

**Note: Jo Hammond was present during most of the interview.**

*Your grandparents were John (Jack) Latimer Hammond and Mary (May) Hammond, is that correct? They came from Nelson Island?*

They lived there for quite a while, but they were from Texada. His name was Jack. His only son called him Jack, and I only knew him as Jack.

*And Mary (May) Hammond was your grandmother?*

Yes.

*They moved to Sechelt in 1920. Do you know where they moved to?*

Selma Park. In fact father bought them the Selma Park store which they ran for a few years. His mother always wanted a store. Her notion of success. Didn't work out that well. She had her daughters running it and they weren't very industrious.

*She had one on Nelson Island briefly, didn't she?*

Hardy Island, actually. Near the granite quarry. That was a failure, but it wasn't her fault. Because of the war it closed down.

*Is that why they moved to Sechelt in the first place?*

No, she wanted to get out of the wilds up there. Her husband had gone to New Zealand and the family was scattering.

*Did he ever come back from New Zealand?*

No. He never came back.

*Where did your parents settle when they moved here?*

Well, for the first seven years they were in one logging camp or another. The age of seven was when conventionally you went to school. So father moved to Selma Park, across from the old store, actually. He lived there about a year,

*Is that where you started school?*

No, a little before. When I started school he had built at Wilson Creek and I went to school from there.

*Where was your place located at Wilson Creek?*

Beside the original Chapman Creek. It was diverted a long time ago. He had 120 acres the Gibsons side of Chapman Creek.

*Was it a homestead?*

No, he bought it.

*What was there? Did it have a house or did he have to build one?*

He built one.

*Did it have electricity and running water?*

Yes. Primitive. There was a well with a pump that went out to a tank to give pressure. It was pumped by a windmill. There were storage batteries in the shed by the well. It was quite sophisticated for those days.

*Did he build it?*

Yes.

We had a 1500-gallon tank on a 40-foot stand above the house. It had good pressure.

*He was quite an ingenious person. From what I've read about him. He helped his sisters and mother.*

He had lots of skills. Whatever he did, he did it well, even if he didn't always choose to do it.

*What are your earliest memories growing up? Do you remember Wilson Creek at all?*

Oh, yes. I was seven. I can remember back to the age of a little over three.

*In logging camps?*

Yes. That was in Fredericks Arm where we first moved to after I was born. I remember wading out to a little rock and putting my finger in an anemone which closed on it and gave me enough of a shock that it stuck in my memory.

*What were your memories of Wilson Creek when you moved there?*

Just living in the bush.

*It was all bush at the time?*

Pretty well. There was a field below our house where loggers had kept horses. An old barn. Mostly bush. Quite large trees. Father cleared it fairly quickly and planted apple trees and had a large garden. One of my less pleasant memories was of weeding acres of carrots it seemed to me. Farmers were always ready for a hard winter.

*So weeding was one of the chores you did. Did you have other chores you had to do? Always.*

Always a son or a daughter had to work hard. Clearing land, cutting wood. Carrying wood. Father would work ten hours and come back and work another six until dark on the farm.

He worked by the tides, sometimes all night.

*What was he doing?*

He was the head boom man for Jackson Logging.

*How long did you live at Wilson Creek?*

We moved away from there to here when I was sixteen.

*So this was actually your father's property?*

No. He bought property in Gibsons. Behind Armours Beach. Then we moved into the bay into this house and then moved this house here. We had a chance to change that property for this one which was better.

*What schools did you attend at Wilson Creek?*

My first school was a little thing run by an English woman named Mrs. Cawley on the shore at Davis Bay. Then there was a little school in Wilson Creek that was more official. It lasted for a while and then most pupils were transferred to the West Sechelt school.

*That was a long way to go.*

Yes. A long bus ride.

*It was a bus?*

Yes.

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*What was the bus like?*

Full of noisy kids. Can't remember much else.

I was at the opening of the Sechelt Consolidated School [March 1939.] Not that I was thrilled by it.

*Why weren't you thrilled?*

I hated school.

*Because you had to sit still?*

Because there were a lot more interesting things to do than learning things you didn't need to know.

(Jo: Like going down to the beach at lunchtime.)

I got away from school as soon as possible, for as long as possible.

*What grades did you go to?*

Altogether? I finished 13<sup>th</sup> grade at Gibsons. I did correspondence courses in a couple of the earlier grades at the Sechelt School after the war when they had no teachers for those subjects. But I never stopped going to school.

*This was during the war?*

Yes.

*How many years did you go to the Sechelt school?*

I moved to Gibsons when I was 16 and I graduated here when I was 16. (1945)

*What was the teaching like?*

The principal at Gibsons was excellent. Stan Truman. An excellent teacher. It shows even he can make a mistake.

(Jo: He died a few years ago.)

Yes. I always meant to contact him, but it was one of those things you put off for too long.

*What was different about his teaching technique that you admired?*

He made you interested in the subject.

(Jo: There's a picture of him in *Helen McCall's Community Album* and a quote about the school in Gibsons.)

I had other good teachers, but he stands out.

(Jo: I met Stan Truman in the early 70s when I was on the Arts Council and he was too. He said, "Oh, yeah, yeah. So you're married to Dick Hammond? He was a genius you know!")

I used to breeze through the IQ tests, mostly depending on having read things.

*You were an avid reader?*

I learned to read when I was four. My mother taught me from comic strips.

(Jo: And you used to send away to the Open Shelf Library. Also those travelling libraries.)

I guess I was a pretty bright student. I remember doing quadratics past the ones in our math books. It impressed him.

(Jo: Did he tell you when he first entered school they put him up two grades?)

*Because you could read?*

(Jo: It was a mistake because he was bullied terribly.)

*Was there a lot of bullying at that time, or was it because you were small?*

It was the custom. The small got kicked. When they got big they'd do a little kicking themselves. They frown on that now.

(Jo: They didn't have any rules about penknives in those days!)

Rules were fairly lax by today's standard anyway. One thing, discipline wasn't lax. A 3-foot

strap was kept in a corner by the door and used quite often.

*Did you ever feel it?*

Yes. The thing was to not show that you felt it. Once I couldn't hold my pen for the rest of the afternoon. One teacher was an old man who came out of retirement. His name was Mackie. I'm afraid I gave him a hard time and he didn't deserve it.

*What did you do to get the strap that time?*

Obviously something I shouldn't have done. Might have been the time I put sodium carbide in a girl's ink well. It fizzes and makes a bad smell. I didn't think anyone noticed that it was me that did it. Because there is was an interval between the time you put it in and when it fizzes.

*Where did you get it?*

From the lab. The lab was open.

(Jo: That was another thing they used to do differently. They used to play around with mercury and stuff like that.)

Once in a while our fingers got burned. We'd take metallic mercury and swirl it around in our mouths. It was a very strange feeling. Metallic mercury is totally harmless. It doesn't deserve its reputation. Mercury fumes or organic mercury compounds are dangerous, but not metallic mercury.

These days if it was discovered you'd spilled even a few tablespoons they'd bring in the hazardous materials crew. It gives me a chuckle or two.

(Jo: He had carte blanche to order chemicals he wanted when he was at Sechelt Elementary.)

