



Ray Cummings in Montreal

One quiet evening when I was relaxing at home in Portland, Oregon, I got a call out of the blue from Ray Cummings. Ray and I are second cousins, sharing the same great-grandfather, Charles Cummings – and coincidentally sharing his name. Having recently retired, Ray was launching a new venture of researching all of the major families of Hugo, MN, and he wanted to know if I was interested in learning more about my mother's Peloquin and Cummings ancestors. I jumped at the opportunity.

My oldest brother, Jerry, spent his boyhood summers with our grandmother in Hugo until the summer of 1951 when Grandma married Michel Cartier and moved to Coos Bay, OR. That date marked the last time our family drove to Hugo from Winona. My memories of Hugo when Grandma still lived there are shadowy and limited to what a six-year-old would retain into adulthood. Cousin Ray, on the other hand, grew up in Hugo, and he offered to tell me anything that I wanted to know about Hugo in the 1940s. The curtain was lifted!

Ray was a fount of information about Hugo and family genealogy. The first thing he did for me was to sketch out on butcher paper the entire village of Hugo – residences and businesses. Then he filled in the details about daily life in Hugo. My entries on the Sieracki Family webpage on our French-Canadian history and genealogy are based on his voluminous knowledge about our ancestors.

I became fast friends with Ray during the few years that he had left on this planet. He was such fun to talk to because he was witty, friendly and had an encyclopedic memory. His wife, Linda, has

written the following brief biography of Ray. I think the following descriptor for a multi-talented person of rare vitality and energy fits Ray perfectly: he was “une force de la nature.”

Ray's Life Story

By

Linda Brisson Cummings

Raymond Joseph Cummings was born on December 15, 1941, in Vallejo, California. Ray was named after Dr. Raymond del Mas a doctor in Hugo the family knew. Ray's father had retired from the Navy before December 7, 1941 and was working as a civilian welder with the Navy. After working for the Navy for a few more years, Ray's dad decided to bring the family home to Hugo, Minnesota.

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Ray was finishing his BA degree at St. Thomas where he graduated with honors in the spring of 1967. The summer 1966, his last year at St. Thomas he started dating, Linda Brisson, the “girl next door.” Well Linda was the girl next door when she was aged 2 to 5 and Ray was 9 to 12. Cupid's arrow hit them both and in September of 1967 they were married. Ray had received a Fellowship to the University of Minnesota to study family sociology. For the next two years, Ray was completing his graduate coursework, and Linda was working at the UofM library system. She left the library just

before their first child, Jennifer, was born in August 1969. The next spring, Ray graduated with his Master's degree. On Ray's 30th birthday, December 15, 1971, he graduated with his Ph.D. In 1973, their son, Paul, was born. Over the next several years, Paul was diagnosed having Cerebral Palsy and was blind.

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