

LOOKING BACK: The Pioneers of Pease Lake *

by Bob McMinn

When the District of Highlands was making an official list of the new municipality's roads, the name of a pioneer Highlands family was reinstated. In its early years, the road between Wallace Drive, formerly the route of the Interurban Railway, and the Millstream Lake Road was called the Ross Durrance Road. This road joined the Ross family ranch in the Highlands with the Durrance family farm in Saanich. Over the years, its name had been shortened to Durrance Road, the name still used in Saanich.

Duncan Ross bought Section 25 in the Highlands in the 1890's. Who was Duncan Ross? He was the son of emigrants from the Scottish Highlands who had settled in Ontario. Duncan, who spoke Gaelic as well as English, had come west to British Columbia to seek his fortune, probably because manual labour on an Ontario farm did not appeal to his entrepreneurial spirit. His blistered hands at the end of his first day on the job at a New Westminster shake mill confirmed his view that manual labour was not for him. He moved to Vancouver Island where he taught school in Vic West. Among his many friends was a young Saanich farmer. While roaming the hills of the Saanich Highlands, as the Highlands were then known, they came across Pease Lake.

At that time and for many years to come it was a hidden lake, entirely surrounded by old-growth trees. Duncan Ross was not yet able to build a dwelling in this beautiful but remote setting because he still had to make his fortune.

With backing from a Victoria newspaper man, Duncan Ross moved to Greenwood to start a newspaper. Greenwood was then a booming mining town, in British Columbia's southern interior. His financial and political acumen enabled him to make

money and be elected to Parliament. In Greenwood, he met and married Mary Ella (Birdie) Thompson, who was secretary to the manager of the Phoenix Mine. She had been born in Five Islands, Nova Scotia, but was raised in Spokane, Washington. After a stint of teaching school in Loomis, Washington, a remote community near the B.C. border, she returned to Canada and took up residence in Greenwood. Duncan and Birdie's oldest child, Christine (Teen), was born in Greenwood before the new

Member of Parliament moved to Ottawa. Mary, their second daughter, was born in Ottawa. When the Liberals were defeated in the next election, the Ross' next stop was Vancouver, where Margaret, their third daughter, was born.

Duncan Ross' activities in pursuit of financial security included building a portion of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (now CN) near Hazelton. Having made enough money for comfort, Duncan Ross moved his family to Victoria, where he built a substantial house on Rockland Avenue. His farm background prompted him to buy a cow, which he pastured on the vacant lot next door. Margaret writes fondly of the clotted cream and home-made ice cream made from the sixteen quarts a day provided



Duncan Ross

by "Queenie".

With his town house built, Duncan Ross decided it was time to develop his "ranch" in the Highlands.

The original log cabin consisted of a single large room and small bedroom downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs.

It was built from unpeeled Douglas fir logs and chinked with moss. A verandah ran the length of the building overlooking Pease Lake. The Ross' new dwelling was warmed by an enormous camp

* This piece is based on the reminiscences of Mrs. Margaret Robbins, who was Duncan and Birdie Ross' youngest daughter. She wrote down her recollections and memories so that her grandchildren, Peter Robbins' children, would know more about their childhood home at Pease Lake in the Highlands. My thanks to the Robbins family for the use of the biographical material, family photographs and help in preparing this piece.

Pioneers of Pease Lake

stove, fed by cordwood through a door in the front. Pots could be heated on steel brackets welded to the side of the stove.

The original cabin was soon extended by adding a kitchen, pantry and utility room at one end. In one corner of the kitchen a trap door, raised by a leather strap, accessed a ladder and dugout storage which kept butter and milk cool. Even today, a slope in the kitchen floor is a continuing reminder of this storage area because the soil used to fill it in during construction of the present house settled.

A third expansion, made of upright cedar logs, added a beautiful living room with French doors opening onto a deck overlooking the lake. The dominant feature inside was a huge stone fireplace, which nearly a century later is still used to heat the rec room built to replace the living room which was torn down because of rot. Margaret tells of polishing the handsome wood floor, when, as a child, she was pulled around sitting on a polishing cloth. There were bear rugs, wicker chairs, black oak furniture and a beamed ceiling. A built-in bookcase filled the space on one side of the fireplace. Railroad tracks, with upturned ends, served as fire dogs.

