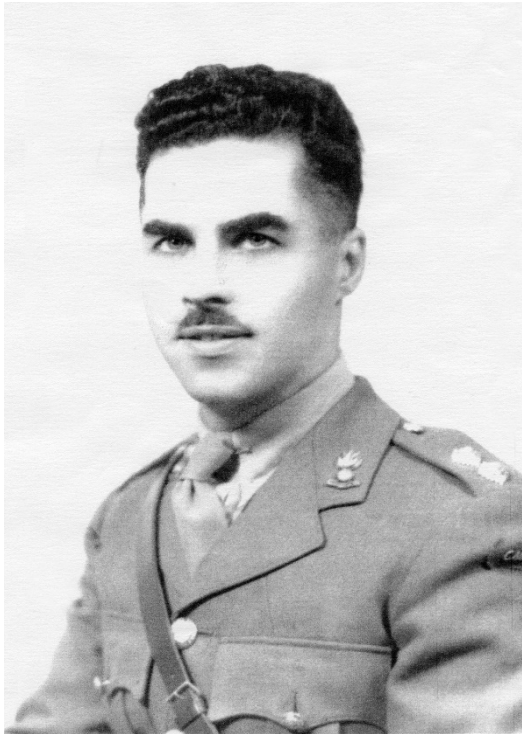


JIMMY

Arthur Allen, 09 September 2020 Final

In central Scottish dialect, the word “jimmy” refers to a male stranger.



*Lieutenant James Reid
RCE, WW2*

In 1944 my Uncle James (Jimmy) Reid came home early from World War 2 following a medical breakdown during the Allied Campaign in Italy. Family opinions held that seizures denied him active service, and he was sent to military hospital in Canada. Before the war's end he returned to Alberta to receive care at the Colonel Belcher Hospital in Calgary, and to rejoin his wife and young family, and his mother and three sisters, in Canmore, Banff and Blackie, Alberta.

BIRTH

James Douglas Reid was born on June 17th, 1909, in Bothswellhaugh, Scotland. His parents were James and Jean Greenshields (Bell) Reid of Glasgow.

IMMIGRATION

Jimmy's father (a miner since 1891 at age 11) came to Canada in 1910, and found work in the coal mines of the Crow's Nest Pass in Alberta. The family, with 3-year-old Jimmy and four siblings, Agnes, Robert, Josephine and Jean followed in 1912. In 1916, when the CPR began coaling its main-line locomotives from the Canmore mines, the family moved to Canmore.

EDUCATION

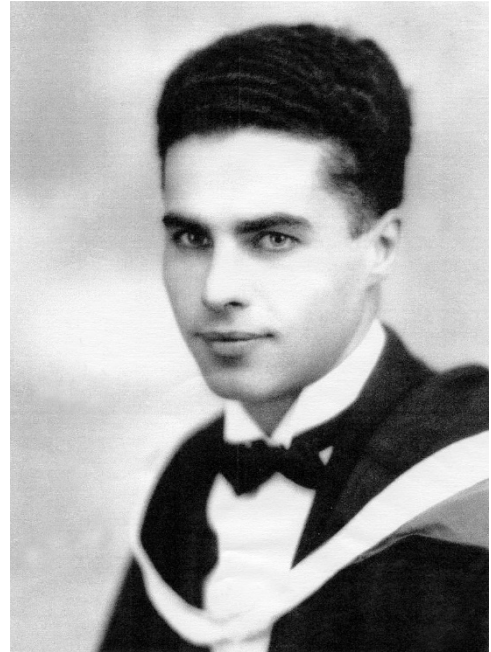
Elementary and high schools were attended in Crow's Nest communities and in Canmore, where Jimmy graduated from Grade 12 in 1930. On graduation Reid sons and grandsons were told;"you go down the hole to work, there's no food or bed for you at home that night...." Jimmy studied Mining Engineering at the University of Alberta, and graduated in 1935.

