



KNOWLES CENTRE INC.

Helping Youth Find Their Path: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

*100th Anniversary
Book of Memories*



With our heartfelt thanks ...

Knowles Centre Inc. gratefully acknowledges Sir Walter Lindal for his generous support of the production and distribution of the Knowles Centre 100th Anniversary Book of Memories.

Mr. Lindal came to Knowles School for Boys at age 9 in 1928 and remained a student until 1935. Even at this young age, he demonstrated a keen business mind, entrepreneurial spirit, and a drive to succeed in life.

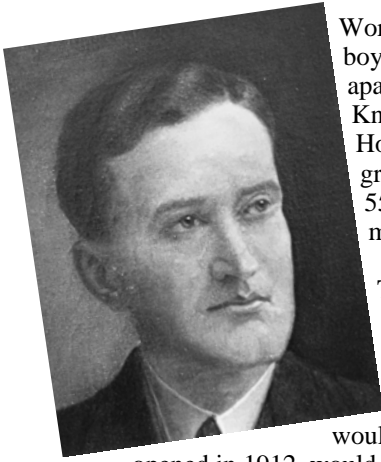
Within 10 years of leaving Knowles School, Mr. Lindal established Lindal Cedar Homes. Today, this Seattle-based, multi-million dollar company is the largest manufacturer of premium, custom cedar homes, with a sales force that spans the world. Mr. Lindal continues to serve as the Chairman Emeritus and Director from his home in Seattle, Washington.

Knowles Centre is honoured and proud that Mr. Lindal continues to recognize his former school and home as part of the foundation to his great accomplishments. We are especially pleased that Mr. Lindal – our most senior alumnus – has returned to Winnipeg to join us for our centennial celebration.

The success he has found in life is, in part, a tribute to his early years at Knowles School for Boys. It is also a reminder of the importance Knowles Centre makes on the future lives of the young people who come to us for care.

From Boys' Home to Treatment Centre: A History of Knowles Centre Inc.

The Knowles story begins in the early spring of 1907. Wilfred Knowles, a clerk with the CPR, met a young orphan named Joe shivering on the street corner. Learning that Joe was homeless, Knowles invited Joe to stay at his boarding house on Hargrave Street in Winnipeg.



Word of Knowles' generosity spread. Soon more boys showed up on his doorstep until the small apartment was bursting at the seams. By November, Knowles resigned his job to open the Knowles Home in a larger house at 738 Broadway. The growing number of residents necessitated moves to 557 Bannatyne Avenue and later to 582 McDermot Avenue within a year.

The orphanage incorporated in 1910 and its new board of directors purchased 40 acres for a permanent facility in North Kildonan a year later.

The board raised \$50,000 and secured a \$20,000 mortgage to build a new dormitory that would accommodate up to 70 boys. The building, opened in 1912, would stand for 47 year until destroyed by fire in 1959.

Even before Wilfred Knowles' departure in 1914, the Home had began to shift from its focus as strictly an orphanage. It was believed that up to 70 percent of the boys came from Winnipeg's juvenile court. Many other boys still had a living parent but could not be cared for at home.

In the early years, the cost of maintaining a boy at the Home was paid in part or in whole by his family. In cases where there was no family or the family did not have the funds, the cost was paid by charitable donations. Community support was always important to Knowles Home. Early in its history, a



Women's Auxiliary, the 100 Club and the Girls' Auxiliary of the Knowles Home for Boys were formed to raise funds and plan fun events for the boys. Winnipeg's Rotary Club, one of the Home's earliest and most important benefactors, raised substantial funds to build the new facility in North Kildonan.

The boys were educated by teachers paid by the Winnipeg School Board. Older boys were sent to work in the city or on farms for half the day, a situation not always in the best interest of the boys. Even at the Home, the boys were assigned chores outlined on a work list including cleaning, yard work, kitchen duty, and more. This work ethic had been established earlier while Knowles was superintendent. He believed a child had to be encouraged to work by giving him a reward.

Still, the Home's sprawling grounds offered opportunity for play. The boys played Tarzan in the trees, swam in the Red River and Bunn's Creek in the summer and jumped ice floes in the winter.

In 1924, the Home changed its name to the "Knowles School for Boys" and, in 1931, Charles Hawkins became superintendent of the school, after spending nine years as its gardener. He lived on the grounds and his two children attended classes with the boys.

"The Boss," as he was privately nicknamed by the boys, was described as a "spit and polish" superintendent known for his disciplined, military-like management of the school. He was also known for his fairness and gentleness, which earned the respect of the boys.

By 1940, there were 50 to 60 boys at the School. Almost one-third of the boys were sons of men in active service and were placed by mothers who could not handle raising their children alone. As well, a number of boys evacuated from the blitzing of England were to join the School.

Wear and tear was taking its toll on the 30-year old dormitory. A campaign was launched to fund a new building; the first wing was completed in early 1950 only to be swamped later that spring by the historic Winnipeg Flood. By the end of year, Hawkins fell ill and had to be hospitalized. He never fully recovered and, on April 10, 1951, Hawkins passed away, ending another era in Knowles' history.

