

John Aitken

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IN THE MOUNTAINS

I know a place in the mountains,
it seems like an oasis to me,
There's a cottage on the edge of a cliff
on Columbia Lake, B.C.

I feel like I am cradled
by hills on either side;
in that tranquil atmosphere
anxieties subside.



When in our paddleboat
we feel the lake's our own;
the winding train that skirts the shore
whistles to us alone.

In front of us the swallows
perform a merry dance
and the intriguing humming bird
stops by for a brief glance.

The osprey is a marvel
we watch it catch a fish,
but some days we just stay in-doors
and read all day if we wish.



Near by the wind has sculpted
the hoodoos into spires
and in their shade there runs a creek
that fisherman admire.



When the snow is deep in winter
the elk feed on our lawn.
In spring, we must protect our flowers
lest they, too, are gone.

Here's where you know your neighbors;
they're like family.
It's a place where we spend some blissful days,
this beautiful mountain valley.



Elizabeth (Betty) Sawatzky

THE BIRTH

From the official documents it would appear that the birth of Columere Park occurred in 1959. This is not a very long time ago, approximately 41 years. Betty and I have owned property in the park for most of the 41 years. We purchased our lot in 1961 and erected the initial section of our present house in 1962. Frank Reinartz informed me that his house was the 5th to be built and that was after we had built ours, so it would seem that ours was probably built somewhere between the first and fifth house in the park. Lindy Burke was already here when we were building, so his house must have been the first to go up (now occupied by Al & Denise Jackson). Among some of the other early birds were Norman Randall (now occupied by the Albrights) and Chris & Ruth Foote (now occupied by Morgans) who were building about the same time as we were working on our house.



Earl and Betty Pederson (and lab Natasha) in front of our 1951 Chrysler at Columere Park.

In the beginning back around 1959 – 1960 the landscape upon which Columere Park is located was a raw piece of land which had been logged off back in the 1920's.

In the early years of development the houses being built were definitely of the cottage or cabin type construction. By the 1970's the buildings started to take on the look of city dwellings, larger, basements and appearance of becoming a more permanent residence.

By the 1990's the houses became larger with the look of grandeur. The landscaping more beautiful until we now have a really attractive and beautiful sub-division.

We now enter the 21st century with every expectation that Columere Park will get better and better, but hopefully not too much bigger.

GOD SAVE THIS LAND

One day I was thinking about some original occupants of the park and decided I should record as much history as we can recall before the few originals still around might disappear. I don't expect that to happen for another 20 years, but it may take me that long to do this write-up.

EARLY SETTLERS

My first thoughts about writing about Columere Park was to start at the beginning of its inception in 1959. While I do not want to delve extensively into the history of this area prior to 1959, I will mention only a few names and the part they played in some local developments.

David Thompson

Arrived in 1807 on an exploration of this area looking for the source of the Columbia River and to set up a fur trading post.

John & Robert Galbraith

1864 - early 1900. Arrived in the Fort Steele and Cranbrook area. Moved on to Fairmont around 1890 where they farmed and purchased land in this area.

Captain Armstrong

In 1882 he purchased 215 acres of land on the East side of Columbia Lake. Captain Armstrong grew potatoes on this land and was involved in transporting freight and passengers along the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers.

Sam & Helen Brewer

Came to the Fairmont area in 1883. This couple was very popular in the area for some years. One of their achievements was the building of a structure as a roadside house which was referred to as the Fairmont Castle. It still stands as a log house near the Mountainside Golf Course.

William Baille-Grohman

1885 – Credited with building the canal from the Kootenay River to the Columbia Lake. The canal was closed due to it not being large enough for the boats.

George Geary

1889. Built and lived in a landmark house, the remains of which can still be seen near the Number 14th tee at the Fairmont Golf Course.

Robert Randolph Bruce

1890 - One of the first real valley promoters. He was convinced that this valley would become a great fruit growing area much like the Okanagan. A story circulated that he had tied fruit to fir trees sending the pictures of these trees to prospective buyers in England to show that fruit really could be grown in this land. Actually he was not too far off base as a lot of fruit can be grown in this area, but not on a commercial scale. Many people did emigrate from England hoping to make a good living growing fruit. This promotion did not work out, so many people returned home, but some stuck it out. Bruce purchased the Fairmont Hot Springs property from Mr. Galbraith about 1911-1912. He promoted the building of the road from Banff to Invermere and this road was completed in 1923. He was appointed BC's Lieutenant Governor in 1926.

