Josie Barclay

In conversation with the editor (Part Two)

Living at my Dad's was very rough. It was all oil lights and packing water and wood. I remember going out with a sack and the baby and my little girl and looking for bark for the stove from the big stumps, and I was out there chuckling to myself. I know the old man couldn't hear me, but I said to him anyway "You have skinned *every* stump anywhere near the house. Now look what you're making me do, having to get away back into the bush to find a bit of bark to keep warm!". It was something living up there then. We had a very old truck, and one day I took it out to get some groceries and came back, and it was dark. Well we got about a mile from the cabin, and the truck stopped and it was pitch dark and I couldn't start it. So I grabbed the two children and I started to walk. Well I couldn't hardly see one foot in front of the other and there I was shuffling along that road in the dark. It was one of those dark nights and I was packing the baby and pulling poor little Carrie. Anyways I got half way up there and I heard these footsteps behind me. I'd walk a bit more and I'd hear this thing walking. And then I stopped, and it stopped. I tell you right now, it was one of the worst nights of my life. And I walked a little further and finally it kept walking and I just stood there. I didn't know what to do. And as it got closer I thought, "That's a funny walk. It's not a big cat or anything. What is this?" Well, it was my cow! It had gone down there to eat, I guess, and saw me and was following me back home. By this time, of course, I'm half dead with fear. And I get to the house, and you know what? [laughing hilariously]. I'd left all the baby's bottles in the truck! So I had to go back. I thought "I cannot drag these children back down that road". I had a flashlight now, but the one thing I never believed in doing was leaving my children, and that night I had to, because I had a baby that was going to be hungry. So I lit the fire and then I let it burn down really low so there was no chance of it going anywhere, and they were sleeping and I just ran the hundred mile dash, grabbed that bag and ran like hell back home again. Oh that was funny. I've had some experiences in these Highlands!

I lived in there for a winter and into the next summer and then the old Aikman homestead opposite the schoolhouse came available. They had electricity so it was easier there. I took the baby and Carrie and I walked that milk cow from my Dad's place, through the back along the old power line and all the way to Aikman's. Well, we were there for a couple of years and then we moved back to town and I had two more children, Butch and Sherry. Then we moved to West Burnside Road. Now I had known Tommy Francis [whose land became Francis Park] through my Dad. He used to walk down to West Burnside to catch the bus and when he came back he would walk home again and I'd often go and speak to him. He was a colourful man. He was old then and he wasn't doing any farming any more, but he used to go downtown and play bridge with these women and he'd get into the worst damn fight you've ever seen in your life with them! He'd be just fuming mad coming home, and all over a bridge game!

While I was still living there, I left my husband, got all that cleaned up. And then I went back to work at the meat department, because I didn't want to ask for any money from anybody, and I had four children to support. I went to work for Alberta Meat on Cook St. They used to supply everybody with meat. You worked in there wrapping these huge orders that were going out to different places. I went to work from six o'clock to two o'clock in the morning so that I could be with my children in the daytime. That's how I swung that. That was the only way I could see doing it. I had my husband's father, Pop, the kids' grandfather — he stayed with me forever, till he died. I had inherited him and the children. He looked after the children while I was gone. He was kind to them. But I didn't do that for long — maybe two years. I know it just about killed me. I was down to I don't know what, my hip bones sticking out.

And then I met Jim. I met him through an old friend. She and her husband were very kind to a lot of navy boys, because they really didn't have any home here. A lot of them had come from the prairies and all over, and that was kind of their home away from home. And Jim was one of those people. We did eventually get married and that was thirty-seven years ago and we're still going strong.

We were posted to various places, and I had another child, Andy. One of the places we lived was Dartmouth in Nova Scotia, which was very interesting. I *loved* those people. They are the nicest people that walk. They are all very desperate people because that is very poor country. But they would give you the shirt off their back. When I would get in the car to go and get some groceries, there were all these lineups, but here were all these people stopping to let you through! I had never seen this before. And this is how the whole thing works there — through the generosity of the people. They'd give you anything. They had nothing, and they'd give it to you. As a matter of fact, you *had* to have it. My neighbour had been given a bouquet of flowers for some occasion — Mother's Day or Valentine's or whatever. And I had to have half! Who would break up a bouquet of

flowers? She said, "Oh I can't have you sitting over here with no flowers..
.....it's pretty country — very pretty in places; but I don't think that's what really makes that country. What makes that country is the people. They sing about it and they make it beautiful because they are beautiful people.

