

VALLEY HISTORY

AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 250-342-9769 February 2009



Dino and Shelagh Dehart

Dino Dehart was born in Switzerland in the Canton of Ticino in the mountain village of Olivone in 1907. He was a Swiss-Italian and one of nine children born to Eugene and Virginia DeGrussa. In the years of his youth there were many good times with the family but there were also hard times leading up to and into the depression years. As a young teen Dino worked for others in the village and eventually left home to work in a bakery in Biasca. During these years he made friends with Andrew Breda and Carlo Bassi, they became life long friends. These three decided to relocate to Canada where they heard a better life and living could be had. They arrived by boat in Montreal and then traveled by train to British Columbia. None of them could speak English at this point and that in itself proved to be a huge challenge. Dino's first night in the Columbia Valley was spent in the Delphine Hotel (in Wil-

mer) in an upstairs room. He was 21 years old. Upon waking up that first morning he felt somewhat at home because he was in the mountains. Dino's first experience with Radium Hot Springs was to secure room and board, which he did by living in a cabin at the bottom of Sinclair Creek owned by Jack McCullough. At one point he delivered the mail for Radium from the train station, which was below Radium Hot Springs and near the Columbia River, to the Blakely Hotel which was up near where the pools are today. On this daily trip, he always passed the one room schoolhouse where Norma MacKie was the schoolteacher. She was a city girl and always had a terrible time to light the wood fire in the stove, as she usually piled the paper and kindling so flat it would never light as it couldn't breathe. Dino was always kind enough to get it going for her to heat the place for her and the students. During these first years, Dino worked in the park on the Kootenay road. The men at that time thought nothing of living in tents and "batching" for themselves.

Dino was a tall dark and handsome man that loved good times and loved to dance. It has been said that in those days the wonderful dances in Edgewater never began until Dino arrived.

Dino also was asked to be the lifeguard for the Radium pool after a direction came down from Government sources, that for legalities, the pool needed one. Dino took the job that entailed helping crippled and infirm people down the steps and trail to the pool . Even carrying them ' piggy-back'. The truth of the matter was that Dino could not , and never did, swim.

Lizette (Shelagh) Palmer was born on April 1st, 1910 to her parents William Hobbs Palmer (a Scotsman from Amherst, Nova Scotia) and Amelia Palmer. (Amelia was the daughter of the last hereditary chief of the Shuswap people, Pierre Kinbasket.) Lizette was the middle girl of a family of 7 sisters and spent her young years growing up with her parents and grandparents in the Columbia Valley . At the age of 10 she was sent off to the Saint Eugene Mission School for an education. (Lizettes story is told in a book published in 2006 titled “ The Kinbasket Migration and other Indian History by Shelagh Palmer Kinbasket Dehart.)

Lizette left the school in 1928 and soon secured a job with the Blakley Hotel in Radium Hot Springs. She was an extremely shy and quiet girl and found it very hard to serve the public as a waitress and desk clerk but soon learned under the stern hand of Jessie Blakley. Lizette worked for the Blakley Hotel for about five years and during that time she met Dino.

Dino and Lizette often recalled their happy times as young people with many outings as far as Jasper and Banff when Dino had his first car. Some of their best times were when attending local and Edgewater dances when names such as Dorothy Brown, Leonard and Jo Cobb , many of the Tegarts , the Harrison boys and of course the Blakley boys were mentioned.

On December 21, 1933 Dino and Lizette were married in Cranbrook, B.C. In attendance were her sister Flora Larson and her husband. Their first son Floyd (Biron) was born in 1934 and at this time they bought 18 acres of land in Stoddart Creek from Lizette’s parents, William and Amelia Palmer.

They had chickens and a cow and also a big garden so Lizette was able to sell or barter in Athalmer with some of the stores for things like sugar and coffee in return for eggs, cream and milk. In May of 1940, their daughter June (Dorothy) was born in the

Lady Bruce Hospital on the shore of Lake Windermere.

There were many years spent in Port Moody and Port Coquitlam where Dino worked as a heavy-duty mechanic for a trucking company in New Westminster.

In September of 1943, their son Eric (Don) was born in the Royal Columbian Hospital. A few of these years on the coast were very trying with sickness for Dino and Eric especially. Both almost dying of appendicitis. It spent almost all their resources and their spirits. At this time they joined a numerology society called Kabalarians. It was during this time that they took a name change and the sir name ‘ DeGrussa ’ became ‘ Dehart ’. Lizette took Shelagh as her name and the children took different names. Floyd became Biron, June became Dorothy and Eric became Don. They spent 10 years on the coast before returning to Radium Hot Springs in 1952. (footnote by Dorothy)

I accompanied Dad on his very first trip back to Switzerland in 1967. He had not had a return to his home in over 35 years. The reception he got was truly wonderful with TV coverage and all of his family in attendance. At that time there were still six of his brothers and sisters living. They gave a large dinner party in his honor with some of the family making speeches. I was so proud and pleased of him when a prominent brother-in-law got up and said that the family wanted Dino to return to Switzerland and that they had the funds to assist him in setting up a business for himself and his family. Dino got up and thanked the gathering and family members for their so very kind offer and said that he loved Canada and that the Columbia Valley and Radium Hot Springs was now truly his home. Dino was a proud Canadian!

**by Dorothy (Dehart) Connolly
(photo courtesy of Shelan Verge)**

(For a full Dehart/Kinbasket History, please see Dehart File in the Museum.)

