

COATES FAMILY STORIES AND OTHER RECOLLECTIONS



BY JACK COATES
October, 2004

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(minor revisions: Aug/2009)

Introduction

It is unfortunate that some of our forefathers did not record something in writing and pass on to us, but we have a family history, quite a good family history, actually. So, we are not at a loss altogether. I've been very fortunate to live as long as I have. The secret of living to a good long healthy old age is choosing your parents. I am very fortunate in the fact that I have known all my grandparents both on my mother's side and my father's side.

Johnny has been encouraging me for years to record family stories, and we have spent many happy hours in retrospection, tape recorder in hand.

Jack Coates

I have often felt that "If experiences are not recorded, they did not happen".

It is also clear to me that most people want to know their heritage.

This is a draft document. My hope is that this compendium of family stories by Dad will encourage others in the family to record more stories, which can be added. Perhaps using or building on stories told at family reunions.

We would also like to acknowledge the encouragement and support of Dennis Coates and the technical assistance of John Coulthard.

Johnny Coates

Early Days in British Columbia

January 4, 2001

It is a dull winter day with overcast skies and a suggestion of rain. Son John was up from Vancouver for a short and welcome visit before Xmas.

Being interested in family history he persuaded me to record some family history. What will evolve as a result of his encouragement and my procrastination?



John Ableson Coates (Preston's father)

My father Preston Charles Coates was a fourth generation Canadian. His great grand father emigrated from Yorkshire England in 1816 The Coates family were sheep farmers near the village of Kirk Ella, Yorkshire, not far from Hull where wool was an important world export.

My father was born in May 16, 1880 in Barrie Ontario at the family home on the corner of Owen and Worsley Streets. In the late 1880's his family moved to Vancouver Island in the vicinity of Comox. The area was not settled at that time. Courtnay and Comox evolved much later. The post office and areas were known as Sandwich P.O. As there was no school there at that time most of the family's early education was taught at home by their parents.

He was reported to be a good student and when schooling was later available he progressed rapidly, attended the University of Toronto and graduated as a Civil Engineer in 1904. He married Edith Kate Roper, my mother, in Toronto, December 21, 1905.

His first work after graduation was at Cobalt and around the silver mining area country in northern Ontario. He also worked in northern Alberta in the Lake Athabasca area. He enjoyed the outdoor life and adventures in remote and virgin country.

John Ableson Coates family



Charles Bessie Bessie Preston Kathleen John

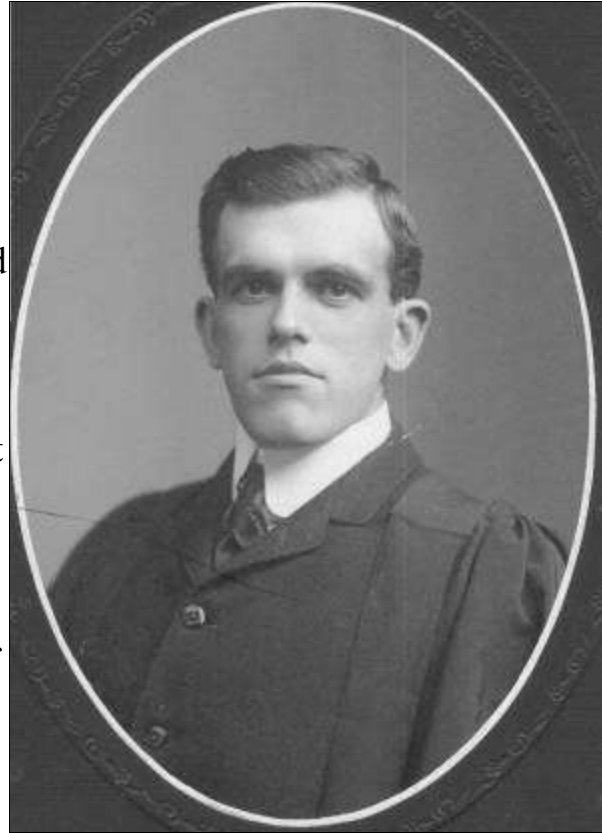
He talked of survey trips in the Kootenays in the big bend country, the Blaeberry and Canoe Rivers. He also worked in the Shuswap Lake country. This note appears in some old records. "Mother and Jean arrived Salmon Arm December 29, 1907. Bought house in Salmon Arm for \$850.00 on corner of Centre Street and 3rd Avenue.



Surveying mining claims and timber limits entailed rafting the rivers and travel by pack trains with equipment and crew. The big Mica Dam River development above Revelstoke flooded the Big Bend of the Columbia River. It is now the big Kinbasket Lake making much of the area accessible only by boat. I drove over this big bend area with its interesting and powerful rivers before it was flooded.

In 1917 with a family of five children and work that entailed much traveling and necessitating being away from home a lot he opened an office in Victoria. His stationary read: "P.C. Coates, Dominion & British Columbia Land Surveyor; Timber Limits, Purchase Lands, Subdivisions and Mineral Claims."

In 1912 he purchased a lot on Violet Avenue in the Saanich area of Victoria and built a two story house for his family. A farmer at heart he soon had a good garden, a cow which "I learned to milk", a flock of chickens and a pig.



To complement the family farm he had a nice grass tennis court where I recall he entertained some of his friends



Among his records is an agreement dated 1921, to purchase a 1920 Ford touring car for \$695.00 on the installment plan at 45.18 per month, interest at 6.5%.

Agreement made this the 31st day of January 1921, by and between

Carlton Brock hereinafter known as the Vendor
724 Johnson St.
Victoria B.C.

P. C. Coates hereinafter known as the Purchaser
Marigold B.C.

WITNESSETH, that the Vendor hereby agrees to sell in good order, for the price and on the terms hereinafter set forth, and the Purchaser hereby agrees to purchase, the chattel as described hereunto, namely: One four Cylinder 5 Passenger Automobile.

Make Ford Model Touring 1920
Serial No. 0235547 License No. 25156 Date 1920

Sale Price	695.00
Service Charges	45.18
TOTAL	740.18
Less Cash Payment	400.00
Credit Value of Car Traded In	
Balance on Time Payments	340.18

Time Payments subject to conditions hereunder to be made by 7 equal monthly installments of a 48.59 each due on the 3rd day of the following month succeeding this date.

PURCHASER'S STATEMENT OF SOLVENCY

To Vendor:

With a view to securing credit from you on my purchase of the Motor Vehicle specified herein, I certify to the following particulars of my business and financial standing:

(a) Business position Teacher in High School
(b) Business Address Marigold B.C.
(c) Income per month One hundred and fifty dollars
(d) Net worth Two thousand
(e) Use to which vehicle will be put Privately
(f) References Farmers Co-operative Co. Fred Pauline, Oak Bay.
(g) Further remarks

I am confident that I can meet the payments on my purchase as they become due.

Purchaser's signature [Signature]

THE FOREGOING STATEMENT may include such information as the Purchaser wishes evidenced in support of his claim for credit, but must include the particulars called for in (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e). It is in the interest of all parties concerned that the purchaser should make the above statement as full and complete as possible, and reference to some banker, or established business or professional man is desirable.

