

Bill Guthrie in conversation with Dianne Hentschel and Doreen Thompson. At his home in Seaford. January 2005.

Our family came to Cortes in March of 1940. My parents, Ernie and Jessie Guthrie; my siblings Shirley and Raymond, and myself. We had been living in Burnaby and heard about Cortes from our neighbours, Hector and Pearl Graham. Pearl's brother, Ed Rourke, was up here so Hector knew a bit about the island. They moved up here and Hector wrote Dad and told him there was work up here so we arrived about six months or maybe a year after they did.

We arrived here at Seaford on the Union Boat. All of our household goods were with us, along with a big black English Sheep Dog, a couple of cats and a couple of goats. We lived here in the Seaford area for a short time, up towards Andy Byers and down by Frabjous Day.. Then we moved to what was called "the Old Froud Place" (now 767 Sutil Point Road). We lived there for quite a few years, my younger brothers Jim and David were born while we were there. (Bill Fretwell bought it after we left) David was actually born in the Froud house, there was a big snowfall that winter so Mom couldn't get out and Dad had to deliver David. We were there for a few years then Dad bought about seven acres of land from Morrisette's, right across the road. He had to buy an additional half acre from Bill Fretwell to give us access to the road. It was part of a much larger piece of land that Fretwell owned, he kept selling chunks of it whenever he needed money. (Now 768 Sutil Point Road). We had a cow for milk and lots of fruit trees that were already on the place. We had a goat called Fanny. Dad also had a sister called Fanny, when we got that goat that ended her nickname! We went to Monten's place to buy eggs (719? Sutil Point Road). I remember us kids used to go over there with a quarter and get a dozen eggs and she'd always give us a cookie. It was a pretty good deal!

There was no teacher here when I was in grade 1 so I had to go back to South Burnaby to stay with relatives. I remember being really homesick. The next year I went to the old log school that was on Sutil Point Road. The first phase of the three-room school that was eventually on that property opened when I was in grade 9. Mr. Henderson and Don Levey were my high school teachers. Back in the log school Don McDevitt, Mr. Flowers, Gladys Brown and Mrs. Bastin had been my teachers. Gladys Brown married Francis Smith. Fanny the goat used to follow us to school, she'd go right inside the cloakroom and open those metal lunch kits. I was always taking some poor kid home for lunch because the goat had eaten theirs. Mrs. Bastin got so mad one day that she took the baseball bat and hit it right across the backbone. It's a wonder she didn't do serious damage to it. It never came back.

Jimmy Christensen from the lagoon, Ida Fulgham and Kathy Morris from Smelt Bay, Jessie and Muriel Nichols and Ronnie Forrest from Squirrel Cove and Lorraine Graham from Manson's were all in my grade. There were four grades in the high school room with only a few kids in grade 12. I quit school in grade 11 and took grade 12 equivalency later.

Fraser Campbell was postmaster back then (late forties - early fifties?). He stopped one day to bring a parcel into Mom and Dad's and left some other mail he was delivering on the seat of his car. He'd forgotten about the kid goats we had. They got Bill Fretwell's pension cheque and ate half of it! Poor Bill had to wait (not til the goat passed the cheque!) two or three weeks until a replacement could be sent in the mail. Those same two little kids danced on George

Freeman's canvas-topped car and ripped the roof to shreds. It's a good thing he was a tinsmith, he built a tin roof to take its place.

Dad worked for Art Marshall for awhile, logging down at Frabjous Day while we were in this area. He continues to log and do whatever else he could when we moved to Manson's. I remember he hauled the groceries from the wharf to the Lodge when Nellie and Baron Jeffery were living there and Nellie was running the store. It was in one of those big rooms in the Lodge. Baron must have been away fishing or something because Dad was using his truck to do the hauling. Then around the mid nineteen forties he started driving the school bus. The first bus was actually an old nineteen-thirty-something four-cylinder Chev truck with high wooden sides. It was probably very unofficial. The next one was an old 1943 army-surplus ambulance that had been painted blue. The darn paint just came off steady so the kids all wore blue paint. Bus driving wasn't a full-time paying job. Dad filled the gap in a variety of ways. Dad and George Freeman ran a sawmill out at Freeman's place on Sutil Point.