One of the courses I was taking was a correspondence course which I was taking in school. You could order any materials required for the correspondence course, and nobody bothered to check if the materials I ordered were actually in the course. So I used to order things.

***Like?***

(Jo: Things that burned people's eyebrows off!)

Powdered red phosphorus. Several things that would make explosives. Never worked out too well-they always fizzed and I had to throw them out. I got good picric acid. It was a military explosive.

*When you were at school what kind of games did they play at recess? What recreational activities were there?*

The usual things-football, baseball. And we went out in the woods behind the school and climbed trees. I wasn't much of a game player. I was a loner because I'd been raised in the woods. Not that I didn't want to mix, I just didn't know how to do it. More often ended up in a fight as not.

*Did you ride on the Union Steamship boats?*

Oh yes.

*What was that like?*

Nice experience. What still impresses me in memory is the woodwork in the interior. The curves. Exotic woods. Wonderfully fashioned.

*What would be a reason for you going on the boat?*

Anything that required us to go to Vancouver, such as a visit to the PNE a couple of times. My mother didn't discuss her reasons. I'm afraid I wasn't even curious. Wonderful! We're going to Vancouver!

(Jo: She probably went to the doctors a lot. Your mother was a hypochondriac.)

Very likely.

*What did you usually do on the boat?*

Ran around and made a nuisance of myself.

(Jo: Like what?)

Running around. Being boisterous, like boys are.

(Jo: Did you get told off by the crew?)

No. Mostly I got dirty looks from the passengers.

(Jo: Did they play games? Get drunk on that boat?)

That came later. As an eight or nine year old I wasn't interested in what adults were doing. Later on when I used to go to logging camps on the *Chelohsin* and the others, the drunks were there.

*What was that like?*

Going back to camp with a shipload full of hungover drunks. Can't say it was noteworthy, actually. They'd have a bad headache and missing their whiskey or whatever. Not very sociable. Didn't have the energy to get into fights. At least, not always. It was boring.

(Jo: Who was it you fought with in the camp? Estonians?)

Some of them were Estonians.

(Jo: That was the one with the rock. It's a good job you fought in school, otherwise you would have been in trouble in the logging camps.)

*Where did you buy your clothes when you were growing up?  
What age?*

*As a teenager.*  
Local stores.

*Any particular one?*

Well, there was the Union Store in Sechelt which carried quite a wide range of things. And Whitaker's Store in Davis Bay. They had mostly groceries, but also a few other odds and ends. And Drummonds in Gibsons.

(Jo: A Drummond son was in your class in Gibsons. He went into insurance after that.)

*Who were your friends going through school and growing up?*  
Jacksons and Tysons.

*Which members of those families were you closest to?*

Pete Jackson. The son of the owner of the camp, and an adopted son, Alan.

Tysons were a good family. Tough, no nonsense loggers. They were trained the Spartan way. I remember being at their home once. Robert had fallen and cut himself, fairly badly on the side of his forehead. He came in crying and his father said, "What's the matter with you?" "I fell and hurt myself." "What are you crying for?" "Because it hurts." "Come over here, and I'll give you something to cry about!"

(Jo: Did he?)

He stopped crying.

(Jo: He didn't want to see if it needed stitches or anything?)

Stitches for something like that? You wouldn't even put a plaster over it to stop infection. It paid off.

*How so?*

If they hurt themselves, they didn't make a fuss about it. Just carried on with what they were doing.

A lot of people would interrupt their whole day for a bit of a bruise.

*Which Tyson were you closest to?*

Closest was Stan.(His brother Earl was a bit too young.) And Robert.

Produced good men. All the Tysons were decent characters, at least while I knew them.

*When you were old enough to go on dates, what did you do?*

I didn't date.

*For any reason?*

Mostly because there wasn't anybody around. Only a couple of girls and they were claimed early on by tougher boys than I was. There were a few attractive ones in Sechelt, but Sechelt from Wilson Creek seemed a long ways away.

(Jo: His parents used to go dancing a lot. Every weekend they went to one of the dance halls where his father played the accordion. They used to take him along with them.)

Because there were no babysitters.

(Jo: Yes. And he used to spend his time outside catching moths in the lights.)

I collected bugs. That's where I grew to hate dance music. Endlessly shuffling around the floor. And I didn't want to be there. I couldn't always go out and get bugs. Could be raining. Wouldn't be any bugs in the rain anyway. At least not the nice, attractive moths that I used to like.

(Jo: They used to go to Roberts Creek didn't they?)

Mostly the Roberts Creek Hall. Sometimes Gibsons. The biggest moths I caught were two fluttering around the light outside Gibsons Hall. Big *Cecropias*. Big as a hand.

*Did you ever have any emergency trips to the hospital in Pender Harbour?*

I'm afraid so. We lived on a hill at Wilson Creek. And the road ran like this, and our road came down like so. I came scooting down the hill [on my bike] out onto the main road-there was hardly ever any traffic-just in time to get in front of the neighbours car. Next thing I remember was the doctor telling me I'd be all right.

(Jo: Weren't you seven?)

No, probably eight or nine.

(Jo: Was that where Field Road is now?)

No.

(Jo: Further along towards Sechelt.)

Yes.

Then there was an ear infection that I went to Pender Harbour for. I was treated in Sechelt for the accident, but for the ear infection I spent three days in bed there.



*It would have been harsh in those days. They wouldn't have had antibiotics.*

(Jo: How old were you?)

Ten.

(Didn't antibiotics appear in the war? So, what did they do?)

Oh, they dripped something that smelled of peppermint in the ear.

(Jo: He remembers the ruins of that old mission at Wilson Creek.)

*What was it like?*

The creek is called Chapman Creek now. Mistakenly because Chapman didn't live anywhere near it. It should be called Henderson Creek if it is called anything. It was formerly Mission Creek because there was an old Spanish mission on the flat part near the mouth of the creek. I remember there was a white cross on the peak of the building.

*How big was it?*

That's difficult for a kid to remember.

*Was it log?*

No, I think it was lumber. It was timber. I seem to remember something about some timbers. It was built about halfway between the bridge and the salt water. Crab apples grew there.

(Jo: You mean that property that has been for sale by the bridge?)

The other side of it. Halfway between the bridge and the ocean. Crabapple flat there. The mission was there.

*No one was using it?*

Long before.

(Jo: you weren't allowed to go there?)

That didn't stop us from doing anything. It wasn't very interesting to me. It had been thoroughly cleaned out of anything people could use. Metal.

(Jo: That's when your father used to work at Jackson's logging grounds.)

Yes.

*What was your first job?*

When I was twelve years old I helped at the booming ground at Wilson Creek. I must have helped because I actually got paid for it. Which my mother promptly confiscated.

(Jo: Why?)

That's what you did in those days. They didn't allow kids to carry around money.

*Do you know how much you got?*

I think it was \$1.50 a day for four hours. I seem to remember that. So I must have done something useful because that was a fair sum of money at the time. Or maybe it was 50 cents. As I say, I never saw much of it. Times were hard. Long discussions in our house on how we were gonna pay the bills, how to pay the money on the farm.

(Jo: His father tried different things. Raising chinchillas and stuff like that. They all didn't work. The trapping did.)

