



COURTESY PAUL LUVERA SR.

This float loaded down with fresh fruits and vegetables was the hit of the July 4th, 1926 parade sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The owner, with an assist from his

ox, took home first prize. The float is seen here passing by Luvera's Market at Seventh and Commercial.

Luvera looks back at young Anacortes

By PAUL LUVERA SR.
Guest Writer

My father Nicola and I were working in 1918 for the International Coal and Coke Co. in Coleman, Alberta, Canada, a mining town of about 1,000 people.

My brother, Salvatore, was a Salvation Army officer in Anacortes, and when he heard we were to move to Vancouver B.C., he said "why Vancouver, come to Anacortes — it's beautiful here, in spite of some rain. It's like southern Calabria in Italy, and looking at Guemes Island, it's like seeing Sicily."

We took the Canadian Pacific train to Burlington, then a steam engine with three small passenger cars to Anacortes. There must have been 30 of us on the train.

When we arrived, there was a crowd waiting. I asked someone "are these people leaving Anacortes?"

"Oh, no," he said. "Almost the same crowd always goes down to Curtis Wharf to watch the arrival of the *Kulshan* from Seattle. That's one of their entertainments!"

I was told the Depot had been built four years before. It looked so new and elegant, wonderful looking designs of red brick all around, and inside, a big pot-bellied stove, with benches all around — and large rest rooms, clean, with toilets and washbowls.

No wonder I was so pleasantly surprised. Coleman had a boxcar, which was the train depot.

I asked the ticket agent (George Krebs) how I would find 816 24th St. He told me to go to Commercial, pick up the 5-cent jitney, and take it to 24th.

My parents and my sister, Antonitta, had come here a couple of months before I arrived. Anacortes seemed to me like Paradise. I left Coleman in three feet of snow, and arrived here to see nice green lawns, flowers in bloom, and the most friendly people I ever saw.

I was 20 years old, and decided, "this is where I'll spend the rest of my days!"

And with God's help, I am still here.

I remember many things:

- There was an Armistice Parade down Commercial. All workers were excused and joined the parade, headed by a four-piece dance band (all that was available). Father Truett gave the victory talk to the mob. It seemed there were thousands of us, some with tears in our eyes. It was impressive.

- We had four sawmills, six shingle mills, six salmon canneries and two codfish plants, and a LePage glue factory that used the fish bones.

- After church, people would take a basket full of goodies and

head for the picnic grounds, at the foot of Cap Sante by the Depot. The beach was shaped like a half-moon. Blankets were spread out and families would visit, with the children playing in the shallow water. But the teenagers, and those a bit older, had to have more privacy, so they would take their own basket and walk down the railroad track to Weaverling Spit, a secluded, beautiful beach (it still is). I know I used to take my gal friend there — that's before I met my wife, Mary.

- In the Depression years, the foot of Cap Sante was turned into a "Hooverville," also known as "Little Chicago." Many shacks were put together, with any material that could be found, including lumber stolen from sawmills. It was bulldozed in later years. There were many unemployed; they met at the Moose Hall at 16th and Commercial. At one point, many of the unemployed raided the Safeway store at Sixth and Commercial. About a hundred men marched down Commercial, three abreast. The leaders yelled, "Go ahead boys, help yourselves," and they did. I was curious and went down to see what was going on. One of the leaders, who I knew well, said "Get back to your store, Paul, you may be the next victim." The leaders were arrested, and there were no more disturbances after

that.

- From 1915 to 1929, we in Anacortes held the only July 4th celebrations there were in Skagit and Island counties. They were sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Stores were decorated, and there were canoe races on Guemes Channel. Indian tribes were invited to compete. They would be given \$50 allowances for food, and they would erect their tepees beyond Second and Third on O Avenue. There was always a big parade, with lots of floats.

- I don't suppose many (except the old-timers) remember that we once had a bank hold-up in Anacortes. The Citizen's Bank was across the street from our store at Seventh and Commercial. We had accordion-type doors on our store. I was trimming carrots one summer day, the doors wide open. I heard revolver shots and started towards the bank. My father pulled me back. I later found out that Joe Hagen, Eagle Lodge secretary, was on his way to make a deposit when he was hit over the head and knocked out by one of two robbers. They scooped up all the visible cash and came out shooting.

There are people who say "Anacortes hasn't changed." How wrong they are!

YOU BET YOUR LIFE IT HAS CHANGED — FOR THE BETTER!