Mr. Holland

Purchased most of the property at Fairmont including the large farming area and the hot springs around 1912-14. The first swimming pool was constructed in 1923.

The Wilder Era

Lloyd and Earl Wilder purchased the entire Fairmont Hot Springs property from Mr. Holland. Included in this transaction were the water rights to the mineral hot springs, 2000 acres and all existing facilities. What we now see at Fairmont today are the results of many years of planning since purchasing the property & building in 1957.

Most of the facts related here can be found in the very informative book "THE LEGACY OF FAIRMONT HOT SPRINGS" by Janet Wilder.

THE RANCH NEXT DOOR

Before the development of Columere Park in 1959 a couple of people should be mentioned as they had an important role to play in the period before Columere Park. Immediately after World War 2, Fil and Nona Coy decided to pursue a career in farming and to this end were able to purchase the land which they still occupy directly to the west of Columere Park. Fil said they had to pay the exorbitant price of \$1,500.00



Fil & Nona Coy

for the land, but managed to recover most of this cost by selling off the logs to Simon Ronacher. Fil Coy & Ken Marples made a bid of \$2.50/acre to purchase the land on the east side of Dutch Creek, but the owner Rex Hardie was holding out for \$15.00/acre. This would have taken place around 1946-1948.

We at Columere Park have been very fortunate through the years to have had the good fortune of living next to the Coy farm & Golf Course. Fil & Nona with all their family members are great community supporters and we appreciate the privilege of their company and their help which we know is always available.

Before 1959 Les & Mary Oulton owned the land on which Columere Park is now situated. Les indicated that he intended to farm this area, but would require a road to his property. Fil Coy agreed to help out this prospective farmer by selling a 66-foot wide right of way through his property for \$1.00. This right-of-way was later transferred to the Highways department.

According to information from A.T.(Hap) Richardson the Columere Park area had been logged off back in the 1920's.

In 1959 the Columere property as we know it was purchased from Les Oulton by a group of five.

THE FIRST DEVELOPERS

"In 1959, 5 individuals purchased part of Lot 450, Kootenay District, from a Windermere Valley poultry farmer, Mr. Les Oulton. They proceeded to subdivide it into approximately 105 residential lots and constructed the required access roads as required for registration and title transfer. The 5 individuals were: Robin Abercrombie, Brian (Bim) Biart, Geoff B. Hobbs, Walker Willis, and Bob Lemaster.



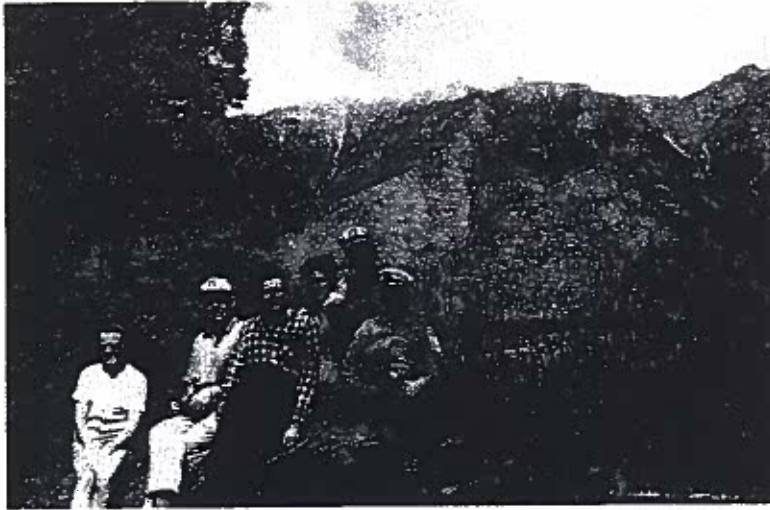
Robin Abercrombie, Brian (Bim) Biart, Geoff B. Hobbs, Walker Willis, and Bob Lemaster

The first sales promotion was held on the May 24th weekend in 1960. A barbecue and tour were planned for interested visitors. High hopes were dashed when a freakish storm blew in with rain and sleet, forcing us to spend most of the weekend huddled in a small cabin for shelter and warmth." (Written by Bob and Reta Lemaster)

A survey was conducted in the same year by Mr. Carney, B.C. Land Surveyor from Kimberley. During the survey it was not unusual to see Mr. Carney resting under a large tree nursing his favorite refreshment while his assistant Phil Boase performed the survey. The area of Columere Park consisted of 160 acres. The original survey show 106 lots with space still available for another 200 lots. A document mentioned that in 1959 they had sold 40 lots, 11 homes completed in addition to the office (part of Gordon McIvor's residence) and a house for the use of the directors (now Vanhelden).