A large barn made of fir logs was constructed after the house was completed. There were half a dozen stalls for horses and cows and storage for hay, buggies and tools. A small house was built for the farm manager. The chickens had a fenced run. The slope down to the lake in front of the house was cleared, fenced and planted with fruit trees. A snake fence enclosed a "living area" at the back of the house. An outhouse and root cellar completed the structures. The root cellar was dug into a slope and roofed with timbers and earth. It was big enough to stand up in. The swamp at the back of the house was drained and prepared for planting. Most ambitious of all, the whole 160 acres was fenced with wire attached to cedar posts.

A dirt road coming up from Langford through thick forest gave access to the Ranch from Victoria. The road ended at the Ross front door. Although the family car was driven by an experienced chauffeur/

mechanic, the eighteen-mile journey from Victoria could be quite an adventure. On one occasion when Birdie Ross and an elderly friend were on their way to the ranch, the car had two punctures. Both inner tubes were useless and there were no more spares. Evan, the resourceful driver, filled the tires with bracken to finish the journey.

One of Margaret Ross' first recollections of the Ranch, when she was about four or five, was being attacked by a ferocious rooster, intent on pecking her eyes out. She was saved by Mr. McTavish, the hired hand.

Mary and Margaret liked to walk along the top rail of the snake fence to test their balancing skills.

The summers of 1913 to 1916 were spent at the Ranch, enlivened by visits from many friends. Until they learned to swim, bathing in the lake was more like wallowing in the mud because there was no float, although a log jutting into the water helped.

Margaret remembered one rainy afternoon when the mother of one of the visiting families had had enough; her temper snapped and she smashed the cylinder which had been incessantly playing "You've Got to Quit Kicking My dog Around" through the gramophone's horn. On another occasion when the three Ross girls and two visiting friends were alone at the Ranch, a small forest fire seemed to threaten them. One of the visiting girls, who was about twelve at the time, became

hysterical and kept crying "I want to see my mother before I die". The fire amounted to nothing, but the "hard-bitten" Ross girls long remembered that hysterical cry with fiendish glee.

Duncan Ross died during the summer of 1916. By 1918, Birdie Ross decided that her family should live at the Ranch full time. She sold the Rockland Avenue house. Teen was settled with friends in Victoria so that she could continue with high school. The move to Pease Lake with all their possessions was quite an adventure. The new road from the Ranch to Durrance Station was still under construction, with only a mile and a half having been completed. Their neighbour, Mr. Corry, was the engineer in charge. Mrs. Ross thought that everything would have to come via Langford. She advised their



Mary Ella ("Birdie") Ross at the railway construction site.



The dirt road from Langford ended at the Ross' front door.

Chinese "house boy" that he should allow a day and a half to walk "Queenie", the cow, out to Pease Lake through Langford. Louie Chow insisted that he could use the partially finished Durrance Road - "much shorter". Mrs. Ross remonstrated that there was a fallen tree across the path that a cow could not get over or under. Birdie Ross and her two younger children set out via Langford the next morning and found Louie and Queenie waiting for them at the Ranch. Incredulous, she asked Louie how he got Queenie past the fallen tree. Louie responded that when they got to the tree he said "Queenie get down on your knees," which she did and crawled under the tree. Louie had a remarkable way with animals.

In the autumn of 1918, Mary and Margaret, who were ten and a half and eight and a half, had to go to school. If they went, the little red Millstream schoolhouse, then situated near the junction of the Millstream and Millstream Lake Roads, could stay open. It would then have the required minimum of eight pupils. Mr. Corry agreed to lend the Ross family a sulky (a two-wheeled, two-seater cart) and his tired old horse Mickey, which was kept in the barn. Mary drove the four and one half miles to school every day with Margaret as passenger. There were two boys, about twelve and fourteen, and six girls, with Margaret Ross the youngest, attending school.

Before the girls went to school, Mrs. Ross made it clear to the teacher, Mr. Likeman, that under no circumstances were they to be kept in after school.