Four dedicated superintendents followed Hawkins over the next 15 years, each leaving their unique imprint on the School. Then, in 1967, 28 year-old Keith Black joined Knowles as its new Executive Director and ushered in some of the greatest changes in the history of the School during his tenure. His leadership reflected the growing body of knowledge with respect to treatment of children and adolescents with emotional and psychological problems.

Around this time, legislation was changed to allow single mothers to collect government allowances. As a result, single mothers no longer sent their sons to Knowles because of financial hardships. The School fully adopted a shift in its focus to a treatment centre for boys with emotional and behavioural issues and staffing was restructured to reflect the change in mandate. Black was the first leader not to live on site; cottage house parents were replaced with professional child care workers. Not everyone was pleased with the massive changes at

Knowles. Nevertheless, the School continued to implement modifications to reflect the changing face of child care in North America.

As it did throughout its history, the School faced many financial challenges, especially during this period of change. The growing city boundaries, however, offered some relief. In 1976, Knowles School sold approximately 28 acres of its unused land to a housing developer. New streets on the land were named in honor of former administrators of the School. As if to summarize the changes it had seen in the past decade, the School officially changed its name to Knowles Centre Inc. in October 1979. Two years after it changed its name, the Centre officially became co-ed in October 1981.

If the decade of the 1970s was one of massive structural change, the 1980s proved to be the decade of new programs. Knowles Centre began many new treatment programs at this time, the first of which was the Day Treatment Program in conjunction with the River East Transcona School Division. The Centre also took part in a pilot project for a Professional Parenting Program in 1987. Then, in 1988, Knowles Centre began its comprehensive Sexual Abuse Treatment Program.

Executive Director Dr. Rudy Ambtman joined Knowles Centre in 1992 and brought with him a strong community-orientation. Under his direction, community treatment homes were opened in 1995 and 1996 to replace the open units on the grounds.

In recognition to the growing population of Aboriginal clients, Knowles Centre undertook a pilot project in 1997 to meet the cultural and spiritual needs of First Nations youth. Today, the Biimautaziiwin voluntary program continues to provide clients with a nurturing environment where they can explore teaching and activities along a journey to become a part of the Sacred Circle of Life.

In 1998, the River East Transcona School Division opened the John G. Stewart School on Knowles Centre's grounds. It has the distinction of being the only publicly funded school on private property in Manitoba.

The Treatment Foster Care Program was launched in 2006 to offer another option in the continuum of care at Knowles Centre. The program brings together the professional treatment services for children and youth with strength of a caring family from the community.

Today, under the leadership of Dr. Michael Burdz, Knowles Centre is moving ahead in a new century. It is continuing to explore other services that meet the needs of an ever-changing community and the children, youth and their families.



The history of Knowles Centre Inc. was researched and compiled by Kristine Beter, a former volunteer and staff member.

“Your world is made of your memories, and your memories are given to you by your world. The whispering voice of happenstance is always in our ears. ‘This is the world. This is the way things are. Look. Pay attention. Remember’.”

Anonymous



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100th Anniversary Memory Book

My mother died when I was 2 and, by the time I was 5, my father lost our farm and I ended up in an orphanage in Tuxedo “The Children’s Home”. I had a healthy diet there but before that I had experienced hunger. There were many days when there was no food. I learned early that lack of money could mean starvation. Hunger is painful and I became imbued with a desire to earn money.

At Knowles, Mr. Hawkins the Superintendent encouraged new ventures to make money. I recruited a small group. We helped vegetable farmers, planting, hoeing, weeding and harvesting and took payment in radishes, carrots, beets, peas and corn, which we sold door-to-door. In the winter we became a knitting gang. We made scarves, daisy mats and cushion covers which we also sold door-to-door.

My biggest project was chickens. In the spring of 1931 we bought 100 chicks for \$4.00. In the fall we sold the roosters for \$1.00 each. To keep the hens I built a log chicken house. Half of the hens made it through a minus 40 degree winter. Soon we were making big money for those days. Mr. Hawkins bought all our eggs for the school.

I also became the Knowles boys’ banker. I got 35 cents back on a two-week 25-cent loan and made loans as high as a dollar on which I got 25 cents interest. I took toys, knives, fountain pens, flashlights etc. for security. I collected nearly 100%. Even as a boy I preached the importance of having good credit. There was a dispute once that Mr. Hawkins settled in my favor. He stated the loan was usurious and illegal but a hand shake loan should be honored. We all wore a sort of uniform. At 15 I was able to buy a suit. With smart clothes and money jingling in my pocket I was a hit with the girls. I became a real capitalist and before I left Knowles School I was able to purchase a \$100 bond. Knowles School was a wonderful experience for me.

Sir Walter Lindal

Former student

1928 - 1935 (age 9 to 16)



I recall going out with my father in his 1938 Chev to pick up cookies and other forms of baking and sweets that were being donated to the school by various companies in Winnipeg. These treats were enjoyed by the boys during movies at night or for dessert at meal times. These donations also helped stretch a very tight budget. We also used the '38 Chev, with the back seat removed, to pick up piglets from the mental hospital in Selkirk. I think the pigs were also donated and much appreciated in the fall when they appeared in the form of dinner for hungry youngsters.



