

# VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A IK0 250-342-9769 August 2014



**William and Judith McKay  
May 24, 1926**

“A policeman’s lot is not a happy one.”

So went the well-known Gilbert and Sullivan ditty and maybe where “constabulary duties to be done” were concerned a policeman’s lot left much to be desired some years ago. However William ( Bill ) McKay survived some 35 years of constabulary duties in seemingly fine fettle or is it because his wife, Judy, took such good care of him ?

And if a policeman’s lot is not a happy one, what of a policeman’s wife ? Did her husband’s job make her lot a difficult one ? The only way to find out was to ask... so I did. After 32 years as a policeman’s wife, Judy McKay should know the answers. Mrs. McKay admitted she suffered a bit of disillusionment when her husband became a policeman. “ I thought a man should be home for breakfast and usually for dinner but sometimes Bill was not home for either

and sometimes midnight brought my first glimpse of him for the day. It was a good thing I like to read and sew because I spent many lonely evenings. ”

Mrs. McKay said their first posting on the police force was to Grand Forks where the two-man force made up the detachment. She found as the children grew older she had to be father as well as mother at times. Once she turned up at a Father-Son banquet as father when Bill was called away at the last moment, and once she scouted the neighborhood for a proxy father at the 11th hour.

One problem the McKay’s faced like other policemen’s families, “ A policeman’s son, like a clergyman’s, is always on view. People expect them to behave, and like all normal kids they have their moments.” The McKays remember one of their boys exclaiming in a moment of exasperation, “I wish my father was something else instead of a policeman ! ”

Mrs. McKay recalled an incident one Christmas Day when her husband was constable at Rossland. They were just sitting down to Christmas dinner when a report came of an attempted murder— a wife had taken a knife to her husband. Bill got hold of the aggressive spouse, but there were no woman's quarters in the jail, so he took her home . Judy fed the woman and put her to bed. She took her clothes away so she couldn’t run off and hid all the knives in the house.

Moving around so much is one of the disadvantages of being a policeman’s wife, Mrs. McKay said. They were married 35 years ago and Mr. McKay was then a Game-warden which was a part of the police department. Then the Game Department separated from the police and Bill decided to stay with the police. He was

moved to Grand Forks at a few days' notice and Judy was left behind to pack up.

"It was 20 below zero. There were no packers in those days so Mr. Frater made crates and I packed them. I packed and packed and finally I got sick of packing so I just sold the rest."

She got to Grand Forks just five days before Christmas and the big job of unpacking began. "What a hectic five days getting settled. I thought it would be nice to go to the hotel for Christmas dinner as I had been so busy but Bill had had a month of hotel living and he didn't see it my way so we bought a chicken and cooked it for Christmas dinner." That was just the first of many moves. Judy became a pretty proficient packer through the years !

The McKay's were married in Golden in 1926. Judy Larson had lived in Golden since she was three. Bill is a Valley product, born and bred. They have lived in a lot of places in B.C. but they came back to the Valley to retire. Why ?

" Well," says Judy "We both feel the Valley is home to us. Bill likes the hunting and fishing and I like to have my man happy. "

( By Ron Ede—January 1961 )

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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 Blakley's at the 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.

## **David Thompson Memorial Fort The Final Days**

Please accept this letter as a correction, and addition, to information which you have on file regarding the grand old building known as the David Thompson Memorial Fort which existed on the "Fort Point" in Invermere from the early 1920's until the late 1960's.

An undated memo which you have on file and which I understand was written by the late Winn Weir sets out much of the history of the building. The last paragraph of the memo states:

"Aubrey Young and Fred Becker of Invermere purchased the land for a residential subdivision. Contractors Tom Andruschuk and Doug and Don Sinclair tore the Fort down and you know the rest of the story."

The last sentence is not correct. The building was not torn down by those named. The following provides information from one of those individuals.

An article in a local newspaper in August, 2007 reported the above as facts, which did not agree with my recollections, and so I met in Calgary with Don Sinclair on August 18, 2007 for clarification. ( Tom Andruschuk was my father, and he passed away in 2006. Don Sinclair was married to Tom's sister ( my aunt ), and Doug Sinclair ( also now deceased ) was Don's brother ) .

In a letter to me, Don set out the following along with other details about the property ( quotes are direct from the letter ):

\* In 1958 or 1959, he and Doug and two others ( not my father ) purchased the property from "Irrigated Fruit Lands Ltd". "The purchase price was \$7,000.00. "

\*"The property was comprised of a two story log building situated on four acres of land on the Fort Point overlooking Lake Windermere in the Village of Invermere. The building itself measured 45x60 feet and was constructed of cedar logs –both walls and roof. The large stone fireplace stood

almost 20 feet high and would take 6 foot logs. The property also contained the remains of a surrounding stockade with two block houses on the north corners of the property. The Fort was constructed in 1922 by the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway jointly, and was for a number of years used as the Community Centre for the Invermere, Athalmer and Windermere communities.”

\* “Don and Doug Sinclair sold the property to Sepp Wenger in 1965 or 1966 on the understanding that the building would be maintained on the property, for \$15,000.00.”

\* “Mr. Wenger subsequently burned down the venerable and historic building”.