If they had to be punished, she stipulated that they should be kept in at recess or during the lunch break. One day after some infraction, Mr. Likeman ordered them to stay after school. Mary reminded Mr. Likeman that they could not, but they would stay in the next day at lunch time. As they turned to go, Mr. Likeman grabbed Mary by her long braids to pull her back. Mary turned on him like an animal at bay, kicked him in the knee until he let go and they ran for the sulky. Neither of them said a word about what had happened when they got home. A few months later when Mrs. Ross and Auntie Beryl were agreeing that the Millstream School was not much of a school, Mrs. Ross said: "At least Mr. Likeman did respect my ruling about not being kept in after school". The two girls burst into tears and confessed about Mary's braid being pulled and her kicking Mr. Likeman. Mrs. Ross and Auntie Beryl had a good laugh and, relieved, the girls eventually joined in.



Mary with Mr. McTavish who saved Margaret from a ferocious roosters' attack.

Shortly after the kicking incident, Mickey, the old horse, died. Mr. Corry's decision to cremate the corpse beside the barn greatly upset Louie Chow. He thought the horse's ghost would haunt the place. That night, after the cremation, a loon's mournful cry terrified Louie who thought he must be hearing Mickey's ghost. Louie soon left the Ranch, which meant that Mary and Mrs. Ross had to milk Queenie. Without transportation, there was no more schooling that year.

During that summer, the girls became proficient



Ross family on the deck overlooking Pease Lake.

swimmers, venturing far from shore, nearly across the lake. They pulled leeches off each other, but they did not recall encountering ticks. There was a rowboat and a Peterborough canoe. The lake had been stocked with cutthroat trout by Mrs. Ross so the fishing was good. There were lots of visitors who came for fishing, hunting, swimming or just visiting.

One of Margaret's duties was to fetch water from the spring every day in two enamel pitchers. The spring was a beautiful spot with deep pools surrounded by large cedars, and lush maidenhair and sword fern growing in black soil. One summer day when guests arrived, Margaret was dispatched to the spring for more cool water. When she got back to the house, she was scolded for taking so long and then was really chastised because she had come back with the pitchers empty. The spring was a beguiling place for daydreaming on a hot summer day. This spring dried up long ago but the cedar grove is still there beside the public access to Pease Lake.

During the summer of 1919, the girls had two days of paid work as chain men for Mr. Corry as he worked on the Ross-Durrance Road. They were very proud of themselves.

Mrs. Ross was a stern guardian of the property who managed to scare off trespassers who came to fish or hunt. One day a good friend walked in from Durrance Station with a shotgun under his arm and a broad grin on his face. As he came past the swamp he met two disgruntled hunters who said: "Don't go

up there. There's an awful old woman that gave us hell for shooting on her land". It took Mrs. Ross a long time to live that down.

The girls' idyllic existence came to an end when Mrs. Ross decided that they needed more schooling. She enrolled them at St. Ann's Academy while she started training as a nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital on the other side of Humboldt Street. Teen continued to live with friends and finish high school. Schooling at the Academy was not a success from the girls' perspective. They hated the food and, as Protestants, disliked having to attend mass. Catching 'flu in early spring was the final straw that decided that this form of schooling was not for them.

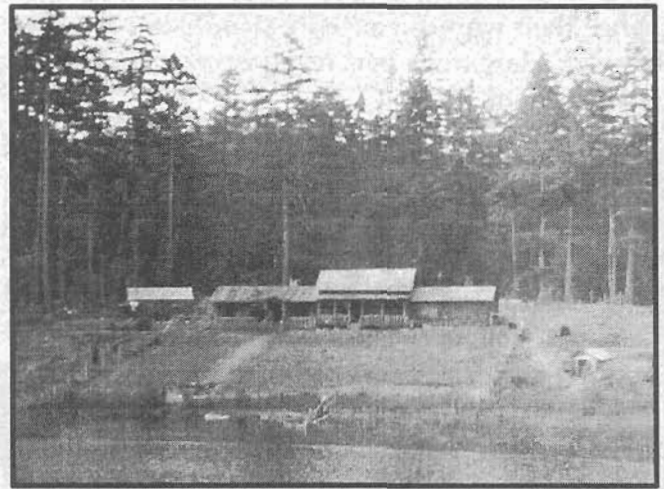
Following four months of freedom at the Ranch in the summer of 1920, the girls started back at school again. Now they lived in a house on St. Charles Street. The Ranch became a weekend and holiday place for the next twenty years.

Since the family had no car, the Interurban railway from Victoria to Deep Cove was their method of reaching the Ranch. They were not deterred by the four-mile walk from Durrance Station. One of their favourite resting spots was a group of three cedar trees on the Ranch side of Durrance Lake. Another was just before the big swamp, where a lovely little creek ran under the road from a pool nestling among the roots of a cedar tree. This creek now flows underground, its course having been affected by the 1946 earthquake.