About 1919 partly for family reasons and the lack of demand in the engineering field he accepted a teaching job at Victoria High School and in 1924 he accepted a school principal job in Prince George. In August that year my father, myself, 14 years old, and an assistant driver and friend of fathers, Charles Drennan, drove to Prince George, the family to arrive later after accommodation was arranged. We drove the ford car to Hope where

we transferred the car to a flat car on the Kettle Valley Railway to get from Hope to Princeton. The Fraser Canyon was not open at that time. We then continued from Princeton to Spences Bridge and up what is now Highway 97 to Prince George. The road was rough and treacherous; sections were "suspended" at that time around Spences Bridge.

The weather was hot and the roads were washboard.

As I remember the Ford behaved well and we arrived safely in Prince George. I think that Charley Drennan our driver was a brother of my last school teacher in Victoria, Rose Drennan, who I admired and enjoyed as a teacher! The Drennans may be

related to Ann Drennan a former police liaison officer in Vancouver, who was well respected and mentioned quite often in the news. The name Drennan always rings a bell (a nice bell)



Prince George at that time was considered the hub of the north, being surrounded by great timber resources, mineral potential and the valuable gas and oil potential of northern B.C. There were three areas competing for the future growth of the town; South Fort George, present Prince George and an area I think was called Centralia. As the C.N. railway passed through Prince George it was the logical choice for the present city. The Pacific Great Eastern had surveyed and built the road bed ready for the laying of steel but that did not come about until 19??.



Jack



Pat

We rented a house in south Fort George named after the old Hudson Bay fort on the Fraser River. It was in this house that I had what could have been a fatal accident. I had heard of and known people playing or working with dynamite caps who had lost arms and had been totally blinded. Investigating our rented house, I found a Copenhagen (snoose) box on a beam in the basement. Opening it I found it contained what looked like 22 shells. Dad had previously warned me about blasting caps. Whether it was caution, good luck or the good lord watching over me I did not investigate any further but put them back on the beam. It was tempting to investigate further. What a catastrophe if I had; as my parents were struggling without having a crippled kid in the family. I hesitate to think of what might have happened.

I was fourteen at the time and moving to Prince George was a thrilling adventure. We lived close to the mighty Fraser River and the old Hudson Bay Fort then serving as the town police station. There were two old relic river boats along the river bank. They were locked up and out of bounds but we had to find a way to investigate them thoroughly as boys.

The big interesting river was an invitation for us young fishermen. I set night lines in the big back eddies for Dolly Varden trout. I was surprised one morning when I pulled in after a bit of a struggle a creature that I thought at first was a shark. It turned out to be a sturgeon, the only one I ever caught or expect to catch. It was consumed and enjoyed by the family. They are boneless, good flesh and good eating.

Prince was a young rough town, plain board buildings with gravel roads and extreme winter temperatures. Woolen underwear, heavy socks, moccasins or shoe packs were the norm with warm toques with a small visor to see and breath through. The Northern lights were also spectacular.

Winter was cold with temperatures 40 and 50 below Fahrenheit and the river froze to a depth of four or five feet. Teamsters hauled sleigh loads of logs over the ice in winter. It was common to hear timber wolves serenading from the far bank of the river at night.

The break up in the spring was a sensational and interesting event. At break up time there was a continuous rumbling and growling with huge house size chunks of ice grinding their way down river. The Nechako River ice making its contribution as well.

I was very interested to see dog teams and toboggans mushing down Main Street in the winter. Trappers in for supplies and I presume selling furs.

In the summer Indian canoes with several people in each boat were occasionally seen silently plying the river. Summer weather was warm and



much enjoyed, including berry picking fishing and getting acquainted with the country. Prince George was a wonderful berry country. Blueberries, Saskatoons and cranberries. Small bands of natives had berry picking expeditions. As a family we also picked quantities of berries for preserving, and many delicious pies. These expeditions left us with red faces and hands not to mention leaving us quite healthy.

As kids we enjoyed some great toboggan rides and parties on some good hills. We also played scrub hockey on some of the sloughs in winter.

Homes were heated mostly with wood stoves and heaters necessitating a good wood supply. My father had a most unfortunate accident while on a wood cutting expedition. After a day cutting wood he was on his way home with a load of wood pulled by a team of horses and two other helpers when he had a fall and injured his hip. As I recall this was in August 1925. He would be 45 years of age. The men assisted him into the house and to bed. A doctor was called and he was diagnosed as having a sprained hip. The doctor's name was Dr. Ewart. There were no X-ray facilities there at that time. When X-rays were taken in Penticton a year later it was discovered that his hip had been broken and a section of bone about 2 inches had been pushed out of position and absorbed by his body.

He went through a period of severe suffering and exercises as directed by the doctor; using crutches and eventually a cane. He was determined to recover and it was essential to him to be able to carry on teaching. This must have been a very trying situation, being in the north country with a family of five children and a wife to take care of. He suffered and struggled and finally decided X-rays were necessary and applied for and accepted a teaching position at the Penticton High School. An X-ray examination clearly told the story. As a result one leg being two inches shorter than the other he was left with a permanent limp for the rest of his life

Around the 1925-26 era there was a concerted movement to unite the several religious denominations into one body. This eventually evolved into what is today the United Church of Canada. My father came from a Presbyterian family and my mother a fundamentalist Baptist family. Moving around the province they became involved and accepted into various denominations. Mother was always welcome as she was an organist and piano player. My father was a scientist leaning heavily to the H.G. Wells and Darwinian theory and automatically expressed the theory of evolution. I recall several meetings with dedicated fundamentalists and evolutionists trying to reach a conclusion to unite the churches. For the dedicated fundamentalists it was a life and death struggle determined to continue with their Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic and Anglican faiths. The Methodists, the Congregationalists and two thirds of the Presbyterians affirmed what is now the United Church.

I was young, uncommitted and sitting on the fence.

The principal of the Penticton High School was a fundamental Baptist however and my father as a scientist with a teaching instinct expressed the evolution theory.

The result of the story was that he decided to try fruit growing. I recall him perusing the attractive advertising circulars promoting the wonderful opportunities for orchardists under the South Okanagan Lands Project (SOLP) and was not surprised when he discussed the thought of fruit growing with the family and asked me if I would go in with him. Having moved several times and attending three different schools I was not an enthusiastic student so was quite agreeable to his invitation.



A New Chapter

After nearly a life time 43 years as a fruit grower in Oliver with all the trials, tribulations and rewards we (my dear wife Margie and I) sold the "Foothills" our last orchard property in 1974 and purchased a retirement home at Vaseux Lake, thereby graduating from the continuous work and responsibilities associated with fruit growing. Any branch of farming entails gambling with mother nature, Spring frosts and extreme winter weather and windstorm are a few of the hazards over which the fruit growers has little control.

The History of My Father Preston Charles Coates (1881–1960)

Hello! This is May 7, 1994 and a lovely spring day here in the South Okanagan – not a cloud in the sky. The flowers are blooming and the birds are singing and the garden is growing.

At the gentle, persistent urging of the family and well meaning encouragement from my good friend of 60 years, Dorothy, this may be the beginning of the Coates family history as I know and remember.

At the mature age of 85 (1994) and being a procrastinator, I must not delay too long if my knowledge of the family is to be recorded.

I will caption this, “The History of My Father Preston Charles Coates (1881 – 1960)”, with assorted ramblings.

My father was the son of John Ableson Coates, the oldest son of a family of five, three boys and two girls.

