

Ken Summers in conversation with Susan (Bone) Ellingsen, Dianne (Theal) Hentschel and Doreen (Huck) Thompson. At his home on Lennea Place, Campbell River. January 2005.

It was a picture of Hague lake that brought my folks and my Mom's parents to Manson's. Dad saw a picture of it in a realty office in downtown Vancouver. He came up to Squirrel Cove aboard the Union Steamship Company's *Chelohsin* to have a look at it.. Realising the potential of a piece of property having ocean and lake frontage on white sand beaches and acres of forest along the shores of a lagoon along with a small store building, one small house, a huge old lodge set in behind an orchard and a sawmill and government wharf at the water's edge he and my grandparents bought the place. "Cortez Lodge - Lodge, Store and Cottages" was born..

We moved into the lodge, the cabin was rented to the Musclows, Charlie and Ellen and their kids - Lorne, Charles and Sheila. Over the next couple of years Dad and Grandad, using the mill that came with the place, cut lumber and built 10 cabins along the shore and added living quarters to the store.. They would become the basis of summer business, support from locals would keep it going for the rest of the year. I don't think we had the big fuel tanks for boat and car gas until maybe about 1949. I was two years old when we arrived at Manson's, as I grew up I pumped gas, handled fuel sales down on the wharf and delivered groceries - first with my dad and later on my own. I was probably about fourteen when I started pumping gas. Boat gas was twenty-eight cents a gallon, forty cents for car gas. Aviation gas was more.

Smokers and gas were always a problem. Mom spotted a guy who came in, baled out of his plane with a big cigar in his mouth, grabbed the gas hose and started fueling up. She tore down that wharf and took a strip off of him....he was the marine manager for BC Airlines. Never even thought about what he was doing! He felt pretty sheepish about that one!

The lodge had three bedrooms downstairs and three more plus a library and the only bathroom upstairs. Large living and dining rooms on the main floor were the scene of many parties. Dad played the banjo and often provided the music for dancing. Guests, whether pilots stormbound for the night or summer people staying at the cabins joined in. The cabins rented for about forty dollars a week in those days.

The business was advertised in newspapers in Vancouver. One of our best sources of advertising came when Slim Barnard, who was a writer/editor for a newspaper in Los Angeles picked up one of those little advertising matchbooks somewhere in his California hometown. He got to wondering where Manson's Landing, Cortez Island was, phoned to find out came up to the spend a couple of weeks in one of the cabins. When he went home he sent friends who sent their friends. Many of those people became regulars, appearing every summer. Slim and his wife, Henrietta, later bought property at Cortes Bay.

The new living quarters added to the store provided space for the immediate family, Mom, Dad, my brother Bert and myself. My grandparents stayed at the lodge. Grandfather died in 1951, leaving only my grandmother to live there. She still took in guests year-round. Eddie Joyce, the Northwest Telephone Company lineman from Quadra, stayed there whenever he was on the island to repair the phone lines that connected several, but certainly not all, homes. The phones were still the old crank type, the "numbers" indicated by a series of rings. Two shorts and a long. A long and a short. Short, long short. The store had one of these phones along with a radio phone and, as the years went by and floatplanes became a way of life, a radio phone for the airlines. Customers often came to the store just to use the phone. Eva and George Freeman, who lived down past Smelt Bay, had a NWC phone. Eva was the first person able to see the Union boat as it steamed up the channel towards Manson's. When it came in sight she cranked the phone, using the general ring -meaning everybody on the line could answer- and announced the imminent arrival of the boat.

Boat days were a social event as well as a day of business. Mail arrived, groceries and goods --spare parts, pets, sacks of chicken feed, crates of household goods, even vehicles - were off-loaded. Passengers arrived and others left. People gathered on the dock and at the store, visiting and waiting for the mail to be sorted. Business at the store was always brisk on boat day. Customers who hadn't ordered fresh goods - vegetables, bread and dairy products - ahead of time came in to get what was there before it was gone.

Dad and Grandad used to shoot ducks out at the end of the spit. Granny Lowes used the down to make pillows for

the lodge and cabins. Doris Hawkins, who lived across the way would come out ranting and raving because all the shotgun pellets would come down on her roof. There used to be a few trees and two telephone poles out on the spit. The phone line crossed over to Hawkin's side there. Two planes hit it over the years and one pilot came down over the lagoon to make a landing in a storm, barely skimmed the gravel and went right under the line, between the poles. Didn't even know it was there!

Someone, maybe one of the Hawkins, told us that there was once a well out on the spit. It had fresh water when the tide was in, salt water when the tide went out. I remember one of those old iron well pumps out there. I remember the natives coming in to dig clams. They arrived by boat, once every couple of years or so, dug clams in the lagoon for three or four days then went away again. I think they came from up north somewhere.

The Coffee Shop, across the road in front of the store, was built in the early fifties. Grandma did the cooking and hired women from the community to help out front. Betty Jeffery, who also worked with Mom in the store, worked for her, so did Peggy Newsham. I remember Lynette Landry, who was about my age, working for her in the summertime when she was a teenager. There was a big wooden airplane propellor on the wall in the coffee shop, most of the pilots who came in had signed the thing. Dad kept it when he sold, I kept it when Mom died.

Cubs and Boy Scouts were going strong when I was a kid. Joe Titus, the ministrer from Whaletown, was the Cub leader. Ed Sharkey from Squirrel Cove and Jim Pyner were the Scout leaders. There were quite a few boys taking part. I remember Eddie Huck, Dennis Newsham and Bert Hansen were Scouts when I was. We went camping at Smelt Bay and out at Barrett's Lake.

School was just up the road. I remember being taught by Vi Herrewig, Bev Mathews, May Freeman and Reg Chapin. Maybe Ray Miller. I went there until grade 11, then I quit. Fred Tomlinson was teaching in the high school room then. I worked on the roads part time for a bit, did oysters with Don Munro and then went to work at MacMillan and Bloedel's booming ground in Teakerne Arm for awhile. Lynn (Robertson) and I were married in April of 1965.

Granny Lowes had retired to Smelt Bay when we got married. The lodge had been rented out to Ada and Morris Dronsfield who moved out just in time for us to move in. A big party marked the occasion.....it was a cold late fall night, the old place was cold as a barn. It was heated by a huge wood furnace with a stovepipe that ran across the basement to the chimney, probably about twelve feet of it. I went down there and stoked up the fire, opened up the drafts and came back upstairs. Next time I thought about it I went down there and the whole stovepipe was red hot. I shut the drafts, put a wire round the stovepipe to keep it from falling onto the plank floor and burning the place down and went back to the party. Robert Christensen told me later that he'd spent a lot of time in the lodge and it had never been that warm!. We lived there while building a place on a piece of property on Carrington Bay Road in Whaletown that we bought from Lynn's folks, Dunc and Pat Robertson. We moved over there when my folks and Granny sold the Manson's property in 1966. Dad and Mom moved to Vancouver then to Campbell River.

Jim Taylor took over the property. I think he wanted to trade it to the government for some timber but he died in a plane crash before that happened. Then I think the place went to a group of Americans who mioght have been the ones who sold it to the Parks Board.

Heather was born in October '65, Derrick in January '68. In the fall of '69 we took a year off and went to New Zealand, returning in December of 1970. I worked for BC Hydro for awhile, cutting the power-line right-of-way in readiness for hydro coming to the island. Worked on oysters with Robbie Graham for awhile, tried Teakerne Arm again, and spent six months going to Vocational School in Nanaimo. After that I worked as a heavy-duty mechanic on Vancouver Island. We moved to Campbell River in 1974.