

My Father, Daniel Alexander MacInnis

My father, Daniel Alexander MacInnis, was born in Antigonish County, Nova Scotia, October 3, 1900.

His Father, my Grandfather, was Angus John MacInnis, of St. Joseph, NS, born 1861. His Mother and my Grandmother was Sarah MacGillivray MacInnis, Glen Road, Antigonish Co., NS, born 1862.

Dad was educated in the local school at St. Joseph and went to St. Francis Xavier University at Antigonish. He graduated in 1923, destined he thought, to be a school teacher. While in college he helped teach at a local school in St. Joseph. At this time (about 1918) during WW I, there was a huge explosion in Halifax Harbor from a military ship loaded with ammunition, it did incredible damage to the city and harbor. Dad said he felt the vibration from that explosion while teaching about 150 miles away.

In 1923 after finishing his school work, he decided to go out to Western Canada to join up with a friend from Antigonish, probably to Edmonton (think the friend's name was MacDougall). On the way west he wanted to visit his sister, Jane, working in Detroit as an industrial nurse at one of the automobile plants. He came to Detroit, saw that the city was very prosperous, and heard that the going rate for laborers was the incredible wage of 509 cents per hour. He wanted a job for that wage. He solicited a job by telling the hiring person that if he couldn't outwork that guy in the trench, then he didn't have to be paid. That was the going system for getting work in those days.

He got hired as a Timekeeper for a general contractor, Utley Construction of Detroit. Utley was building General Motors Corporation factories in Detroit and other nearby cities. He said he was so busy that in the next two years he only had two days off, Christmas and one other holiday, including weekends. There was that much work. He had no car, so he had to take the streetcar to work, and make allowances to get to both Mass and work on Sundays, all using the streetcar. The period from 1923 till 1927 saw him being very busy with Utley Construction, but he found time to invest in property, buying lots and selling them.

Dad also became involved in a company doing industrial flooring and waterproofing, and he got in on the ground floor of that company, Detroit Concrete Products Corp. (DCPC), owned by a man named McGregor from Chicago. McGregor was a salesman who owned the rights to selling a water-proofing product called "Adhesophalt". This product was made in Chicago and shipped to Detroit. McGregor owned the rights to it in the Detroit area.

Dad saw the opportunity in selling and installing this product. He would sell Adhesophalt by mixing it into a Mastic flooring. To the industrial user, it was used to make industrial floors. This product replaced wooden floors which were common in factories then. The advantage of Mastic Flooring was that the carts could run on the floor, and the floor could be resurfaced as it wore down. The disadvantage of the wooden floor was that wooden floor pegs broke and caused the cart to overturn. It was important to the factory owner to replace the wooden floors with a Mastic Floor. The men at DCPC found ways to close the factory for the weekend and give the factory a brand new floor by Monday morning startup.

The business was doing pretty good, until the crash hit, the Depression of 1929-1930. Daniel A. MacInnis decided to purchase the business in 1930 by assuming the debts, approximately \$10,000, which was a huge amount at the beginning of the Depression. My mother, Clare Keating, was born Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland, on March 2, 1902. Mom and Dad married in 1928 and had two children by 1930, so taking on this debt was a massive burden that took incredible courage. He saw the business as an opportunity. He moved the business into his home, keeping barrels of Adhesophalt in his basement, and my mother was the secretary. Dad told the story that she was typing a letter for him while pregnant, and the baby kicked her, thus messing up her typing,

They kept the business going through the Depression. In fact, they found a new business source-- breweries. President Roosevelt ended Prohibition in 1933, so the breweries needed upgrading, and one product they needed was flooring. Brewing beer includes malt acid, which ate the concrete floors, so the breweries needed Mastic flooring to protect the concrete floors. Since he was working with asphalt emulsions, he was asked to work on the dust coming from the gravel or dirt parking lots; in those days parking lots were not paved as they are today, so you can imagine how dusty they must have been. The technology in those days to keep down dust was to spray them with waste oils, which worked for a few days or weeks, but eventually the oil deteriorated or evaporated and you had to spray the parking lots and roads again. He was asked to spray the lots with asphalt or seal coat the parking lots using Emulsions of Cut-backs, which are oil-based asphalts. Spraying a parking with emulsion can control the dust for a much longer period of time. This technique led the company into the parking lot paving business as a sideline to the mastic flooring business in the industrial market.

As they progressed through the 1930s, Dad brought his brothers, Ron, Ken and Charlie, into this business in Detroit. In 1939 through 1941, the USA was gearing up for WW II. Dad was told by the government to close his business and prepare to join the Army, I was told he was destined to work on the Alaska Highway construction. In July 1942 one more son was born, the sixth child, and Dad was over 40 years old, so by a new law he was exempted from serving in the Army. The company started to do a lot of work on government projects, especially at Fort Wayne, during the war, so the company was considered to be doing essential work and prospered during the war. After the war, the roads for civilian use were in terrible need of work and the company decided to get into paving roads, expanding into public highway work, which became its mainstay.

In the early 1950s they stretched their efforts and bought several pieces of equipment, including asphalt mixing plants, and they moved into asphalt paving and chip sealing work all over the Lower Michigan Peninsula. Dad stated that he worked in more than 70 of the 86 counties in Michigan. They worked across the state under two names in the 1950s: Detroit Concrete Products Corp. and MacInnis Bros. Paving Co. When another recession hit in 1958, the company needed to pull in its horns, so they merged the two companies about 1962 under Detroit Concrete Products Corp. MacInnis Bros. Paving no longer existed.

In 1966 the company moved out of Detroit and bought industrial property in Novi, because the majority of work was in expanding Oakland County. We had three asphalt plants: two at New Hudson (Oakland Co.), and one at Adair near Port Huron (St. Clair Co.). In 1973 the Adair plant was closed due to the plant's age and technology. In 1976 Ron MacInnis died from a heart attack. In 1977 Ken MacInnis was murdered during an afternoon robbery. In 1977 Dan MacInnis turned control of the business to his son-in-law, K.T. Bryant, assisted by Dan's son, John R. MacInnis. In 1979 this new team bought a new asphalt plant and concentrated the whole business into one site in Milford/New Hudson, MI. In 1986 Clare MacInnis died at age 83; in 1989 Daniel MacInnis died, age 89. In 1992 K.T. Bryant retired, turning over the business to John R. MacInnis. In 2001 John R. MacInnis sold the business to Florence Cement, as a stock sale, and the company now exists under the logo of Florence Cement.

John Ross MacInnis, born July 6, 1942, married Marisa Reale February 26, 1971. They have three children: Eileen Clare, Maria Lee and John Reale, and five grandchildren. They reside in Northville, Michigan.

by John Ross MacInnis, Northville, Michigan, May 3, 2013