We made a little money on trapping in the winter.

*What did you trap?*

The desirable things. Marten, otter, mink.

*Were there lots of them?*

I wouldn't say lots, but there were enough.

*How many would you get in a winter?*

I don't know.

*Did you help with the trapping?*

I don't know if you would call it "help." I went along. Carried whatever was necessary.

*Did you do any of the skinning?*

No. My dad was fussy about that. The least cut in the skin would drastically reduce the price. In those small animals with soft skin it was very easy to cut with a skinning knife. There is a way to unglove them, but that had to be done just right too. I'm not saying I couldn't have done it. Father wouldn't let me.

*Where would he do it? In a shed?*

Seems to me it was done on the verandah of the house. But the drying-the skins were salted and left to dry in the attic and the house smelled rather oddly of drying, salted skins all winter long.

(Jo: I'm surprised your mother put up with that.)

She was happy enough to get the money.

*Do you know what years that would be that he had his trapline?*

Yes. It would be about 1942 to 1945. He had trapped before that. He trapped all over the inlets. He actually started to trap Wilson Creek, probably as soon he started working at Jackson's camp. As soon as he lived at Wilson Creek.

I'm sure he started in 1937 because that's when he actually started to work at the camp. I have bad memories of trekking along the snow, my rubber boots full of caked snow, numb feet, numb fingers. That was probably when I learned not to complain.

(Jo: A short story in one of his books about that. When he was told to find his way home.)

*So your trapline was up Mission Creek. How far up would you go?*

Yes. Right to the top of the mountain.

(Jo: What mountain? Elphinstone?)

The shoulder of Elphinstone.

(Jo: I thought you went down the other way. The Porpoise Bay way.)

Yes, we went to Norwest Bay. The trapline extended to the other side of what is now Sargeant's Bay. We called it Norwest Bay.

*Did it border Solberg 's at all?*

They were on Porpoise Bay. Of course, that didn't stop them or us from setting traps in practical places that nobody else was using. Legally, father's extended from Sargeant's Bay to Wilson Creek and then as far as we could go into the mountains.

You had to buy a trapline license. Pay for it. They called it buying it, but actually you paid a fee for trapping. We weren't the first-father thought we were-to trap Mission Valley. Way up the valley one time he found a trap near a spot where he caught a marten. He was cleaning up and he found an old, old trap of a design that we'd never seen before. Haven't seen anybody who knows what it is.

(Jo: How old do you think it was?) It was rusted away.

Somebody long before we were there.

(Jo: Do you think it was an Indian's trap?) Could be.

*Did you socialize with the Indians very much?*

Not then. Father did. He liked the Indians.

*Why didn't you?*

Well, they were up there and we were down here. Just didn't have any reason to come together. Only time I socialized with them was at school. At football matches. They were enthusiastic players.

*Soccer or football?*

We called it football because we kicked the ball with our feet. Soccer I didn't know anything about. I have never really adapted to the word soccer.

I was goal tender. A good one too. Reflexes were good.

The Indians played to win. Yeah, I liked them. They were happy. You didn't hear them complaining if someone kicked their shins. They just kicked back harder if they found an opportunity. That's the way to play football.

They had a good sense of humour. What Father always remembered about the Indians was they always had a sense of humour. Always had a joke, no matter what was happening. Apropos today regarding the World Cup Games 2006 when the players bitch and complain at the slightest thing!

(Jo: She asked what your first job was. Telephone line.) No.

My first job was when I was a kid

*So what was your next job?*

Officially, or the next thing I did to make a living?

*Both.*

Well, one of the sort of odd things looking back on it, there was quite a demand for fir seeds. Fir trees. The government would pay so much a pound for seeds from fir cones. We'd fill up sacks with cones. That's a pitchy job. That's where I learned that butter removed pitch. Lots of butter around because of the cows. And the cones would have to be dried in the attic. That made it nice in the house - drying fir cones. Then you'd shake the seeds out and send them in. I don't know how much they paid for them, but it seemed worthwhile to do anyway.

*So what was the next thing?*

First official job. Helping to put a telephone line in from Gibsons to Port Mellon. There was no road at that time, so we cut trail from here to there. Someone surveyed where to go. Carried copper wire in and hung it on the trees. Fastened insulators.

(Jo: Is that when you stayed at Rockwood Lodge?)

That was the same job, but that was later. That was putting line from here to Sechelt. Renewing poles.

*So your job was carrying stuff?*

At first. Of course, thing you wanted to do was put on spurs and go up trees. It seemed I was fairly

good at that and I got spurs fairly early. There was quite a bit of tree falling and the boss found out that I had helped my father log and fall trees. And since I didn't fall any in the wrong direction, it became more or less official.

*Do you remember what year this was?*

Right after I left school, I guess. 1946.

(Jo: School wanted you to go to university.)

No money for that.

(Jo: You could have got a scholarship.)

Maybe so, but we didn't know about that. Besides, I would have made serious objections. More school after I just got rid of the thing!

(Jo: What year was it that you did the actual survey for the road itself?)

That was Stan Forbes. When I was working for Jacksons.

(Jo: That was a bureaucratic mess. When they put the real road into Port Mellon.)

It would be about 1950. The dates would be on record. I worked for Jacksons, and they got the contract to log the timber along the right-of-way between here and Port Mellon if he had his engineer survey the course. Strange how things were done in those days. Stan Forbes was a good engineer. He did a very careful survey. No hills over a certain slope, no curves under a certain radius.

(Jo: Not at all the way the road is now.)

Well, someone owned some land there and they wanted the road to go through their land so they chose some curious places. That's what I was told anyway. So they didn't use Forbes' survey.

Jackson got to log the timber anyway.

*How come they didn't use his survey?*

It didn't go through the land it was supposed to go through. And he refused to resurvey it. He had the best course there and he would not change it for anybody.

*So your first job was between here and Port Mellon, and your next job was rebuilding the line between here and Sechelt?*

Yes.

*And you stayed at Rockwood.*

Yes. I remember the food. Those lunches were something. Even the jays wouldn't eat some of that stuff!

*Who was running the lodge?*

I don't know. It was a nice enough place. We went there mostly to sleep. Too tired to do anything else. Boss pushed us hard. It was on some sort of contract.

In those days telephone poles were raised by hand. Four men on poles with a spike in the end. And dug by hand. Six feet deep. No cement. Just wide enough to get the pole in. We had a special shovel. Shaped so you could dig down and pull up on it and bring a load of earth to the surface.

*How did they raise it with four men? Did they use ropes?*

No. What you did was men got under it and shouldered it up and worked along it as far as they could. Then two men would get two long poles with a spike on them and shove them under beyond the other mens' reach. And the four men would balance it so it couldn't fall over. It worked pretty well, so long as nobody made a mistake or dropped a pole. You did that sort of thing you wouldn't be hired. We did all the poles from here to Sechelt. Some of them were a pretty good size.

(Jo: Did the poles have a coating?)

I don't think we creosoted them. I don't remember. That part of it I wouldn't do. I'd help raise them, but I wouldn't remember the earth end. They were probably tarred.

