ever fired from a job. I disagreed with the boss on an issue, and that was it.

Sieber: The only time you've been fired?

Bunt: Yes, that's right. Then in my later teen age years, before I graduated from High School, I came under the influence of a team of evangelists, named Crossley and Hunter. They were holding meetings in our town in which the Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists united. Services were held in all three churches. I was born into a Christian home, I had Christian training from my earliest memories, but during that campaign I felt that I had made a public decision, so, as I started out to say, the influence of those services on me were far-reaching. **Interview conducted by: Rev. L. G. Sieber** had been a Christian from my earliest days, but it was a public declaration of my faith, and before the meetings were over, I received what I call a "call" to the ministry. Part of that time it had been my intention to go into medicine, but when this need came, I felt as though I had no choice but to give up the idea of medicine and turn to the Christian Ministry. In fact, I might use the expression of Tennyson, "it was one clear call for me." A call which at times in later years, dimmed a bit, but never left me.

Sieber: Where did you go to University?

Bunt: My first two years of Arts were taken at McGill College, located here in Vancouver. It was at the corner of Pender and Gasline. I am not sure what is there now, I think maybe it's a parking lot.

Sieber: How did you come to be in British Columbia?

Bunt: When I got through High School in Collingwood, I came out to Moose Jaw, "go west young man, go west" was one of the slogans of the day. I had an uncle in Moose Jaw and he had no sons in his family, he had three daughters, but he said he would provide me with a job and I could live with them in the home, which I did. It was a very interesting year for me. Then, at that end of the year, my uncle and his family moved to Vancouver. I went back east for the summer and came out to Vancouver in the fall and entered the college that fall. After two years Arts, I took a job in a wholesale

Lawrence G. Sieber of the History Seekers
Interviewing Dr. W. Percy Bunt, at his home,
3705 West 22nd Ave., Vancouver, B. C., on
Thursday, October 16, 1975.

Sieber: Dr. Bunt, are you a native of British Columbia?

Bunt: No, I was born in a little place called Markdale, Ontario, in Grey County, not far from Owen Sound. My father was a farmer and I remembered him telling me on the day on which I was born, May 1st, there was a fall of snow two inches thick on the ground in that area of Ontario.

Sieber: That sounds like the North Country?

Bunt: Well, it was cold enough in that area at times, there was no doubt of that. My early education was in the Elementary and High School of Collingwood, Ontario, which is in the neighbouring County of Simcoe, and I speak of that as my home town because my parents moved there when I was very young and lived there all their life, and were buried there in the cemetery at Collingwood.

Sieber: Did your father work in the shipyards there?

Bunt: Yes, he did for awhile, until he had reached the age, which today, people probably would retire, and as a matter of fact, I had a job in the shipyard one school holiday, and it was the only time in my life I was ever fired from a job. I disagreed with the boss on an issue, and that was it. He prevailed and I left. (Laughs)

Sieber: The only time you've been fired?

Bunt: Yes, that's right. Then in my later teen age years, before I graduated from High School, I came under the influence of a team of evangelists, named Crossley and Hunter. They were holding meetings in our town in which the Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists united. Services were held in all three churches. I was born into a Christian home, I had Christian training from my earliest memories, but during that campaign I felt that I was reaching the age when I should make a public decision, so, as I started out to say, the influence of those services on me were far-reaching. I was not converted, because I had been a Christian from my earliest days, but it was a public declaration of my faith, and before the meetings were over, I received what I call a "call" to the ministry. Part of that time it had been my intention to go into medicine, but when this need came, I felt as though I had no choice but to give up the idea of medicine and turn to the Christian Ministry. In fact, I might use the expression of Tennyson, "it was one clear call for me." A call which at times in later years, dimmed a bit, but never left me.

Sieber: Where did you go to University?

Bunt: My first two years of Arts were taken at McGill College, located here in Vancouver. It was at the corner of Pender and Cambie. I am not sure what is there now, I think maybe it's a parking lot.

Sieber: How did you come to be in British Columbia?