But eventually we came back here and started this place and here we are twenty-eight years later. Before we left B.C. we had bought this place where we are now. We sold our house in Colwood and bought this piece of property, because I just felt we should get the children out of there. It was growing up and it wasn't my sort of thing. But Jim of course had never lived in the country. He was a city boy from Winnipeg. So he wasn't as enthusiastic as I was to get to the Highlands. Anyways he did come up and look at it, and he decided, yes.

Well, Jim was in the navy. He was gone six months of the year and he wasn't here for the start of it. My brother, Ken, came in with his bulldozer and cleared a spot so that I could get something up there to live in, because I was living in my brother Bob's basement with all these five children. We were a bit short of money, so we just put up the house and it was very rushed. I couldn't finish the walls or the floors, so we lived with the insulation and just the plywood floor, and I moved the kids in. And I remember Butch and I — he was twelve at the time, — we put up a plywood wall around where the toilet was, but it had no door, it had a curtain. A few years later, a friend of ours who couldn't stand it any more — this curtain and all these kids running around, brought a door along! But we poked away at it and eventually got it finished. Still it took years. We had to sleep in the front room and there was a lot of us — five kids, Pop, Jim and I.

But it was a beautiful place. In the beginning that whole hillside over there was covered in hazelnuts. I wish we could have saved them, but the fir trees got too high. I think it's one of the few places in the Highlands that grows them.

Highlander: I remember old Harry Phillips a long time ago, showing us a lot of hazelnut trees near Mt. Finlayson, and that's not too far from here.

Josie B.: I think this area just likes nut trees. It's an interesting place. They say the last sighting of the mountain quail on the Island was on Mt. Finlayson. We had them when we first came here about twenty-eight years ago. And one day about six years ago I took a walk quietly to the back there, and I heard this bit of rustling in the bush and I just listened and watched and here was two mountain quail.

Highlander: That's interesting. In the fall of '88 I saw several of them on Jocelyn Hill. I put food out for them up there all winter, but I never saw them again... But how did you get started with the sheep?

Josie B.: *Jim* had cleared a little spot in here. So while he was away I bought him two sheep for his birthday from Mrs. Bolton at Goodland Farm. For his little spot, just to clean it out. Well, of course that started everything.

Highlander: Was he interested in sheep?

Josie B.: Well, I don't think he really was. No, he'd never had sheep. [chuckling] He just came home, and he owned two sheep! But then he did get interested, and he went and got a nice, docile ram from somebody, and then he had some lambs, and finally we got thinking about these Scottish Blackface that my father had kept. There weren't any more around here. It was very difficult to get rams, so it was hard to keep the flock purebred. We found someone in Alberta with Blackface and we got a ram lamb from him. And that got us going. A few years went by and we got in touch with a fellow in Ontario, and actually I found that he was a Brydon, which was my grandmother's name. And he told me about the statue of a famous ram of the Brydons in the village square where they came from, because of the work they'd done to improve the breed. You know what they're like over there about improving stock. It's a big thing there. Well, he brought a ram lamb in from Nova Scotia and we flew that one and two of his ewes out, so we finally got a flock going, but it wasn't easy. And we're still going at it. But it's not an easy thing. In Scotland, they've got absolutely beautiful stock, but you can't bring it over. There's a five year quarantine on them, because they're scared of scrapies.

Highlander: Is there's quite a demand for them?

Josie B.: Some years you don't hear from anybody, and other years you hear from too many and you don't have enough. We've sold them all over the place. This year's whole flock of lambs is going back to Alberta. Somebody phoned and bought them all.

Highlander: What is it that people like about them?