THE CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

There must have been some confusion on dates as Frank Reinarz stated that his house, built in 1963 was the 5th house erected at that time. The first house, we think was built by and for Lindy and Evelyn Burke (now Jacksons). The 2nd, 3rd & 4th were ours, Chris Foote (beside our house), and Norman & Phylis Randall (small house behind the one built by Clint Albright). Office building (later purchased & incorporated into Gordon McIvor's house). Others followed soon after (1962-1963) were:



1962 (left to right) Betty Pederson, Harvey Nesbit, Dot Nesbit, Evelyn Burke, Lindy Burke, and Wesley Burke

Freemans (now Thiedermann)

Faulds (now Channels)

Oulton (now Powers)

Osterman (now Crooks)

Walker Wills (now Ahearn)

Thomas Belot

Gordon McIver

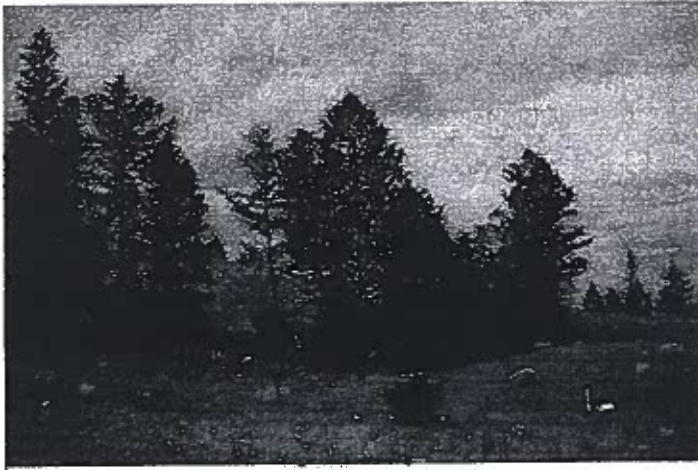
Directors House - (now Vanhelden)

Harvey & Dot Nesbitt (Marion Murray purchased and moved this house to her lot)

Red Mellor (now Noel, first cabin)

OUR DREAM

I guess everyone has a story to tell about how and why they decided to buy and build at Columere. During the late 40's and through the 50's, my friend and co-worker, Rusty Harris and I would drive from Kimberley to Mud Lake and Columbia Lake to hunt ducks and geese in the fall. Back in the 40's and 50's the highway was still a rough, gravel road so it took a little longer to drive the 60 odd miles. We would speculate how convenient it would be if we just had a cabin in this area.



Pederson lot 1961

When Columere Park became a reality, we took the opportunity to select our lot in 1961. The lots were priced from \$250 to \$1,200 depending on the location. The lots at the gate started at \$250 and as you got closer to the lake the prices escalated. The lot we selected was priced at \$1,000.00. We felt we could not afford a lot at this price so more or less abandoned the idea of owning a lot at Columere Park.

Later in the summer, Norman Randall discovered that because the lots were not selling the prices had been reduced. We came back and managed to make a deal on our choice lot for \$675.00. I don't understand how people these days manage to pay \$25,000 to \$50,000 for a lot, but we had a friendly banker who advanced us a loan. The deed was done and we had our dream lot.



Reinarz House

EARLY MEMORIES



1962 - Evelyn and Lindy Burke

This information on the early settlers at Columere Park is strictly from memory so I may have missed a few. I did not mention Bill and Kathe Poole as they owned the lot on which the Gilbreaths have their house. Bill & Kathe camped on the lot prior to their purchase of a lot from Les Oulton and built the house there (now Jean Kaminski). During the early 60's the few of us who were here would often congregate around a fire at the beach, discuss our building problems, fishing stories, politics or what

have you. Lindy Burke was a taxi driver from Calgary and always had some lively stories to tell from his experiences. Lindy also had the only boat capable of towing skiers. We took advantage of Lindy and anyone wanting to have a go at skiing ... Lindy was ready to oblige. I remember the time Robin Abercrombie decided to give the sport a go. All went well until he lost a ski, but instead of letting go of the rope, he became airborne. I told Lindy to reduce speed as he did not have a licence to tow people who were airborne. Lindy let up on the throttle at which time Robin sank like a rock. Who says water skiing is boring?