SUMMER WORK AND UNIVERSITY



*Jimmy on horse with view of Mt Assiniboine
Photo from newspaper, probably early 1930s, better photo not yet found.*

In the 1920s and 30s a surveyor and alpinist named Arthur O. Wheeler established Wheeler's Walking Tours in Banff and guided guests on one-hundred-and-fifty-mile hiking tours in the mountains. Wheeler was active in the Canadian Alpine Club, and worked to promote alpine sport in the Rockies. He started using tent shelters at Mt Assiniboine where Agnes, Jimmy's sister, (later my mother), was camp hostess and cook. Jimmy supplied the camp from Banff with a small train of pack horses.



University of Alberta, 1935

PROFESSION

In the late 1930s he worked as an engineer in the Hollinger Gold Mine in Timmins, Ontario. On one visit home to Canmore, his travel bag spilled, and revealed a beautiful pearl handled small calibre pistol. Jimmy's prestige rose in the wide eyes of the children, but we said nothing and wondered about stealing of gold in the mine.

MARRIAGE

In 1939 he married Eunice Elaine McKinnon, in North Bay, Ontario. She was a nurse, born in 1914 in Canmore and trained in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Their first son, James Hugh (Jamie) Reid, was born in Timmins in 1941.

MILITARY SERVICE

Jimmy enlisted with the Royal Canadian Engineers, and trained at the RCE Training Centre, Chilliwack, B.C. Eunice and Jamie lived at the base. In April 1942 Jimmy qualified as a lieutenant and army engineer. A second son, Douglas Alan, was born in



Jimmy, Jamie, and Eunice, likely in 1944-45

1942 in Chilliwack, and died there of pneumonia in 1943. After basic training in Canada, Jimmy was sent to England for advanced training, during which he sustained a head injury. He was then posted to the Italian campaign, but was not sent into combat due to medical difficulties. A belated Certificate of Service from the Canadian Army, 30 January 1946, states that Jimmy was discharged....” Having become unfit for Service under existing Medical Standards.” In early 1944 he went to military hospital in London, Ontario, for medical care. There he learned the craft of needlepoint in occupational therapy offered to patients.

COMING HOME

During Jimmy’s absence, Eunice moved to Banff and worked as a nurse while caring for Jamie and Janet, a daughter who was born there and also died in infancy. In early 1945 Jimmy

returned to Alberta, and occupied a small cottage with Eunice and Jamie in Banff. They were one block from our own residence, and I was a frequent baby sitter for Jamie. My sister Jean had attended Janet earlier.



Eunice, Jamie, and Janet in Banff, 1944 or 1945

I remember the apprehension of my mother and aging father about Jimmy's return, and possible difficulties for Eunice, but I was not told of, nor did I see or hear any open verbal or physical abuse during the two years I was a companion for Jamie. I was well treated and in following decades visited occasionally with Eunice in Edmonton and Vancouver, and Jimmy in Canmore.

RECONCILIATION

Reunion through 1946 and 1947, and a short try in the early 1950s, did not succeed. Another son, Robert, was born in 1947 and Eunice and the two boys moved to Edmonton in 1948. I visited them there in 1950 while at the University of Alberta. when Eunice moved to Vancouver, Jamie and Robert were placed in foster care on Vancouver Island for a short time. After divorce (September 1969), Eunice stayed in Vancouver and continued her career as a psychiatric nurse in a hospital in the city. Jamie and Robert continued their schooling, and Jamie studied English at UBC. In the process he became well known as a promising writer and poet in the Vancouver literary scene. Robert's life was another tragedy. He died at 22 years of age, in 1969, of epilepsy.

Through the 1960s Jimmy moved about, found a short period of work as an engineer on the Trans-Canada Highway in the Selkirk Mountains of B C, and considered work in Glacier National Park. He kept in touch with his 3 sisters in Canmore, Banff, and Blackie, Alberta, and with Granny who had by now returned to Canmore after a decade in Calgary.

He had a life-time friendship with Lawrence Grassi, a well-regarded miner in Canmore who had found better work above ground in clean air and sunshine, building trails in Banff and Yoho National Parks. Jimmy told me that before the war he and Lawrence built one trail near Lake O'Hara, and walked out each carrying tools and gear, and taking turns with the weight of a magnificent 70 lb. rock of quartz crystal. I know of no other friends.