Bunt: When I got through High School in Collingwood, I came out to Moose Jaw, "go west young man, go west" was one of the slogans of the day. I had an uncle in Moose Jaw and he had no sons in his family, he had three daughters, but he said he would provide me with a job and I could live with them in the home, which I did. It was a very interesting year for me. Then, at that end of the year, my uncle and his family moved to Vancouver. I went back east for the summer and came out to Vancouver in the fall and entered the college that fall. After two years Arts, I took a job in a wholesale

Bunt: hardware, and was getting along reasonably well, I think, when I realized this was not my call in life and so I thought the issue out again, and offered for the ministry. First of all, to the Official Board of Wesley Methodist Church, of which I was a member. That was the order: first the Official Board, and then the district meeting. The Board accepted me and recommended me to the district, and I was received as what we called then, "a probationer for the ministry" in February, 1912, by the Vancouver West District meeting. I don't know whether I was thinking ecumenically then or not, but as I look back even today, I have to smile myself, I was being questioned, as were all candidates. I think there were one or two with me on that occasion who were being examined, and one question after a lot of Biblical questions, one man who I think asked a very pertinent question, he said "Brother Bunt (brother was the expression used in the ministry in those days), if this district turns you down, what will you do?" No doubt they were testing me to find out how sincere and how complete was my dedication. Well, as I've done a good many times in my life, I answered the question and thought afterwards. I thought I might not have been so bold. My answer was that "if you turn me down, I'll do the next best, I'll apply to the Presbyterians." (Laughs) There was quite a laugh over it.

Sieber: That would be St. Andrew's?

Bunt: Yes, but I wasn't trying to be smart, it just came to me. I was convinced that I wanted to be a minister, and if the Methodists wouldn't have me, I would go to the Presbyterians, which later on I did of course, go with the Presbyterians along with other Methodists.

Sieber: Into Union?

Bunt: Yes. Then in February 1912, the Conference met that year in Victoria and I went over there and was received as a probationer by the Conference, and I was appointed to what was then known, as the Sumas Charge in the area of Chilliwack. I had four appointments and did my travelling on horseback. That was quite an experience to me. There were times during that year that I wondered if I was worthy of the ministry when I found people old enough to be my parents, confiding in me, telling me of their sorrows and things like that. It led me to ask myself, more than once, "who am I to be the recipient of confessions and worries and anxieties by people old enough to be my parents."

Sieber: What were the names of the appointments? Would it be the same as today, Cultus Lake?

Bunt: No, there was nothing at Cultus Lake then except a few summer homes. My appointments were Sumas, and then we called it Atchulets, it was a Community Hall on the Ford Road, and the third appointment was, in those days called Majuba Hill, it's now Yarrow, not down on the flat, but up on the side of the hill where the B. C. Electric ran its right-of-way, and Columbia Valley, in a school house about two miles beyond the southerly end of Cultus Lake.

Sieber: Oh, yes.

Bunt: I went there once a month. I went to Majuba Hill twice a month, to Atchulets twice a month, and every Sunday morning at 11 A. M. to the church at Sumas, which is still standing there. I am not sure if it is in use today.

Sieber: I'm not either.

Bunt: No, I think it is part of the Carman-Sardis charge now. But out of my first year, and then at the end of that year, I was appointed to Naramata and had one appointment, although I did considerable work in the railway camps. They were building what is now, the Kettle Valley line through at that time, and I used to go up to the camps and collected a few travelling libraries, and would take them up and minister as best I could in that way. Of course, Naramata has become quite famous now, but it was such a small fruit-growing area at that time. I had a wonderful year there, and at the end of that year there, and at the end of that year, I went east to continue my education, and in the fall of 1914 I entered Wesleyan Theological College in Montreal and my third year Arts at McGill University. I lived in residence in the college. The Principal of the college at that time was Dr. Smythe. He had come just a year or two prior to that from Ireland and a granddaughter of his is now a United Church minister in one of the larger city churches in Montreal.

Sieber: Her name is Smythe?

Bunt: Phyllis Smythe. Then following along, more or less chronologically, in 1915 I had to decide another issue, would I volunteer for services in the war. The whole of Canada then had begun to realize that the war wasn't going to be over in a few months, which I thought at the beginning it might be, and because I had been out of college a few years, I felt that for a short war, they wouldn't probably need me. But it wasn't long before we realized that it was not going to be a short war, and after conferring with Dr. Smythe, the Principal of the College, and some other senior ministers, again I had to make my own decision, and that was, that I should offer for service in the Army.

Sieber: What Unit did you join?