In summer, Mrs. Ross would get up early, walk the four miles to Durrance Station, spend the day at the St. Charles Street house making jam or canning fruit, and return on the last train before making the four-mile walk back to the Ranch. In June, when Mrs. Ross had already moved out to the Ranch, Mary and Margaret on Friday afternoons would run from Victoria High School to catch the 3.15 train at the station near the Hudson's Bay store. They wanted as long a weekend as possible from Friday to Sunday evening. Before running to the station with their long braids flying, they changed into their country clothes, riding breeches, long before the days of blue jeans for girls.

One hot summer, when the heat was appalling and the smoky haze from the Island's burning forests was everywhere, Mrs. Ross, Mary, Margaret and two girlfriends spent most of their time in the lake. They heard of a fire near Finlayson Arm, but thought it would be controlled before it could reach Pease Lake. But the smoke behind the mountain got closer and closer. By late afternoon little flames appeared at the top of the mountain. It was obviously time to leave. Mother and the four children started the walk to Durrance Station, burdened by what Mrs. Ross thought were her most valuable possessions at the Ranch, four pairs of Hudson's Bay blankets! Despite their encumbrance, they arrived at St. Charles Street about nine o'clock. Mrs. Ross, determined not to miss any opportunity to save the Ranch, phoned someone important that she knew. Soldiers in camp at Heal's Rifle Range were dispatched to save the house from burning. The fire burned very slowly down the mountain leaving most of the thick-barked, old-growth Douglas fir unharmed. The underbrush, however, was a charred mess. The fire continued down to McKenzie Bight before it burned itself out. The family returned to enjoy the rest of the summer at the Ranch, complete with the blankets.

The soldiers likely helped by making firebreaks and patrolling the trails to snuff out spot fires. The family later thought that the soldiers had left another legacy. In the middle of the night during the next summer, a friend of Mrs. Ross who had been sleeping in the little bedroom off the large living room, came running out onto the verandah wailing in anguish. She was covered in welts and claimed that she was being eaten alive by bedbugs. The little bedroom had not been used since it was occupied the previous summer by the soldiers. A fumigator was sent for.



The Ross Family ranch house with cleared land stretching down to the lake.

The summers of 1924 and 1925 were the last ones spent by Mary and Margaret and their mother at the Ranch. They had very fond memories of these two years, which included parties at the Corry's enjoyed by friends of all ages. A cousin of their father taught the girls to swim the crawl and to dive from the float.

Margaret recalls a few days at the Ranch in September 1926 spent with Mary and some of her classmates in nurse's training at Vancouver General Hospital. Although the weather had begun to cool, that did not stop the girls from sleeping on the porch and swimming in the nude. One morning, Mary awoke with a shriek when a slug fell from the verandah roof onto her face. Another morning a sheep jumped onto their bed. It had been chased down from the Corry farm by "Bummer", an enormous Airedale who was more enthusiastic than skilled as a sheep dog. On another occasion when the girls were out in the canoe, they were startled by a hunter appearing through the bushes. They all jumped into the lake since their swimming attire consisted of their birthday suits. The "hunter" turned out to be Jeanne, a friend of Mrs. Ross, who had been enlisted to startle the bathing nymphs.

Until the arrival of the Gordons, Pease Lake had been very private, being surrounded by thick forest stands on all sides. Section 57, purchased by the Gordons, included a few yards on the southern shore of the lake. With superhuman toil the Gordons cleared their section to make pastures for their dairy farm. They cleared down to the lake, which then could be seen from the road. Although Pease Lake had lost its feeling of seclusion, that did not stop the girls from swimming in the nude. When chided by Mrs. Ross that they would have to

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change their ways because they could be seen from the road, Margaret's pert response was, "They will probably think it's you".

During the summer of 1932, Bill Robbins, who had been invited by Mrs. Ross to stay at the Ranch, pulled down the barn which had been rotting away. He had just finished teacher's training but job prospects were poor since this was the depth of the Depression.