McGREGOR ERA



Charles & Pat MacGregor

Sometime around 1965-1967 the directors offered to sell the unsold lots and undeveloped property to the people who had purchased property in Columere Park. As I recall the price was around the \$80,000.00 figure. Most of the people in the park at that time preferred not to get involved so the deal did not go through. Charles McGregor appeared on the scene around 1970. Together with some partners, they were able to purchase the Columere Park property. Not too long after this Charles McGregor managed to buy out the other partners. We moved from Kimberley in 1968 to Fort McNeil, so for the next 10 years managed a once a year return to Columere Park. It was during this time that the road was paved, water lines installed, septic tanks and drain fields put in

place. This was a great step forward after years of hauling our own water, disposing of the wastes etc. Charles must be commended for improving the community in this way.

Charles McGregor had his problems during this period but managed to carry on. The marina was dredged, a channel to the lake put in place and things seemed to be going along very well. One day a government inspector, B. Harotsworth arrived at the site and discovered what was happening, and as no permit had been issued, the operation was shut down. Charles was able to convince the authorities that this was an oversight and that he would do whatever was required in order to carry on. Carry on he did, and the marina became a reality. Another problem arose when it was discovered that the survey line between Columere Park and the Coy farm was incorrect by six feet. Charles insisted that this was a mistake and the Coys should reimburse him for the cost of correcting this error. It was discovered that the Coys were not responsible for this error so the case was dropped and the situation corrected.

In 1979-1980 a number of people had purchased lots and a few had even built houses on their lots located in phase 2 of Columere Park. Title to their lots had been promised, but soon they discovered that titles could not be issued until certain commitments had been met by having deposits in place with the Government regarding water, roads etc. Charles McGregor did not

have the required funds to fulfill these commitments so until these obligations could be met the titles to the land in question could not be issued.

A meeting was organized by those who had purchased lots in the phase 2 and this meeting resulted in a committee being set up to find a solution to this dilemma. The three people selected were:

Mr. Merv Williams

Mr. Ed Ivers

Mr. Wallace Wiebe

After several meetings and negotiations with Government representatives and Charles McGregor it was agreed that all moneys outstanding on lot purchases be collected and held in trust by the above committee until the amount held in trust is sufficient to satisfy the Government.

People responded very well and the problem was quickly resolved. The committee did a very commendable job and they deserved a real vote of thanks for a job well done. In a few months the titles were issued and all ended well.

Shortly thereafter, there was a great influx of people buying lots and building houses.

Some of the family names of people who became permanent residences of the park were:

Cote	Forbes	Gilbreath	Gardner	Lavear	Kuipers
Blewaska	Delaurier	Hoffert	Ivers	Jonas	Osterman
MacDonald	Noel	Linde	McGregor	Ritchie	Schmidt
Palko	Preston	Morgan	Weir	Schroeder	Sillner
Davis	Watson	Weir (D)			

Some who followed more recently were:

Cullen	Harvey	Mitchell	LeVear	Flater	Schoeder
Hamilton	Hoffert	Gargas	Smith (G)	Dyson	Menagozzo
Myers	Geigers	Rae	Ahearn	Jenkins	Cunningham
Crooks	Smith (S)	Young	Roggeman		

I have only mentioned here the people who have been and are now living full time in the park. This is strictly from memory so I have no doubt missed a few. There must be at least a two hundred or more part time residents who we see from time to time on weekends or on their vacations.



RAE ERA



Donna, Dave, Daniel & Christopher

In 1989, there was a change in developers when Charles McGregor went into receivership and the undeveloped land, marina, beach etc. was purchased by Donna & Dave Rae. Dave and Donna were already well known at Columere Park as they had previously purchased and built a house in the park in 1979. In the eleven years that the Rae's have been in charge of development, they have done an excellent job and are always available and willing to help out in all activities.

RECREATION ACTIVITIES



Columere Pros at Dutch Creek Par 3.

Back Row L-R: Warren Schmidt, Glynn Watson, Don Gardner, Betty Pederson, Fil Coy, Thelma Gardner, Meta Jonas, Nona Coy, ?, ?, ?, Dorothy Weir.

Front L-R: ?, Nellie Schmidt, John Weir, Donna Channel, Ernie Channel, ?, ?.

(Photo taken by Earl Pederson)

Golfing - Before Coy's built the par three golf course we would occasionally arrange golf competitions at the Fairmont Mountain Golf Course. When Coys completed the par three golf course, we switched to having regular tournaments at their wonderful facility. This is an open fun type tournament ... open to all Columere people and to others in the surrounding area. We post the time and date of these tournaments on the bulletin board. Come join the fun. We charge \$1.00 to provide for prizes and usually end with a pot luck or a meal at the club house.



