



### A note from Sherry Stewart:

I had lunch with my good friend, Howard McMillan, the other day and we found ourselves on the topic of the Higgins / McMillan 'connection.' I already knew that the Higgins and the McMillans have their family reunions together. Howard Malm told me once that "the McMillans came to be known around the Interlakes area when old Bob McMillan packed the mail in on the first rural route all the way around Bridge Lake.

"The McMillans and the Higgins have intermarried three

times," Howard said. "Glenn McMillan married Irma Malm, Buelah Higgins married Alex Higgins, and Kenneth Higgins married Mary McMillan. Two brothers married two sisters," Howard said with a smile.

Now young Howard McMillan, a sharp financial advisor, is as keen to keep the pioneer stories alive as I am, so I asked him if he would write the McMillan family history for the Interlaker readers. And here it is.

## Son of a woodcutter [The McMillans, Part 1]

By Howard McMillan

My paternal grandparents, Robert and Oma McMillan moved to the South Cariboo in April of 1926. Leaving a farm near Khedive, Saskatchewan, they arrived in Lone Butte on the train with five children and their worldly possessions packed into a 'Settler's Effects' railcar. Like most newcomers to the area, these possessions were modest; consisting primarily of a cow, one horse, a 'Democrat' wagon, some basic tools, and their personal effects carried with them in the passenger car.

Grandpa had been out the year before and arranged to purchase the Charlie Rose homestead on the south side of Horse Lake, a property now accessible with a drive down Falls-Way Road. However, on arrival they determined none of the buildings on the site was adequate for the entire family, so they temporarily rented the nearby Muley Place.

Motivated by a need to expand their farming operations enough to support a growing family, the McMillans soon took over an eight-cow dairy farm, along with the Post Office, from

the Browns at what was then known as the Willowford Place. Located near the head of Horse Lake, this property was so named for the shallow fording area on willow-lined Bridge Creek. This venture was also temporary, with the family moving back to the Rose Place the next year, just in time for the arrival of my Uncle Jim, who was born there in October of 1927.

Somewhat like gypsies at this stage of their lives, the family then took off on an adventure to California, where my father Glenn was born in December of 1928. Soon thereafter, in the spring of 1929, the family

returned to the Cariboo and resettled on the original Horse Lake property.

Like all their Cariboo neighbours, the family struggled through the now raging depression and things only started to look up for the McMillans in 1934 when—retaining the Rose property—the family relocated yet again, this time to the Whitley Place. Grandpa rented these two quarter-sections, located east of Horse Lake and bordering Judson Creek, from Bill Whitley, once again expanding their operations to better support his now-larger family.

It was while living at the Whitley Place that the McMillans got their start as commercial woodcutters, with Grandpa hacking ties out of the bush to fill a contract to supply 500 of them to the railroad. With the best grade of ties selling for roughly 40 cents, a typical day's production of ten generated some modest, but much needed, cash flow. Shortly thereafter, a cord-wood saw was acquired and put to use cutting firewood for a number of neighbours.

Still primarily a farmer, Grandpa even tried his hand



Top L to R: Clarence, Oma (Grandma), Alex, Mary (Mrs. Kenneth Higgins), Ross, Archie. Bottom row: Jim, Robert (Grandpa), Glenn  
Taken at the Rose place on Horse Lake around 1937 or 1938.



at grain farming on the Whitley Place. It was through this venture that a connection to the pioneer family of Ed and Irene Higgins (located in the Roe/Bridge Lake area since about 1913) was strengthened, as my great-grandfather Ed had a thrashing machine. However, the dream of a prosperous farm enterprise suffered a major setback around this time with a mysterious illness claiming the lives of the family's twenty-some head of cattle. With this setback, it was decided in the summer of 1938 to return yet again to the Rose Place.

Now close to a school again, all the younger children were enrolled in Lone Butte, which meant roughly a six-mile walk to school. To shorten this journey, Grandpa got permission to blaze a trail from Horse Lake Road, by the

## Snowball weekend

The Ryan Larson Memorial Snowball Tournament, hosted by Roe Lake & District Recreation Commission, will be held at Interlakes Hall Ballgrounds, March 4-5. Team entry costs \$150. Teams must include at least 11 players and no more than 18. Of these, at least four must be of the opposite sex.

The long running tournament was renamed in 1998 to honour the memory of then 13-year-old Ryan Larson, who died of meningitis that January. Ryan's brothers and many cousins always field teams for the annual event. Registration deadline is February 25. Several teams are already registered and space is limited, so call Tim soon at 593-2239.

Spectators are more than welcome but should dress warmly as this is a wholly-outdoors event. There is a concession on site. The event will run, regardless of ground conditions—those conditions usually create some hilarious situations!



Photo courtesy the McMillan family

Lone Butte School, 1938-39 *Top L to R:* Fred Reed, Clarence McMillan, Ivan Julsrud, Tim Reed, Anna Granberg, and Archie Roach (teacher). *Middle:* Glenn McMillan, Laura Julsrud, Olga Granberg, Curly Granberg, Marie Hinsche, Jim McMillan. *Bottom:* Howard Malm, Audrey Reed, Marie Monette, Ruth Julsrud, Billy Abbs.

homestead directly south to Lone Butte Road, thereby cutting the distance by nearly half. Nowadays, this trail is a well-used public road bearing the name, McMillan Road.

That same fall Grandpa landed a contract to pick up mail in Lone Butte and deliver it throughout the area eastward towards Bridge Lake. This job provided a reliable and seemingly princely income of \$500 annually, but later proved to be uneconomic because of the numerous expenses incurred.


With the scaling back of the farm enterprise, he also set to work and converted the chord-wood saw to cut

lumber. This pro uced lumber for boat planking and house siding, some of which ended up on the original community hall in Lone Butte.

Around this time, the connection to the Higgins family solidified substantially with Robert and Oma's only daughter, Mary, getting married to Ed and Irene's son, Kenneth, in 1939 and their second-oldest son, Alex, marrying Ken's sister, Beulah, the next year. Fortunately for me, this was not the last

of the connections, as my dad Glenn later married Ed and Irene's granddaughter, Irma Malm. (As a side note, this is a source of considerable pride for me, as I am a direct descendant of not one, but two pioneer Cariboo families!)

These events, perhaps along with Grandpa's frustrations with farming in the Cariboo, prompted a move to the Central Okanagan with the youngest children in 1942. Soon after that, their son Alex purchased the Horse Lake farm, allowing my grandparents to settle in Rutland (near Kelowna) permanently. *To be continued...*



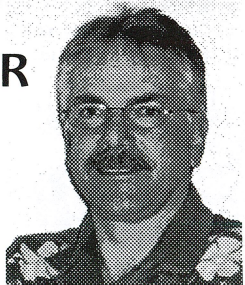
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