My father carried out numerous duties that might be considered rather strange today including cutting the hair of the somewhat hesitant kids. This was done as a money-saving venture but eventually a professional barber was hired much to the relief and approval of the boys.

Sports also played a big part in the life of Knowles School. I enjoyed playing on the school hockey team with colors red and black “for the school that never turned back.” We also enjoyed playing baseball, basketball, football, etc.

Unfortunately, my father died just after I turned thirteen and much of the knowledge I have of him has come from other people, including my sister Irene. I think a former teacher of mine at Knowles School, Eva Calder, summed his life up best when, on the day he died, said “the heart he gave to Knowles School stopped.”

Matt Hawkins

Former student and son of Superintendent Charles Hawkins

1938 - 1951



Bunn’s Creek was known to us as Cordite Creek as it was used by an arms factory in Transcona. All sorts of rubbish from the factory used to float down so it wasn’t often that we swam in the creek. However, on the side of the highway was a wide, deep hole where we did sometimes swim. Of course, we had no swimming costumes we went skinny dipping.

One day when a group of us were enjoying a swim, a man came up the creek from the river in a large canvas and wood kayak heavily coated in black paint. Several of us swam over and held onto the kayak. Two of the boys actually sat

on it. The man just smiled. Then someone noticed that the black paint was sticking to their arms and hands. Soon everyone could see they had paint on them and it wouldn't wash off. Calamity.

Back home we applied hot water and soap but it was only with the use of a stiff nail brush that we finally got rid of that stuff. Imagine the discomfort of the boys who had sat on the kayak and couldn't see the paint covering their bums. Their pals took great delight in applying the nail brushes.

Not many people went skinny dipping there again.

Harry Collins
Former student
1940 - 1943



The Haunted House, a production of Knowles School, Winter 1944.



In the spring of every year, Knowles took delivery of 200, day-old chicks, which became the responsibility of two “garden boys.” In early winter the hens were killed and plucked, then the carcasses were stored on Mr. Hawkins screened veranda, which was unheated.

The sight of so many plump carcasses was a big challenge that proved too big a temptation to three of us – who shall remain anonymous. One night we crept

onto the veranda, pinched two chickens, and buried them in the snow near to “first bush.”

On the Saturday we got permission to go to Birds Hill. So six of us set off for the day, picking up the chickens as we went. Arriving at the old gravel pits, we made ourselves a camp, lit a fire, and began cooking the chickens. We weren't very good cooks and the result of our efforts was more like charcoal than chicken, but every piece was eaten and apparently enjoyed.

We returned home in time for supper, feeling we had had a great adventure, but one we didn't talk about. Now, more than 60 years later, I can still taste the chicken, remember the faces, and hear the voices of my long-ago companions.

Harry Collins
Former student
1940 - 1943



Charles Hawkins had a special way of dealing with the boys caught smoking. After supper, smokers were given a pail and had to report to his office. They were given a throat swab of nitrate of silver by the matron. “The Boss” then gave them a cigarette from a pack he kept in drawer near to a radiator so they were dry as dust. After a few puffs the smokers turned green and “threw their supper” into the pails.

I think this must have worked as not many boys were caught smoking. As usual, Charles Hawkins was ahead of the game. Many years later, this kind of treatment was recorded by psychologists. They called it aversion therapy.

Another lesson learned at Knowles was that there was such a thing as chance. For example, there were 10 free places at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday afternoons. Perhaps 30 boys wanted to go so “The Boss” would count out 30 cards from a pack, ensuring there were 10 face cards in the pile. The cards were then placed face down on a table and the boys formed a line up and each took a card as they passed the table. If you got a face card, you went to the theatre. If not, you didn't go. So you learned to deal with disappointment.

Harry Collins
Former student
1940 - 1943



Nearly 67 years ago about 9 of us English evacuees landed on Knowles' doorstep. We had indeed been very fortunate to have crossed the Atlantic safely in the Duchess of York, a gallant ship which carried many troops from Canada. (Later, it was twice bombed by Condor bombers, and received her fatal blow off Spain heading to Africa with troops and had to be set on fire and sunk by the escort ships.)

A week or so after arriving, my brother and I were sent to foster homes, next door to one another on Jubilee Ave. My brother lasted about 3 weeks as he couldn't get on with the family and was back in Knowles. I managed to last a couple of years nearly, but the novelty of having a little evacuee wore off and I too was back in Knowles. I had 2 more foster homes. During and between our stays in various foster homes it seemed best for us to meet at Knowles School. On one of these visits I was fortunate to bring some VIPs to the School.

One wintry Saturday I set off to see my brother in Knowles. Reaching the street car terminus I found I had just missed a connecting bus, so I set off to walk the couple of miles down Henderson. Hardly had I gone a 100 yards than a big, black limousine pulled along side me. The driver asked if I knew where Knowles School for Boys was. I told him I was heading there myself, and they offered me a gratefully accepted lift! At the school, I exited the car with 3 very smartly dressed gents and a lady in an unusual dress. So that is how I brought Snow White and Walt Disney to the School!