Josie B.: Well, you can run them on rough land. Some sheep, you know, if you run them on brush land, they just about starve to death, they can't make it, whereas these ones will eat anything. They're very hardy, and they're good mothers. But they're not too heavy on twins because they don't want twins back in Scotland. They're up on the moors where it's cold and bleak and one lamb is really enough for a ewe to raise — they don't want them having two. And there's another thing. Over there the sheep have their own moor. If a place is sold, the sheep go with the place. You can't just take the sheep off their moors, because they get to know the boundaries. There are no fences, but as long as they're born on the property, they'll come back. And you can't just put a new flock on a piece of land either. It doesn't work. It was that way here in the Highlands when my Dad had the sheep — open range. You just let them go and they'd come back. Tommy Francis had those black cows that

were on open range too. His mother was a native person, and he had a certain way about him. Everybody remarked about it. He would be very silent when he was in the bush. He just kind of blended in. He knew how to become part of the forest. You could be walking along and Tommy Francis could be there but you wouldn't see him. And then all of a sudden, there he'd be leaning up against a tree!

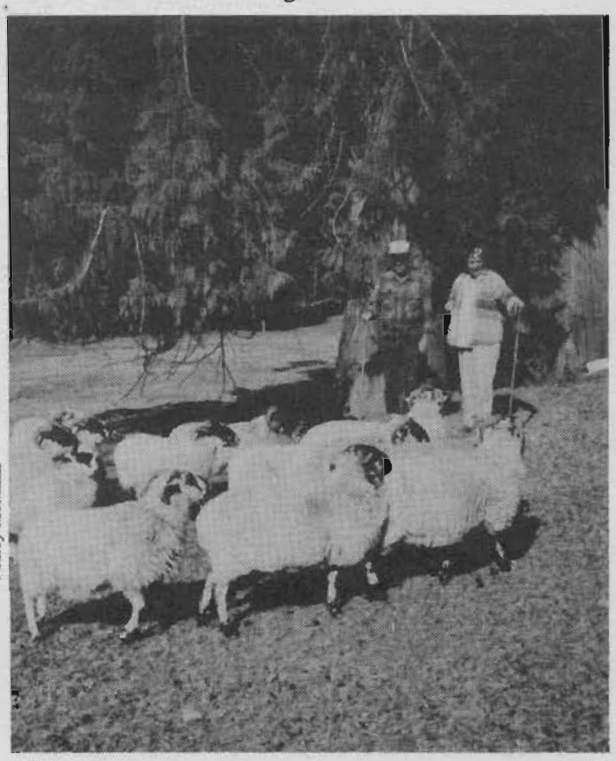
Highlander: What do you do with the wool?

Josie B.: Sometimes there's a call for it and sometimes there isn't. You can ship it, but it's great big two hundred pound bags that you have to ship it in — you've got to be filling these enormous bags and, well, it would take quite a few people to get together to do that. Now our shearer comes down from Courtenay, stays the weekend and does the shearing and he's excellent. Sometimes he'll take the wool, because he does so much shearing and people don't know what to do with the wool, so he takes it and makes up these big huge bags. Other times we have people want it for making rugs. It's excellent for that. It's got a very long, tough fibre. But they haven't got it set up very good for the average farmer that doesn't have a lot of sheep. If you're not a big rancher with a thousand sheep it's hard for you to deal with the wool.

Highlander: And now you've gone into sheep dog trials, haven't you?

Josie B.: Oh, well, the sheep dogs, now there is something. That's the love of our life, actually. At first we couldn't find a dog. Now we're in it, there's dogs everywhere, but at first we couldn't find one. Jim got his dog from a man up Island who had dogs and sheep and he wanted some Blackface horns to make crooks out of, and he had a pup that he thought was going to be a good one so Jim traded him the horns and gave him a bit of money and that dog turned out to be a really good one when Jim was finished with him.

I got my dog from Scotland four years ago. I went to work — not big wages, just a little tiny part time job. I saved a little bit of money, and I used to stick it in the drawer there in all sorts of envelopes, so I'd forget about it. And I managed to save up about eight or nine hundred dollars. Everybody thought I was nuts, that I should have had it in the bank, but I didn't want a bank account, I wanted to make out that it wasn't there! Well, my cousin had been out from Scotland and I spoke to her because they had come from a big huge farm with a lot of sheep and a lot of cattle. So I explained to her about this certain type of dog I wanted. She spoke to the shepherd at her daughter's farm near Galashiels, but he got his dogs from a breeder in Ayrshire. Well, to make a long story short, she phoned me out of the blue and said "I've found a puppy for you". So I said that I'd have to find out the fare and it was very expensive to fly him out and I had to get his shots and a special diet, because he was only eight weeks and he had to take this trip without eating anything, just drinking water. And I hummed and hawed and finally I phoned her and said "Send him. Just send him. I don't want to have to think about it any more. And then they gave him to me for a gift, to help ease the pain, because it was so very expensive. He came into Vancouver, so we had to go to Vancouver to pick him up, and it was love at first sight. He was only eight weeks old, and from day one I knew I had found the dog I was looking for. And you know, he's been the best thing that ever happened to me. I couldn't have spent that eight hundred dollars on anything in this world that would have been better than that dog.