SECOND MARRIAGE In the 1960s Jimmy often stayed in our boarding house in Banff during his trips to the highway project. It was there he met Eileen Johnson. In 1969 they married and occupied a three-room cabin Jimmy had built beside Granny's house at the cabin camp of Kathy and Sam Grainger, west of Canmore. Kathy was Jimmy's youngest sister and was born in Canada. Eileen was a friendly and patient woman who could live in three small rooms with Jimmy.

From the 1960s to the mid-1980s, in the cabin with Eileen, Jimmy had several occupations;

..... continued work on fabric arts of his own design. These works are needlepoint, a form of embroidery, stitched through a backing fabric. Tapestries require weaving of warp and woof, with no backing fabric;

..... cutting and finishing of interesting stones picked up by a geologist's eye for fabrication of hand-made jewelry. I still have a pair of cuff links made by Jimmy with tiger's eye stones;

..... coat hooks, cribbage boards, platters and other useful items made from the antlers of deer, elk and moose;

..... collection of deformed chunks of rusted metal that had softened and clung to the brake shoes of CPR trains as they overheated on the down-grade run from the Great Divide to Canmore. As an eastbound train passed near his cabin, Jimmy would wave at the engineers, and they would let go a short blast on their electric horn, (steam whistles had vanished in the early 1950s). He would follow the train as it slowed and stopped in Canmore. When brakemen broke iron chunks from the brake shoes he selected pieces of interesting shape, well- polished on the wearing surface and often showing abstract and animal forms. Under the aspen trees at the cabin, he made a small iron and stone rock garden, with colorful flowers for mountain songbirds and hummingbirds.



In his cabin

FAMILY VISITS

In the 1960S and 70s Stella and I would stop in Canmore on our annual family visits to my parents in Banff. Our children remember Eileen as friendly and gentle, and Jimmy as “quirky” and interesting. He gave tours of his workshop where colorful pebbles and rare stones were of special interest. In the garden, flowers, birds, and iron objects needed explanation. Stella remembers Jimmy’s account of why hummingbirds show such brilliant, iridescent and changing colours. Jimmy told about the waves of energy he could feel in his brain. We visited a storage shed and examined the intricacies of cut stone and bone carvings and furniture made of local burls and twisted trees. Stella enjoyed the rock garden. We named its brilliant quartz

centre-piece “the O’Hara Crystal”, and Eileen served tea under aspens quivering in the mountain light.

By the early 1980s, when Eileen found Jimmy’s stubbornness too much to take, she left him to mind his own business, and moved into a nearby Canmore nursing home. In the process, she asked the RCMP Detachment to keep an eye on his comings and goings. Her request was granted; the police station had a clear view from across the street. A photo of Eileen has not yet been found.

Shortly before his passing, I was informed that Jimmy had declined family burial plots in Canmore and Banff, and asked that his ashes be thrown to the wind at “the Hoodoos”, massive pillars of yellow clay and boulders formed by the erosion of the hard glacial till banks of the Bow River between Canmore and Banff. In sunlight they were solid and sculptural. Under the moon they became shadowy spirits guarding the river. I do not know what happened to Jimmy’s ashes.



A few of many Hoodoos, approx. maximum 30 ft tall

LOOKING BACK

James Reid Sr. had died in 1940 And Granny Jean in 1976. Agnes died in 1980, Jimmy in 1987. Eunice followed in 1991 in Vancouver. Eileen died in 1999 and was buried in the Canmore Cemetery. Jamie died in 2015, leaving Carol and I in southern BC, and numerous Reid offspring spreading out in Alberta from the 49th to the 60th parallels of latitude.

With the passing of Jimmy and his generation, I am left with a few dramatic memories of my connection with him and the Reid family.

As a boy I had been deeply impressed by my uncle's image as a man of the world. Jimmy on horseback, in a graduation gown or an army uniform, all embellished by my mother's stories of his exploits, led me to a state of childhood hero worship. In the 1930s and 40s, I was a boy in awe of my uncle, a man on his way to far places. That view vanished when he came home from war without the glory I had expected to feel on his return. It interests me now, decades later, to observe that in spite of disappointment and the departure of young Reids from Canmore, I did not separate from Jimmy, Eunice, Eileen and Jamie and Carol, and visited them at long intervals as we all moved about in Western Canada.