Bunt: The 148th Battalion, which at the time was being raised on the campus of McGill University, and we went in toward the end of the college year, into barracks on Payne St., and from there to Valcartier, and from Valcartier we sailed later in 1915 for overseas. Our battalion was broken up into drafts, and because of that the Commanding Officer released (if I might use that expression) the N.C.O.'s who wanted to enter some other form of service. I applied to, and was received into the Royal Flying Corp.

Sieber: As an N.C.O., what would you be?

Bunt: I was a Company Sargent Major at the time. Maybe fifteen years ago, my wife and I went on a trip to the Old Country, and among those we visited was the Canadian High Commissioner, the late Hon. George Drew. We called on him at Canada House. I had had a letter of reference to him from the Hon. Howard Green, so with that, I was able to have a chat with him, and it was a most interesting chat to me. One thing, I laughed at the time, and since, in looking at me he said "and you were a Company Sargent Major were you", and I said "yes". He said "what is puzzling me is, how a Company Sargent Major, who is noted for his fluency in a certain type of language, could ever become a minister of the Gospel?" (Laughs) Well, it was a very nice chat with him. In the Flying Corp after several months training in Britain, I went to the Western Front and was there upwards of a year, and then was sent back to Britain for further training, and the Training School at which I was sent was down in Egypt, so I had a trip

Bunt: down through Europe and across the Mediterranean to Egypt. I was there several months and then returned to Britain for further service on the Western Front. I had hoped I might have been sent to the Palestine front, but it was not to be. So, when the war ended in 1918, I was then an instructor in flying at a training school in Wiltshire, England. As a matter of fact, the actual date of the Armistice, on that date, I was just being released from hospital where I had quite a severe attack of influenza.

Sieber: There was a lot in Canada at that time too.

Bunt: So, that brings me to the end of the War, World War I. I was, as I said, instructing, but before long, I got the necessary documents through for my return to Canada and was on my way to a center of the North Coast of Wales, to Leith, for embarkation to Canada. When in London, I met with a former student, whom I'd known well, of McGill, and we were having dinner together that day in a cafe, and he asked me where I was going. I told him. "Well, he said, you know there is a boat leaving Liverpool in a couple of days for Canada, why don't you go that way?". I said "I'm quite willing to go that way if I can." So, to make a long story short, I went to Headquarters in London, where they were disposing of Canadian troops, and I have to admit in telling you, it was one case in my life when I lied. There was a long lineup waiting to see the Adjutant, and along the corridor there was a right-handed angle turn in the corridor, and the Adjutant's office, after you made the turn. When I got into the line and I was asked if I had an appointment with the Adjutant, I said "no", I haven't any appointment". "Well, he said "You can't see him", so I turned away disappointed, and from then on I was looking and fell in the line again at the back end, and when I reached him this time, he said, "Have you an appointment?" and I said "Yes". Well, it worked anyway and I got to see the Adjutant, and at that time I had the rank of Lieutenant, and I told him "I'd like to go home on that boat that is leaving for Canada by the way of the Panama Canal. I said, "I came from British Columbia and my fiancée is living in British Columbia. I would like to see her", so he said "Show me your pass", so I showed it to him. He said, "Well, if you go on that boat, you'll have to forego the rest of your leave", and I said "That's O. K. with me", but almost before I knew it, my name was on the list to go that way, and by 9 o'clock the next morning, I was on the train for Liverpool, and later that afternoon, was on board the ship for Canada. I didn't breathe easily until we got out to sea, I thought they might yet recall me and send me another way.

Sieber: There were no helicopters in those days to pick you up.

Bunt: So, that was my career up to that time. So, I got back to Canada and I had a job in my own home town. It wasn't the choicest of jobs, but still I took it.

Sieber: What was it?

Bunt: Sanitary Inspector, and there was only a minimum of modern flush-toilets in Collingwood at that time, so you can realize what I had to inspect. That fall I went back to McGill and I had a year and a half of work to do in Theology before I could be ordained. I was able to do it in the one college term, although I lost quite a lot of weight in the process, but I graduated in 1920 at the Conference, then came to

Bunt: B. C., ordained at that Conference and was appointed to Grand Forks. On June 9th I was married. I would like to say this, that my wife (my fiancée then) and I, became engaged in 1914. We had a week together and we didn't see each other again for five years.