John Ableson, my grandfather, whom I knew and remember quite well moved from Ontario with his young family in the 1880's and filed on a pre-emption on Vancouver Island near Sandwich P .O. not far from Comox, which became absorbed by Comox in later years.

There were no schools in the area at the time so Grampa and Grandma were the family school teachers. I have one of the school books in my possession -it is a Latin text book "Invenalis Satirae" purchased from E. Galloway News Dealer in Vancouver second edition 1873. Grandfather's attractive signature is on the front page.

Latin was considered essential at that time. As there was no school available, my father was not able to attend school until the age of 14 but was a good student and was awarded the Governor General's medal for excellence in Latin.

Grandfather had been in the sawmill business in Ontario, the mill being burned down as told by one of my aunts. He was a short, stocky man. Strong, healthy, friendly and smoked a pipe. I admired him as a boy.

I became acquainted with him in Prince George about 1924. He was an outdoorsman, carpenter by trade, hunter, fisherman, trapper and interested in mining.

Eventually he died at the age of 83 in the mountains on Vancouver Island while searching for a fabulous mother lode. Grandma Coates died in Victoria about 1920 from heart problems.

I am not sure of how it was managed but my father attended the University of Toronto and graduated as a Civil Engineer in 1904. His first work in Ontario was in the rich silver mining area of Cobalt. He had some large samples of silver ore. He was married to Edith Kate Roper, eldest daughter of a large and well respected Baptist family in Toronto. He had met Mother in the College St. Baptist Church that the Roper family had founded. They were married on December 21, 1905, Mother was 32 years of age and father 24. This union produced 5 children -Jean, John, Preston, Kathleen and Winnifred.



Winn, Kay, Pat, Jack and Jean with Aunt Kathleen, 1936

My father is listed in one genealogy as an engineer, a scientist, a high school teacher and in later years a fruit rancher.

Upon coming to B.C. he was engaged in survey work in the Columbia Valley where I was born in 1909 at Golden. Surveying took him to various outlying areas, one of which was Lake Athabasca in Northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. The family admired the souvenirs he brought home from various trips such as ornamental snow shoes and beaded moccasins from Athabasca and large pieces of pure silver from Ontario. Answering the call

of the west he bought a home in Victoria on Fernwood Road where he was engaged in survey work. -I remember him talking of his experiences on Quadra and Cortez Islands. He traveled by motor launch to remote areas and dealt with the native Indians. Mother accompanied him on some of these expeditions. Mother said she was nervous with a young family, as the Indians were often asking for tea and tobacco, and they were not to be trusted completely.

While in the Golden area he used pack horses to reach remote areas often camping in the mountains. His survey crew travelled by whatever way necessary to reach the survey sites. I have pictures of him with pack trains, and on snowshoes and rafting rivers. I remember him



talking of the Canoe River and the Blaeberry. Much of this area is now under water. He was always interested in the outdoors and as a family we had some interesting trips fishing and while at the coast berry picking expeditions. His sister, Aunt Kathleen, accompanied us on some of these trips. There were plenty of raspberries and huckleberries, particularly in the logged off areas around Sooke. Old logging roads made hiking easy. Rusty donkey engines were not uncommon. Deer were plentiful and bear tracks kept everyone alert!

Most of our trips at the coast and in the Okanagan later were hiking trips. There were not many roads into the back country and not many cars either in the late twenties. .

About 1912 or 1913 the family moved to Victoria where father had an office



and bought a house on Fernwood Road. His stationery reads: P.C. Coates, Dominion and British Columbia Land Surveyor; Timber Limits, Purchase Lands, Subdivisions, Mineral Claims.

About 1913 he purchased a lot, about half an acre, on Violet Avenue in the Saanich area. The inter-urban railway to Brentwood had just been completed. He built a nice home on the property and it was still in good condition when I visited there in 1992. Father was interested in agriculture and was happy having a nice jersey cow {where I learned to milk}, pigs, chickens, a fox terrier dog to terrorize the rats, and a good vegetable garden. He also built a good grass tennis court where he entertained friends. A big event was the purchase of a Ford car about 1920, a special model with a one man top and no self-starter. We were driving on the left side of the road at that time.

I recall the move from Fernwood Road to Violet Avenue in Marigold, one of my earliest memories when I was about four years of age. The move was made on a wagon pulled by a team of horses, and filled with trunks and family possessions on a muddy road to a nearly finished house. One of my early memories was the teamster carrying me from the wagon to the board sidewalk at the gate.

The Marigold house was about 1 1/2 miles from town. Father rode a bicycle until acquiring the Ford car. When the Great War broke out in 1914 there apparently was a demand for school teachers. Father acquired a position at Victoria High School where he taught until 1923. As a result of a shuffle of teachers at Victoria High at that time he accepted a position as principal of a school in Prince George, B.C.

Prince George was a pioneer town and still is the hub of the north. I would estimate the population at seven or eight hundred at that time. Today it is 75,000. It was not unusual to see several canoes and Indians travelling on the Fraser River. They came to the house with a haunch of moose meat occasionally. During berry time, small bands moved through the district picking saskatoon berries and cranberries. You could hear wolves howling across the river on winter nights.

Roads were gravel with wooden sidewalks and plain wooden buildings. It was not unusual to see trappers with dog teams on Main Street during the winter. Winters were cold, wool socks, moccasins and mackinaw coats were the norm.

During the summer of 1924 father had an unfortunate accident. Wood was the usual fuel for heating the home in the cold winters. On a summer expedition, while cutting the winter supply of wood, he fell and injured his hip. The local doctor diagnosed it as a sprain. There were no X-rays there at that time. After a spell in bed he graduated to crutches and eventually a cane and continued teaching in the fall, but in much discomfort and pain -so the decision was made to move to a teaching position in Penticton for medical reasons where X-ray was available.

X-rays showed a piece of bone about two inches long had broken and his leg mended that much short. The bone had been absorbed causing the slight limp for the rest of his life. He was endowed with a strong body and a determination to carry on.

1926 was a great year in the annals of religion. The United Church was finally formed combining many Baptists, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Methodists. My father and mother were interested and quite active in the church. (the Methodist at that time) The principal of the Penticton High when my father taught was L.B. Boggs, who was a dedicated fundamentalist Baptist. The fact that my father was a scientist and a great convert of H.G. Wells caused some friction.

Father was a man of strong conviction and most people will agree today that he was right, but not his principal L.B. Boggs.

The South Okanagan Lands Project was getting a lot of publicity at that time and father was always interested in growing things and in agriculture generally. He did not have any trouble making up his mind. I was fifteen at the time and not enjoying school that much (three school moves), so when he asked me if I would go to Oliver and help get started I was flattered to be asked. One little piece of advice I will offer regarding education is that it is not fair to students and teachers to be related. Not father and son anyway.

Mr.E. W. Munch was a land agent for the B.C. Government and showed us around the Southern Okanagan Lands Project. Would that we were endowed with hindsight. Lot 164, about two miles south of Oliver was finally chosen, level ground, apparently good soil and adjacent to the highway. Living quarters the first summer were a tent and a future chicken shed until a small house was constructed. Water had to be carried from a neighbouring well. Strictly pioneer conditions, accepted with hope and faith in the future.

