

## GETTING TO SCHOOL

Jerry Dunn

Getting to St. Brendan's elementary from home on 2nd Avenue was relatively easy, even for a six year old. Firstly, I had an older sister and brother, secondly there were numerous fellow urchins heading in the same direction. It was north to Rosemount Boulevard and then seven (of what have since become short) blocks east to the school. With experience we eventually traveled the more adventurous back lanes.

On one particular day while in the first grade I set out alone. This was a rare occurrence. For some reason I left home early, and the street was empty of fellow young travelers. I walked the first 50 yard segment to Rosemount and then turned right heading for the school. As I approached 6th Avenue something was amiss. St. Brendan's wasn't there. The school always came in sight at 6th. There was an open field of vision across the Nesbitt school yard and the lawn in front of the municipal library. But St. Brendan's wasn't there; neither was the library, and I could just barely make out the Nesbitt school building.

Do I head back home, and how would I explain what had happened; or do I forge ahead into the unknown? Discretion held sway as I headed back for home. But within a block or two I ran into my sister and her friends. I explained my finding, and then they told me all about fog.

### High School

By the time I graduated to high school in 1958, we had moved up in the world, all the way to 4th Avenue, near Holt Street. St. Brendan's graduates generally moved en masse to Cardinal Newman High School about 6 or 7 kilometers southwest, in the Plateau area, and for me this meant city bus travel.

Cardinal Newman was situated on the east side of Christophe Colombe between St. Joseph Boulevard and Gilford in a red brick building that had once been a Protestant school. Its annex for Grade 9 students was on the east side of Delormier (now de Lormier) between Gilford and Mount Royal.

My usual bus route to the school was south on Iberville to St. Joseph and then west to De la Roche. The Iberville route at that time featured electric Canadian Car cream-coloured 'trolley' busses. The St. Joseph Boulevard route was served by brown and cream diesel busses. I remember three distinct makes. Most were Canadian Car products. There were also some made by Mack (as in Mack Trucks), but my favorite were a very few older General Motors vehicles. They had leather seats (not that we often got to sit) and manual transmissions. I was always amazed at their drivers who could somehow manage any combination of selling tickets, punching, distributing, and collecting transfers, steering the bus and shifting gears.

The transfer point was at a remarkable engineering phenomenon at the intersection of Iberville and St. Joseph Boulevard. Three railway overpasses converged at that

spot, one crossing Iberville and two crossing St. Joseph, one on either side of Iberville. Whether approaching from Iberville or St. Joseph, vehicles and pedestrians descended into the concrete-lined intersection, covered over on three of the approaches by the rail overpasses, to be greeted by traffic lights as the streets intersected at the very centre of the underpass complex.

Occasionally on the way home I took a different route: the Christophe Colombe 'trolley' bus north to Rosemount and then the Rosemount bus east to my stop at 5th Avenue. For some unremembered reason this occasional route was taken only for the trip back, never for the journey to school.

In those days busses had two rows of double seats which left relatively little standing room and movement space between them. Getting on, moving to the rear with one's school briefcase, and exiting, especially during crowded rush hours posed quite a challenge with a lot of "Excuse me's" and "Pardonnez-moi's."

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