Sieber: And she still thought the same of you, did she?

Bunt: Well, she stuck by me, anyway.

Sieber: What was her name?

Bunt: Her name was Eirene Knight. Her mother was the first white child born in Chilliwack, and her father and mother (her grandparents) had lived there from early, early days. So, we were sent to Grand Forks from 1920-1923. We left there to make way for our local Union. The Presbyterian minister had left Grand Forks early in 1923, and for two or three months before leaving there, I was the minister of joint services, Methodist and Presbyterian. The Presbyterian Church was the larger and newer building than the Methodist. As a matter of fact, the minister who was called to come in after I left in June, was Rev. Frank Runnalls, well-known to many of us in British Columbia.

Sieber: Very much so.

Bunt: Yes, indeed. Then I went to Kaslo, and I was there just two years when once again I moved to make way for Union. General Union came and the general policy followed in those days, was that, where two congregations came together, a minister who was new to both of them would be appointed, and so we left Kaslo for that reason and came to Mission City in 1925.

Sieber: Was there any tension connected with Union in Kaslo?

Bunt: No, no, the Rev. E. W. MacKay lived in retirement here until his death, a very able Presbyterian minister who had been in Cranbrook in the Presbyterian Church prior to union, came to Kaslo. He was a man of ability, and a man of wisdom, and as far as I knew there was never any problem.

Side #2, begins

Bunt: You would be interested to know that the organist of the little church there during my ministry, and for years before, and for some time afterward, was the mother of the Hon. Howard Green. Also when I was at Kaslo, I had a new job wished on me. I was Secretary Manager of the Fall Fair there and we managed to carry it through reasonably well, and ended with a small surplus of money.

Sieber: Good administrator too, eh?

Bunt: Well, ministers in this Province and most Provinces have to turn hands to a great many things. Then I came down to Mission. I was there from 1925-1931. General Union came in, in 1925, and the Presbyterian charge had three appointments, as did the Methodist Charge. It was 1927 before there was any realignment of the preaching points in that area. In 1927, the Presbyterian minister moved and so there was a realignment made, and the appointments that I had were Mission City, Cedar Valley to the north, and Silverdale to the west. The Cedar Valley service was held in the school house. There was quite a nice little church at Silverdale.

Bunt: My wife and I both enjoyed our years at Mission, and I had the privilege just a few months ago of going up there to help commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Church Union.

Sieber: You would have a good time at that.

Bunt: Yes, you knew something about Mission, yes, we had a wonderful day there.

Sieber: We would have been there except we had been invited to Revelstoke, and had accepted it before the Mission invitation came.

Bunt: Yes, Dave Donaldson was there. I think he and I were the only two former ministers there. It really was a big day. Then in 1931 I went to the United Church congregation of St. Andrew's in Nanaimo, and I was there eight years. Looking back, I think perhaps the thing that comes to mind with the greatest force, is that those years were the years of the big depression in Canada. At the end of my first year in Nanaimo, I had to accept, I did it voluntarily, a reduction in salary of \$25, from \$175 a month to \$150 a month. But the things we had to buy in those days didn't cost us very much, and we never suffered because of lack of sufficient to live on. We could get good cuts of roast beef, sirloin tip - 10 to 12 cents a lb., and everything was correspondingly low, but there was a great deal of unemployment, and I remember the time we rallied the churches, and sent a carload of foodstuffs to Saskatchewan. At that time I didn't know the Rev. George Dorey, but the carload was consigned to him and he distributed it within that province to the needy areas. Later, he was Secretary of the Board of Home Missions, of which I was one of the Superintendents. I became Superintendent of Home Missions in 1939. My years in the pastorate number 19, and my years as Superintendent of Missions numbered 19, so it was the halfway mark in my ordained ministry when I became Superintendent of Home Missions. Now I could talk a long time about that work.

Sieber: What were some of the highlights, say, up in the north, or in the Nootenays?

Bunt: Well, one phase of the work that had a great appeal to me, was the Indian work, and as I went around among the Indian Villages, very often with the Rev. Peter Kelly as my guide, I gained an understanding of them, their life, their ideals, which I never would have had otherwise, and there were some very devoted Christian Laymen in most of these villages. I think one of the most outstanding was Heber Clifton of Hartley Bay.

Sieber: The grand old Chief?