*How long did you work on that?*

Until the line was finished. When that was done there was no job for that crew up here and I didn't want to leave. But I ended up leaving anyway.

*Where did you go?*

I worked with my father in the government wharf repair operation here in Gibsons. There was quite an operation based in Gibsons. There was a store house and a work house on pilings in the bay

*Part of the main wharf?*

No. In the other corner.

*A private wharf?*

No, it was government. There were a lot more government wharves then, and they needed constant painting and repairs and new pilings that required a good sized crew. Father worked on it and I had no problem getting hired on there.

(Jo: You used to go around to the islands and put in pilings.)

Yes, any government wharf as far as Halkett Bay, at Camp Fircomb. I remember painting more than

most things. In the summer time. We used this red wharf paint. Painting that long wharf in West Bay-it seemed endless! Everything had to be done underneath. All the railings. You got that paint all over you.

(Jo: Probably poisonous)

Probably was. One particular incident I remember was in Gibsons. It was in the hottest part of August, and the only way we could keep going was to jump in the bay and cool off. Somebody reported we were swimming on the job, and we got a reprimand from the government! The boss was quite put out. He knew we worked harder because of it, but it didn't look good on his record.

That's where I learned how to use a spike maul. That's something that has pretty well faded.

The wharves were always planked in those days and spiked-big heavy spikes. So the spike heads wouldn't stick out when the wood wore, they were driven about an inch below the surface with a maul that had a pointed end, just the size of the spike head. So you had to walk along after the spikes were driven and drive the heads in with this pointed maul. Not too many people could hit a spike head with a spike maul without driving holes into the planks. Father had done it when he was working on decking sail boats and he was good at it. And he showed me, and I managed to be adequate too, so we were the two that did the spike mauling. I still have one in the basement. I don't think I could hit a spike head now. My eyes.

I could do both operations, I could drive them and use the spike maul. But usually the boss had somebody do the driving and somebody else doing the spike mauling.

(You worked with creosote a lot, too.)

Well, all pile driving used creosote pilings. So if you did piling you ended up covered with creosote. Then use coal oil or diesel oil to wash it off.

*How many days did you work a week?*

Six days. Sunday off.

*What did you do on Sundays?*

I did a little fishing or something.

(Jo: What about that awful drive up to Pender Harbour you used to do with your parents?)

That was from Wilson Creek. Father liked to fish up at Pender Harbour. Every Sunday, usually, in the summer time we'd drive all the way to Pender Harbour. It was a very crooked road and I got carsick. I arrived there in a state of almost total collapse. Even the promise of fishing - - it was a while before I could even think of it. Those are bad memories. The fishing was good memories.

*How long did you do the wharf work?*

Don't remember. A year or so. Maybe close to two. It was interesting work. Always different.

*Did you live at home at that time?*

Yes.

*And where did you go from there?*

I worked at Jacksons as helper to the timber cruiser.

*On the Port Mellon job?*

Well, that came after the first year or so that I was working there. Port Mellon was just one of Stan Forbes' jobs.

*What did timber cruisers do in those days?*

Well, in those days it was a wider sort of job. One thing, we laid out the roads with grades that were negotiable by logging trucks so they went to the best bits of timber, so they weren't too expensive to build. It was a fairly responsible job, that work. Now you'd have a crew for just that.

Forestry maps were very inadequate. All of these valleys were mapped. But as we found out in many cases, they went to the nearest high point, possibly with a bottle of whiskey, and they drew what they could see. That didn't mean that what was on the map was actually where it should be. In fact, in Mission Valley the old contour map shows a mountain where the valley of Mission Lake is. Nobody knew about it until a friend and I hiked up there and found that the creek ended in a lake, not coming down out of the mountain.

That was the degree of accuracy. So it was the timber cruiser's job to go around areas that Jackson thought were available or desirable, and find out just how desirable they were, how much timber was on them. That's quite a skill, too. To walk through a place and decide there's 40,000 per acre there and . . .

Then places that Jackson had got a license to log in, such as the Toba Inlet valley, we'd actually map it. Run lines at 330-foot intervals up and out of the timber on one side of the valley, back down through the timber, taking notes. The helper would take a compass for direction and carry the chain.

A strip of steel, very thin strip of very good steel. That way you'd get a pretty accurate map of the timber grades and road access. Whatever was worth noting. A monotonous job, but it had its good parts. Sometimes we had to camp out for a couple of weeks in the valley, but that was interesting.

*How long did you do that for?*

For several years.

(Jo: Then Stan Forbes wanted you to join him as a partner.)

Yeah. He was tired of walking up and down the mountains. So he was going to form a company



so he had somebody do the field work while he did the office work and got the jobs. But I was tired of going up and down mountains too, so I decided to do something else.

*So what did you do?*

My most interesting job of all -- hand logging with my father. I liked that.

*Where was your claim?* k

First claim was on the south side of Keats Island. Rock bluff timber. Some of it was quite good. Fairly difficult to run. Then we went to the north end of Keats where there was some original timber on privately owned land. Large timber, several 7-foot butts, and one ten-foot diameter butt. It had signs that it had started to rot and would have fallen in a few dozen years. We got huge logs out of it. Had to cut them short to handle them. The largest one was 16,000 board feet. It was a big log.

*How did you handle them?*

Logging jacks. Roll them, or if rolling wasn't practical, you'd peel the bark off. You had to do that during growing season. Peel the bark off and put skids under it and give it a lurch with a couple of jacks and away it would go. Thunderous.

*Into the salt chuck?*

Yes. With a bit of luck. Sometimes it would go into a gravel bank or another big log. But nothing we couldn't get out. We had four Gilchrist jacks and two Ellingson jacks. You only needed half of those to lift this house up.

(Jo: They weighed a lot, too.)

I don't like to think of that. I used to walk up the slope of Bowen with one jack under my arm and one over my shoulder. About 140 pounds together. The heavier one weighed 80 pounds.

(Jo: That's why your vertebrae are squashed.)

That's why my muscles were so good.

(Jo: You had to do everything by hand, up those steep slopes.)

Oh, yes. You couldn't get a license without guaranteeing you wouldn't use anything mechanical. Nothing. Proper handlogging uses nothing that you can't carry. They relaxed that in later years.

*So (hey 'd go down into the water and you 'd boom it yourselves. So you 'd have to have a boat.*  
Yes. Father always had a boat.

*Where would you sell the logs?*

We had a broker. Sell it on the river. It was good wood. Best old growth grade fir.

*Who would take it over? Would they come and get it or?*

Usually yes. We wouldn't have large booms. About three sections at a time.

(Jo: That's how you started beachcombing.)

Yes.

*Picking up logs that came out of four booms?*

No. Hand logging was a seasonal occupation. So in between we'd find logs on the beach. There was lots of wood on the beach in those days. We'd pick it up and sell it to the local mill at Twin Creeks.

*So is that what you continued to do for the rest of your career?*

Pretty much. I thought that was a good way to make a living.

(Jo: You were walking home from the boat when that earthquake hit in 1948)

1948 or 1946. Can't remember which. Knocked chimneys down. Telephone poles leaned over.

*Did you know what was happening?*

It was pretty obvious.

