

VALLEY HISTORY AND THE WINDERMERE VALLEY MUSEUM

BOX 2315, INVERMERE, V0A 1K0 November 2017 250-342-9769



Ethel Thornton Tunnacliffe

In 1928, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Thornton, and children Elsie, Ethel, Sidney, Kathleen (Kay), and George took up residence in the old McKay house (Lakeside) in Athalmer. Charlie Thornton had been appointed manager of the Invermere Meat Market, then owned by Pat Burns of Calgary.

For years before and after 1930, the high school for Windermere District #4 was in the old Athalmer School (built in 1911.) One sunny day, recess time, Misses Elsie and Ethel Thornton walked over and introduced themselves. The students were impressed by these two lovely young ladies. Ethel remarked, "It's just beautiful here, and I know I'm going to love it." We all introduced ourselves and welcomed them to our circle of friends and the young people of our communities.

Ethel proved herself especially proficient in sports. She was an enthusiastic, competitive player. She enjoyed basketball, badminton (played in the old David Thompson Fort), tennis, baseball, golf, curling, hockey, snowmobiling, water sports, fishing, bridge and other card games. She made many long-time friends

through these activities and spectator sports her whole life.

In the early 1930s, Ethel was affectionately called "Tillie, the Toiler" after a comic book character because she worked as a book-keeper for her father in the Meat Market.

On October 12, 1935, Marvin Tunnacliffe, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. Tunnacliffe, won Ethel's love and they were married in St. Andrew's United Church in Wilmer. That same year they joined Trinity United Church in Invermere. They supported the Church and church work was a priority of both Tunnacliffe families.

Donald was born in 1936 and Lynn was born in 1938. These were the years that Ethel and I became close friends as we shared notes. We were equally interested in home-making, cooking, and the care of our young children. Those were the days when one did household work in the morning. Children took naps and then were dressed and taken for walks. By 3 o'clock in the afternoon our homes had to be ready for company and we nearly always landed up for a cup of tea somewhere.

In 1936 Ethel joined the Ladies Aid to Trinity United Church. This was a group of pioneer ladies to help the Church with finances. In 1962 they became the Tunnacliffe-Cleland Unit #1-U.C.W. They were active until 1971. Ethel and others then joined either Unit 2 or 3 U.C.W. The total mission of the Church. Ethel continued contributing her prayers, talents, gifts, and services all the days of her life.

Ethel was an excellent seamstress. She sewed aprons, dish towels, table cloths and napkins, cushion covers (some of which were embroidered). She loved knitting and sweaters, mitts, socks etc. all found their places at every U.C.W. handicraft sale.

Ethel was an excellent cook and she gave generously to bake and tea sales.

In 1942 Marvin enlisted in the R.C.A.F. He served at St. John's, Quebec, Gander Newfoundland, and overseas. Ethel and the children joined Marvin in St. John's in 1943. Marvin was discharged in September 1945. Ethel never spoke much about these years except to say she was glad to be home. She picked up on church work, U.C.W and her other favourite projects and sports.

Fund raising was always necessary. There used to be a lot of fun in fundraising. There was excitement, organizing, practicing, meetings, anticipation, fear, challenge and finally achievement. Old and young participated in the entertainments. There were theatricals, musicals, dances, balls, carnivals, picnics, sports days, curling, catering, fall fairs, dinners and tea and bake sales ! I remember Ethel and I meeting to practice our dance steps for the Chorus Line ! Mrs. Coy, Sr. took charge of the costumes.

Ethel loved music and Marvin and the children filled her home with it. All kinds of music ! Marvin had organized a dance band. He was also organist for Trinity United for many years. He played piano for many of the theatricals. All the songs !

In 1947 Marvin and Charles Osterloh became partners and did business together. They had similar interests and gifts. Charles loved to sing and all our parties became very musical. In 1972 Marvin retired from business, but the happy relationships continued for Marvin and Ethel. They all loved golfing, fishing, theatricals, musicals, projects and travelling. During the business years Audrey and Ethel often helped in the store.

The children all grew up. There were always birthday parties, swimming, skating, school events and performances. There were graduations, careers, weddings, youth activities and organizations. We shared these many happy years.

Marvin passed away in 1980. This was a time of grief and sorrow for everyone. Ethel was always a very reserved private person. She went through her time of bereavement quietly, missing Marvin every day of her life.

In the years 1980-1989, Ethel continued to play golf and was a member of several golf clubs. She enjoyed golf so much and loved being in the company of good friends. She always attended the 'Marvin Tunnacliffe Memorial' which was played each year at one of the golf courses.

Ethel kept up her gardening and yard care, her church and U.C.W. work. She joined several bridge clubs and was known as a keen player.

Ethel accepted all the changes and challenges in her life. She was grateful and happy to have Don and Donna close by. She took many trips to visit her daughter Lynn and John. Lynn always suggested that Ethel 'stay longer' but Ethel always wanted to get home .

She accepted quietly the sale of her beloved Trinity United Church, with all its beauty and memories..... With its stained glass window in memory of Marvin. I'm sure she would have been pleased with the new church and she would be happy to see the window again.

Ethel Thornton Tunnacliffe- 1913-1999

(by Jessie Lockhart-Museum Files)

The Edgell Family

The Edgell family came from Africa in 1912 with six children; Dick, Jack, Joan, Keith, Frank and Peggy. Dick was nearly grown when they came and served in the 1914 war. Their place was on a hill west of Lake Eileen with a beautiful view down the valley. The house was a two story with a large water tank under it for water storage. Mrs. Edgell always called the verandah the 'stoop' as in Africa. She was very deaf but such a kind person. They farmed until the late 1920s but one by one they moved away. The house burnt down about 1925. Keith and Frank stayed on in a shack for some time.