Carl Bloom

In the winter of 1919 Carl Bloom and two companions cut ties and piled them on the banks of the Bull River. Come spring, the swelling waters would whisk thousands of jack-pine ties downstream.

No tie mills in those days. Just husky Swedes and Norwegians mostly swinging heavy broad axes to hew ties to serve as a backbone for a hungry railroad.

Carl said, "The average man would cut about 40 ties a day. At 25 cents per tie that was \$6.00 a day. Big money for those days. We worked from first light till dark, six days a week."

Carl remembers one particular young man who became a near legend in his day. His name was **Gunner Almlie**. A strapping young Norwegian lad over 6 feet tall and 200 lbs. Carl said, "This Gunner was like a machine. While others did well to make 30-40 ties a day, Gunner would cut from 90 to 100. I remember him well. He was big but didn't look big. His face was thinner than most and when he worked he made it look easy. Always singing and whistling but boy those chips would fly."

One day word came that inspectors from Calgary were coming to check up on this human phenomenon. They didn't believe his tally or that it was possible to cut that many ties in a day.

The thicket of trees started falling like ripe grain before a sickle. Tree trunks littered the ground and the amazing Gunner cut and hewed 33 trees before their unbelieving eyes in just one hour. That's better than one tie every two minutes. The inspectors just shook their heads and walked away.

That winter Carl and his two companions built a log cabin that would shelter them until spring. "That cabin wasn't built fancy,

just fast," said Carl. "We couldn't make money building cabins."

The men worked from Monday to Saturday. Sunday was used for washing, cooking and baking to prepare for the next weeks work. Carl was the camp hunter and would provide the crew with goat and deer meat. "I would just as soon hunt as cut trees," he said.

When spring came, the three tie hackers picked up their cheques and went to the Old Country for a visit. Carl stayed in Sweden for two years then returned to Canada.

"I figured the C.P.R. would be running out of ties," he said. Then he broke into a hearty laugh with his Scandinavian blue eyes twinkling.

(Museum Files)

Valley News—1945

January- "John Appewhaite, our versatile townsman, has forsaken the bagpipes for the winter months and has joined the Williamson-Hillier Orchestra, playing a clarinet. We hope John revives his open air concerts for the summer months as the skirl of the pipes wafting over the peaceful air helps break the monotony of gardening in the warm summer evenings."

September- Invermere now has a group of Junior Forest Wardens who are being trained in Forest Protection and the preservation of wildlife.

The boys are receiving instruction from Forest Ranger J.L. Johnson and Game Warden H. Tyler. Later in the season it is hoped to take the group on an outing to give them practical experience.

Junior Forest Wardens to date are Jack Richardson, David Lewis, Edward Fuller, Lloyd Smith, Eugene Durand and Frank Johnson. Their uniforms consist of red shirts, forest green hats and ties to match.

Invermere Regatta

Greetings,

I read with considerable interest your request for info on the Invermere Regatta, in the June 27th (08) issue of the Pioneer. I remember it well from it's very beginning in 1958.

It started as a cooperative effort of local businesses, community leaders and Calgary recreation home owners, mostly situated on the east side of the lake. Charlie Osterloh and Chris Madson of Invermere were some of those locals involved in its formation, as was Harry Thompson and Dave Balfour, early recreation home owners on lower Lakeview Road. (1956-57)

The first regatta followed a colorful parade put on by various merchants and special groups through the streets of downtown Invermere. The Regatta itself took place at Kinsman Beach on July 27, 1958 and for many years thereafter on or near the last weekend in July. Volunteers built the ski jump, swim racing floating pool and set the slalom course annually. Competition included age category water skiing events of slalom, ski jumping, individual trick skiing, swim races and demonstrations of group skiing stunts. As the years passed, more and more got involved and competitors attended other regattas like the large , well established Sylvan Lake Regatta in Alberta.

If you are interested, this now 67 year old, still with a home in Invermere, won the " Junior Trick Skiing event" in 1958. I performed on a rope-less saucer, pulled by a 12 ft. boat with a 35 hp Evinrude motor

with a step ladder which I climbed and held the ski rope with one foot ! It was a tough finals against a local young man, who skied directly off the shore on two canoe paddles, no harness on the paddles ! I have the trophy to this day and would be happy to donate it to your museum. I also have a framed copy of the 1961 Regatta program, which features a picture on the cover taken in 1960. Many of the people in the photo are identifiable. I may have other still photos and even footage on 8mm. Best Regards,

Jim Thompson- July 04, 2008

James Carlton Pitts

Jim Pitts came from Ontario to Donald B.C. where he worked with Rufus Kimpton. In 1890 he married Mary Alice Behan who had come West from Pembroke Ontario to join her sister Celina.(Mrs. Rufus Kimpton.)

In 1900 the family, which now included four daughters: Gladys, Dorothy, Muriel and Greta dismantled their home and moved it to Windermere where Mr. Pitts and Mr. Kimpton opened a General store. It had been James Brady's store.

The partnership split with Mr. Kimpton concentrating on his ranching and stage line and Mr. Pitts taking over the store.

Mr. Pitts formed another partnership with Mr. Hankey and in 1912 they opened a second store in Invermere. In 1914 Mr. Hankey went to war and didn't return. Mr. Pitts took over management of the Invermere store and his daughter Gladys ran the Windermere store.

(compiled by Sandy McKay)