Bunt: A grand old chief and a fine christian. I'll always remember the first service that I attended in that congregation, in that church. The singing - I'm not musical, but music was always a pain to me and affected me. It seemed to me at that time that the congregation in its entirety, (there might have been 50 people there, or more) were singing in harmony, and the thought came to me as I listened to them singing, it's only a generation or two ago when their ancestors were fighting, and killing each other here in this area. An emotional surge came over me and I just had to stop singing because of its effect.

The medical work among the Indians, gave me an insight into the devotion of men like Dr. Horace Wrinch and Dr. George Darby.

Sieber: Dr. Wrinch was at Hazelton and Dr. Darby at Bella Bella.

Bunt: That's right. Then there was a Dr. Gladstone Fiddes came to Simpson

Bunt: before long, and Dr. E. J. (Ted) Whiting. I think he is in his final year before retiring, at the present time. I remember one time when there was talk of re-appointing some of the Medical Superintendents, and Dr. Whiting's comment to me was, that if in the shuffle there was no place for him as a missionary doctor, he would apply to some other church because he said "That is my life, a missionary doctor," and he has been a great character.

Sieber: I remember him very well, of course, he was just that kind of a man at Bella Coola, in fact, to begin with, it wasn't a United Church hospital. It was taken over and Dr. Whiting went there to help meet a situation that was difficult, and he met it with his usual wisdom and christian spirit. I think two of the matrons, I can't call them by name, but there was a Miss Bedford at Simpson, and a Miss Miner at Bella Coola, and I remember when I was leaving Bella Coola after a visit, I had been there for two or three days, there had been some problems to meet, then the Annual Meeting of the hospital was held at Lower Bella Coola in the hall and Miss Miner said to me when we were leaving, "Mr. Bunt, before you go, I want to tell you that your visit has helped us a great deal". I just thought what other reward could one want, than to be told they helped somebody.

Related to that Presbytery, was the Marine Work, Dr. Peter Kelly, Gillard and others. There is a lot I could say, I hardly know what to leave out. Then perhaps it better be recorded that prior to my appointment there were two Superintendents. There was also a Superintendent of Indian Work and one of Oriental Work. I did my best within the area of B. C. Conference to cover them all.

Sieber: I don't know how you did!

Bunt: I don't think I did, I spread myself out as far as possible. I can't pass this over without reference to the Japanese and Chinese work.

Sieber: Yes, I was hoping you'd talk about the Japanese work.

Bunt: The beginning of World War II, created a situation which now is well-known and perhaps largely forgotten for the Japanese. Very shortly after war was declared, an order came out that all Japanese had to be removed from the coastal areas. I think the line was drawn 100 miles east of the coast. At that time, we had eight ordained ministers in the Japanese work. We had a strong congregation here in Vancouver which Rev. Mr. Shimizu was the minister, an exceedingly able minister, and he went with his people to Kaslo, I think. Some Japanese went to Slocan, some to Kaslo, some to Grand Forks and other parts of the province, and some to Alberta and even to Manitoba. The families were moved. I remember one time a man I had to deal with quite often, and I liked him very much, was a Col. Mead. He represented the military authority in charge of the dispersal of the Japanese. He said to me one time when I was visiting him on business in his office, and discussing the problems of these homes being broken up, he said, "Mr. Bunt, there was no necessity for this", he said there were a few dangerous Japanese, but we had them all cornered before the war was declared. There was no need to break up these homes and it was pitiful really as you went in to see them packing their stuff, putting it in the attic of First Church, and out at Steveston, and places like that, and I know that many of the items which were stored were stolen, and the Japanese never got them back. It is one black mark on what was done. No doubt, those in authority found it had to be done, but some of us couldn't see it that way.

Sieber: In Sam Roddan's book, he quotes you, and he says, (that you wrote, or did you say it) "The disposition of their property, the unchristian attitude of many of our people, in both public and private life, makes one hang his head in shame?"

Bunt: I wrote that. That's the way I felt at the time. It was very interesting to see the change that came over many of our Canadian people as the years passed along. The Japanese were scattered and entered into a life in communities elsewhere and were worthy citizens in the main.

Sieber: What kind of accommodation would they have in places like Kaslo and Tashme?