Mr. Percy owned a mill on his property down at the landing, he built the first store building with lumber from the mill. Percy sold the place to Lowes and Summers. Jack Summers, I think, ran the mill to cut the lumber that was used to build the living quarters at the store. After that Dad cut the lumber for the cabins. He always drove the bus though, did that job until he retired in 1979. The first real school bus arrived just before the road to Whaletown was opened up in 1951. Squirrel Cove and Whaletown both had schools, so did Von Donop for awhile. Whaletown went to grade 12 until the road opened, then the older kids, past grade 8, were bussed to Manson's along with the older kids from Squirrel Cove. The smaller schools eventually closed, Squirrel Cove in the late fifties, Whaletown in the early seventies. Von Donop closed when the logging camp moved out in the early fifties.

Lowes and Summers ran the Lodge kind of as a boarding house. Several school teachers stayed there over the years. That's where Joan (Barker) Guthrie lived when she first came here. The cabins were more like a summer resort although they were sometimes rented out in the winter. They also had the big fuel tanks and pipelines down to the wharf installed. I remember Jack painting the tanks when they were put in. He'd been a painter in Vancouver before they came here and said it was time to quit when he started coughing up paint balls! They built the coffee shop too, Mrs Lowes ran it. She was famous for her pies. I remember there were big aerial pictures of Manson's and the lagoon area on the walls, people would come in and look at them and exclaim over how pretty it was, and of course it was. I was just a kid and was so used to it that I couldn't see what they were so excited about.

When we first came here we got a lot of our groceries from Woodward's and David Spencer's in Vancouver. Mom just mailed a list down and they sent the stuff up. Mail was never a problem here. At one time it came by boat three times a week, sometimes being dropped off at Squirrel Cove. Dad had a job hauling it over to Manson's. The road only went to Squirrel Cove in those days, there was no connection to Whaletown unless you went through VonDonop Creek and Carrington Bay on logging roads.. The Union boat sometimes went up this side of the island and down the other, a ticket from Vancouver to Squirrel Cove was fifty cents cheaper than a ticket to Manson's. So you'd buy a ticket for Squirrel Cove and ride around to Manson's. Once you were on the boat they didn't care how far you went.

Henry Pavid ran a barge service into Cortes Bay from Lund, that was probably in the sixties. There was a water taxi service between Manson's and Campbell River about the same time. When the Union boats stopped running in the fifties the Gulf Stream boats ran freighters for awhile, the *Gulfstream* and the *Gulfwing*. Tidewater shipping followed with the *Troubadour* and *Tournament*. Johnny Humphries barged stuff over from Campbell River on the Whaletown - Manson's side of the island. Bob Thompson and Robbie Graham towed cars back and forth between Heriot Bay and Whaletown or Manson's, they both used floats until Robbie graduated to a barge. Airplanes and the ferry replaced them all.

There was a medical clinic once a month at Whaletown. It was in the Boas' house at first, and in the Clinic building after about 1951. Mr. Boas, in the mission boat, *Rendezvous*, picked people up at the wharf at Manson's and took them up to Whaletown to see the doctor.

Even back in those days people didn't get along with each other. I remember back in the forties when old Henry Hague died. Dad had his coffin in the truck but couldn't get up Cemetery Road because of mudholes. So he figured he'd just take the old boy in on logging roads that ran through the Beasley place. When Beasley found out that his arch-enemy had been driven across his place, dead though he was, he was mad. How could anyone take that so-and-so across his property? He had Mr. Rexford go out and fall trees across the logging road so old Hague could never go through there again!

Mr. Rexford and Mr. Flowers, who lived in the teacherage on the Rexford place, were also enemies. The Rexford girls were in Mr. Flowers' class at school so the trouble probably started there.