William Collins
Former student
1940 - 1943



I remember my father, Peter Besse, working as a gardener at the Knowles School for Boys in the 1940s and 1950s. He became good friends with Mr. Hawkins and was also liked and respected by the boys. Although the boys often teased him about his size 14 shoes and large hands,



they benefited most from his large heart. He showed them how to grow things in the garden and to build projects would that make things better for themselves. Together with my father, the boys built a dam at the creek (now called Bunn's Creek) so they could swim, they made a skating rink to play

hockey, and many other things. After Mr. Hawkins died, Dad left Knowles School; it was not the same, of course. As they had done before, many of the boys still came to see my father in our old house without plumbing. The visits were filled with good times, a lot teasing and laughter. There is a lot more to tell, I could write a book, but that would make this letter too long.

Joyce Anderson (nee Besse)

*In memory of my father, Peter Besse, the Dutch Man
1940s - 1950s*



I was possibly the youngest at Knowles in the early 1940's, but have some memories that can last a lifetime. I recall the fire drills held during the night to ensure safety for all in a building that begged for burning. It eventually did die in part to its age and building material.

It was customary for all boys, before going to bed, to undress, put on issue pajamas, and then neatly place their folded clothes at the foot of their beds. Boots were to be placed on top of the clothes. This exercise was generally supervised to ensure you could find your belongings in the event of a blaze.

One night I was roused by the fire alarm sounding out another mock drill. I quickly grabbed a blanket from my bed in the dark and then went for my clothing. My shoes were nowhere to be found so I made my way toward the fire escape on the side of the building. The stairs were a steel type and I descended them barefoot in the middle of winter. I spent the next week soaking my feet in warm water and being chastised for my stupidity.

I also recall the following:

1. How to put sheets through the mangle
2. The art of scrubbing floors
3. How to steal strawberries when Mr. Besse wasn't looking
4. How to survive hives from strawberries
5. How to wash dishes in Mr. Hawkins' family suite
6. Telephone duty in the main office
7. Going to the Roxy Theatre to see movies
8. Swimming in Cordite Creek
9. Punishment for misbehaviour
10. Church every Sunday

*William Polonuk
Former Student
1941 - 1943*



My arrival at Knowles School for Boys in November of 1945 was also my first exposure to a contemporary way of life. I was only twelve years old and had lived in numerous rural foster homes as a ward of the Children's Aid Society. Structure and discipline had not been a big part of my life but the need for it must have been obvious to the staff of Knowles and to the principal, Mr. Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins was a family man that was totally involved in the management of the school; he and his family would join us in the dining room every evening and we could usually expect an announcement that pertained to most of us. He had the appearance and physique of a defensive linebacker and spoke with a tone of voice that never allowed you to doubt what he was saying. I was not old enough to understand why he demanded strict adherence to an endless list of rules and regulations that held no meaning for me but I was shrewd enough to know that disobeying them was not an option. This created an atmosphere that I initially disliked but ultimately began to enjoy as I found that it fostered pride, satisfaction, and positive results in the activities that I was involved in.

Discipline and structure became integral parts of my life while still a teenager and are still with me in my senior years. More than sixty years have passed since I left Knowles and my memory is starting to fade; however, I clearly remember Mr. Hawkins as a role model and will never forget the lessons learned that he instilled in those of us that were fortunate enough to have been at Knowles during his tenure.

Neil Siemens
Former Student
November 1945 - April 1946



I remember the time when, as always, we lined up for breakfast in single file in the hallway waiting for the dining room to open. When we went in this time, however, our chairs were stacked against the wall and on each table there was a plate with bread and a pitcher of milk. Only a cup of milk and two slices of bread for each of us. Mr. Hawkins stood up at the front. He told us that he had heard some boys had been complaining about the food, so what was before us would be all we got for breakfast. Then as always, we recited the Lord's Prayer and ate, but this time we ate standing. Noon meal with the same, so was supper, and the following day was the same. And that's the way it was for two full days. I thought there was no reason for anyone to complain. The food was always good and the staff ate the same food that we did. After that there were no complaints. Problem solved.

George Champagne
Former Student
1948 - 1950

My Mother and Father (Peter and Katherine (Kit) Besse) met while working at Knowles Home around 1943 or so. Mom worked in the laundry and Dad as the gardener. They worked at the Home from around that time to early 1950s. I was not born until 1948, so although I don't personally remember Knowles Home, I have been told that in the summer I would be put into the middle of the garden patch and the boys would feed me fresh peas, beans, and carrots from the garden.

I did not have brothers of my own, but I was fortunate to have the boys at the Home as my "adopted" brothers. Some of these brothers continued to be involved in my life as I grew up even though we were no longer directly involved with the Home.

My parents had great respect for Mr. Hawkins and his family. Mr. Hawkins believed that having a little girl around the home was a positive situation for the boys, and it was as for myself as well to have all those brothers.