Tennis Court

Tennis - With the help of a number of donations from tennis enthusiasts and a fund-raising event in the summer of 1994, it was possible to build the single court. The site on which the court is now built was leased by the Community Association. At the time of this writing, we just had word that a Government grant had been received and this grant would be sufficient to complete the finishing coat on the surface and allow extra to do some landscaping around the court in 1995. Promoters of the establishment of the tennis court were Egan Sillner, Harry Mitchell and Dave Rae with help from many others in the Park.



Going Fishing

Fishing - Back in the 60's when we first started to spend weekends at Columere Park the fishing was very good. Seldom did I go fishing without catching at least one or two Kamloops trout. At this time most of the flow of water from Dutch Creek entered the lake on the West side. There was a fairly good channel extending well into the lake, about where we now see a large weed bed. The trout would spend the hot summer days in the cool waters along the channel. Fly fishing or spinning was a great way to spend a few hours along and in this channel.

During the 1950's and 1960's fishing for ling cod was a very popular sport. The ling cod would congregate at the north end of the lake in preparation for their annual trip up Dutch Creek where they would spawn. In these days the spearing and the use of a light was legal to fish for cod. The ling were quite large and plentiful back in those days and that was the reason for fishing laws being so lax. People would come from far and wide to take part in this annual event. Camps would be set up on the lake and most of the fishing took place at night. The area directly in front of Columere Park resembled a small city. I'm sure the profits at the liquor stores went up drastically during the month of February. I had the opportunity to participate in this activity for a few winters before the law prohibited this practise.

I have been fishing off and on most of my life, spanning the prairie regions of Saskatchewan and Alberta, to the Pacific ocean and the great north around Yellowknife. The most successful fishing trip I ever had happened right here on Columbia Lake. Our son, Robbie, and I were out for a leisurely boat outing along the west side of the lake early one spring day. We had no plans for fishing so we left all our fishing gear at the cabin. Part way down the lake we spotted an old boat resting up side down among the weeds. This was a nice sunny day so we removed our shoes and socks and waded over to the boat to investigate. With one on each end of the boat we were successful in flipping the boat right side up. To our complete amazement we discovered that we had a boat full of ling of all sizes. We presumed that the ling had taken shelter under the boat to escape the hot sun. After releasing the smaller ling we still had a goodly supply of ling. The end result was that we arrived home with all these ling without the use of tackle and it only took about an hour.

In the last 10 to 15 years the ling population seems to have declined and the average size much smaller. For those of you who have not tasted a Columbia Lake ling you have missed a real treat.

In the future some corrective measures must be taken to preserve the fish, get more fresh water into the lake and reduce the rapid advances being made by the weed growth in the lake.



Rob Pederson holding a Canada Goose.



Duchess with sunglasses – Columere Maskot.

Hunting - For hunters who enjoy the great outdoors there are many large game in this area - deer - elk - moose - sheep - goat - and bear. Before the north end of Columbia Lake was declared a bird sanctuary there existed good duck and goose hunting for those who preferred the smaller game.

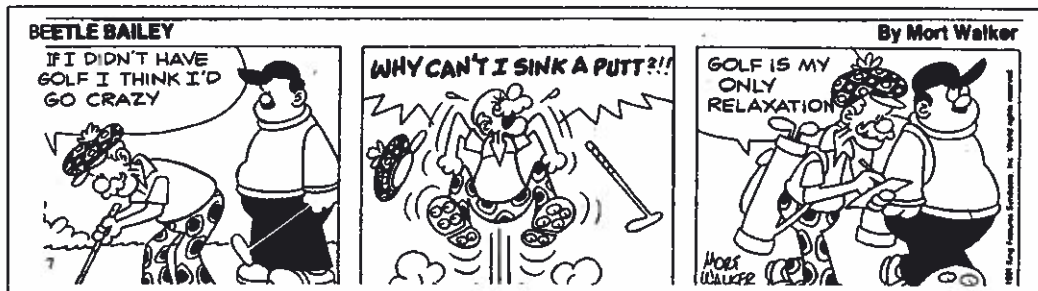
Wind surfing - The Columbia Lake is recognized as one of the best lakes for this sport. Ten miles of water and usually plenty of wind.

Other Water Sports - Besides water skiing we see all types of boats from rafts to canoes etc.