We cut wood for the winter, supplemented our diet with venison in the fall and pheasants were plentiful. It was not long before father had a good jersey cow, chickens, pigs and a good garden, so to some extent we were self supportive.

While waiting hopefully for the fruit trees to bear, we grew ground crops, tomatoes and cantaloupe. Summers were hot. There were no trees for shade and the water supply in the summer was irrigation water

Father took an active interest in the community, being one of the organizers and promoters of the Oliver Credit Union which has now assets of 80 million dollars. He and mother both took an active interest in the United Church. He also promoted and took an interest in the Oliver Co-op Store and the Co-op Packing House. He organized the first Boy Scout movement in Oliver with the assistance of R.O. (Bert) Hall.

Politically he was a staunch C.C.F.'er, (now N.D.P.), and he was very active locally in that party. There were many unemployed and precious little money in circulation. If you were very fortunate you could get a job at 30 cents per hour. He did some substitute teaching in Oliver and taught at Blakeburn near Princeton. While father was working I was left with the responsibility of the farm - caring for animals, irrigation, etc.

It did not take many years to realize that the family farm was in a frost pocket. Almost every spring fire pots were set out and loaded with briquets and kindling. Instruments recording temperature and humidity were of necessity watched and frost warnings were listened to each evening in the spring. With a north wind and a clear sky we would be up in the wee small hours ready to light up the fire pots to ward off the killing frosts.

At times several nights in a row the fire pots had to be re-filled and re-lit. Often the fruit blossoms were killed or damaged producing deformed and lower grade fruit. Some orchardists purchased property on ideal sites for air drainage while others unfortunately purchased in frost pockets and were at a distinct disadvantage. Some of this land should never have been sold for orchards.

Father had high hopes for his family and inspired his children with ambition and ideals in spite of the adverse conditions.

He looked to me for advice and help as the years went by. In 1960 I took over the place, paid off the government and settled with the family. I sold

the place at the first opportunity -orcharding is not an easy way to make a living under the best circumstances.

How true is the saying "Behind every good man is a good woman"? Mother was a real martyr, deserving of much credit for the love and care of her family. A feat in itself, bearing and caring for five children



and not married until the age of 32. Mother was much loved and admired by the family and neighbours. She was an accomplished piano player and loved to sing. She played the piano and organ at several of the churches that the family attended. Regular attendance at Sunday school and church was the accepted way when the family was young.

In the early days of their marriage they were on the move --northern Ontario, Columbia Valley, Salmon Arm, West Coast, etc. and living was under pioneer conditions. Some hesitation about telling this story -my father told me he ran 14 miles one night to visit mother. Which one of the family was the happy result?

Father told me he had a mastoid when young and was fortunate to survive, as many in those days did not. The family will all remember the episodes of his short temper, all of us bore the brunt of it at different times.

Understanding Mother was the balance wheel and calmed the troubled waters.

Father became quite deaf and progressively worsened as the years went on. At the age of 70 he had an operation on the lower bowel, which was somewhat demoralizing. He was a student and great believer in the value and importance of good food, an interest that he passed on to the whole family.

After an adventurous life experiencing their share of trials, successes and tribulations they are together in the Oliver Cemetery where I visit from time to time and meditate on the vicissitudes of life.

I should identify myself, the writer of these pages --John Roper Coates; John from my grandfather; Roper from Mother's family name; Coates the family surname for six generations in Canada originating from the village of Kirk Ella seven miles west of Hull in the Yorkshire area of England.

Stories From the Past

Ladies & Gentlemen:

Lynn Alaric persuaded me to make a contribution to Archives Week with a few thoughts and memories of bygone days.

I will try not to say much about myself. I do not have to be too careful about what I say as there are not many here who can contradict me!

I came to Oliver as a boy in 1926. During the early 1920s the Southern Okanagan Lands Project had been completed. This ambitious and challenging plan was conceived and completed by the provincial government with Honest John Oliver as Premier. When Oliver was named, it was only necessary to drop the Honest John.

The project being completed, it was now necessary to attract settlers to occupy the land, pay irrigation rates and pay land taxes to help defray the large expenditure.

My father was a school teacher at the time. I recall his interest in some of the colourful brochures promoting the great potential for fruit growing area in the South Okanagan. The big cattle country and desert of the South Okanagan was to be converted to the Garden of Eden. So I was not surprised when he announced to the family that he was interested in fruit growing. I was quite flattered to be asked if I was interested.

Oliver at that time was teeming with pheasants. There were grouse and deer in the hills and fish in the lakes. As a boy I enjoyed hunting and fishing and the outdoors, so was not hard to convince.

We came to Oliver in 1926, 75 years ago. Choosing and deciding on the right orchard property was a very important decision. Whether an orchard was to be successful depended on location and soil, with location most important. Good location means good air drainage where spring frosts were generally escaped and fruit crops were assured. The land agents may not have been aware of this but the situation became quite obvious with experience as the years went on.

Weather and marketing conditions result in success or failure in fruit growing. With the failure of crops due to spring frosts, orcharding is disastrous. Frosts not only kill the blossoms but cause inferior grades of fruit. In my opinion, there was one serious flaw in the government's

planning. Land in low-lying areas that were frost pockets should never have been sold as orchard property.

Starting an orchard from a piece of dry land was close to pioneering. There were no modern facilities such as running water, electricity or phones in the beginning. Modern facilities were gradually acquired and much appreciated. A family farm in many cases was self-supporting with a cow, chickens, a garden and a couple of pigs. Wood had to be cut and stored for winter. Spuds and fruit were stored in the basement. In winters, ice was stored in the ice house for summer use.

It takes years for trees to bear fruit depending on variety. Ground crops such as tomatoes and cantaloupes were grown for survival until the orchards produced. Oliver was known in those years as "The Home of the Cantaloupe."

After a couple of years helping the family get organized I left for the big city and ended up in the paper mill at Power River. When the big depression hit in 1929, I was laid off, as I had no seniority, and was a single man. I returned to Oliver and got work with Major Harry Earle at 30 cents per hour. He owned a 20-acre orchard in a good location and was a progressive grower. This is where I served my apprenticeship as fruit grower. In 1931, I became the owner of 10 acres of land with a down payment of \$250.00. I also bought a horse and harness and a stone boat for \$50.00.

I borrowed money from the Farm Credit Corporation at 5%, got married in 1938, built a house and raised a family of three. I retired in 1974 after 43 years as an orchardist, and am still working on my 1stmillion.

My wife, Margaret McConnachie, was a school teacher at Osoyoos when we met. She first came to Oliver in 1920. With several other girls she came from Penticton to the Maypole dance on the gravelly Main Street of Oliver on May 24th, this was for many years Oliver's annual festivity.

The girls came from Penticton by motor boat down Skaha Lake. Oliver was served by the Kettle Valley Railway at that time. There was a barge service on Skaha Lake and Okanagan Lake. The rail cars were transferred from the barge to the rails at Okanagan Falls and then to Oliver.

My wife's father, Mr. McConnachie, was a retired prairie farmer and came to Penticton in the early 1900s. His oldest daughter, Jessie, attended the first school in Penticton on Westminster Avenue in 1907.