Teena Cottingham (nee Besse)
In memory of my parents, Peter and Katherine Besse
1948 - 1950s



No true effort is ever wasted on children. Knowles School is a vivid example of the great lasting results of love, discipline, and consistency in their daily care. (Former Superintendent) Mr. Dan Young was a great leader and role model in the early years.

Dorothy Campbell Mulder
Psychiatric Nurse & Reg. Nurse, Child Guidance Clinic
Children's Hospital of Winnipeg
1950s



Knowles School was affected by the Flood of 1950 that devastated Winnipeg. Although nearly one-quarter of the city was underwater, the community opened its arms and its heart to the boys, offering meals and accommodations until they could return to the School.

Of all the memories I treasure, those that cause me to chuckle are the fondest. We had a goat, a male, but he was known as Marcia. One Saturday afternoon, I received a call from the manager of the Roxy Theatre complaining that “my boys” had smuggled Marcia into the show and that she was eating a seat!

Douglas H. Lawrence
Superintendent, Knowles School for Boys
1954 - 1959



Every Saturday we had to do certain chores. Each boy was assigned certain work detail to clean the school. We started after breakfast and it usually took all morning. The work details included sweeping and mopping the floors of various sections of the school. These included the basement, first and second floors of the old building, the dorms on the main floor and the showers, locker room and the basement of the new building.

The old building had a concrete floor in the basement. The first floor contained the kitchen and dining room, two class rooms, staff offices and the director's residence. The second floor contained the common room, a counsellor's residence and other staff rooms. We had to dust, sweep and mop the floors in the basement, stairs, hallways, dining room and the common room. The other areas were off limits.

The first floor of the new building contained three dorms, counsellors', nurse's and first aid rooms. The basement contained the showers and locker room and the gym. We had to dust, sweep and mop the floors in the dorms, stairs, showers, locker room and gym. Cleaning the dorms required moving all the beds to one side and then putting back after that section of the floor was done.

All the work had to be finished by lunch. All the work was inspected by counsellor before you could go outside to play before lunch.

If you got your job done on time and were eligible, you could go outside the school for Saturday afternoon leave. You would get your allowance and head off downtown usually to go to a movie or visit family. You always had to be back at the school by early evening or you risked losing your privileges and could not go on leave the next week.

John Ring
Former Student
1957 - 1959



All of the order boys who attended junior high school (grades 7 to 9) had to go the Lord Kitchener Junior High, which is now John Pritchard Junior High. In 1958 and 1959, we had to walk to and from Lord Kitchner to go to school.

We walked four times a day to and from Lord Kitchner, because there was no lunch program at that time. The lunch breaks were longer then, but we barely had enough time to get back to Knowles for lunch and then return to school for the afternoon classes.

There was limited transit service, but we were not provided with bus fare. If we wanted to ride the bus on really cold days, we had to pay with our own money. Some of us would hitchhike on the highway even though it was not allowed. We also had to be careful to watch out for the police car patrolling the highway, because hitchhiking was illegal and we were walking on the wrong side of the highway.

We walked every day rain or shine, freezing cold or snow. I don't recall ever being allowed to stay at Knowles because of a snow storm. Going to school was the only time we were allowed outside Knowles except for Saturday leave or escorted activities.

*John Ring
Former Student
1957 - 1959*



In 1958 and 1959, all the boys had to be involved in an evening activity every week day. One activity was scouting and we had our own scout troop at Knowles School. Our troop was unique because it was the only sea scout troop in Manitoba.

I was a scout member and our scout master was Doug Lawrence, who was the school's director at the time. Mr. Lawrence was an avid seaman who had served as a merchant seaman during the war.

We had our own "ship" in the basement of the old building. The room was really a canteen, but part of it was modeled like a ship with a dark wood panelling and a ship's wheel, ship's bell and a mast at one end of the room.

Our seamen's uniform was a blue shirt with brass buttons, a white lanyard and a seamen's whistle. Instead of the scout hat, we each had a seamen's hat styled like the Royal Canadian Navy. Our meetings would start by being whistled aboard the "ship" by the seamen's whistle and we would stand at attention for inspection by the skipper (scout master).

Our scout program used the Tenderfoot to Queen's Scout manual and we would earn badges for various activities.

While we never got to go on a boat or ship, some of the boys graduated to sea cadets and went to HMS Chippewa.

*John Ring
Former Student
1957 - 1959*



I was at Knowles for 4 years. I was approx 10 years old when I arrived at Knowles and 14 when I left. I have many great stories and memories to share:

- * I was there when the old building burnt down and we were evacuated to an Indian school.
- * Mrs. Ferguson was the nurse when I arrived.
- * My Dad was at Knowles school when he was a boy. Mrs. Ferguson remembered him.
- * I was one of only two boys who got to go to school outside of Knowles.
- * Mr. Dixon was my councilor before I went to Knowles, then he came to Knowles to be in charge.

- * We had fantastic councilors; Bob Jones, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Heber
- * Played on a hockey team at Knowles, we were the North East Champions for 1961 and 1962. I still have my trophy and crest.
- * We wrestled and I still have that crest.
- * I received a Knowles School ring for achievement. Two rings were given out each year.
- * We had great support from the community, Rotary, Jewish Women's club

*John McBryan
Former Student
1959 - 1964*



“Memories of our lives, of our works and our deeds will continue in others.”

