

# VALLEY HISTORY

## AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 342-9769 FEBRUARY 2008



George, Rikuso ( Harry ), Frank, 'T', and Bu  
1920's

### FUTA FAMILY BUSINESSES

**1942-** The family arrived in Invermere from Cranbrook. The family was made up of Harry, the father, age 79, T. Futa, the mother, age 70, and the sons, George 30, Bu John 28, and Frank 24.

**1943-** George worked for Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruit Lands Ltd. George and Alice Edmunds married in June. George acquired a buzz saw to cut firewood for people. He did this in his spare time for 2 years.

**1944-** The three brothers built a sawmill to cut rail ties and started cutting west of town. ( Invermere ).

**1945-** The brothers carried on with the sawmill. The war ended in August. Their mother died in August.

**1946-** They carried on with the sawmill. Set up in town just below the old provincial building, cutting ties and supplying firewood and

sawdust.

**1947-** Expanded the sawmill and moved up old Toby road near town. Made the mill larger to cut long lumber with a crew of over a dozen people.

**1948-** Moved sawmill up to Brewer Creek about 20 miles from town. Built new roads and a camp for the crew. Between cost of this move and slump in the lumber market, we were in dire financial straits during the winter of '48-49 and did not operate all of 1949.

**1949-** We brothers worked out this year. George worked for Roy Lake, Bu for the Dept. of Northern Affairs, and Frank for a mill in Cranbrook. Father died in February.

**1950-** A boom came in the lumber industry this spring so we went back to Brewer Creek, and started up the sawmill. We expanded the mill, installed a planer and trucked the lumber to Calgary. Bu did not return to sawmill but stayed on with Northern Affairs near the coast. .

**1951-** Frank and I ( George ) continued with the sawmill and had up to 40 people on the payroll. However, we were able to clean up our financial troubles and successfully completed this timber limit.

**1952-** Timber ran out so we operated on small private timber lots and then closed out our sawmill operations. We bought a house in Athalmer and moved there.

**1953-**We gradually disposed of sawmill machinery and equipment and I started a sales agency with a vacuum cleaner line. Frank and I rented Mrs. Slump's Pool Room in Athalmer and opened it. We also stacked some home appliances. We hired electricians and plumbers and did wiring and installations between Canal Flats and Golden, as B.C. Hydro had just installed power from Spillimacheen.

**1954-**We lost our lease on the Pool Hall building so we built a store in Invermere. ( Uncle John's Floors) ( Lordco- 2008 ) We started with Home Appliances and electrical sales and service. The business was named Futa Sales Agency.

**1955-** I built a house ( across from Strands ). It was the first NHA house in the area. We expanded the business to include distributorship for Oglivie Flour Mills, Robin Hood Mills, Palm Dairies, Home Provisioners, and Alta Soft Drinks. We built a warehouse behind the store to accommodate these supplies. We opened a branch appliance store in Golden, B.C. under the management of Bu Futa who returned from a job with Northern Affairs. This store closed in a year due to ill health. Bu worked in the Valley for the school board, Joe Conroy, Thorne Riddell & Co. and part time surveying until his health failed and he was unable to work the last ten years of his life. He died April 1976.

**1956-**The Futa Sales Agency carried on. We delivered from Invermere to Kimberley south and Golden north and the business prospered during the next four years. We acquired Propane dealership from Roy Lake Auto Service. And started experimenting with T.V. reception. Frank Futa went out to Barber School and joined Jim Thompson's Barber Shop in the Toby Block.

**1957-**Business continues. Frank with Jim Thompson for 2 years then bought the shop and was then joined by Duane Clark. He sold out to Duane in 1962. Frank went to work for several sawmills and Western Gyp-

sum until moving to Cranbrook in 1969. Futa Sales Agency opened a furniture department in Toby Block for a few months of this year but closed for lack of volume within 6 months.

**1959-**Carried on as Futa Sales Agency. Did more testing for T.V. signals.

**1960-**Started to install a coin laundry and coin dry cleaning area in appliance store. Put on an addition on the corner of the building to display appliances and TV's. Installed a T.V. booster in area, and operated till legal CFCN station was established on Panorama Mountain.

**1961-62-** Carried on with business.... Coin Laundry, Appliances, Flour & Feed, Propane, Ice cream, electrical , Radio and T.V Sales and Service.

**1965-**Opened a Take-out Dairy Bar. A summer operation on the corner of the store.

**1966-69-**Sold out the whole business operation to Lou Adams in the spring of 1966. I joined Excelsior Life Insurance. 1967 I opened a Car Wash at Weir Motors building, and ran it for 2 seasons then sold to Ray Taft. Then I moved to Cranbrook in August 1969. Frank went to Kimberley and Cranbrook in the spring of 1969 to work with A.R.D.A.-Canada Land Survey B.C. ( Agricultural & Rural Development Act. )

**1976-** Bu Futa passed away April 14 in Cranbrook District Hospital and is buried in Cranbrook, B.C.

**1979-** Robert J. Futa earned his interprovincial journeyman carpenter's ticket, having apprenticed with Bavin Construction ( Hal Bavins Custom Home-building Company ) , and began his own contracting Company because Hal was going to retire. Family obligations kept the company small but he worked with several locals to build their custom homes from foundation to rooftop and also crafted many fine pieces of custom furniture.