Nancy McMinn

Jim and Josie Barclay with their Scottish Blackface sheep at their farm "Gleann Mohr" (Gaelic for "Big Valley").

I had forgotten how intelligent they are. You know, my Dad had them, but you forget. Anyway, you have to learn to work with these dogs. It's an art. They don't just come doing all these things. They know in a way; they've got the instinct, but a lot of it's got to be taught. When they're working, it's just like playing a game of chess. Except there's two players on one side, and you've got to coincide with one another. You've got to really like your dog, because this is a partnership, and he's listening to you, maybe three hundred yards away, or half a mile. So he's got to like you! You've got to have this thing going between you, that you're both getting these sheep, the two of you are. It's not just him doing what he's told. It's a different kind of relationship, and it's fascinating. They're used everywhere, to help run these huge farms. Here in this country and the States they're used as much

for cattle now as they are for sheep. All of those big ranches, they all have them. It's just like a very expensive piece of machinery, when you think of the work they do.

Highlander: So when you got your dog from Scotland, you knew something about training them?

Josie B.: Very little, but some. And he was very kind to me. There are some dogs that are not as kind as he is at putting up with somebody that doesn't know what they're doing.

Highlander: Do you train a young dog with an older, more experienced dog?

Josie B.: No. It doesn't work. It's you and him.

Highlander: Do you and Jim use the same dog?

Josie B.: No, you can't really do that. It's not done. It's too confusing for the dog, one person saying one thing and the other saying another. Now Jim's dog will work for me if Jim's gone, but he won't work for me if Jim is standing there. I can go to the field and if Jim's gone he'll come with me and listen to me. You see, he thinks he's so important that I can't do it without him, so he'll have to help me. But if Jim's here and I tell his dog to do something, he just looks out at the field like I'm not there. I'm just like a hunk of rock on the ground or a clump of grass, like "I can't see you and I can't hear you". So he just doesn't work for me when Jim's around.

The training, there's a lot to it. You can be at it for five years and you're just beginning to get it together. You watch these old handlers that have been at it for thirty years. It's just like a piece of art to watch them. But then anything that's intriguing is always like that, isn't it? If it's really intriguing, it's very difficult and if it's difficult, it's interesting.

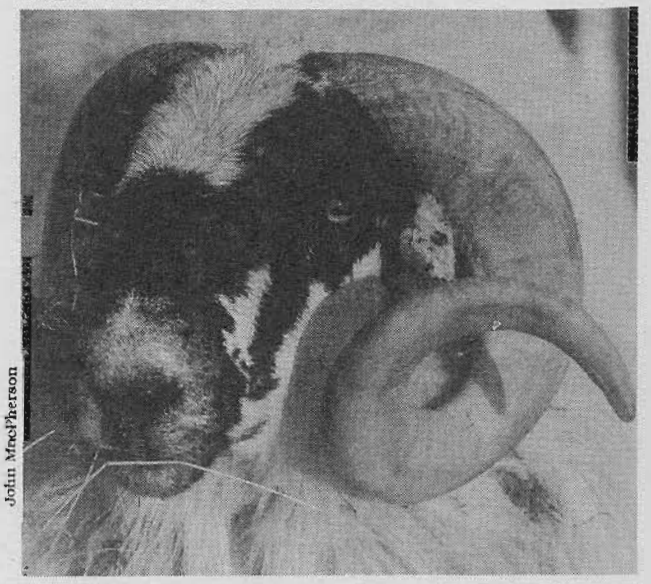
Highlander: Have you bred any yourselves?