Rosa Parks



Having just graduated as a social worker, I came to Knowles School to work as a counselor to some 40 boys. Within three months I was challenged to take on the task of Director. Then, just before Christmas the main building of the School was destroyed by fire. Then came the challenge to design and create a whole new program and campus. I spent five years, exciting and exhausting years, making it all happen effectively.

I have deep gratitude to both the board and the staff; we shared a vision and made it happen. My richest memories are of the boys in their pain and their humour and their zest for life. It was a heavy duty, hard working, and crucial kind of loving. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

*Bill Dixon
Director, Knowles School for Boys
1959 - 1964*



My memories of Knowles are so overwhelming that it's hard to capture them in a few words. My seven years there were a turning point in my life, and with the amazing help of a huge number of people, I believe a turning point for Knowles as well. I always wonder about so many of the boys who were there during that time, and hope that they reached the potential that was always there just out of reach. We worked hard to establish staff levels and treatment plans that sought to help reach that potential. With frequent

backward steps, we moved to full 24 hour staffing for the first time, trained treatment staff in each cottage, and moves toward the community with the "duplex" (the current office building), and increased collaboration with the (then) River East School Division. Many of our "fledgling" child care cottage staff moved on to amazing careers in helping professions all over the province and beyond. It was in all a turbulent time for the world, and for the development of solid treatment facilities.

I would like also to acknowledge the work of the Board in whatever was accomplished between 1967 - 74. When I arrived (as the first Executive Director not to live on grounds), the Board was entirely male. I was stunned to discover that women were not allowed to serve. It took me a year or two to change this pattern, and when several women eventually joined the Board, things really started to happen. By the time I left, the Board was incredibly knowledgeable and involved, assisting in relationship with the funders, finally looking toward the sale of the "back 40", and offering great help to the whole development plan. It was one of the best Boards I have ever seen - before or since.

One other brief comment. Throughout all the changes, all the bumps and difficulties inevitable in a time of development, I must acknowledge the unending and incredible support of Min Prymak. Largely behind the scenes as manager of the office, she made the whole thing work and did her best to keep a young Director from harm. Neither I nor Knowles could have done it without her.

Congratulations to Knowles for a century of incredible contribution to the lives of countless children and the community as a whole. It was a privilege to be a small part of that reality. Happy 100th!

Keith Black
Executive Director, Knowles School for Boys
1967 - 1974



The time I spent at Knowles as a child and youth care worker and supervisor was the beginning of my career in working with children and their families. At the same time, I also began a commitment to the training and role of child and youth care workers.

I am grateful to Stewart Boyce (d. 2006), my first supervisor, who helped me to see beyond the child's challenging behaviour to recognize his needs. Stewart was a passionate advocate for the education of child and youth care workers. Through Knowles, I obtained a certificate in child and youth care from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The boys and my second

supervisor, Eileen Howell, humbled me of my rescuing fantasies and helped me to see that the child's primary relationship is with their family and that both need opportunities for healing.

Aruna (Augamiyha) Reddy, a colleague who lived in the former house parent's suite, showed me how to be fun-loving yet firm, and how to let each child know they were loved and accepted. After the City of Winnipeg purchased land for the Bunn's Creek Park, I was asked to work on the study for future service alternatives with Thérèse Chatelain. I served on the board in the 1980s and was involved in bringing the accreditation process to Knowles.

My time at Knowles brought me enduring friendships and colleagues with whom I have continued to cross paths. I thank the children who provided me with more learning than they will ever know.

Christina Cassels
Former Staff, Knowles School for Boys
1970 - 1975



Commencing my employment at Knowles School for Boys in 1975, I began to encounter numerous boys which a multitude of problems I could never imagine existed. In 1977, I met and began to work with a youngster by the name of Russ. At the age of 15, Russ had experienced more pain, sadness, disappointment than I could and or have experienced in a lifetime. But Russ was a survivor. He taught me more life-long lessons than I could ever teach him. He was someone that despite everything that was thrown at him, always produced that winning smile.

I'm proud to say that 30 years later, Russ and I still talk on the phone three to four times per month to reminisce about the old days. I enjoy his surprise visits especially at the Knowles Centre Christmas dinner. By the way, Russ, through it all, now works helping the homeless in Winnipeg an inner city mission.

We can all take pride in the things we teach to the kids in our care at Knowles Centre but should never underestimate what the kids can and do teach us.

Rik Skelton
Group Care Director, Knowles Centre
1975 - present



Some of my favourite memories during my almost 30 years (and counting) at Knowles, center around our camp. In the "old days" we use to pack up all the kids and staff and head off to the camp for a week at a time. Looking

back at it now I can't quite fathom how we managed to throw it all together, but we did for many years. I remember one year Eleanor the cook made dinner for 52!!!! I remember because I was on dishes that night.