**1981-** Justin Drew Futa born December 29 to Jean Futa.

**1990**– Jean Futa registered a limited company to purchase the local cappuccino bar ( “Harnet’s Coffee”?) and combined it with inventory purchased from the closing liquidation sale of Mountain High Natural Foods. She called the business The Good Nature Store, importing fine roasted coffee beans from Cochrane Coffee in Cochrane, Ab. and providing the Valley with health and herbal supplements. A firm believer in “ supporting your local sheriff”, she was one of the first retail distributors for Kicking Horse Coffee.

**1994**– George Futa passed away May 20 in Cranbrook, B.C.

**1999**– Frank Futa passed away May 10 in Cranbrook, B.C.

**2000**– Jean sold The Good Nature Store to Mustard Seed Eco-Market on April 6.

**2006**– Shizu E.M. ( Mary-Lou ) Futa began operating as an independent bookkeeping contractor and also put her Touch for Health qualifications to work, setting up “ Touching Tranquility” in the reading room at the new location for Mustard Seed Health Foods ( formerly Mustard Seed Eco-Market ).

Throughout their lives, the Futa brothers were avid outdoorsmen, enjoying fishing and hunting, in varying degrees . All three are now resting near their parents in the Catholic Cemetery in Cranbrook. George's children live in other locations in B.C. but Bu’s children continue to call the Upper Columbia Valley “ home”, having grown up appreciating its natural beauty. Like himself, Bu’s children( Anne, Shizu, Robert, and Jean ) are advocates for environmental-ly sound practices and sustainable living.

**2007**- Robert passed away, suddenly and unexpectedly, July 30.

**2008-01-15**

**Appendix to Futa Family Businesses by  
George Futa  
Shizu E. M. Futa**

## **My First Driver’s License By Ray Crook**

Like most teenage boys, I was keen to drive a car and after September 1, 1934 when I became sixteen years of age, I was old enough to be issued a driver’s license. To obtain this, one had to have a driver’s test and this was given to me by Constable Robert ( Bob) Pritchard who was in charge of the Invermere detachment of the B. C. Provincial Police.

Bob was a large Welshman, and when I presented myself at his office, proceeded to show me some card tricks with a deck of cards he produced from a desk drawer. Perhaps this was done to put me at ease, or it could be that he liked to show off his skill.

After this came the time when I had to show him if I was able to drive. The vehicle used was my brother’s Model ‘B’ Ford. Ever heard of a “ Model B?” It was only in production a short time between the model A and Ford’s V8.

To get back to the driver’s test, Constable Pritchard had me drive around the town a bit. I remember that on the way, there was a cow grazing on the side of the road and Bob said “ You always have to be careful passing a cow for you are never sure of when they will take a notion to cross the road.” In his soft accented Welsh voice the word cow came out as ‘ coo.’ In later years, I came to know this good man quite well and he spent his old age living alone in a small house on 13th Ave, having outlived his wife by many years.

I was issued a license to drive with no restrictions for the sum of one dollar.

A note from **Dennis Williamson**  
regarding:  
“ **The Reunion of the Builders of the  
Community Hall** ”

“ After the basement was dug by the team of horses, the ramp coming out of the hole was in the north east corner and had to be removed manually. As I recall, several men with shovels, and Bud Cleland, who donated the use of a Ford Ferguson farm tractor owned by the Invermere Contracting Co. , did the job. Roy Broadfoot and I took turns driving the tractor which had a hydraulically operated bucket on the back. We would back the tractor up to the edge of the hole and the shovel brigade would load it up and then we would drive it off and dump it.”

( Dennis Williamson is the son of George Williamson and May Starke. Now residing in Kingston Ont. )

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**Mrs. Nita Gordon**

Nita was the wife of Alexander ( Sandy ) Gordon. Sandy had arrived in Wilmer in 1911 to work for Dr. Turnor on the Benches. He worked for a year to repay Dr. Turnor for his boat fare. He was only 16. He returned home to fight in the First World War. After the war he returned to Wilmer. Nita came to Radium in 1923 to work for Blakely's Hotel. There she met Sandy who was working at the Radium Hot Springs as a pool attendant. They were married in Calgary. They raised Ward, Peggy, Bernard and Doreen.

**Early Mail Service**

Until 1883, the nearest post office was at Bonner's Ferry , Washington and the citizens provided their own service from that point. Predictably, the service was very irregular.

Beginning in 1883, the mails for the Kootenay District left Victoria once a month by pack horse and were due at their destination within 15 days. The mail seldom arrived on time. From November until the following June, there was no mail. Mail for the Windermere District was left at the St. Eugene Mission which was the nearest post office.

It was not until 1888 that Captain F.P.Armstrong contracted to deliver the mail once a week from Golden. After the turn of the century, Rufus Kimpton also provided regular mail delivery.

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**We Thank Artym Gallery**

During 2006, “ The Columbia Valley Map Book”, featured a beautiful giclee called “ Chisel Peak From Lake Windermere” by Cameron Bird.

For every giclee sold by Artym Gallery, a percentage was donated to the Windermere District Historical Society.

The cost of each picture is:

20" x 15" framed - \$675.00

unframed- \$450.00

40" x 30" framed- \$1640.00

unframed- \$1200.00

This has been ongoing and as of the end of 2007 a total of \$2700.00 has been donated to the Windermere District Historical Society by the Artym Gallery.

Thank you very much!

( compiled by – Sandy McKay )