In 1955 Jimmy offered some practical advice on my mother's mental breakdown. I remember no emotion or sympathy in his words about his troubled sister, but in the confusion, I was reassured and gratified at his concern and knowledge about what I had to do.

Eunice was able and willing to talk about personal connections. She once told me, with blunt feeling, that she had yet to meet "another man with such a strong need for his mother's approval" She also advised (in the mid-1950s) that it would be good for me to live with a woman before marriage.

Eileen was tactful, but did tell Stella and I that stubbornness was a major problem in her life with Jimmy. I agreed, adding to the conversation by referring to his reluctance to accept authority.

From 1945 to the 1970s, I saw one instance of a seizure affecting Jimmy. He and I sat on a bench at his workshop during our summer visit, and talked of routine things. Stella and our children were close by, enjoying the garden. Suddenly Jimmy reached out and gripped my arm with both hands. He held hard and said nothing but moaned quietly at intervals. I sensed no anger as he looked at me. There was no struggle or attempt to injure or offend me. I did not try to release his grasp, and in five minutes he let go and we continued our conversation with no comment. Stella and the children were anxious and curious, but calmed down as the group returned to normal and we later told a simple version of Jimmy's condition. Was he reaching to give and get support?

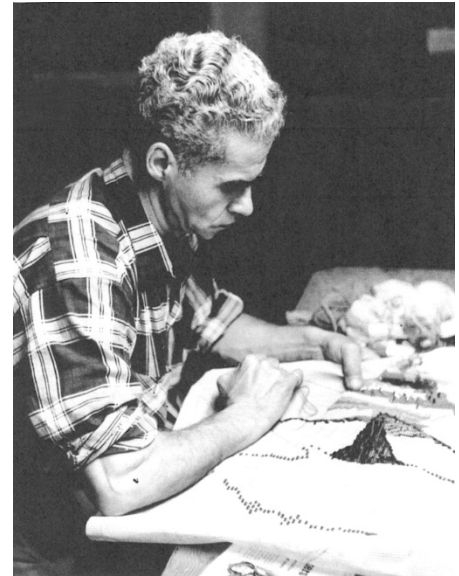
REFLECTIONS

Nearing completion of this story I read a little mythology on fabric arts, and found the story of Neith, an Egyptian goddess of creation, war, weaving and fate, among other tasks. The possibility of a woven universe was tempting, but it was war and weaving that made me curious. Did ancient people believe that woven bandages or fabric art had magic power to heal the wounds of war? I found nothing. Neith may have used weaving in fashioning the universe, but she is not named as a healer.

Several sources noted weaving by various gods in the fabrication of webs of fate applicable to our lives and families. The Fates of Greek myth were depicted as weavers at a loom, sometimes taking instructions from the gods, sometimes deciding for themselves the destinies of humans. That fits with my perception of fabric art (needlepoint in Jimmy's case) as an essential part of his difficult life. It tempts me to ask if Jimmy tied things together with threads to help create order in the personal and larger spaces of life in his universe. Jimmy and I

never discussed mythology or history, leaving no answer to my question, but I wonder; is it possible that the Fates and Gods were occupational therapists of their time who knew that concentration on work and art has the power to calm and stabilize troubled and frightened people?

The passing of Jimmy and his generation is the end of this story. I wish that I had known him better.



Jimmy at his work

NOTES

There are approximately 10 fabric pieces by Jimmy Reid now held in the collections of the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. The eight fabrics shown in the appendix to this story are at present possessions of Carol Reid, of Victoria, BC. They are now in the care of Arthur Allen pending a search for a museum or archive willing to receive them for permanent care as donations. Rights to publication of this story and possible profits of sale will be given with the donation of fabrics.