Although the trips came with their fair share of problems most of the staff who participated in those trips can only remember the positive things when they look back. I recall sitting around the main hall at night having a snack and playing my guitar; I'd sing a song like "Lucille" (one of the all-time favourite camp songs) and there'd be 20 to 25 kids singing along "You picked a fine time..." I can still hear the voices ringing across the lake all these years later. It was quite impressive.

What I remember most though was the last day of camp when we packed up and headed for home; besides the joy of knowing that the week was over there was also this incredible sense of accomplishment. Everyone who had come through the week together (adults and kids) knew that they had experienced something that they might never experience again and there was a bond that would exist between throughout the years.

We don't do those kinds of trips anymore and maybe it's for the better; but many times in recent years I've run into kids who were on those trips and they always say it was one of the best times they ever had!! And they also ask if I remember Lucille. I do.

Marshall Gardner
Unit Supervisor, Clyde Road, Knowles Centre
1978 - present



It has been my privilege to spend the last twenty-five years working at Knowles Centre. The exceptional quality and dedication of our staff, board members, and John G. Stewart School employees has made my career very rewarding. Working directly with our clients and their families continues to be one of the favourite aspects of my job. We are especially fortunate to have a camp on Big Whiteshell Lake that has provided countless healing and growing experiences for our clients. My memories of camp are filled with the expressions on the faces of our clients when they catch their first fish. This simple activity can teach the importance of accepting advice from others and the benefits of perseverance. Though damaged by the storm last spring, I am sure we will be able to continue to provide this exceptional experience to our clients in the near future.

Stewart Halper, M.A.
Clinician, Knowles Centre
1982 - present

Knowles Centre holds a special place in my heart. It has been 24 years since my first day at Knowles Centre and every day I am so grateful to have the opportunity to work with such wonderful and caring people who invest their lives helping our youth. I was a stay-at-home Mom and just reentering the work force when I was hired at Knowles Centre on a six-month contract as Research Assistant by Min Prymak, the Office Manager at that time. Although I spent most of my days typing and re-typing endless reports on a manual typewriter, the people that kept me coming back every day. It wasn't long before Min retired – what a sad day that was – we all loved her. Gerald Cattani was hired as Director of Finance and I was hired on full time. Gerald pushed me to take on new tasks and move forward. In 1988, we started our first accreditation process and as accreditation coordinator it was a grueling yet satisfying task knowing that we upheld such high standards ... and still do to this day. Thank you to everyone who has passed through my life at Knowles Centre and guided me along the way and those that still do – there are too many to mention.

Gerry (Geraldine) Nytepchuk
Executive Secretary, Knowles Centre
1984 - present



Many fond memories come from the many practical jokes we played on each other and especially the kids. It wasn't so much that the laughs occurred at their expense, as it was to delight in the knowledge that a child still has that innocence we lost as youth – that anything is possible if you just believe.

The staff would go through great lengths to set up situations to allow that magic to occur. One of those times, as did many, occurred at camp. We had all gathered down by the dock to assist in a rescue mission! We told the children that one of the staff had accidentally dropped the camp keys into the lake and would have to dive deep to find them, but just beyond the dock the lake dropped sharply into a deep abyss and, with no diving equipment, this feat would be impossible. But, we added, we would use the garden hose as a breathing device. We would need everyone to assist our diver by blowing air through the hose as he made his way down.

There were no questions; it appeared like a good plan. Our diver made his way walking through the water, hose in hand, and then suddenly stepped off the “ledge” and disappeared. Promptly the kids began blowing through the hose. The serious looks on their faces indicated that a life saving effort of major proportions was occurring and it was up to them to ensure our diver was receiving enough oxygen.

In the meantime our diver had double backed swimming under the dock where he had plenty of room to resurface. Up above the life saving effort was in full force, one young lady taking charge by giving commands to “blow ... blow ... blow,” not unlike the captain of a rowing crew. A half hour passed, then an hour. Our group was looking quite exhausted. It was time to give up the gig.

Signaling to the diver, he made his way to where he first went down and then sprang up. Gasping and sputtering he held up the lost keys. The rescue crew cheered. Some tearfully hugged each other as they reveled in their heroic efforts. Our diver thanked the crew for giving him the life-saving air and that, without them, he never would have made it. He then went on to tell the group about “something” he encountered while he was down there, something very creepy, beyond imagination, but true! But that’s another story.

*Juana Schoch
Unit Supervisor, Respect House, Knowles Centre
1986 - present*



Our family has a lot of good memories about Knowles. Our boys spent some time here and all of us learned a lot. We were very naïve foster parents who were fostering boys with many disabilities and did need a lot of help to make it work. As parents we appreciated the assistance we got -- from the therapists to the cottage staff. We would like to thank each one of you.

The boys also have many good memories. They remember Big Whiteshell Lake, learning to fish and the many good times there. They remember Knowles School where education was tailored for them and where they spent many hours playing basketball and other sports. They remember how to do their laundry and to make their meals. They remember all the different activities that they took part in. They remember the life lessons they learnt and also remembered the importance of relationships; and that relationships require work.

Also my husband and I always appreciated being accepted at Knowles for who we were. We appreciated being in on the family conferences and planning for the boys. We also appreciated the strength perspective Knowles used.