I did do some work at Jackson's logging camp. I took over father's old job as boom man for a while. Then I came back here and joined him in beachcombing.

*In beachcombing what kind of tools did you need?*

In those days you could pick up logs if you had a rowboat. Didn't need very much. A boat that could tow a couple of logs. A hammer. Logging dogs with ropes in them-a spike with an eye on it called a dog. That was about it. No license required.

*When did they start requiring a license?*

(Jo: Well, your father was number 16.)

No, number 32. Fletcher was 16. I ignored that for a couple of years.

(Jo: I think it was the mid-sixties or something)

*Where did you boom the logs at?*

At first father didn't boom and we had to tie up at Shelter Island. A man named Barter lived there at that time.

At that time Jacksons had put a booming ground in at Shelter Island Bay. Quite a large sort. We have a picture of log barges tied at Shelter Island. Both kinds-Gibson rafts and Davis rafts. They broke the Davis rafts there. It was the main sorting area.

*Were you able to use the Jackson Logging area, or did you have another section of it.*

When they stopped tying at Shelter Island, that area was available. His permission was required to use it. Father knew him fairly well. The sequence of these things is vague.

I was quite young actually. Somewhere between the telephone line and before the wharf repair. That's where I learned to boom so I was adequate to work at the Wilson Creek booming ground. As long as you don't require me to set out a table of relevant dates, the information is accurate.

*So you tied up at Shelter Island. How long did you tie up there?*

Till I quit beachcombing. We got a water lease there. My son still ties there.

*Could you describe a typical day when you were beachcombing? You 'd get up at what time in the morning?*

What year? Things changed. -

*How about the early years.*

There was a lot of wood around then. Father had a fairly good boat with a 2-cylinder Easthope engine. I think an 18-24 or something like that. Those were pretty hefty horses. We used to cruise around the south side of Keats Island. There was adequate wood between here and Paisley, Hopkins, all along the shore to where the Terminal Forest Products grounds are now. It was a good beach to work. Only one house on shore at that time. Couple of houses at the far end.

We'd find the logs, row ashore with a heavy tow line and use the big boat to tow them off. Part of the day was spent in towing them back.

*You 'd try to work at high tides?*

Yes.

*Would you work at night sometimes to catch the high tides?*

Not for tides. The outfits that sorted the booms that came down the coast, at West Bay, Centre Bay, Long Bay, all along Andy's Bay, and Bear Point. It was the biggest log sorting area in the world. And as the industry grew, speed counted. So if a log drifted out of place, nobody would bother to pick it up and it would just drift down the inlet. They looked unfavorably at you if you picked it up in the daylight. Whenever they were working just before night time they were in even more of a hurry to get through before dark. Logs would get loose and in the morning they would be drifting anywhere from Paisley Island all through the water to Port Mellon. It wasn't very long before it got fairly competitive. I decided an outboard speed boat would go faster. That's when things got interesting. Because others thought that was a good idea and soon there were quite a few. The earliest one out was the one who would find the logs drifting down from the booming grounds.

Which of course had a positive feedback effect-earlier and earlier.

*Were there any clashes?*

Not serious. I remember being threatened with a pike pole once.

(Jo: who?)

I think it was Einar. I went into his bedroom. Found him under the bed.

(Jo: I wrote that in one of my books.)

I threatened to wrap the pike pole around his neck if he didn't get out of there. He saw I meant it. But it would be pretty hard to wrap one of those poles around anything!

Sometimes there would be five or six outboards and later inboards, tearing around in the middle of the night. Get up at twelve and somebody's already out there. That was fun.

(Jo: That was before they had the curfew.)

Yes.

*How long did you do the beachcombing?*

About forty years. Really only quit it 7 years ago when my health went temporarily.

*When did you start getting involved in writing and how did that happen?*

(Jo: 1996. But before then, his father had led this very unusual life.)

Father was a storyteller and he stuck his nose in places which possibly he shouldn't have been nosing into. But he had good stories and he told them well, and I thought I should record them. So I bought a tape recorder. But before I could get one story down, he died, which I thought was very inconsiderate.

So as the years went by, I got to thinking that those stories were just too good to lose. I had been hearing them all of my life from the time I was old enough to pay attention. Because there were social gatherings and always stories would be told, father would tell the same stories to different people. Much to my mother's reluctance to hear any more of them.

They stuck with me pretty well. But it took years before I had gone through them all in my mind. The events, if not the names and dates.

(Jo: Two years before he died you went through them all with him to finalize the details.)

Yes. We spent afternoons and evenings together and he'd go over and correct the exaggerations or errors that he'd allowed to creep in. Like, he'd change the story slightly depending on the audience. The *Murder and the Cat-Killers* was a good example. With people who liked cats, the cat won; people who liked dogs, the dogs killed the cat. I got the truth, which was that the cat won.

(Jo: His father, was brought up on Nelson Island. There were a lot of people living around there in those days. And on Nelson Island there was an old Jewish blind man. And -)

He didn't live on Nelson Island, but one of the islands near there. I'm not sure which one. These things are all in the books.

(Jo: His grandfather sent his father once a week to the old Jewish man to be his eyes.)

To tell him what happened. Even at that time, Father had the gift of observing and he could relate what he saw. Grandfather took Father over to the Jewish man's place because he did some carpentry work there. And the child prattled away and the old man liked it so much he wanted to borrow him. So he got paid some magnificent sum to go over and visit and sit there and tell him what happened to everybody during the week.

(Jo: Those tales are in *Tales of Hidden Basin*.)

Yes. But not the cat one.

*So you got him to tell you the good stories and you fixed them in your mind.*

I didn't, at that time, think that I would write them actually. It was for my own information. It was years later when I got the idea.

In school the top four grades gathered together and they would vote on who would be the most likely to do one thing, and who would be the least likely to do it. I was voted the least likely to be an author. So maybe I took that too seriously and put it off too long.

(Jo: So he started writing the stories down in longhand, because he can't type. About 1994. At first he gave them to Allan Crane to type out, because Alan could type. And it so irked me, that I started to teach myself how to type. A friend of ours, Walter Hardwick, gave me his old Mac Plus with a typing program in it. So I started doing the two things, teaching myself typing the proper way and writing Dick's stories out. He'd written them in long hand, very difficult to transcribe, and I tried to keep up with him as he wrote. And I deliberately wouldn't read ahead. I would just type it out. It was an incentive to type it out as he wrote it, and to do it quickly.

After I had typed about four, I sent them to Howard. He said, "Great stuff. Send more." So I'd try and get through about two stories a week, or every two weeks, and each time I sent them in he'd send back, "Send some more! Send some more!" I've got all of these cards that he's written. There was no order in these stories at all.)

I had a great compliment from Howard that I still treasure. Howard as a publisher and editor finds

reading people's writing to be work. He said I was the only writer that he read for pleasure. I'm sure that has changed since though.

(Jo: It has the same effect on me. But there are a couple of stories that would get me so worked up. I'd type until midnight, and some of the stories would go on and I'd type until two o'clock in the morning. Some of those stories I'd type away with tears rolling down my face!)

You'd take them too seriously.

