

DEBUT TIMES TWO

by Gordon Laird

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Campers would gather on a rainy day in the big kitchen shed on the Cultus Lake campground. There were many rainy days: too many for my Father!

On one of these occasions the campers were all seated at tables, actively "making their own entertainment".

After a few had sung or recited, my Parents hoisted me onto the picnic table for me to sing:

"O, give me a home,
Where the buffalo roam
and the deer and the antelope play
where seldom is heard
a sky-reaching word
and the sky was not cloudy all day"

My debut on the stage, was on a picnic table! I was considered "cute", so I must have been 4 or 5 years of age. When I made the "mistake" in wording (sky-reaching for discouraging) it was because I had sung it that way many times before and my parents thought the "mistake" to be cute.

I must have noticed the applause, I am sure there was plenty. I have no particular memory of whether I enjoyed this debut or not.

This debut was accompanied by another. This time it was a Church fun-night which was being held either in a Church hall or in a nearby highschool annex. This time there was a stage involved, and in our turns we took our place on it.

I sat on the stage, legs dangling over the edge, and in my hands was a black cash-box.

"There was an old miser named "Fox"
Who kept all his loot in a box

When the mission plate passed
[dum de dum, dum de dum]
Old Fox
Kept his Box
Under Locks

At which point I shook the cashboxes to make the keys inside rattle good and loud.

There was a wonderful ovation for this performance, which was probably enhanced because Dad was known by everyone to be their Banker, and they understood an ironic twist to this limerick.

I think I enjoyed the applause, and, of course, I was "cute".

My Stage career had been launched but it did not continue. School itself was not nearly so much fun, and there was much rivalry from young colleagues. I don't recall being given a part in any school plays.

Taking part in musical recitals on the violin or piano were no occasions I looked forward to. In fact I simply said to my teacher and parents, "No!"

By highschool I was now playing clarinet in the school orchestra. Being in the "pit" for musicals was its own kind of thrill, but I recognized that the "real thing" was to be "on stage".

It wasn't until a decade or so ago that I entered a contest for seniors in which I played a saxophone solo.

Emboldened by this good experience, I took my saxophone on our cruise on the Maasdam, and volunteered to play in the amateur contest.

Finally I was on a real, Las Vegas-type stage, with an audience, and with a 4 piece band as accompaniment. When I completed playing "Misty" for an appreciative audience, I realized that a connection had been made with my first two Debut experiences as a child.