I also appreciated having the privilege of being able to come to Knowles to make the Christmas (table) arrangements with the kids. It was awesome to see the joy in the kids as they planned who they would give the arrangements to. There was no thought of them keeping them for themselves. I will never forget the time when one of the kids said to me “if I’m here next year I’d like to come again.” So, I came back again, so that if he was there he could do it again. I would like to thank the Knowles staff for this privilege.

To each of you who are at Knowles now and to those who will be there in the future – our hope is that you'll experience Knowles like we did – and have many good memories of the things you did. We hope that you'll make use of the help the staff is willing to give you and work hard at it. We wish you well.

*George & Kathy Friesen
Parents and Volunteers
1990s - present*



My fondest memories thus far of Knowles Centre would be the time that I was at camp teaching one of our boys to ride a bike. He was mentioning that he could speak many different languages including Australian. I asked him to speak a little for us, and he said "I only speak Australian to other Australians."

The same boy at camp was sitting down to the table to eat dinner, when he let out a big belch. A female staff at the table said, "What if your dream girl was sitting at the table and did that?" He responded, "That would **be** my dream girl."

*Dave Purpur
Supervisor, Unit 2, Knowles Centre
1992 - present*



“We inherit from our ancestors gifts so often taken for granted... Each of us contains within... this inheritance of soul. We are links between the ages, containing past and present expectations, sacred memories and future promise.”

Edward Sellner



Several years ago I started with Knowles through a joint training program between Knowles and "Taking Charge." There were seven of us in the program, and two of us have remained with Knowles ever since. I have learned so much from so many people I have worked with while at Knowles and wouldn't trade a minute of my time here.

There were times during the training I felt like giving up because I didn't always have the answers to everything ... and I still don't. One of the

supervisors I worked under when I started was Vicky Whitehead. What an amazing lady. On one of those difficult days I mentioned, she told me something I will never forget and always pass on to new trainees. She told me that no question was stupid and if the day ever comes when you think you have all the answers, then it's time to quit this field. She told me the kids we have – and will continue to have here – are all special and different in their own ways. We learn something from each and every child that comes through our doors and no two are exactly alike. Knowles lost an incredible spirit when Vicky passed on, but she will always be in our hearts. God Bless you Vicky.

Cynthia L Brown
Youth Care Worker, Respect House
1997 - present



I have always been impressed by the number of former clients and students who visit Knowles Centre and its staff, whether to provide staff with an update on their lives or to request assistance because they view staff as part of their dependable support system. My first Knowles Centre client still visits me after being successfully discharged from Knowles Centre many years ago, whether just to say “hello” or to share new milestones in his life. These visits should serve as a reminder to staff that we can have a lasting effect on people’s lives when we partner successfully with them. I have also been impressed by the support that exists among staff. The work at Knowles Centre can be difficult and stressful, but this support helps to lessen the burden. Finally, I have always been impressed by the dedication of staff to this organization and its clients.

Michael Burdz
CEO, Knowles Centre
1997 - present



My memory precedes my employment at Knowles Centre. As a boy, I would travel with my family past the Centre to visit my father’s parents in the county. Without fail, my siblings and I would misbehave in the back of our Country Squire station wagon. My father would always threaten to drop us off at Knowles Centre if we didn’t behave. Fast forward to today ... despite my father’s warning, I now am employed at the Centre and feel very privileged to be part of an organization that can make a positive difference in a young person’s life.

Grant Obirek
Director of Finance & Administration, Knowles Centre
2000 - present

There is always a grounding and sense of peace when I have had the honour of being part of a Knowles Centre event. As a supporter, we have been in contact with wonderful staff members over the years. We have watched the creativity and growth of the cultural program at Knowles and Troy Fontaine has been a constant source of admiration and gratitude. Thank you to all of the staff at Knowles Centre for your dedication, enthusiasm and commitment. You are all making a difference in so many young lives and contributing to your community in a lasting way. Congratulations on your 100th Anniversary! I know that you have furthered the dream and vision of Wilfred Knowles far beyond what he could have imagined. Thank you.

*Susan (Lount) Stovel
Graham C. Lount Family Foundation
2001 - present*



The Aboriginal Cultural Grounds funded by the Lount Family Foundation.



I started working at Knowles Centre in March 2007 and soon learned my experience here is much more than a job. I have been invited into the lives of the current staff and clients, and especially the former students of the Knowles School for Boys. For them, Knowles was not just their school, it was their home and the backdrop to their youth. I am honoured that so many have trusted me with their memories and have agreed to share them in this book.

*Maureen Britton
Community Relations Coordinator, Knowles Centre
2007 - present*

The distribution of the Knowles Centre 100th Anniversary Book of Memories was made possible through a generous donation by Knowles School for Boys alumnus Sir Walter Lindal.

Donations to Knowles Centre help to support important recreation, camping, and Aboriginal cultural programs and other activities and special projects for the children and youth and their families receiving services that are not covered by core funding.

To make your own tax-deductible donation to Knowles Centre or to learn more about how you can help create positive memories for the young people whose lives are touched by Knowles Centre today and in the future, please contact us:

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