In 1917, Mr. McConnachie, Mr. Dawson, and Mr. Fraser formed the Osoyoos Land Company and purchased all the land on the east side of Osoyoos Lake from the Indian Reserve to the border --a good speculation if they had lived long enough. They finally sold the property in 1944, and probably recovered their investment. Today, this area is all prime and valuable property, good orchards and vineyards and many modern homes.

In the early 1920s, Oliver had a population of about 200, gravel roads, board sidewalks--outdoor plumbing was the norm. In 1934, Oliver's first stop sign appeared at the junction of Road # 7, and Highway 97. Mr. Laird, the Government Agent, said Paddy Kellagher was the only person who ever stopped at the sign,

Paddy had a brand new Model- T pick-up that we all admired. The first trip I made to Osoyoos in a Model-T Ford was in the late 1920s. There was no sign of habitation, just miles of sagebrush and cactus--not a building to be seen. As we approached the US border, we heard a siren and had to turn back to find and report to Canadian Customs. This was the only building in the area and was located near the bridge. The Customs Officer was the well-known Perly Simpson. I realized later that there was at least one home on the east side of the lake belonging to the Fraser family.

So, in 80 years, the ambitious plans of the government have materialized. Two beautiful towns and a successful orchard industry are the result. Honest John Oliver would be elated to see the success of the government's plans.

I must comment on the evolution of golf in Oliver. One enterprising man, Sandy McPherson, owner of the South Okanagan Supply Co., the only general store in Oliver at that time, was a keen golfer. With his brother Bob, an orchard owner, Major Harry Earle and Reg Tait, they approached the Provincial Government in 1926 for property for a golf course, stating that it was desirable and necessary for the recreation and enjoyment of the settlers. They must have voted the right way, as they acquired 148 acres of ideal land for \$1.00. This became the first golf course, "The Oliver Golf & Country Club."

I played the course with a borrowed iron with Sandy McPherson and Ted Tasker in 1928. Then, the course, being the only one in the district, was played by Oroville, Osoyoos, Oliver, Okanagan Falls and Kaleden players. There were no golf courses in Oroville at that time-

It was a dry course, with sand greens, cactus, sagebrush, rattlesnakes, and range horses frequently on the course. Green fees were \$1.00, and they were voluntary .The first water was available from SOLID in 1972 and several greens were prepared--all work was done by volunteers. Arrangements were later made with the Town of Oliver for a water supply and the course has evolved over the years into a championship golf course. Much credit must be accorded to the men and women golfers who have contributed time, work and money to see their efforts rewarded. This is now Fairview Mountain Golf Course.

The last orchard I owned adjoined the golf course with a commanding view of the valley. After making a living in the valley for 75 years, I take the liberty of calling it My Valley.

Note: This is a copy of Jack Coates original transcript done for "Archives Week-Stories from the Past." Jack Coates was one of our guest speakers, November 21,2000. There is also a tape recording of this story .

Reminiscence

I feel motivated to record a few words about men I have known and respected particularly during the years of my youth and when trying to get established in life.

This takes me back to my youth and formative years. On school holidays at Penticton students had the opportunity to help the fruit growers harvest their crops. This was also an opportunity to make some money. I was 15 or 16 years old and attending Penticton High school in 1925, and welcomed the experience with several others of my school class.

Picking cherries in his orchard is how I met Mr. F.H. Latimer. I did not realize at the time that he was a civil engineer and had just recently been engaged by the John Oliver provincial government to construct the Southern Okanagan Lands Improvement Project (S.O.L.P.) This project was to change the South Okanagan desert into the productive fruit growing area that it is today.

Mr. Latimer also surveyed and planned the City of Penticton, the Town of Oliver and Okanagan Falls.

I enjoyed meeting this fine old gentleman and got to know and respect him. He gave me the responsibility of picking fruit in his orchard while he was about on business. I took my responsibility seriously as I admired him and appreciated his confidence.

When my family moved to Oliver in 1926, Mr. Latimer asked me to work for him. He owned and was developing a rocky piece of land in a favorable location. This land later became the Albert Miller orchard. Mr. Latimer's son also purchased land that later became the Jim Stowell orchard home.

When working for Mr. Latimer I was offered and accepted work on an adjacent orchard owned by Major Harry Earle and his brother George, who resided in California. This is how I met Arley Gayton, foreman of the Earle Orchards.

There were many men unemployed. The country was in the throws of the great depression. Men were anxiously waiting and accepting the going wage of 30 cents per hour. Arley Gayton and I became good friends. He taught me how to work and much about orcharding.

We had some good hunting and fishing trips together; memorable adventures as well as supplying fish, grouse and deer, much appreciated for family consumption. This was a profitable form of fun and recreation; a contrast to the high cost of recreation today.

Arley was a clever practical engineer. He had worked on the Kettle Valley Railway over the Coquihalla mountains. Those of us who remember the long high tressels over the canyons must have great respect and confidence in the engineers. Arley was employed in the construction and framing of many of these formidable structures.

Arley was called away to war in 1914 for three years. He told me one of the great moments of his life was when he returned from war to find his sweetheart waiting for him at the Kettle Valley Summerland station. They were married and had a family of two - Raymond and Kathleen.

Arley was a fine man and friend, very much respected and appreciated.

I worked with Arley for two years, at which time his orchard demanded his full attention, leaving me as foreman of the Earle Orchards. I worked there until 1942.

In 1931 with a small down payment I purchased Lot 249, a 12 acre orchard property adorned with a 16 by 24 foot cabin and some neglected fruit trees.

Major Harry Earle was engaged in various engineering projects. He had also worked with Latimer in building S.O.L.P., the irrigation project. He arranged a joint bank account at the Bank of Commerce enabling me to do the necessary hiring. Casual help was needed during the year. As many as 20 would be working at cherry picking time.

I have pleasant memories of my 10 years working for and being associated with Major Earle.

He was living alone and I felt he needed a companion. Even with the big variation in our ages I think that describes our relationship.

He had a small unpretentious house on his orchard and lived by himself with the necessities of life. Mrs. Earle preferred city life and had a home at Victoria. As Major Earle's health failed she rented a house at Oliver but they continued to live apart.

I always addressed him as Major; no saluting involved. His orchard was his pride and joy and he kept in close touch with the biologists and

entomologists at the Dominion government experimental farm. His orchard was at times a small extension of the experimental farm.

The Golden Delicious apple was a promising new variety just discovered in Washington about 1935. Earle managed to get one tree that I believe was the first Golden planted in the South Okanagan.

It was not unusual to find rattlesnakes in the orchard. We were always aware of them. It was not unusual to find one or two a day while attending the irrigation. Normally their distinct rattle gave warning but we were always aware of the danger. Rattlers are great mousers. Two or three mice in a snake was not unusual; the bulges in their body told the story. Large bull snakes were not uncommon and were also great mousers, but harmless to people.

Earle's orchard bordered the hot dry desert area of the foothills and during the hot dry summer, snakes gravitated to the irrigated area and the irrigation ditches. They were considered dangerous to families and animals in those days, and were destroyed! Today they are considered an endangered species and protected, but still not welcome in gardens or orchards.

In 1942 my orchard was demanding my attention, so reluctantly I gave up my job at Earle's. I had married in 1938 and had a family of two children. My 10 year stint in Earle's orchard had been my bread and butter in those early years.

During my 43 years as an orchardist I owned and operated four orchard properties in the area south of Oliver. Orchardng demanded much manual work to thin, pick, spray, irrigate and handle thousands of boxes of fruit.