By the summer of 1934, the Ross family had become very friendly with the Gordons who were already milking cows. Margaret confessed that she often arranged her visits with the Gordons to coincide with tea time. "What teas," she writes "homemade scones dripping in butter, homemade strawberry or blackberry jam and her own Devonshire cream". Margaret would sometimes bring treats from town that Mrs. Gordon would not ordinarily have. But half an hour after such a delivery, one of Mrs. Gordon's sons would arrive with something homemade for the Ross family. The summer of 1934 was the last time that the family stayed any length of time in the old house.

When Bill Robbins came for a visit during the summer of 1936, he was commissioned to pull down the old house with the exception of the living room which had been built of cedar logs. The unpeeled Douglas fir logs in the rest of the house had rotted prematurely, which happens quite rapidly when the bark is left on. Margaret and Bill, who were married in the summer of 1937, returned to Pease Lake for their honeymoon. Since there were no cooking facilities, they ate their meals with the Gordons who, in Margaret's words, "did their best to turn us into roly-polies".

The new house, built for Mrs. Ross and her friend Helen Logie as a permanent residence, was almost finished when Bill and Margaret Robbins came to stay for the summer of 1938. Their son Peter was born in 1940. That summer, while Bill was in California doing research, Margaret and Peter spent the summer at the lake. Mrs. Ross delighted in bathing her new grandson in a tin bathtub placed on the dining room table. Margaret writes that: "Water splashed all over the table and floor and much fun

was had by Peter and [his] grandmother".

Mrs. Ross and Helen Logie left the Ranch as their permanent residence in 1945 because Mrs. Ross was unwell and without a telephone could not reach help quickly. The Fairbanks-Morse generator had failed and hydro power was still in the future. Mrs. Ross and

Helen were visiting the Ranch when the 1946 earthquake struck. They reported that there was a tidal wave in the lake with the water going from one end to the other. The earthquake also interrupted gravity flow from the spring that had supplied water for so long.

The house was rented to various tenants after Mrs. Ross moved out. One of the tenants, who kept horses, built various outbuildings including a chicken house and a horse shelter. When the last tenants moved out in

1973, Peter Robbins and his family came to live at Pease Lake. They have been there ever since. That year, the Capital Regional District bought all but the fifteen acres surrounding the house for regional park. It seems appropriate that a Ross family descendant still lives where the family pioneered and that we are reminded of them by the reinstatement of the name Ross for the road that has been so closely associated with the family for a century.



Fireplace



Enjoying the ranch lake.

HIGHLAND PROFILE: Kathy and Elliott Gose

by Bronwen Duncan

If growing "old" means becoming as elegantly outspoken and cheerful as Elliott and Kathy Gose, I will welcome each new white hair on my head.

There is a calm that surrounds Elliott and Kathy. I can sense it as I walk up to their home, - a Panabode, modest by today's standards, that squats above a gentle tree studded slope leading to Third Lake in the northern Highlands. I stand on their deck, a few feet from the lake edge, the damp lake smell slowing my breathing and washing away my hectic day. The door opens, and I'm enveloped into their welcoming world. Immediately it strikes me: these people have found that gentle balance between peace and purpose. But what is their secret, what gives them this balance?

Sure, maturity comes with experience. But that cannot be the whole story - the world is filled with people aging less than gracefully. Perhaps it has to do with having the confidence to meet challenges and yet still being able to protect oneself. I don't know, but I endeavour to find out, armed with my small list of questions and an archaic tape recorder.

I learn that Elliott and Kathy originated from the States. Just before moving to Canada they lived in Louisiana with their first child Peter, where they felt like fish out of water. In 1956, an offer was made to Elliott to be a professor of English at UBC. They moved to Vancouver, where they had their second child, Sally, a couple years later. This felt like home, and as new Canadians, they became very involved in their new community. In the early 60's they started a parent-owned cooperative elementary school in Vancouver. Kathy was a sessional lecturer at UBC and in 1972 got her Masters of Social Work. As she explains, she was really most interested in gerontology, but at that time, social work was the only available avenue for study into the subject. She worked for the federal government in the New Horizons Seniors' program which gave money to seniors cen-

tres, and later worked at the West Vancouver Seniors Centre, teaching Creative Writing and facilitating a women's support group dealing with the spiritual and psychological effects of aging. Meanwhile, their children were caught in the regular extracurricular activities with sports and music. Life was fun, full and suburban. Summers saw them escape to nearby Bowen Island for sanity breaks and nature immersion.