Bunt: Well, I'll just illustrate once. I visited Tah Komiyama in the Slocan area. They had a camp built there for the Japanese. At that time, Tak was a single man and his parents lived with him and they had a house, a small house that had been hastily put up to house the Japanese, and I gather that his house was as good as many of them. They had me as their guest in this little house, and they also had the Japanese W.M.S. worker for the Japanese there, Miss Hird, and somehow or another they crowded us all in and I slept on a couch in the living room, it was right against the wall of this house, and when I awakened in the morning and put my hand out, there was a heavy layer of frost on the inside of the wall. That was the kind of accommodation they had.

Sieber: What time of year would that be?

Bunt: It was probably February.

Sieber: It would be the coldest part of the year.

Bunt: Yes, it would be. But wherever they went they weren't there very long before they had gardens around their places and they were growing things. The same was true up around Lillooet, there was a settlement up across the river from the community of Lillooet, and wherever they went, I can still see them in those camps, cultivating the ground around them, watering the plants by hand and that kind of thing.

Sieber: This was true of the Japanese in Revelstoke when I was there in the early 40's. It was interesting this summer, I had the wedding of one of the young men's daughter's here in Vancouver, Sheila Shoji.

Bunt: Well now, there is another incident I'd like to record. The United Church had property in Dawson City and Whitehorse, and at the time of my appointment as Superintendent, that area was part of my responsibility for oversight. Our work had been suspended there as far back as 1932, I believe. There didn't seem to be enough work for both the Anglican and our church to warrant the spending of money and the competing with one another in areas like that, so the Board of Home Missions said they wanted some direction regarding our property in both those places, so I went in. It was really an outstanding experience to go in to that part of Canada. I flew first of all to Whitehorse, and was there over Sunday, and the Anglican minister had me preach both morning and evening in his church in Whitehorse, a Mr. Chapple, was the minister. Later, he came to an appointment in the eastern part of Vancouver. Then after spending the better part of a week there, I took the river boat down to Dawson City, and on arrival there, - perhaps I should go back a couple of weeks. Prior to my leaving for the Yukon, the Anglican Bishop, Bishop Geddes, called on me at my office, which was then in the Dominion Bank building, and he said "Mr. Bunt, I hear you are coming up to the Yukon".

Bunt: I said "yes, I am just coming in to give you my personal welcome." "We are glad you're coming" he said. I said "Well, Bishop Geddes, I am not going up there with the purpose of pulling the United Church people out of any congregations they are now in, nor are thinking at the moment of the appointment of a minister. I am going up to meet our people and look at the property situation." When I arrived up, as I said at Whitehorse, Mr. Chapple met me and arranged for me to address his services, morning and evening, and then when I went down to Dawson, when the boat tied up at the dock in Dawson City, I was in the process of shaving, a tap came to my cabin door and here was the young Anglican minister at Dawson. He said, "Mr. Bunt, have you made no provision for hotel accommodation, if not, and you are not tied up in any way, we'd be delighted to have you stay with us in the Rectory, if you can put up with two small children?" I had a delightful week with Mr. & Mrs. Vance and their family in Dawson, but the thing that struck me so forcibly was when the little weekly paper came out, there was a quarter of a page of advertising for the following Sunday. Here was my name in big, black type, that I would preach in the Cathedral at 11 A.M., and 7:30 in the evening, a service after the order of the United Church of Canada, would be conducted by me. I was a bit nervous, I'll have to confess when I went into the pulpit that morning. Here over in his chair was the Bishop and the Anglican Rector was the organist for that evening. There was I, a United Church minister leading the service. Well, I thought, that is the ecumenical spirit anyway.

Sieber: It really was.

Bunt: I had a wonderful visit there at Dawson City, meeting with the Vestry, to ask them officially to accept care of our property and use it, rather than let it deteriorate, and we made a few arrangements like that in a very satisfactory way, and I will always remember that visit, especially the brotherliness of the late Bishop Geddes. I had a conversation with his widow a short time ago, on the telephone, she is living here in Vancouver and remembers that occasion quite well.

Sieber: What property did we have and what use did they make of it?

Bunt: Really, what had at one time been a very good church there, fairly large for the area, and we had a manse, because the beginnings there were Presbyterian, so it was called a manse, and the manse was being used when I was there on this visit by the church for social purposes, ladies groups and things like that, and the worship was carried on in the Cathedral, and our church was being used partly as a Recreation Hall. When I met with the vestry committee we all had a bit of a laugh over it. I was the United Church minister there, and all but one of the local committee were United Church and one Anglican.