Signed

Carol Reid

date

Arthur Allen

date

Wonder Peak



Wonder Pass



Mount Magog



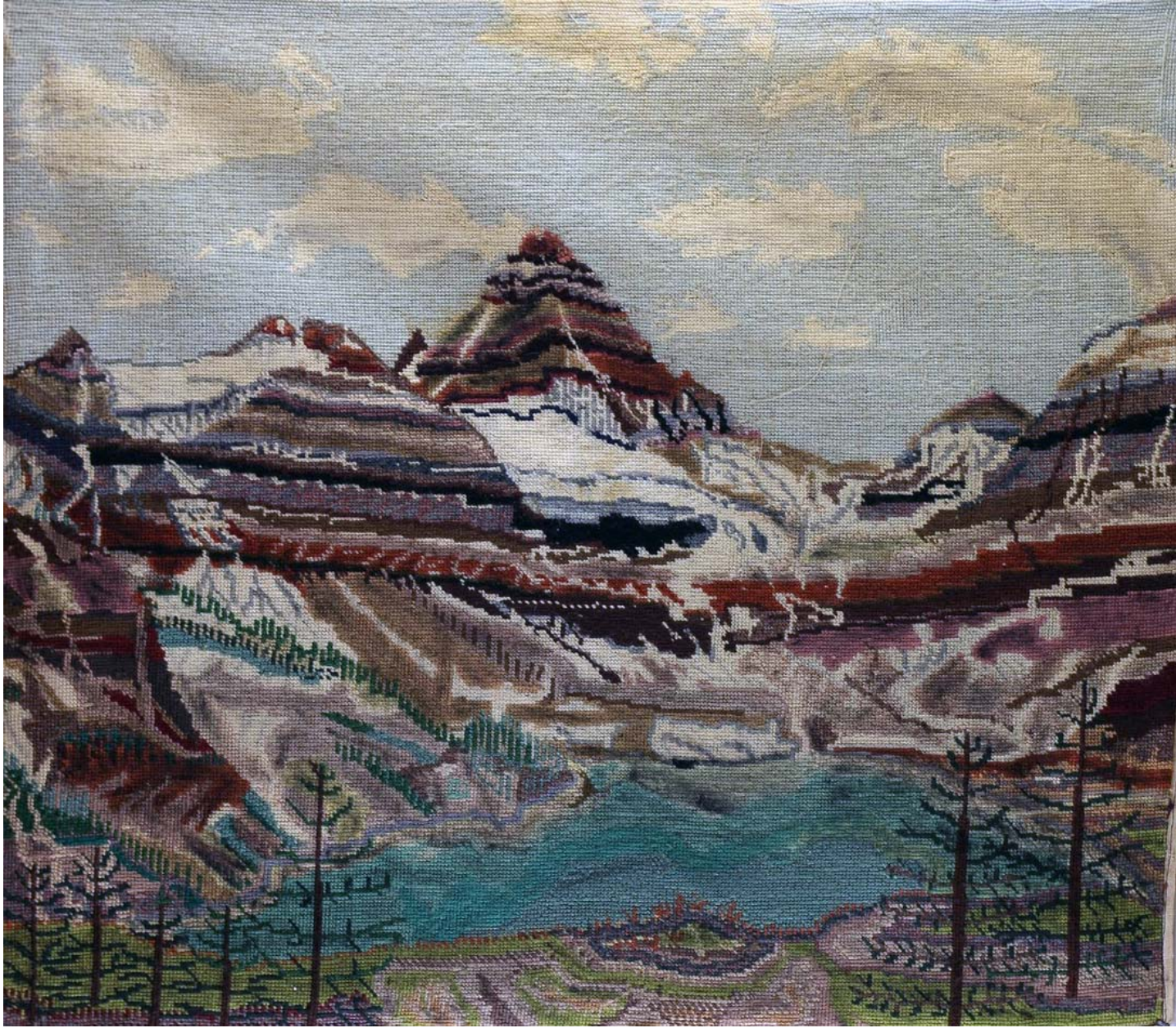
Mt Assiniboine



VIEW 1



Lake Magog, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park, British Columbia



VIEW 2

Mount Assiniboine and Magog Lake



VIEW 3

Mount Assiniboine and Magog Lake



VIEW 4

Location Unknown, Possibly Pilot Mountain in Bow Valley, West of Banff, winter



VIEW 5

Location unknown, Possibly Pilot Mountain, West of Banff, autumn



VIEW 6

Spirit Island in Maligne Lake, Jasper National Park

Bugaboo Spire



Various Spires
Crescent, Brenta, Northpost, Cobalt Lake Spire



VIEW 7

Bugaboo Spires, Vowell and Crescent Glaciers, Purcell Mountains, BC

Bugaboo Spire ↓



VIEW 8

Bugaboo Spire, Purcell Mountains, BC