They were not looking for change. So, what started their interest in the Highlands? According to Kathy, they just "fell into" the Highlands - there were no obstacles, it just seemed like it was meant to be. One of the families involved with the parent owned school



Kathy and Elliott Gose

in Vancouver was the Kuijts, who were good friends with the McMinns in the Highlands. Through these mutual friends, the Goses met the McMinns in the mid-60s. Nancy McMinn enthusiastically introduced them (in her characteristic big-hearted, adventurous style) to Highlands places and people.

The McMinns were selling the property around Third Lake, but no one seemed to want to buy the whole 80 acres. In order to maintain the pristine nature of the acreage, a company was formed with six partners, each owning an equal number of shares. In 1967, the Goses bought the shares entitling them to the lot closest to the gravel road as they wanted to build a small house. This lot was near the existing electricity line. Their neighbour Vicky Husband bought another lot and also built a home. Laws changed a few years after the purchase, limiting the number of houses allowed on a property. Eventually all the land around the lake was owned by these two shareholders.

They built their house, - a summer Panabode. They hired a carpenter to lay the first layer of squared logs,

but then the neighbours took over. Kathy remembers a particular Sunday, when a helpful team of Gose and McMinn children, aged six and up (assisted by adults) literally started layering up the house. The communal spirit dominated the northern Highlands. It was simple: the Highlands moved people into doing things that they had not done before so everybody needed help. Only the outspoken few would live in a virtual wilderness, where driving the local Durrance Road (now called Ross-Durrance) was impassable for many cars venturing from Millstream, and even the locals did not consider driving into Victoria by way of "going over the top" on Durrance Road to West Saanich Road. According to Elliott, they were attracted to the Highlands initially by the natural setting, but the contagious cooperation that blossomed around them grew to be every bit as appealing. Kathy remembers Elizabeth Brooke asking the Gose family for Sunday suppers that included the offer of baths – a true luxury. Elizabeth lived in the old house where Diana McMinn and her family now live.

For many years, as soon as school was out in Vancouver, the Goses would retreat to the Highlands. They would rent their Panabode to students or school teachers during the winter – a perfect arrangement, Kathy points out, as their schedules would coincide so that they could also visit at Easter and Christmas. The children were of the same age and had some of the same interests as the McMinn children, and this fostered friendships that still continue. Elliott and Kathy explain how children seem to thrive when they have the opportunity and time to enjoy nature: they find their own projects and games in the natural surroundings, fostering self-reliance and a true appreciation of their role in the natural world. Their son, Peter, continues to cherish the wilderness, and their daughter, Sally, after many years away, now lives in a house that she and her partner, Rose, built across the road from Kathy and Elliott a few years ago. Eventually, an addition was added to their Panabode that doubled it in size. It was built by their neighbour, Patrick Pothier and his friends (including Davyd McMinn).

Kathy and Elliott never planned to retire to the Highlands; – they thought it would just continue to be a summer retreat. However, change was occurring in the Highlands – it was becoming an easier place to live. Not only was their local road paved bit by bit, but the sale of lands by a forestry company and the easier access to town and amenities created an influx of all varieties of people to the area. In the early 90's the independent-minded carefree existence was being

tempered by the need to organize these changes which meant questioning the character of the Highlands. Did it have an identity that could be locally managed, or should it continue as an unorganized district of the CRD?

During the summer of 1990 they started to become very involved in the newly formed Gowlland Foundation. Elliott explains that they were so attracted to what was going on because they felt they could make a difference. When they went back to Vancouver, they decided that they simply could not miss the action, so they sold their house in Vancouver and immersed themselves in the Highlands. Along with a group of people from Greater Victoria, they were instrumental in developing a master plan for the Gowlland-Tod Park: what it was going to be like, what parts were going to have trails and what parts held for wildlife protection. They worked at all levels, from editing park proposals to walking existing trails and creating new ones.

