

PENTICTON HERALD

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20 MOST INFLUENTIAL OF THE PAST CENTURY

Bill Barlee

By: Mark Brett

He spent a decade in politics but is known best for sharing his love of history.

The following is the 15th in a series on individuals who made outstanding contributions to Penticton during the *Herald's* first century.

Former Penticton resident Neville Langrell "Bill" Barlee is one of the best known modern day pioneers who has spent a lifetime preserving the past for the future. Although he's now in failing health, Barlee had a thirst for knowledge and a love of life as big as the great outdoors he enjoyed so much.

His work has touched the lives of countless people and will continue to influence generations to come.

Described by many of his colleagues as the great historian of British Columbia, Barlee is a man of higher ideals, liked and respected by almost everyone who has come to know him.

Born in Grand Forks in 1932 and raised in Rossland, Barlee's varied background included more than 20 years as a teacher (most of those at Penticton Secondary School), a successful author, publisher, television host and lecturer.

He also had a political career that spanned nearly a decade, during which he served as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Small Business, Tourism and Culture.

In terms of sheer popularity it was through the award winning television show "Gold Trails and Ghost Towns" that most people got to know him.

One of Barlee's biggest projects locally was the preservation of the Kettle Valley steam railway. He also introduced the Buy BC campaign in a successful effort to expand the market for home grown food and beverage products.

As Minister of Small Business, Tourism, Culture and Film from 1993 to 1996 he oversaw what turned out to be, in his own words, "a period of unprecedented growth."

In 2000 Barlee decided to try his hand in federal politics running as a Liberal candidate in the riding of Kootenay-Boundary-Okanagan.

It was his final attempt at public office and two years later he then moved with his wife Kathleen to Victoria, BC where for a time he worked with his former Ministerial Assistant, Michael Geoghegan at Barlee, Geoghegan and Associates. After he retired the firm then became Michael Geoghegan Consulting.