(Jo: Well, they're serious stories! Particularly the last one in *Haunted Waters*. It was called *The House by the Haunted Falls*. If you read nothing else out of those books, you should read that one. It's a long story - 48 pages or something.)

Father's stories were good stories.

(Jo: That story stayed with me for ages! Everybody else says that, and Howard says the same.)

He should have married that woman with the yellow eyes. I'd like to have some of that blood in me.

(Jo: And there was the woman with the snake, too. He nearly married that one!)

Well, he probably would have, actually. Then I wouldn't be me, anyhow.

*You contributed to three issues of Raincoast Chronicles and have published three books, including Haunted Waters which was shortlisted for the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Book Prize. Are there any other written works or award that I am not aware of?*

No.

(Jo: I think he had a story in one of those colour supplement type magazines.)

Minor.

*Did you like writing?*

No.

(Jo: He'd sweat!)

I have a couple of other books I'll get around to writing, but I'm not looking forward to it.

(Jo: Dick, if you didn't have to write it physically, would you like it better?)

No. It's concentration. It takes a lot of concentration if you are going to do a job up to standards.

(Jo: He doesn't rewrite things.)

I go over the typed pages and see what I think. That's rewriting.

(Jo: Yes, but it's all been done.)

The story is formed. I like to form the story before I begin.

Those stories should not be lost.

(Jo: But apart from those stories, I found in his junk from before I met him, that he had written some fiction, short stories. Fantasy. And he's written a couple of poems too.)

I'll get back to them. If I don't die first.

(Jo: He did write one story that he sent to Howard. Howard wanted to put it into the last book, but he couldn't possibly put it in because it was a fiction story.)

Howard called my stories fiction. They aren't fiction. They're as accurate as I could make them. And as accurate as Father could make them. Howard thought they were too good to be true.

Howard got in touch with us not so long ago, and said, "Are there any more stories to go along with this *Grisly Jackl* It's a horrible story. Howard thinks its brilliant. It gives me the creeps.)

It's not everybody's bit of cake.

(Jo: It's allegorical isn't it?)

Yes.

(Jo: So Dick said to Howard, "No you're not putting it in that last book (*A Touch of Strange*). It doesn't fit." Howard said, "Well, do you have any others to go with it?" And Dick said, "No. I'm tired of writing." I don't know if he's going to write any others.)

I will.

*Did you know Howard growing up?*

No.

I read some of his writing. *Writing in the Rain*. A good book.

*I'd like to talk about how you met.*

That's for Jo to tell.

(Jo: Well, I came over on a freighter. That one in the picture on the wall. We were emigrating from England. I was married to Allan Crane at the time. We had no kids. We were teachers and we were going to get paid 2 1/2 times what we were being paid in England. So we got jobs right away.

The first week we spent with a friend of Allan's. Allan had lived in Vancouver a few years before that working for the oil refinery. The guy we stayed with was a record collector and a logger-Gib Gibson. They used to have musical evenings every Wednesday to which they invited a couple of other people. Classical music. They used to invite Dick. And he told us, "Well, there's a beachcomber coming next Wednesday to the music, but he probably won't turn up because he odd. He's a recluse and he doesn't like strangers." So I thought, huh, how interesting.)

He figured I didn't like women because I didn't have any girlfriends that he knew of.

(Jo: Anyway, he did turn up and sat there quite quietly and I didn't see anything strange about him. And I sat quietly too. So after about 2 1/2 years I quit teaching. I was having a kind of breakdown. Because Allan would stay up till all hours, go to the Legion, go to the pub straight after school. I'd had it. So I left him, and we started to go out pretty well straight away.)

You announced you were going back to England.

I was impressed with this novelty of a woman who loved music.

(Jo: Anyway, he took me out in the boat and took me out in his Citroen. When you start a Citroen up, they go up. It's handy up the logging roads because they rise up and have a very high clearance off the road.)

They go fast around corners. If you go over boulders you can raise the body up 14 inches. Good traction.

(Jo: He took me beachcombing, took me to see the island, the sea lions and seals. Then we moved in together and had kids. Got married as soon as the divorce came through-1971. I moved in with him in 1970.)

*You have lived here all of your married life?*

Yes. Well, we lived in Gibsons, right next to the boat works.

You know where Weingarden Park is? We lived there, in this same house.)

It was getting unpleasant. So many people came on weekends to fish. There were sometimes a hundred boats out there in the gap and they all wanted to come in and tie in Gibsons Harbour and our float was one of the most convenient places.

(Jo: It was a private float.)



If I didn't have to keep intruders out of the yard, the smell of outboard gas drifting up-

(Jo: They lit fires on our dock!)

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It was getting to be unpleasant. If it wasn't the traffic fumes drifting down, it was the outboard fumes drifting upwards. We had to get out of there. We were considering moving.

(Jo: That year they put in the sewage pipes. In other words they cut off our access to the sea by building that promenade to cover the sewage pipes.)

We lost our waterfront.

*Where the sidewalk is now.*

(Jo: Yes. That wasn't there. Just reeds there and our garden.)

We still had our water access.

(Jo: Yes, every year we paid for water lease.)

Anyway, we were happy when a man came along and asked if we would trade that property for one he had down here. Since I first came to Gibsons I had gone by here and I admired this patch of grass and this point. And here I was given a chance to move there!

He didn't want the house because he was going to build a hotel or motel of some sort. So we moved the house here.

(Jo: I was in the house on the barge with the cat and Patricia. She was just about ten months old.)

Patricia didn't mind, but the cat sure hated it. As the scow neared the shore that cat jumped, I'm sure, ten feet, straight into the bushes.

(Jo: It was a dark, dark night. Highest tide of the year. Eleven at night when we landed.)

It was necessary to get the house off the barge and onto the shore.

(Jo: Patricia screaming her lungs out! Don't know why. She didn't know what was going on.)

I'm sure with the lurchings and what not, she was alarmed.

(Jo: She really loves the house! Well, when it docked there was a great big tide and it kept going sideways. You know you put the ramp on and this barge is sideways with the tide. So this guy used a tractor and tied it up to one of the trees, I think. On the water, it was lurching, things falling off the shelves. Actually, we never moved out of this house once during that time. We didn't get hooked up to everything for about three months, because it was on pilings.)

Even the fireplace and chimney came with us.

*The fireplace you have is beautiful. Is that the original one?*

It's slices off a jade boulder that came from the Fraser River. I had an opportunity to buy it and had it sliced, cheaply.

*You went beachcombing with Dick?*

(Jo: Sometimes, yes.)

She was useful to send towing when I was sleeping, catching up from my midnight run. I don't think the curfew came until after that. I didn't always obey it anyway.

*Were you inconvenienced by the Beachcomber series, or did you participate in that?*

(Jo: They came to us and asked if they could use our boats. Paint them.)

Yes, that was before that series started. This perfumed individual came up and asked to see Alan Jackson's-my partner-large boat. He didn't like it the colour it was and wanted to paint it. He said they'd pay all of these fees. All promises. The day came when they were to pick the boat up, but he never appeared. Never saw him again. He was from the CBC, so I guess that explains it.

It was to be painted white and then repainted to the colours that it was. I guess it was a little too expensive. Never came off.

I rented them logs occasionally.