Not only was the Gowlland Foundation getting up a head of steam, but in the early 90's there was a referendum about whether the Highlands should go from being an unorganized district to being its own municipality or joining the District of Langford. Bringing the community together to deal with such an issue was like taking its temperature – and it was pretty hot! Elliott grins and explains it was just such a vibrant time that they couldn't resist being a part of it. When Western Forest Products decided to subdivide its lands in the northern Highlands into lots, the Goses were part of a quickly formed group known as the "Citizens Advisory Committee", which offered their services. Elliott explains that Western Forest Products actually took them up on their offer! This resulted in a mutually respectful and creative process where the lots were designed to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

In 1997 Elliott joined the Advisory Planning Commission and has served on it since then. As a member of the APC he is involved in helping to frame the new Highlands Official Community Plan. As a member of the Dreams and Decisions Task Force earlier on, Kathy helped to gather and tabulate information collected from a detailed questionnaire sent to all Highlanders shortly after incorporation. This information was used in shaping the first OCP. Later she served on the Housing Task Force and she was also on the Roads Advisory Committee for two years. When the Friends of Fork Lake extended their lake stewardship program to other Highlands lakes, Kathy joined stewards from three other lakes to monitor water quality and control invasive species, such as bull-

Highland Profile

frogs. Recently, both Elliott and Kathy have become active in the newly formed Highland Stewardship Foundation.

I can't help taking a breath and then asking where Kathy and Elliott find this drive - aren't retired people supposed to relax and enjoy? Or is their enjoyment tied to being active? Elliott explains that he and Kathy have always been innovators. It's true - they've always had an interest in doing something for their community. In the same way they spearheaded a cooperative school, Elliott served on the Vancouver School Board for two terms, and Kathy developed programs to help people deal with the stresses of aging. Elliott explains that discovering and researching issues keeps them young - it is a very important part of keeping the psyche and physique going.

I come back to my initial thoughts of balance between peace and purpose - is it, as I supposed: the confidence to take on challenges but also the ability to protect oneself? Challenges would rate as commonplace to this couple. They agree that the responsibilities they take on can be frustrating at times, and Elliott explains that they know there is a wear and tear. For instance, he had the "smarts" to get involved in the APC instead of running for council. They obviously do exercise the ability to say no. But I still feel I am only seeing part of the picture; this is not enough to explain the overlying peace that they radiate.

What other clues can I find? There is where they live: the land, the lake, and the true friends in the neighbourhood. There is a quiet pride in their children.

There is another factor I can't overlook. Throughout my interview they both continually refer to their lives in the context of "we". I question this team approach and they agree that they both have been involved in the same causes. They say that although they may each specialize, they both basically agree on what are important issues as well as where the balance is between private and public life. As an outsider, I am impressed by the support system they have in each other, partly born from years of familiarity and mutual respect, but partly from their innate similarities.

There is also the ability to find fun and enjoy - whether it's a walk in the woods, singing in a group, reading books out loud to each other, or writing outrageous poems for the enjoyment of Highlands children. Very recently, Elliott published his first book of poems.

Whatever it takes to find this peace, I cannot yet figure out the recipe. I will continue to take notes. All I know is that as I left their home, I felt inspired to take hold of life with the throttle full open. Thank you, Kathy and Elliott.



RECIPE CORNER



Ask a busy person with a family for a simple, easy-to-produce recipe, and the following is the result from Dianne Gill:

Ingredients: 1 red leaf lettuce
2 ripe avocados
1 tomato
1 red onion, finely chopped

Dressing: 3 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
zest of 1 lemon
3 cloves garlic
a dash (or squirt) Worcestershire sauce
pepper and salt to taste

Chop or tear lettuce into small pieces. Scoop out avocado meat into small balls, chop tomato into small pieces, and mix all with chopped onion. Crush garlic and add to other ingredients for delicious dressing which is either poured over salad or added to taste individually.

If any of the above ingredients are not available, substitute favourite other vegetables. Your limit is your imagination!

Now that your mouth is watering for the delicious-sounding salad, let us find out who contributed it. Dianne, with husband Rick and 4 children, came to live in the Highlands 6 years ago, and almost immediately she joined the Highlands Fire Department as a volunteer. She has become very attached to the rural environment and even more attached to the Fire Department, where she works with "the greatest bunch of people who have the best Fire Chief in the world"! Hard work and practice make for a safer place for all Highlanders to live and sleep peacefully, knowing that the possibility of a fire or other disaster will be dealt with efficiently and effectively. When not caring for her family and a variety of animals, including dogs, sheep and chickens, Di owns and operates Gino Cappuccino, a busy coffee bar in the Broadmead Shopping Centre.

Having asked her to contribute one of her favourite recipes, I now wonder how she found time to write the details out for the Highlander - in between running a home, mini farm, business and being very much part of the volunteer force of the Highlands District.

Thank you, Di!