We gradually graduated from horsepower, the four-legged ones, to tractors, mechanical ladders and sprinkler irrigation eliminating much manual labour.

I sold my beautiful Foothills Orchard (that I had developed from raw land and planted in the mid 60's) in 1974. At the age of 65 I retired and we purchased a retirement home at Vaseux Lake.

At the time we, Margie and I, moved to Vaseux Lake. The land on the east side of the lake was owned by and subdivided by Blue Sky Development. Property between Highway 97 and the lake had been and mostly sold to individual homeowners. The east side of the highway was subdivided into building lots but not sold.

This area was and had been for many years the prime winter range of the valuable herd of California Bighorn Sheep. Blue Sky had a good well and two storage tanks to supply the water requirements of the area.

We wanted control of our water supply and also realized the importance and value of the land for a Bighorn Sheep Range.

Realizing that the property on the east side of the highway was surveyed for building lots the present home owners formed the Vaseux Lake Water District with the advice and consultation of the provincial water rights branch and began negotiation with Blue Sky Developments to take control of the area.

A committee was elected, myself as chairman, to negotiate the takeover as well as take responsibility for the water and storage tanks and necessary upkeep and repair. Meetings were held once a year and each owner took a turn as chairman. Being chairman entailed being available day and night, hot or cold, to get the water on again right now, whether it was digging through a foot of snow or going down a 20 ft. ladder in the well in the middle of the night, with a flashlight.

It was generally a satisfactory arrangement, appreciated and understood by the lot owners. We left Vaseux with some good friends and good memories.

I retired Blue Sky development.

At this date January 2002 I have enjoyed 26 retirement years, the best years of my life.

"We'll meet again don't know where , don't know when, But we'll meet again some sunny day "

Racism - 1927

This is an almost forgotten event and possibly should be forgotten.

I believe I am the only one alive that remembers this occasion.

The thinking by some at this early stage of the district was that it would be detrimental to the interests of the young growing community to allow Orientals to become established. A petition was circulated and signed by 45 landowners objecting to Orientals being allowed into the district.

Two growers, Dr. Harcourt Heal and his brother George Heal had neighboring properties. Dr. Heal, an absentee landowner and a dentist practicing in Vancouver, ignoring the feelings of other growers decided to hire a "Chinaman", wages being \$40. per month.

Not being a landowner, and not fully aware of the implications, I was requested to join a group of 15 or 20 men one morning to protest. Armed with hoes, shovels and various farm tools we marched up to George Heal's farm (Dr. Heal being absent). The spokesman of the party was Sandy McPherson, proprietor of South Okanagan Supply Co.

In no uncertain terms McPherson told George, who met us at the gate "that the chinaman was not welcome" and he was given 24 hours to leave Oliver.

George replied, saying he was staying and he had \$10,000 to fight the case. The following evening as the man was on his way home with a team of horses, a car drove up beside him, and two hooded men accosted him, blindfolded him and drove him up to the Fairview-Cawston summit. He was told to keep going towards Cawston and never come back to Oliver. The team of horses well knew the way and went safely home to the farm.

It was reported that the two men who confiscated him were each paid \$300, a goodly sum of money in 1927.

A court case eventually was held. The magistrate was W.G. Wilkins. During the trial, evidence and reliable witnesses were not to be found so the case was dismissed. The Canadian Legion was a strong group at that time with much influence.

PS. All the characters mentioned were good citizens and acting according to their consciences at the time.

January 1999

Memories of the 1931 Camp McKinney Fire

One of the worst forest fires in recent memory occurred in the southern interior in the summer of 1931. It was the Camp McKinney fire, and eye-witnesses described it as the most intense they had ever seen.

An account in the Penticton Herald stated there was not the slightest doubt in the minds of fire rangers and officials of the Canadian Forestry Association that the fire was deliberately set. A check on weather conditions indicated there were no electrical storms in the area at the time.

This was the era of the Great Depression. There were thousands of men traveling back and forth across Canada looking for employment. It was at that time that the Liberal government opened a relief camp on the site of the present Oliver airport. Men were supplied with the bare necessities of life: shoes, overalls, straw hats, and food and a place to sleep, for which they were paid one dollar per day.

Fire fighters were paid twenty-five cents per hour. H. Ablet of the Canadian Forestry Association was in the district shortly after the out- break. With officials, he inspected the ground where the fire originated, and they came to the unanimous conclusion that matches were the cause. Ablet was astounded at the destitution and damage caused by the conflagration.

The Penticton Herald reported that: "Constable D.A. McDonald of the B.C. Provincial Police, stationed at Oliver, arrested a suspected firebug on a warrant sworn out by the fire supervisor, Mr. McKlusky. This man was alleged to have been caught in the act of setting a fire on the Kehoe property on Anarchist Mountain. Police say he is a transient, speaks with a broken accent and was employed as a fire fighter. When arrested, he was in the local jungle near the railway yards at Penticton."

Continued the Herald: "Rumours have been current that the fire should have been controlled at the outset, and some verification of these statements would be that J. H. Lehman, the local fire warden, was relieved of his position. Harry Stevens of Midway was appointed in his place...Local stores rushed to supply provisions for the fire fighters. A local storekeeper, Mrs. Bill Griffin, was busy filling large grocery orders. She said she stayed up one night to can cases of tomatoes, part of a grocery order,"

In Oliver, the Hill brothers, Ole and Lawrence, were kept busy with their truck, hauling supplies and men to the scene of the fire. Men were also brought from Penticton by truck and rushed to the fire.



Dr. R.B. White's office and residence on Caibou Avenue in Camp McKinney circa late 1890s. The lot was donated by the Cariboo Mining Company who also built the office. Photo courtesy of the Oliver Heritage Society Museum and Archives.

Of vital importance to the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys was the West Kootenay power line. A crew under the supervision of Howard Foster and Duffy Tremblay worked hard patrolling the right-of-way, putting out spot fires and protecting the power poles. The poles were protected somewhat by the concrete collars in which they were set.

I have forgotten the exact date, but in early August, with another group of men, I was delivered to Camp McKinney, the centre of activity. I estimate there were at least seventy-five men, including the West Kootenay crew, working out of the camp at that time. It was hot and very dry and a heavy pall of smoke hung over the area. Headquarters was a well-weathered building made from wide rough planks, located on the north side of the road. It was no doubt one of the original buildings and was occupied by a prospector known as "Gunsight Grant" before being taken over by fire crews. This was also the cookhouse. Long plank tables were improvised to feed the men. Lawrence Hill was in charge of cooking. Lunches were delivered to men on the fire line. One of the crew much in demand was the water boy, who patrolled the fire guard with a packsack holding several gallons of water.

The fire warden was Mr. Bodman, a rancher in the area. Timekeeper was David Briscoe, a fruit grower in Oliver. Wages were twenty-five cents per hour. The timekeeper was quite generous with the hours. Conditions at times demanded men had to remain on fire guards for long hours.