(Jo: Once in a while they'd be filming over on the boom on Shelter Island and they'd keep refilming the same scene over and over again and they'd expect him to stop work and be silent while they were filming. Which he refused to do.)

I hated that series. It trivialized an interesting occupation. The equivalent in my mind is the Beverley Hillbillies which trivialized the Kentucky mountaineer. Well the *Beachcombers* did the same thing for the log salvager.

Jo worked on it as an extra occasionally. Fine with me. Extra money. Besides, she enjoyed it.

(Jo: They paid extras for singing. Just a small group of us. Ken Dalglish got a group together. We were doing some carolling and we got paid extra for that.)

*How would you compare your way of beachcombing with the way it is done today?*

I wouldn't want to beachcomb today.

*Because?*

There's an organization formed by the insurance companies and the logging companies and

permitted by the government, which is the only practical way for anyone to sell their logs. Before you could sell them to a broker. But now they set the prices and then they buy the logs. Who the profit is going to I'm not sure, but only a small part of the money goes to the beachcomber.

(Jo: A beachcomber gets a very low percentage, compared to a logger.)

In one documented case, a log worth \$1300 was bought for less than \$200. And of course, fuel prices have gone up so much and that is a major part of your operation. You can't run high speed boats like we used to. You don't make enough to afford it. Unless you stole logs. But my father taught me differently.

And the same sort of wood isn't being lost. Except once in a while. When I was beachcombing, every corner you came around there might a nice big log. Now there'll maybe be two or three little scrubby things. It's more like farming now, than hunting. You're just cropping, you aren't out hunting. Used to be the life of a hunter gatherer. Now it's only for scavengers.

No, it's not for me now. Just as well, because I'm not for it, either. My eyes aren't very good on the water and I really can't see what's a good log on the shore. At speed they get tears in them and I can't see anything. I function, but in a fast boat I'm out of my territory.

*But your son still does beachcombing?*

Yes, but he does other things as well to make a living. Wharf construction, repairs of various sorts.

(Jo: He's helping somebody logging right now.)

Thirty years ago if you were industrious you wouldn't have to steal to make a better living than most.

*As you were growing up and going out in the world, who would you say helped you the most?*

My father. And then there was "Pop" Jackson who showed me classical music and poetry. And Al Forbes who got me interested in philosophy.

*It sounds as if you truly admired your father.*

Yes. He was the sort who deserved it.

(Jo: You saved him one time when he fell through a boom and you pulled him out.)

Yes, well he could have gotten out.

*What were the qualities you admired in him?*

Utter honesty. He detested lying or stealing or any sort of hypocrisy. Not the easiest man to grow up with, but you learned your lessons.

(Jo: He was an honourable man.)

Yes. You could say that.

(Jo: He must have been to put up with your mother.)

He made the most of it. Accepted the good, ignored the bad. She wasn't that bad for many years. Then she got cranky.

*It must have been a hard life for her.*  
I think she enjoyed it, at first anyway.

*Was she a city person?*  
No, she was raised in West Sechelt, but born in Kenora, Ontario..

*She was born in Ontario, but she came out here?*  
Yes, she was just a few years old and her father got some sort of preemption in West Sechelt. She was raised there. Country girl. Very athletic. Very pretty. Very sociable. Loved dancing.

(Jo: Loved bossing people around.)

Well she was the one that raised five or six sisters and a couple of brothers, so she was used to being the boss and I she never really got over it. I suppose maybe it was what she was fitted for in the first place. She did it well.

(Jo: Her father was the blacksmith for Jacksons.)

An immensely strong man. (Jo: Norwegian.)

He would have been in the class of the world's strongest men in the competitions that we see.

(Jo: He worked at Britannia Mine.)

*When was that?*  
Father hadn't married mother at that time. Maybe 1926-27.

Much of the drilling was done with a hammer. They did have machines, but in difficult areas they used a single hammer.

*So in a sense both of your parents raised their siblings. Your dad looked after his mother and sisters.*

Well, not father, no. He worked and sent them money, when he was old enough-age 11. But he never actually helped raise them in the house. Grandmother wouldn't have allowed anyone to raise her children.

*How did your mother and her mother-in-law get along? Two strong women.*

They didn't get along at all.

My mother went to work for her when she was very young. My dad's sisters thought of it as their store and she was their servant. Grandmother was officially in charge, but she didn't pay much attention. It was not a good situation and my mother referred to it with bitterness many times.

*[begin side b of tape2]*

*What community organizations have you belonged to?*

I'm not a joiner. Never belonged to anything. I'm apolitical, areligious, asocial. Recluse would have described me. I associated with the people in the books I read. That's a vast crowd.

*Was there a favorite book? A favorite author?*

Probably not one favourite. Several favourites. Mervyn Peake's *Gormanghast*. One of my favourites. Great book. A favourite series was E.R. Edison's *The Worm Oroborus*. I still dip into it now and then.

Dicken's *Pickwick Papers* was one of my favorites. And of course, the first great adventure story, *The Illiad*, Popes rhyming translation which puts me at the bottom of the class because it is not considered a good translation. But it's the one I like best. The critics don't like it. But then that's what critics do best-dislike things.

*What would you say was the best part of growing up in Sechelt.*

Wilson Creek. I didn't grow up in Sechelt. The best part was being able to go out in the woods. Climb trees. Throw rocks at squirrels. Hunt. Trap. Fish. There was a fishing stream that went by the border of our farm. A steelhead river. Big pool abutted our property, always had steelhead in it in the fall. That was probably the best part-the fishing. I was an enthusiastic trout fisherman. The rest of it you don't really appreciate until you get older. Then it's gone.

*Do you still fish?*

I'm afraid not. My eyes. I suppose it's part of an excuse. You see, we used to be able to have good fishing just by walking up a creek. Good trout or steelhead. Wilson Creek-I got some excellent fish out of Mission Creek. Rainy River. Wonderful fishing there. Gray Creek. Halfmoon Bay Lake.

But now you go to those places there are trails all over the place and garbage and off road vehicles running around. It's not the same country anymore. I don't like it.

If I was to go fishing I'd have to take a minimum two-day trip somewhere. Which I used to do. But even that-now Powell Lake is full of boats and there are houses along the shore.

One of my favourites was the Gordon Pasha chain-Lois Lake and Khartoum Lake. Roads go in there now and water skiers.

Clowhom used to be one of my favourites. Still, even in those days. A friend and I were camping at the narrows above the lake and we heard a roar. A plane came in. Three American fishermen got off, threw salmon eggs all over the place so the trout would congregate. They caught a bunch, jumped in the plane and away they went. Spoiled our day. It's probably still going on.

*You said you worked at Clowhom for a time?*

I didn't. My father did. He worked at Clear Cedar when I was about four or five. Before he was married he worked in Clowhom at the shingle bolt camp. Later a shingle mill was built there. Orientals used to run shingle bolts down wires on the slopes. Beautiful cedar used to grow in that area. When I was working at Misery Creek, timber cruising with Forbes, we saw trees there-and we weren't guessing because we measured fallen ones-that had four forty-foot logs before the first branch. 160 feet of branchless tree!

*Where was the Clear Cedar camp?*

At the mouth of Seechelt Creek [now Sechelt Creek]. They logged the slopes up there.