My personal interest in the property comes from the fact that my family moved to Invermere in 1959 so that my father could start a construction company with Don and Doug Sinclair. The Fort was the base for their company, and I spent many hours there as a youngster. Had the Fort not been here and not been owned by the Sinclairs, it is unlikely my family would have moved here.

I believe it would be appropriate to add a notation to the last paragraph of Winn’s memo referring to this letter— as an historian who I knew and respected I am sure she would not have objected.

Richard T. Andruschuk  
December 11, 2007

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### **Stagecoaches**

The last stage coach trip in the Valley was in 1910 . The stage would stop the night at Spillimacheen on its trip north to Golden and at Canal Flat on the trip south to Fort Steele. The Stage carried the mail as well as passengers. The trips ended when Jim McKay began competition with a motor car in 1910 and in 1914 the opening of the railway brought more competition and services.

### **Munn Lake Ranch**

In August 1904, Captain Henry Toke Munn bought 200 acres from the C.P.R. Land Department and started ranching.

He built an impressive stone house. It was near the lake , which is called Munn Lake, just west of Wilmer. He also built barns, corrals and other farm buildings. He engaged in mixed farming.

In 1915 he was still in residence and many Army and Naval officers were called back into service. He joined them.

In the 1920’s, the Simon Olson family rented the ranch. They had a large family, the children were: Ole, Margaret, Evelyn, Helen, Alice, Hugo and Edna. The family raised cows and sold milk and butter. They also had a large garden. Mr. Olson had a sawmill on part of the property. They at first lived in a small grey house, but later built on the original Munn site. Mr. Olson died in an accident, then later so did Ole. Helen also died but it was as the result of an explosion.

In 1935, Bert and Ed Barbour bought the ranch. There was a total of 240 acres. They each bought 120 acres. It became a cattle ranch with 200 Herefords. They also had pack horses, work horses, and engaged in mixed farming with hay fields and potatoes. In 1985 the ranch was sold to Doreen Gordon. Kirk Mauthner bought the ranch in 2006.

( Museum Files )

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### **Annie B. Crook**

Charles and Annie Crook arrived in Athalmer from England in 1910. Charles had met Percy Lake in 1908 in Castor, Alberta where Percy was delivering some wild horses. By 1910 Percy and Charles had decided to become partners in a livery business. . They bought the business in Athalmer from Sam Brewer. Annie and Charles had two sons, Raymond and Charles.

## Scent or Sex

From— Bunkhouse to Boardroom by  
Dr. Ken Williams

Another time, Jack ( McKill ) spotted a cat track which we followed and came across a skunk that had been shot. Near by was a litter of six very small, cute and cuddly little skunks. So we brought them home. They were clean, odorless and friendly and we let them poke around the house, on the dining room table. Joy and the youngsters enjoyed them. After about six weeks we decided to remove their scent glands, and they became friendlier than ever. Shortly after, Jack brought Ian McTaggart-Cowan over to see the skunks. He was a consulting wildlife biologist to the B.C. Game Department ( later Chancellor of UBC.) He was interested in them because Vancouver's Stanley Park Zoo was looking for skunks and would we like to contribute them ? Joy thought that an excellent idea so Dr. Cowan took them with him. End of skunk story ? Not really . Three or four months later I received a letter from him to the effect that while no doubt my reputation as a good physician was justified, he nonetheless couldn't subscribe to any contention that I was a good veterinarian. Apparently I had taken out their testes instead of their smellies. Subsequently, on a Sunday afternoon with lots of zoo visitors present, some youngsters got to poking sticks and teasing the skunks which turned on them. They sprayed the kids and the on-lookers more than once .

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## Barbara Smith

Barbara and Eric Smith came to the Valley from England in 1914. They first settled at Luxor ( Big Vermillion ) where Eric worked for the Telephone company. They were just putting the line through the Valley. They moved to Invermere where Eric worked for the Experimental Farm. In 1918 they purchased the U5 Ranch in Edgewater. They had five children—Geoff, Ted, Dorothy ( Brown ) , Charles and Margaret (Meg) .

## Mr. and Mrs. Pope

Mr. and Mrs. Pope and two sons, Chris and Ken, came to the Valley in 1911. Their land overlooked the Valley on the east edge of the Benches. They built a large frame house painted grey and with a large glass sun porch. I remember a long flight of steps leading up to the house. When they left I don't know, but in 1923, Mr. and Mrs. Ley and son Peter bought it. They were Roman Catholic and turned one of the barns into a chapel. The traveling Priest held services there and always rode a fine black horse. Peter Ley dashed about the country with a white horse and sleigh or buggy. Mrs. Ley loved the life but her husband was an Oxford Professor and like a fish out of water, so they returned to England after a few years and the place went back to the CVI .

( Phyllis Falconer Files )

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## MOVIE NIGHT at the MUSEUM

Arnor Larson is preparing a fall program to begin the third season. If you like old movies from the 1897 to 1974 period, but haven't been getting the monthly email notices, let the museum know and we'll add you.

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## ALERT— YOU CAN HELP

Some historic movies are not on DVD. Do you have a working VCR player we could use to show VHS tapes ? If it is no longer in use, would you donate it to the museum's Old Time Movie Program ? Contact the museum or Arnor Larson 342-7252

(Compiled by Sandy McKay )