A Christmas Message for Mrs. Munson (Early 1950s)

This is a Christmas note to 84 year old Mrs. E.V. Munson, a Wilmer resident for more that 50 years, who has been living in Cranbrook since last July.

Four months ago we received a touching little note from Mrs. Munson, who asked us “ Please, will you try and use your influence and get the old hospital (Lady Elizabeth Bruce Memorial Hospital) made into a home for elderly people? I have always felt it a bad thing to take the old folks out of the district that they have spent most of their lives in ! I am very homesick for my little home in Wilmer.”

We have some very special Christmas news for Mrs. Munson. And we couldn't think of more welcome Christmas news for the whole district.

The Valley Echo has had little to do with it , but Mrs. Munson's wish might come true in 1956. And in a very special way. A way that would create not only a very pleasant home for elderly folk of the Valley but also a park and beach area which could be an outstanding beauty mark for the whole district.

Although not yet officially announced, we understand that the Lions Club is thoroughly investigating the possibility of converting the present Invermere Hospital into a home for elderly people. It's a big project and the Lions don't propose to handle it all by themselves, but at least they're digging for the answers.

At the same time, the recently formed Invermere Kinsmen Club is considering taking over and developing the municipally owned park and beach, which was formerly part of the attractive hospital grounds.

The park and beach site, which we understand covers some four acres, is adjacent to the hospital grounds, covering another 11 acres. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the park site and the present hospital grounds could be developed in such a manner as to form

one large and outstandingly attractive park area , which would offer a badly needed bathing and recreational spot, as well as the elderly folks home ? And what more attractive spot could you find ?

There is another important aspect– a unique feature– which enhances the value of the project a hundred fold.

When the tide of life has passed it's ebb, no- one likes to feel that, after having contributed so much to the development of their community, they must be dependent on others, and that their period of usefulness is over.

This would be not merely the offering of a home to elderly people. It would be offering them an opportunity to perform another service, a vital service to the community. Once developed, such a park area would require continual maintenance and care. Who could look after the grounds, the flowers, the shrubs and the buildings with more pride of pleasure than the people who would live in the midst of the park ?

The Lady Elizabeth Bruce Memorial Hospital, donated to the community by the late Hon. Randolph Bruce, despite its years of valuable service, is still a good building with very attractive grounds. It would be a shame to see it lost to the community now that a new hospital will replace it's present role.

(Museum Files)

One of the first settlers in Edgewater was Harry Munson who ran a stopping house at the end of Hewitt Road.

Dr. W.H. Gaddes and Ebbs Canavan came to the valley in 1908 and formed Columbia Valley Orchards. They surveyed the town site of Edgewater in 1912.

Edgewater post office was created in 1913.

Elof Madsen built All Saints Church, Edgewater in 1931. He also built the pews and other furnishings. In 1936 he built the Edgewater Community Hall with volunteer help.

Christmas in the Valley 1898

The story of the first community Christmas tree comes from Mr. Vaughan Kimpton, Windermere, whose mother, Mrs. Rufus Kimpton was instrumental in arranging for the celebration which was held in the Presbyterian Church, the first church to be built in the district. It was the year 1898 and there were enough children in the district to have started a small school with Miss Lyn Gibbon of Port Moody as the teacher. Mrs. Kimpton and Miss Gibbon felt that the children should have a Christmas tree and collected money for toys which were ordered from Eastern Canada for there were no Vancouver mail order houses at that date.

Excitement ran high as the great day approached and all necessary preparations were made for the tree and the party that went with it. All was in readiness except the toys which were due to arrive by freight team from Golden. Malcolm MacLeod at that time drove the team for Kimpton and Pitts, local storekeepers. He left Golden on schedule with his load, including the toys destined for the Windermere Christmas tree. It was a long and arduous trip in those days, especially in the winter and when the eve of the great celebration arrived and there was no sign of the freight team Mrs. Kimpton became duly concerned.

There were no phones, no telegraph, no way of checking the progress of the precious load of toys. Fear of disappointing the eager children was on Mrs. Kimpton's mind and she became more and more upset.

Finally about 9pm, Mr. Kimpton decided something must be done. With his wife he drove to Jim Lamberts, who had a light sleigh capable of making better time than the heavier freight sled. They persuaded him to set out in search of the missing toys. He drove all night, meeting the freight team at McKay's stopping place where the driver had put up for the night. Mr. Lambert took the boxes and bags of toys from the load and brought them to Windermere on his sleigh, arriving in time for the Christmas tree. Had they been left to come on the

freight sled they would have been too late for the celebration.

Christmas was also celebrated merrily year after year at the Windermere Hotel where Jim Stoddart reigned. High jollification was in order for there was no other form of entertainment, a 'blow-out' the old timers called it ! Dancing sometimes lasted three days and it mattered little if there was no woman within a half mile when the spirit of the dance, aroused by other spirits, overtook the merry-makers.

(Winn Weir Files)

Movie Night at the Museum Winter Program 2018

(Sunday evenings 7:00 p.m.)

January 21— A Throw of Dice— 1929
Filmed in India by German film pioneer Franz Osten, it was inspired by an ancient Sanskrit epic poem.

February 18— Jumbo (Billy Rose's) - 1962
Doris Day, Stephen Boyd, Martha Raye and Jimmy Durante in a wild musical fantasy about an early 20th-Century circus whose only elephant is named Jumbo.

Windermere District Historical Society 2018 Executive

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