



Street Stories

Neale Drive

GPS: [49.645392-122.3233675](https://www.google.com/maps/place/49.645392,-122.3233675)



Ken Neale (centre) receiving an award in 1977 for “meritorious service in the field of meteorology” from John Henderson (left) and Frank Buchinski (right) of the Atmospheric Environment Service. He faithfully recorded maximum and minimum temperatures and the amount of rainfall twice a day for nearly 25 years from a weather station located in the front yard of his residence on the corner of 5th and Murray.

Ken Neale was a teacher, weatherman, and native of Mission.. His father, Harry, arrived in Mission from England in 1905, buying 64 hectares at the north end of Cedar Valley. Here he had a “ranch,” not a “farm.” Among early English homesteaders, a “farm” sounded like a place of menial work, but a “ranch” was more impressive. Strawberries were not a popular crop in the early days, since their harvesting required a great deal of bending over. Hence Harry grew raspberries, gooseberries, and orchard crops, which required less arduous picking. Neale Drive is located near the site of this homestead, off Tunbridge Avenue.

Harry married an Anglican minister’s daughter, Muriel Weatherdon, and with her had four children: Ken, Harold, Edward, and Helen. They made an odd pioneering couple, this English gentleman and his genteel wife. Ken, their oldest son, once said, “I don’t imagine my mother’s finishing school education was much help in churning butter and all the other chores she had on the homestead.”

Ken studied agriculture at UBC in the late 1930s and, in the late 1950s, did post graduate work in education. During the war, Ken was a lieutenant and held an administrative post. For a time, he commanded the local unit of the Westminster Regiment and won a distin-

guished service medal. In 1944, he married Florence Robertson, an accountant for the local school district, and had a daughter, Darien, and two sons, Julian and Michael.

After the war, Ken headed the research department for Canadian Cannerys. He quit, however, when his job required a move from his beloved Mission. Instead he returned to school and took a year of teacher-training. He then started his teaching career at Mission Junior Secondary School in 1960 and taught at other schools until his retirement in 1973.

Throughout his life Ken was also very active in the community. He was “one of the founding fathers of the dyking commission in 1949 or 50”; a member of the local board that built the present day hospital; and was involved with the BC Centennial Committee that built the Mission Centennial Library in 1972.

Ken retired in 1973 but stayed active as Mission District Registrar, a mason and a keeper of daily weather records for the Atmospheric Environment Service – a task he attended to with near religious zeal, even noting down every time he mowed the lawn. “I like to keep records of everything,” he once confessed. Known locally as ‘the weatherman’ Ken died August 29, 1981.

By David Buss; edited with additions by Val Billesberger