We were urgently called together one morning and informed that the fire was out of control, and we would have to vacate immediately. No time to collect our meagre belongings, spare clothes and blankets. What was left of the town of McKinney, plus provisions, food, tools and two West Kootenay trucks were all engulfed in flames that day. Bridges were burned out and the road was cut off. We walked the power line to Rock Creek (about twelve miles), where we were delivered by truck to our next camp. It was on the north side of Rock Creek several miles up the canyon, adjacent to a ranch owned by Billy Munch, a bachelor who was an interesting and rugged individual. He was cradling a field of oats when we arrived. As the fire approached the area, he hitched up his team and ploughed several furrows as a fire guard around some of his property.

The weather continued hot and dry with a heavy cloud of smoke. As the fire became more threatening, Bodman was worried about a group of men working in the canyon. He asked three of us, Johnny Haggart, Shorty Graves and me to go into the canyon and bring them out.

By the time we reached the creek, a strong hot wind was blowing. It sounded as though a freight train was coming up the canyon fast. My companions had been placer mining and knew the area. We just made it to an old, abandoned tunnel as the fire crowned over us. Fire was roaring through the tree tops, with burning embers flying hundreds of feet ahead and igniting everything in their path. Fire creates its own draft. I would estimate it was travelling at thirty or forty miles per hour. The other crew were aware of the danger and got out safely, as we did. As the fire subsided, we were able to pick our way back to camp.

Our next camp was at James Lake, five or six miles north of Rock Creek. The lake was on private property owned by the Howard Smith family, who were cattle ranchers. This was a mop-up operation, building and patrolling fire guards. Nights were cool and frosty; it was cold getting out of the sleeping bag at the ring of the breakfast bell. Red Williams was in charge of the camp. He was reputed to be one of the last of the river men, that was when the Kettle River was first logged. Louis Lasalle, a Frenchman, was the

cook. As the breakfast bell rang out, his call was heard, "Birdies are singing, sun is shining, daylight in the swamp, come and get it!"

One of the interesting parts of the experience was seeing wildlife close up and often. While dozing by a big tree one day with an axe, I woke to have a curious black bear watching me from about twenty feet away. This was the first time I had seen flying squirrels. They are nocturnal and rarely seen during the day.

About the tenth of September I was paid off, presented with a ticket via Kettle Valley Railway from Midway to Penticton, and eventually reimbursed somewhat for my burned sleeping bag and clothes.

The year 1931 was before the era of aerial spotters and water bombers. The fire could only be approached and dealt with from Highway 3 on Anarchist Mountain or from the rough McKinney Road.

The area devastated by the fire can be roughly estimated by its known extremities. From Bridesville, it swept through the Conkle Lake area ten miles to the north. From Rock Creek Canyon and James Lake on the east, to the vicinity of the McCuddy Ranch east of Oliver, is approximately fifteen miles.

Suffice to say there were many square miles of valuable timber destroyed by the inferno as well as many birds and animals.



One of the buildings at Camp McKinney in the late 1890s. The building and people are unidentified. Photo courtesy of the Oliver Heritage Society Museum and Archives.

Tom Ellis Cabin north of Vaseux Lake



This old and interesting log cabin has a story to tell.

It has survived fire and vandalism for over 150 years and is one of the few reminders of the early days in the South Okanagan as well as one of its early pioneers. The cabin was built by Tom Ellis, a young Irishman who came to British Columbia in 1864, with headquarters in Penticton.

Ellis built a vast cattle ranch that included most of the South Okanagan valley. One of the busy streets in Penticton, Ellis St., is an ever-present reminder of his influence in those early days.

The cabin is situated approximately a mile north of Vaseux Lake on the east side of Highway 97. It is visible to the interested observer from the highway.

Arthur McCuddy, son of a pioneer family in the Oliver and McKinney area told me he pastured their flock of sheep in the Vaseux Lake area each spring and used the Ellis cabin for shelter

(This story has also been published by the Oliver Chronicle).

Hunting with the Kings

I have been enjoying a nice visit with Johnny and he is interested in recording some of the old hunting and fishing stories. I'm not very good at narrating things. I should record some of them. So, we'll try one.

This one is about a bighorn sheep hunt; a hunt for a trophy ram up in the Vaseux Lake area. It was about 1972. It started out when I was involved with the Fairview Mountain Golf Club. We needed a groundskeeper there, or somebody to keep an eye on things. Conditions at the club were quite primitive in those days. We had sand greens and \$1.00 green fees and the honour system. An old gentleman came along by the name of Fred King from Victoria. He enjoyed golf. He and his wife had a Volkswagen van they were living in. They quite enjoyed the Okanagan, so they came up and camped and he said he would stay a while and collect green fees and putt around the greens and that sort of thing. So I got to know him quite well.

He befriended, a character who was living up in the hills. A fellow by the name of Lepine. He was starting trouble down in the orchards. He'd stolen a truck and was living up in the hills on Tin Horn Creek. He came down to the golf course occasionally and Fred didn't know about the trouble. He felt sorry for him, and gave him clothes and a little grub once in a while. Fred was good to him. However he began to get a little leery. One day Lepine came into the clubhouse said, "what are the bars on the windows for?" and he asked if Fred had a phone. Fred began to get a little suspicious. I was president of the Club at that time and kept in close touch with Fred. One day Fred phoned my wife Margie and led her to believe that he wanted me to come up there right away. This fellow was there with him. I went up and I could see Fred was nervous and I didn't know what to make of it. I said, well the best thing to do is, "we'll go and see if we can find this man a job. We'll go downtown and see the employment office". So Fred took him down and I followed him in the car. Fred figured I saved his life that day.

We were living up on the foothills orchard at that time. Lepine was seen around our orchard a couple of times. One night I was out to a lodge meeting and Margie had the door locked and this fellow came to the door... she heard him outside and the dog growled and barked and sounded very ferocious and he fell over some boxes outside and took off. Margie went and got into bed of all things. I told her for goodness sakes why didn't you phone someone for help.

A couple of days later Lepine went over to a neighbouring orchard. It was the orchard of Harold Potter. Harold's son and another man were out changing sprinklers. He took them at gunpoint with a gun he'd stolen. He made them drive over to the Kettle River country, where he shot the Potter boy and his helper and went up the Kettle Valley. Then he shot two or three other people who were picking wild berries. It was quite a manhunt. Eventually they got him and he's still in jail. He applied for parole a couple of times, but Bob Potter, the father, watches the case pretty closely.

Anyway, as I say, I got to know Fred and the next thing I knew his two sons, Dennis and Donald, came up to visit him. They were golfers and enjoyed playing golf on the old Fairview course. I got to know them well. They were both from the Sooke area and they asked me to go down. I was interested in fishing and they both had nice boats, so I'd go down there to fish and stay with them and we became good friends. They were great hunters too and had hunted a lot



in the North Country and they wanted to go sheep hunting. So I said let's go and I'll be your unofficial guide. They made plans and brought up a big truck. They also brought two horses and a donkey, plus hay and a big grub box. They let me know when they were coming and I got ready and so away we went, way back into the mountains, up past the lake on the north fork of McIntyre Creek. It was the opening of the season, and we put our tents up beside the creek. It was cold, but we used hay for a mattress and I built a big fire and heated rocks on the campfire and popped them into the tent and so we slept quite comfortably net result of it was that the boys each got a nice legal ram. We butchered the rams, barbecued a bunch of ribs and were sitting there when some big shot hunters came along with their tongues hanging out. There were several guides around, with American clients, and we really showed them how. When we came out with the truck and the horses I got a picture of the horse's heads showing over the truck rack and of the rams' trophy horns on each corner of the truck, and other hunters all

had their mouths open looking at us. The boys had the heads mounted and took them back to Victoria.