*Who did you work for at Seechelt Creek [Now Sechelt Creek]?*

I didn't. Well Forbes was still working for Jackson at that time. And he was timber cruising. I worked for Forbes.

(Jo: Wasn't that where that terrible thunder storm was?)

No. That was at Brem river. Took cover under a boulder. You could hear lightening striking around us.

Jackson had a camp at the head of Toba Inlet. He started that operation. A lot of timber cruising. We mapped all of the Brem River. There was a natural arch there with a creek running under it. I always meant to get a picture of that.

*There are grizzlies up there aren 't there?*

Not any more. I did see grizzly tracks up at Skwawka River. At the head of Jervis Inlet. I hiked up and camped there.

Last time I was up at the Tzoonie River, the camp was fairly large and had a big garbage dump.

(Jo: Yes! I went up there with your)

Remember all of the bears?

*What was the worst part of growing up at Wilson Creek*

Going to school.

(Jo: Your mother chasing you with the axe!)

*Why was your mother chasing you with an axe?*

Oh, she had what was called in those days a nervous breakdown. What caused it, I haven't the faintest idea, but her temper got very edgy.

She was being sarcastic and I took her literally and that set her off. She told me to get the wood and I said, "Can't I play first?" And she said sarcastically, "All right, do it when you please." Which now I know meant you'd better get to it right now. So I left it and went playing and she came out and grabbed the axe and shouted, "I'll kill you! I'll kill you!"

[Jo: Then your father met you. He came off work and saw what was happening to you. What did he do?]

Oh, she was calm by then. She collapsed.

That was the country life. She didn't like being lonely. She was lonely there. And her health was giving her problems there and later. She had a great imagination that verged on hypochondria.

*What do you see as the greatest change in Sechelt?*

Population. I think of it as a loaf of bread once nice and fresh but now gone all mouldy and covered with nasty little mushrooms.

*What would you like to see return?*

If we could hang on to the medical improvements, I'd like to see lots of vacant land covered only with trees and with an occasional interesting person here and there. As almost everybody was in those days. No pressure to conform. You developed in the direction that best suited you, which was sometimes quite interesting.

(Jo: Most people that moved this way from the east were interesting people anyway, because they were rejects.)

They wanted to get away from the masses. Some had their reasons, some just needed elbow room and wanted to go as far as they could and this was as far as they could go.

(Jo: Because you met some interesting people, even around here.)

Yes.

(Jo: Like Mrs. Monteith out past Gower Point. She was interesting.)

Yes, she was. Very intelligent. A good collection of books which I lost no opportunity in borrowing.

(Jo: Then there was that weird man who lived in Lower Gibsons. Built a great big cellar for doomsday.)

Gosdens.' There was a lost opportunity. This old couple, three or four doors from our place-across from Armours Beach. Nice people, but eccentric. He did all his own cement work and he had drawn in it spells to keep the evil spirits off. They believed in spiritualism and various things like that. It was very interesting and my first exposure to that sort of thing. They were also intelligent, interesting people in their own way.

But they had this magnificent library of books. Leather bound volumes I'd never heard of before. I managed to borrow a few, then I went off working. When I came back he had died. Then I went off again and when I came back, she had died.

I used to have her in to listen to music. She was interested in music. And she told me she was going to leave the books to the Theosophical Society in Vancouver. They'd actually sent people out to look at them.

In the meantime he had decided the end of the world was coming. So he built a cement bunker in the house. Two-foot walls, iron reinforcement. And put his books in there.

Well, when she died, the Theosophical Society didn't know or didn't care. And I was thinking it was all gone.

But as you may know, we collect old records and somebody answered one of our ads and it happened to be the person who had bought that house. This was about four years ago. He had said something about old books, so I asked him what had happened to the books that had been in the house. "Oh those," he said. "They were in that blockhouse and we left them there for years until we wanted the space. Then we had the cement taken out and the books picked up and taken to the dump." That treasure, and I had it in my hands! He would have given it to me if I'd been there five or six years earlier. That's the hard part of life. The things that we miss through ignorance of them.

(Jo: We were talking to the lady who runs the museum in Gibsons and told her that his grandfather had been a blacksmith and had made piles and piles of blacksmith tools. About the same time this other thing happened, we got a response from someone in Sechelt, and there were all of these tools in the basement.)

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The new owners of the blacksmith's shop didn't have a blacksmith, they didn't think it was anything they needed.

The tools were supposedly taken and dumped in the brush. But we found that this man had intercepted the truck and took a bunch of them up to his own house. So there were my grandfather's tools. That man died fairly recently, but I got an armful of tools. He wanted a fair bit for them. I bought books from him, but I didn't buy all of the blacksmith tools. He wanted too much.

The museum lady says she knows where they are.



*What advice would you give a young person just leaving home and starting out in the world?*  
Learn how to handle a computer.

Unnecessary advice, because they all know these things these days. I didn't tell my son that and he found out the hard way.

*It is not unlike your life. You learned to use everything around you that you needed to survive with.*

There is a similarity in fact because my father was good with tools. He could take an engine apart, fix it and put it back together. But they were the old type engines. Big cylinders. Chug-chug-chug. However, he wasn't keen on my high-powered, high-speed engines. He didn't really even like to drive them. He would go for a ride with me, but this was a step past where he wanted to be. Not that he couldn't have done it. He didn't want it. He didn't like it. They were noisy. They moved too fast.

Now I'm the same way. I can handle the engines up to any rpm. But computers, they require you to think differently, and I'm happy with the way I think now. They even mess the language up and I like the language the way I learned it.

No, I know I'm an anachronism and I'm happy with that.

(Jo: You've always been an anachronism.)

If I thought I could live another 100 years, why I'd step into the new age fairly quickly.

(Jo: Well, you were the first person with a jet boat on the coast. Now that wasn't anachronistic.)

No, because I was into high speed engines. It was not like computers. I was the first person to have a Volkswagen on the coast.

*What was your first car?*

First car was a Volkswagen.

(Jo: Then you got a Karmann Ghia, didn't you?)

Same thing as a Volkswagen but I got a more powerful engine from Austria to put in it. A Denzel.

*How old were you when you got your first car?*

Quite old. All of my friends had cars when they were 16 years old. I was a boat man and I put off cars until . . . Volkswagens were first made in what? 1953. I think the Volkswagen shop in Vancouver was in its first year of operation.

(Jo: He had a race with someone from Egmont).

In my souped-up Karmann Ghia against a souped-up Merc. We raced from Garden Bay Road to Sechelt. We squealed a few tires between there and here.

(Jo: On a dirt road?)

There was

pavement.

(Jo: Not all the way.)

No. I remember the tires squealing. I think it was paved to Garden Bay then. We did some serious squealing.

*Who were you racing?*

Ted Fern.

*Who won?*

I did. I could take the corners better. The Merc almost rolled over every time he took a corner.

(Jo: He got killed in that car.)

Yes. He had sparks coming off the rocker panels going around the corners. Lots of power, bad suspension.

(Jo: What year was this?)

Jo, dates and I-they go by and that's where they stay, back there. In the cluttered basement of the past.