Skiing - Great down hill and cross country skiing are all around us. Fairmont ski hill of course, only 6 miles away and Panorama and Kimberley within easy driving distances.

Social or Just Loafing - We have had several successful events over the years from pancake breakfasts, beef on a bun to the one in 1994 which included golf, children's games, the dunk tank, steak barbecue and bar. We expect there will be many more of these community picnics to come.

Marina - With the complete overhaul of this facility the boat owners have a first class dock to moore their boats.



WATER – WATER - WATER

This most valuable natural resource is one of the most important ingredient of any housing development, that is water. Those of us who started out getting our water either from the spring a couple of miles south of Columere, from rain collected via eavetroughs or from the lake can attest to this vital element.

Charles McGregor can be credited for having installed the water distribution system that we now use. The water is drawn from the lake, pumped to the reservoir and from there pumped into the entire system.

Roy Martin has been in charge of this utility for years and has done a good job keeping the pumps working and the water flowing.

The water Rights Department in Victoria took over the Administration of the utility for several years before selling the system to Peter Mulyk a well known business person residing in Calgary. Roy Martin continues in his position as general maintenance supervisor.

COLUMERE PARK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

I believe the association was formed around 1974-75. We were living in Yellowknife at this time and I remember getting a letter and invoice for the membership dues from Pat Eckenswiller. I have no record of who the first directors were at this time.

The earliest record I found was dated May 23, 1977. At that meeting the following people were elected:

President	Daryl Weir
Vice President	Bernard Maillot
Secretary	Jeannine Echenswiller
Treasurer	George Ritchie

Committee members - Pat Eckenswiller, Bob Bippes, Adrian Maillot, John & Val Palko, Glynn Watson, L. Iwaskow, Bill & Pat Irving and Carl Osterman.

At the fall meeting it was revealed that the membership stood at 23. Main achievement was the building of 3 boat docks. Charles McGregor built 5 boat docks and one ski dock. The barrels used in the docks were acquired by John Palko at a cost of \$0.75 each. At this time the possibility of building a tennis court was suggested. It was proposed that an initial membership of \$50.00 and a \$20.00 yearly assessment be put in place.

The association became more active around 1982 with the following directors - Grace Ivers, Val & John Palko, Earl Pederson, George Ritchie and Helen Watson. We dealt with problems ranging from open fires, dogs at the beach, access to the lake, motor bikes, etc.

In May 1983 Dan Noel had been elected Chairman but he had moved away from the park. The association had been inactive since the fall of 1982. Earl Pederson called a meeting of interested people and the following directors were selected.

Chairman	Ed Ivers
Directors	Thelma Gardner, Don Kennedy, George Guimont, Earl Pederson, Rodney Darwin.

At the annual meeting in September 1983 Ed Ivers was confirmed as the elected Chairman but I have no record of Directors elected.

I will not list the people who served as directors and officers of the Association through the years up to the present as this information is recorded in the minutes of the Association.

But I feel I should mention a few who have served on the Board for many years and have contributed much to the stability and welfare for those who have lived and enjoyed life in this park.

Don Kennedy for his long service and work in drawing up our constitution.

Thelma Gardner who has served long as Secretary, Treasurer and Chairperson.

Charles Templeton who served as chairman during our difficult years sorting out water and other problems.

Ed Ivers who helped to revive the association after several years of inactivity.

Dan Noel who inserted renewed interest in the association.

Harry Mitchell and Egan Sillner for there energetic efforts to bring the tennis court to a reality.

Frank Reinarz for a long serving and caring attention to community concerns on the directorship.

Egan Sillner, Frank Reinarz and Henry Sawatsky for their supervising and hard work at the beach.

All others who served and worked as directors of the Association and other committees.

The presence of the Association has been invaluable through the years and we are all grateful to those who have donated their time.

We have come a long way from our pioneer days when we had no electricity, water and of course no need for septic tanks. Now we have these conveniences plus a tennis court, playground, marina, docking facility, fire department at Fairmont and a well maintained beach area. As more

people build houses and become permanent occupants the vegetation (flowers and trees) becomes more plentiful giving the subdivision the appearance of a beautiful park.

Thanks to Donna Rae and Sharon Smith for their efforts in getting the playground at the beach for the children. To all the volunteers who worked at building swim and ski floats. Those who cleaned up the roadways by burning weeds etc. To those who provided us with social events such as beef on a bun, on Columere days in 1994. To Chris and Melanie Cook for the Family Fun Day during the last few years. To those who provided funds for the loads of sand hauled to the beach. These are only some of the activities that make our community a great place to live.