We had a little difficulty finding one of the sheep. We went back to get it the next day. There were a lot of slides and pretty steep rough country. While we were standing around deciding where the sheep was we could see a bird coming toward us through an opening in the trees. It was a vulture with a chunk of meat in its mouth and coming straight towards us. So we found the sheep. I think it was the first time I'd seen a vulture in this country. I've seen them from time to time since.

We've had several some nice salmon fishing trips since then... down at the coast. We went on a trip to Nitinat Lake, up the west coast. And we've had several good trips around Sooke.

Dennis King quite liked this country. He discovered a remote trapper's cabin and liked it so much that he made inquiries and found out who owned it and bought the cabin.



When he bought the cabin he found he had to buy the trap line to go with it. So he fixed the cabin up. He has given me a key to his cabin in the mountains. So that's the end of the bighorn sheep story.

I forgot to mention that Vaseux Lake area is noted for its unique brand of California bighorn sheep and you can see them from the road there quite often. I lived at Vaseux for 14 years, and became the official exterminator for sheep run over on Highway 97. In bad winters, sometimes 3 or 4 were run over and I'd have to finish them off if they were hit and critically hurt.

It's one thing to see sheep here, but when you want to hunt a bighorn sheep, a ram, it's a different story. There are about 1 in 25 hunters that actually get

a trophy ram. The rams range far back in the mountains, known as bighorn heaven. The rams get together and leave the ewes after the breeding season. It is nature's way of cutting down the stress. The rams head for the high country. They don't normally stay with the ewes until rutting season in the fall.



RAVEN

At the sedate age of 93 I find myself reliving some of the adventures and fun experienced on hunting and fishing trips in some of the beautiful areas of BC. No mountain was too high to climb and no lake too remote to explore.

As I intruded into the less traveled back country I anticipated the fun and pleasure of what surprises would appear over the next ridge. Will it be a pileated woodpecker, a family of grouse, an animal fading into the cover, a bear busy eating berries, the beautiful trees and colorful foliage or the plaintive call of the coyote?

Often you are accompanied by Canada Jays, commonly called Whiskey Jacks. About the size of a robin, gray in colour they follow fluttering from tree to tree and when lunch time comes they are quite tame. Often hopping on your foot and looking for a handout in the way of crumbs. I always enjoyed their company but got to know them better when I saw them cleaning up a family of grouse (more about that later).

I must tell of my interesting experience with a Raven. When we humans get hungry we jump in the car and go to the nearest chain store where all is available. The birds and animals must depend on what nature provides and depend on their instinct and ability to find the food required in their natural habitat.

One fall in the 1930's I had a hunting trip with Arley Gayton. We set up our camp in the south end of what is now known as Conkle Lake. Evidence of it being a hunting camp by native Indians was a large pile of deer horns which we surmised were surplus to their needs, that being the hides and meat.

The weather was quite cold with a few inches of snow. I hunted the high ridges on the east side of the lake. There was a lot of deer sign but the snow was noisy.

I was interested to see a raven land on a tree ahead of me and made several croaks; it then flew to a tree some distance away and called again. My curiosity and instinct forced me to follow it. This flying ahead and calling was repeated several times. I was convinced this was a message. My friend, the Raven, finally landed in a tree overlooking a drop off to the lake.

He emitted several croaks and appeared to point over the hill. I got the message and was surprised to see the top of a fir tree shaking vigorously.

I released the safety catch on my 308 Winchester convinced it was a buck rubbing his horns. He was at a disadvantage rubbing the tree and had not heard my crunchy footsteps.

The buck just had time to look at me before a well placed shot provided me with a nice fat four point buck.

The next day when I returned to get the meat, ravens and coyotes had eaten the entrails and tried to eat the deer, which I had covered with brush and bark.

April 2002

History of the South Okanagan Sports men's Association

June 30, 2004

As a senior member and the only survivor of the meeting called to organize a sportsmen's club in Oliver over 60 years ago, I feel motivated to record some of the club's early history.

As an outdoors man and an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman, I became interested and involved in the Southern Okanagan Sportsmen's Association both from the recreational aspect and as a valuable source of food for the family in the early days.

When I came to Oliver in 1926 several of us with similar interests at heart had casual and informal meetings to discuss fishing and hunting interests, recommended bag limits, lake stocking and related interests.

The area was teeming with pheasant and quail.

There were many fences and irrigation ditches lined with sweet clover and miscellaneous cover, creating perfect habitat for the birds. Hawks and owls took a heavy toll on the birds as, on some years, did the snow and cold winters.

As orchard management practices changed it was fatal for much bird life. Cover crop mowing destroyed their nests, fences disappeared and sprinkler irrigation eliminated irrigation ditches. Chemical sprays such as DDT and Parathion also took a heavy toll. The first informal meeting of the Oliver Sportsmen was known as the Oliver Fish and Game Club. Douglas Smithers, owner of the Ford dealership in Oliver arranged for several of us with mutual interests to meet once or twice a year. Our meetings were held in the parlour of the Oliver Hotel, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hall - this was the centre of social life in Oliver at that time. The usual attendance at our meetings consisted of Doug Smithers, Dave Evans, Hugh Allen and myself. Fishing and hunting at that time was under the authority of the Game Commission (Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Butler).

OLIVER SPORTSMEN ORGANIZED IN 1942

In 1942 a meeting was arranged to finally organize a sportsmen's association.

George Stuart, a local business man and ardent fisherman took an interest in organizing the first meetings. George Stuart and Dave Evans spent their

spare time fishing at Bear and Madden Lakes. The lakes had been stocked under the influence of Dr. George Kearney, Oliver's first doctor, who was also a keen fisherman. Four and five-pound trout were often caught.

This organizational meeting was held at the Elks hall, about 30 people in attendance. George Stuart chaired the meeting. Present were Jim Cunningham representing the Game Commission, Adam Monks, district game warden, Robert McDonald of the B.C. Provincial Police, Avery King and Mark Hugo from Penticton, plus two men from the state of Washington. The first item on the agenda was choosing a club name - Southern Okanagan Sportsmen's Association was decided unanimously!

Our first president elected was Jim Finch, manager of the Oliver Co-op packing house. Jim served for one year and was succeeded by Abe Braun, local taxidermist. For the following two years, Jack Coates (narrator of these notes), served.

Our meetings were held in the "dugout" of the Legion hall. At one meeting, a young fellow who had recently moved to Oliver from Victoria made himself known as a sportsman. This was Bill Kreller who was elected for the following two years.

During my term as president we had our first turkey shoots which were popular and have since been financially successful. We also built the present trap range. My friend, Arly Gayton, a practical surveyor, laid out the ground and Jack Knodel, a stone mason, supervised the concrete work. Farm equipment and much labour was volunteered by club members.

A major accomplishment of the club was the purchase of the Sportsmen's Bowl, a suitable and relatively safe area for trap and rifle shooting.

An ongoing project of the club has been the health and protection of the California Bighorn sheep.

A clubhouse, built in 1956, is now a credit to the energy and success of the club. Credit must also be given to the members and the officers who have managed the SOSA over the years.