Well now, as I look back over those years, some of the values that I cherish most I think, were the friendships that I made with the ministers and their wives, and especially with the younger ministers, because our fields in those days, I'm not acquainted with today, those fields in our day in the Cariboo, existent places were nearly always manned by younger men, many of them on their first charges. I expressed my opinion more than once, that if I had my way, I would like to send an ordinand to an established field for four years, then send him into the Cariboo.

Sieber: I would agree with you, very much so.

Bunt: It wasn't easy work and it required the more experience and judgment a man had, the better was his work in the Cariboo. Then I had a deep appreciation of the loyalty and dedication of many, many of the laity in those out-of-the-way places. I adventure to say that the churches were kept alive as much by the loyalty of a few dedicated laymen, as by the efforts of the ministers who went in.

Sieber: This would be true of places like McBride and Vanderhoof.

Bunt: Yes, I remember one time visiting McBride and at a mid-week meeting, it wasn't a good night for a meeting, and it wasn't a large meeting, but there was a man and his wife there at that meeting who had walked three miles. They had gum boots to the knees, because that was the kind of equipment they needed, and carried a lantern to light the way, and they were in the service in McBride, and I just thought that down in Vancouver it's hard to get some people to walk three blocks to go to church, let alone, three miles.

I think of an Indian layman at Kitseguecla. We were short of ministers, we didn't have a minister for them, and there was no one in sight we could send there prior to the next Conference. I was appealing to them and I said "how many of you are lay preachers, why can't you carry on the work?", and after awhile a man who had said nothing, up to then, got up, if I remember correctly, I think his name was Arthur Howard, and in broken English, he made a short address which affected me very much. I couldn't understand every word he said, but I got the drift of it. He was telling of his conversion by the early missionaries. He stood up, and in broken English, made a short address that impressed me very, very much. He told of his conversion in the earlier days under the leadership of pioneer missionaries, and said at that time he made a promise to God, that if he was ever needed for any special kind of work, he would respond to the need. And he said, I think this is the time that God wants me, and he said to me, "I will see that the services in this church are carried on until you can send us a missionary."

Sieber: You mentioned some time ago about travelling through that part of Canada or B. C., with Dr. Andrew Roddan when he was President of Conference.

Bunt: Oh yes, that was a highlight for me. Fortunately for me, he fell in with the idea. He was very happy to be invited as President of Conference. That was his office at the time, to visit the Indian churches, and he had a great time, and if you were with anyone that was with him, and he had a great time, then you had one too. We started up by way of Williams Lake, up through Prince George, and then west to Hazelton. We had two Indian Villages, one in Kispiox, and one in Kitseguecla, adjacent to Hazelton, and he visited the hospital there. We really had a great time, and I remember the occasion at Kitseguecla when five or seven babies were brought forward to have Dr. Roddan baptize them. I said to him before the ceremony, "Andrew, (I whispered to him) the mothers all expect you to kiss their babies." I didn't say it loud enough for anyone to hear it, but, to make a long story short, he didn't go through with that part of the service.

Sieber: For obvious reasons! (Laughs)

Dr. W. Percy Bunt - 11

Bunt:

Then we came on down to Port Essington, up to Simpson, down to Bella Bella and Bella Coola. The time we travelled on the Crosby, it met us at Prince Rupert and brought us down the coast when we went into Bella Bella. The tide was low and you had to climb an iron ladder from the top deck of the Crosby to get up on the deck, probably 10 or 12 feet anyway. It was bolted at the top end, but the lower end was loose, and half way up I think, Andrew got a bit nervous and he said if Mrs. Roddan saw him doing this, she'd have heart failure. It was a great experience, and then later on I took him the rounds of the Indian Villages on the Island, and when he reported at the next Conference, that was the highlight of his report as President of Conference. And it was a great thing for the Indians too. Lots of the Indian Villages had radios and they would always tune in to First Church Sunday nights to hear Andrew Roddan. And, of course, after his visit to many of these villages, it meant more than ever to them to have had him come around. So I felt that during my years as President, maybe that was one of the best contributions I made, was taking Andrew Roddan around to the Indian Villages. It was a great experience for him and for me too, and for the Indians.