When the government put the road through to Whaletown in 1951 a certain amount of money was allotted. They took half of the money back to Courtenay, never spent a penny on gravel. So it was just a dirt road running between the stumps. I remember that in the thaw the school bus had a lot of trouble on Kendrick's hill. The step was low and would get hung up in the ruts. Dad and Don McDevitt, who was living at Manson's and rode the bus to his teaching job in Whaletown, would load the step up with big rocks. Sometimes I'd go with them. When we got to the hill the next morning we'd unload the rocks into the ruts so the bus wouldn't sink so far. That was going on for some time after the road was "built". Old MacRae, the road foreman, only had one little gravel truck that they were loading by hand so you can imagine how long it would take to fix mudholes.

Old MacRae was quite a character. He couldn't read so whenever he went to get his freight from the wharf at Manson's he'd take the bill of lading up to Ev at the store and tell her he'd forgotten his glasses and could she read the manifest so he would know how many barrels of fuel or shovels or whatever he had that were shipped.. He'd lost all but the thumb and forefinger on one hand but had a grip like a trap. I worked with him a few times while I was still at school. Gordon Fretwell, his one-man crew, had back trouble so if that happened in the Christmas holidays I'd work with old MacRae for a few days. I remember backing into the bank at the Smelt Bay gravel pit and loading the truck by hand. When the loose stuff was all used McRae would blast more loose. That stumping powder smell never leaves the gravel. Shoveling it into

the truck was a stinking job. Irv had been the foreman before MacRae, and I think, Petznick for a little while. Petznick couldn't even drive. His idea of fixing mudholes was to put bark from old-growth fir trees in them! That was around Gunflint Lake where there were log dumps for dumping logs into the lake so there was lots of bark laying around. Those dumps and the float where the train dumped over by the farmhouse were still evident when I was a kid. The train track went up through what is now Linnaea farm to the old gravel pit. Almost to Cortes Bay Road.

McRae developed a heart problem and Fretwell took over the foreman's job the same year I started working on the roads. That was 1956. I'd done a few other jobs between school and the road crew, logging with Robbie Graham and over on Redonda for about a year. The road to Whaletown went through Squirrel Cove. It snaked through between stumps, full of mudholes in the winter with salal growing in the middle. In summer there were stretches with tall grass in the middle, always black on top from rubbing oil and grime off the bottom of the cars. Every little creek would have a tin can or something hanging on a bush for filling leaking radiators. Those old cars didn't have grilles to protect radiators so sticks and things would often get poked through them.

The road crew was just supposed to do maintenance but we were always trying to straighten corners and squeeze the road out a bit wider. Trucks with dual wheels wouldn't fit between the stumps. Bartholomew Road almost to the dock at Cortes Bay and stopped at the Ed Roark property, about where the Hydro sheds are now. The head of the Bay was only accessible via a logging road through Lakeview Ranch on Gunflint Lake. Elton Anderson was logging up behind the ranch in the mid-fifties and pushed the road through from Seaford Road to Bartholomew. He did a lot freebies for us. He also built the "shortcut" between Gunflint Lake and the Gorge Hill. Harold Hansen did the blasting but Elton and Johnny Anderson did about ninety percent of the work. The government allotted ten thousand dollars for the job. Elton probably spent half of that in fuel and repairs. There was no money allotted for culverts so logs were used. I had to dig every one of them up with a backhoe when they rotted out and were finally changed to metal. The Highways Department is still making decisions like that. The only reason we aren't driving through mudholes and ruts right now is because of the pavement. There is no gravel under it. No real roadbed.

There were a lot of improvements in the forty-three and a half years I worked there. A little straighter, a little wider, better ditches and culverts, new roads built into subdivisions, the main roads paved. I worked under Ben Beaulieu after Fretwell retired, and took over the foreman's job in 1988. There were others who worked with us, among them: (Uncle) Bud Guthrie, Jack Cowan once in awhile in the early days, Sam McLean in the seventies, John Weighill in the late seventies and early eighties. Maggie Fitzpatrick drove the gravel truck for a short time in the late eighties, Don Bailey in the nineties, and Rob Wydeness who became foreman when I retired.

I married Doreen Calwell, daughter of Midge (Smith) and Cliff Calwell in 1961. We have always lived at Seaford. We have two daughters, Frances and Tari.