Josie B.: I haven't done too much breeding. It's a very tricky business breeding a good working dog. You're not breeding it to look at so it can come in any colour. They come red, for heavens sakes, or even three colours — tri-colour they call them. And they come in different sizes, because you're not breeding for that either. You're breeding for the brain. I did breed the dog I got from Scotland once and we got two pups. Jim took one and I took the other. They're a year old now and it's hard to tell yet but I think they're going to be good. You don't start training them 'til they're a year. They've got to be puppies first and learn all the puppy things - how you get along with other dogs. And I put them here at the corner where the grandchildren come along so they're very socialized to children and people, because they can go the other way quickly. But these ones love kids and I like them like that. I don't want the other kind, that's a headache.

Highlander: You mentioned that someone wanted Blackface horns to make crooks.

Josie B.: Yes, the horn of the ram is what you make the crooks out of. Now if you cross the sheep, the horn is no good because it's hollow. But with purebred Blackface, the horn is solid. The stick is hazelwood. There was a place my cousin took us to when we went to Scotland — an old stone house way back in the hills. This farm was built in the 1500's and the farmer made crooks. He had 1500 ewes and 50 rams - tups they call them. He had horns and crooks all lined up, so we bought some.

Highlander: You make horns from them, but a horn seems much thicker than these crooks.



John MacPherson

Traditional shepherds' crooks are made from the horns of Blackface rams.

Josie B.: Oh, yes. It's all sanded down, and then they heat it to turn it and make the right shape.. You put it on a vice and work with it to get it just right. So that's what Jim wants to get into, but he's so busy with his sheep and dogs and trying to maintain the fences and his little job at the golf course, that he doesn't get to it. At Colwood golf course when he went there, there were over two hundred geese, and the droppings were so thick that it clogged up all their machinery. They had tried other dogs but these have the eye. They don't bite or anything. They just walk out there with this eye. I don't know if it reminds them of a fox or what, but there's just something about them that makes them get out of there. The dogs crouch over and use the eye on these geese and they just leave.

Highlander: So Jim is retired now, and what about the children?

Josie B.: The children all live around here. When they were teenagers, they couldn't imagine why anyone would want to live here. You were running them to Langford all the time. But when they grew up and got married then they all wanted to come back. I guess there must be something about these Highlands that brings you back. ✡

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Date	*Event*	*Location*	*Time*
October 29	HDCA General Meeting "Land & Stream Stewardship"	Caleb Pike Homestead	7:30 pm
October 31	Halloween Party	East Highlands Fire Hall	Dusk
October 31	Halloween Party	West Highlands Fire Hall	Dusk
November 5	All Candidates Meeting	West Highlands Fire Hall	7:00 pm
November 6	Advance Poll for Municipal Election	West Highlands Fire Hall	8 am -8 pm
November 12	All Candidates Meeting	East Highlands Fire Hall	7:00 pm
November 16	Municipal Election	East Highlands Fire Hall & West Highlands Fire Hall	8 am -8 pm
November 22	Poetry Event	Caleb Pike Homestead	7:00 pm
November 30	Christmas Craft Fair	Caleb Pike Homestead	10 am-4 pm
December 1	Christmas Craft Fair	Caleb Pike Homestead	10 am-4 pm

IN PIONEER TIMES

Highlands Place Names

- *Chicken House Hill:* The hill on Munn Rd. leading down from Goodland Farm. In the ravine near the foot of this hill there was at one time a large chicken house..

- *Munn Road:* Named after the Munn family who owned a lumber mill below the chicken house. The family later operated a mill in Sooke at Cooper's Cove.

- *Emma Dixon Road:* Named for Caleb Pike's eldest daughter who lived in a log cabin near the corner of present day Millstream Road and Martlett Drive. She is said to have lost her claim to the property when her husband sold it to her son-in-law for a bottle of whiskey.

- *Finlayson Arm Road:* Roderick Finlayson was Factor of the Hudson's Bay Co. during the early days of Fort Victoria. Put in charge of the fort at 26 years of age, he later became a member of the colony's first governing council and a wealthy and prominent member of Victoria society. During his term as mayor of Victoria, in 1878, the present city hall was built.

- *Millstream Road:* Named after the stream emptying at Parson's Bridge, where a water-driven sawmill was built in 1848. The first lumber shipped to the U.S. from B.C. came from this mill. Seasonal water shortages soon closed it down and a grist mill built nearby never operated before being washed away in a freshet.