If you are a director on the Columere Park Association or just helping on some committee don't feel that your efforts are not noticed or appreciated. Keep up the good work.

CLUB 50

Club 50 was organized in the mid 80's. With the purpose of providing a base for social events involving people in the vicinity of Columere, Fairmont, the Meadows and those who lived south along the Columbia Lake. The Club has been inactive for several years at the time of this writing, but only recently became re-activated.

FOREST FIRES



Forest Fire from Fairmont Lodge – 1985.

There were two major forest fires that threatened this area. The first fire occurred in 1968 and covered a large track of land on the Westside Road. This fire was contained within a few miles from the Hoodoos and Dutch Creek.

The most recent fire happened in 1985. This first outbreak appeared to the Southwest of Columere around July 1st. By July 5th a second front started in the Findley creek area and spread quickly to the north and east. The fire crossed

Highway 93-95 approached and included the government campsite just above Canal Flats. We were notified and asked to be evacuated on July 7th and did not return until July 15th when the forestry department declared the fire under control. The fire came within about 7 or 8 miles from Columere Park.

During this fire many of us who had houses in Columere became very concerned and decided to take some precautions to protect our property. At a meeting held at Glynn Watson's house it was the unanimous decision to purchase a diesel generator which could be brought on line in the event that B.C. Hydro should be cut off. This was quickly accomplished by collecting \$50.00 each from 63 property owners. The generator was purchased in Calgary and installed beside the pumphouse.



Fire from Columere Park.

House Fires

I can recall four house fires. One of them caused some damage to Tom and Isabelle Davis's house and the other that completely devoured the house belonging to Cass and Monica Cullen. The third was a minor chimney fire at the Morgan house (Roesler) which was quickly extinguished with the help of neighbors. The fourth fire was the house owned by the MacLean's (John & Gloria) in January of 2000.

Before the fire department was established we purchased a mobile tank unit from Gordon Coutts. Fortunately we used this unit only to control burning along the roadways.

Canal Flats remembers fires

by Laura Muir
ECHO REPORTER

This summer marks the 10th anniversary of the fires of 1985 that forced 1,600 people to evacuate Canal Flats and both sides of Columbia Lake.

The five fires in the area, which burned 40,000 hectares of forest, were: the Spen Fire, 1.5 kilometres from Canal Flats; the Black Fire, 40 kilometres east of Canal Flats; the Ram Fire, 13 kilometres S.E. of Canal Flats; the Sum Fire, 40 kilometres north of Parson; and the Brew Fire, 18 kilometres south of Invermere.

Ten years later, Canal Flats residents remember what it was like during the evacuation, and the fires which lasted about three weeks from the middle of July.

Watching the fire, so close to town, was "the scariest thing you ever did see," said Jocelyn Sagar, adding the whole sky was black and all you could see was a big

orange ball in the sky.

The evacuation was necessary because fires on the east and west sides of the town created the threat of a firestorm.

“

Some people took everything they owned.

”

Watching people leave Canal Flats was like watching a "gypsy caravan going through town," she said.

Some people took everything they owned. Others, including Sagar's son and husband, had to stay behind for safety precautions. It was frightening to leave them, said Sagar.

Her son and husband planned to jump down their old well "and pray", if a fire storm appeared.

Another resident, Walter Woodske, doesn't remember it as being so scary.

"I didn't feel there would be a firestorm," said Woodske, one who stayed behind during the evacuation.

He said he thought the lake on the west side of town would prevent the fire from getting any closer.

Regrowth

Even before the fires were extinguished, B.C. Forest Service was planning for regrowth, according to information obtained from a newsletter which indicated grass seeding on unstable slopes and logging of salvageable timber began as soon as the fires were out.

Areas previously forested with pine were left to regrow naturally, according to Cliff Beliveau, Invermere Forest District silviculturalist.

Since then, 12.4 million seedlings, about 3.5 million per year, have been planted on 10,342 hectares, at a cost of \$5.3 million.

From The Valley Echo
July 26, 1995

THOSE WE REMEMBER

We remember those who have lived and enjoyed this Park.

