

Bob Martineau (Nanaimo, BC) in telephone conversation with Doreen Thompson. February 2005.

My best memory of Manson's Landing is my wedding party, in 1947. But first, a little background.

My father, Joe Martineau, and I were logging partners when we went to Mary (Marina) Island in 1941. I was 22 years old. The big house was still on the west side of the island, with a monkey tree standing in front of it. We built our camp ashore down by the reef, on the Manson's side. We were horse logging on Read Island at the time. When that didn't work out we sold our three horses and bought a cat. One of the horses, called "Little Dick" went to Charlie Rosen who lived near the south end of Read for many years. Rosen Lake is named for him.

The camp was moved into Manson's Lagoon, near the creek that comes from Hague Lake, in 1944. We were logging in the area and booming in the lagoon. In those days there were no hassles and regulations regarding floathouses, camps were moved wherever they could be sheltered from storms. There was no store at the Landing then. Barron and Nellie Jeffery were living in the lodge and ran a little commissary sort of a thing there. It didn't have much, most people had supplies sent up from Vancouver on the Union boat.

We'd been in the lagoon for a couple of years when I met and fell in love with Mary Hansen. Mary was a school teacher, divorced with two children, Beth and Billy. She was teaching at Squirrel Cove, had been there for about as long as I'd been on the island but in those days there wasn't much travel between communities so we hadn't met until we both happened to be on a little tugboat from Teakerne Arm. Roads were bad, the stumps along the edges so close together that dual tires had to be removed from trucks in order to get between them, cars were old jalopies. We spent most of our time working.

We married on June 27, 1947, in Powell River. Bob and Nellie Black took us to Lund from Squirrel Cove in their boat. We had two bottles of spirits on board, for fortification and to keep up my nerve. We took a taxi from Lund to Powell River, found the government agent, and thought we had things under control. Then he informed us that marriage, in his opinion, should be sanctified by the church. He didn't do weddings. Neither the Anglican nor the Roman Catholic churches would marry us because Mary was divorced. We finally found an odd bunch in a church up on the hill and were married there, with Bob and Nellie as our attendants.

Now, the party. When we got back to Manson's my Dad threw a big party for us at the hall. He went and got a liquor permit, the first time one had ever been used at the hall. The women loved that, no going outside to find a stashed bottle and drink in the dark. Bottles were dug out from behind fence posts and trees and out of the woodpile and brought inside. There must have been a couple of hundred people there.

Elmer Ellingsen, Jack Summers and Jimmy Hill and I think Herb Morrison provided live music with accordion, guitar and fiddle. My brother, Frank, who was a magician, came up from Vancouver and wowed the guests with his magic tricks. The next morning he did a show for the children on the porch at the store.

Changes were taking place at the Landing. Jack and Ev Summers and their family, including Ev's parents, had bought the property that extended from the spit to the lake in 1946. They had a vision of tourism and business. A real store was first on their list and it wasn't long before they had one established close to the wharf and several cabins built along the waterfront. Tourists, attracted by the saltwater beaches and the sandy beach at the lake, arrived in July and August.

BC Airlines was just getting started up when our first child, Joel, was born May 8 in 1949. He was the first baby BC Air flew home from the hospital in Campbell River. Bill Sylvester, the guy who owned the

airlines, was the pilot. We got into the plane with the baby, Sylvester climbed in behind us with his trademark great big cigar lit up and filled the tiny cabin with cigar smoke.

Mary and I were expecting our second child in 1950. There were no doctors on Cortes. It was a foggy day in April when Mary realised she had to get to the hospital. I went up to Summers' store and called the airlines. Bob Langdon's Seabee was fogged in, up at Alert Bay. The fog thinned, I called again, still foggy wherever he was. I spent three hours running back and forth to the store, hoping for some word from the airline. I called the hospital, told them we'd be over as soon as we could get there. Everyone who came by the store knew what was going on. Finally, a break. Langdon landed in the lagoon, wasted no time in getting to the wharf. Mary and I climbed into the backseat, there was a three foot groundswell in the bay, leftover from a storm. Bob taxied over into the mouth of the lagoon and took off from there. The plane ran along the water, started to lift, hit a swell and shuddered. Mary screamed. The plane lifted over three or four more, hit another, Mary screamed and the baby flew out into my hands. Bob got us up in the air, then asked, "How's it going back there?"

"It's a girl," I answered. With that he forced the lumbering old Seabee, which was already going as fast as it could, to go a bit faster. I'd swear he did that twice more before we landed in Campbell River, taxied to shore and ran the plane out of the water and up onto the road in front of the old Willows Hotel and came to a stop. The doctor and about fifty other people who had heard about it were right there, waiting for us to disembark. (Seabees belly-landed in the water, had small pontoons suspended from the wings for flotation and stability, and were equipped with wheels.)

We left the island in 1951 when logging took us to Vancouver Island. Lived in Campbell River for awhile, had a third child, Susan in 1952, did some logging up at Williams Lake in the interior, then came back to the coast when we bought the store at Echo Bay on Cracroft Island in 1958 or 1959. We stayed there until our retirement in 1967.

Our return to Manson's came about unexpectedly. We were driving down to Victoria from Alert Bay and, because it was a long weekend, decided to go to Cortes. We had such a good time that we stayed for two weeks and figured we'd move there. At first we rented a trailer at Ken Hansen's farm (now 1255 Seaford Rd.), that was the winter of 1969. We spent 1970 in Pat Walsh's house at the corner of Whaletown and Robertson Roads in Whaletown (now 597 Whaletown Rd.). After that we bought a piece of land at the corner of Sutil Point and Beasley Roads in Manson's. (Now 982 Beasley). Joel came up one summer and decided we'd better put a cabin on it. We got some lumber from Ernie Guthrie's mill and built a cabin fourteen feet square which we added onto in following years. We had friends in the community, some we'd known from the fifties, but it was our grandkids that made summers on Cortes special, they'd come and stay with us. When they outgrew that stage it was time to say good-bye to the island. We were there until about 1990, spending our winters travelling to the deserts of Arizona, California and New Mexico. We eventually settled in Nanaimo. Mary died last year, May 10, 2003.

Manson's Landing had changed in the years we'd been away. Ferry service, hydro, blacktopped roads - and more of them - a new school, additions to the hall. The store at the Landing had grown and been sold. Provincial Parks. No one lived in the lagoon anymore. The biggest change, though, was in the people. There were a lot more of them. The community, which had been one of gypo loggers, hard-up homesteaders, fishermen and folks who just didn't fit into city life had become a thriving community.