Clint Albright
Mrs. Tom Belot
Steve Blewaska
Lindy Burke
Mr. Butt
Joan Cox (Foote)
Chris and Ruth Foote
Bill and Laura Faulds
Amy Forbes
Gil Gilbreath
Bill Hoffert
Ed Jonas
Mac & Dot McDonald
Vivienne McIvor
Heather McIvor
George Morash
Dan Noel
Margaret Osterman
Carl Osterman
Les Oulton
John Palko
Bill and Kathe Poole
Norman Randall
George Ritchie
Klara Schroeder
Warren Schmidt
Mr. Tregaskis
Walker Willis
John Weir

A few scenes from the early 60's may be of some interest to the old timers and perhaps the young timers as well.



**Railway Crossing
Looking West**



**Snow Covered Hill around the Pond
Looking North**



**Columbia Lake
Looking South**



**Work crew that helped dig out my basement. L-R
Abercrombie boys(2), Greg Freeman, Rob Pederson, Wesley
Burke, Unknown, John Reinarz.**

Recent pictures of the 3 boys above



Wesley Burke



John Reinarz



Rob Pederson

DESTINATION - COLUMERE PARK

Columere Park is quickly becoming a very attractive destination for people from all walks of life and from many different parts of the country.

In the beginning back in the late 50's and the early part of the 60's most of the people came from the Calgary area as they had long ago discovered this area, particularly the Windemere Lake east side. By 1960 we find a few people finding their way into this area from Saskatchewan and this trend continues at a somewhat increased numbers. We even have a couple from Germany purchasing a house, plus several from the maritimes.

The majority of people come from the large cities of Calgary and Edmonton. They find the relaxing style of life a great escape from the hectic life and traffic in the big city.

We have people from almost all walks of life. For starters of course we had the original developers, followed by the more recent developers of Charles McGregor and our present Dave & Donna Rae. We have medical doctors, dentists, geologists, lawyers, accountants, construction people, plumbers, electricians, wealthy successful business people, bankers, fireman, computer experts, sales persons and probably a few I missed.

In the early years I am sure that the attraction could have been the lot prices which started as low as \$250, the proximity to the Fairmont Hot Springs, good fishing, hikings, etc.

We have a wonderful blend of all of the above, but most of all we are so richly blessed with the friendly personalities built into each one.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank Donna Rae, Cathy McIntosh and other members of the community who helped with the contribution of material, typing and proof reading of this publication.

BEAUTIFUL COLUMERE PARK

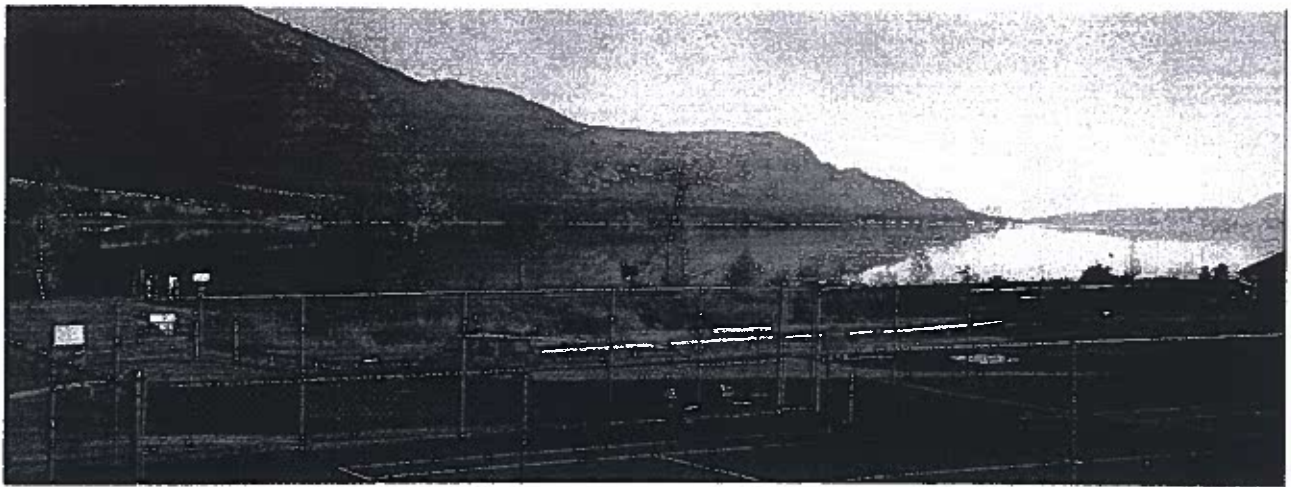


Photo by Earl Pederson, 1998.

If you have corrections or wish to make additions to this document (pictures, articles, etc.), please pass the information to the Columere Park Community Association. This information would be used in the future for reprinting of this document. Thank You.