

Women Pioneers: Kitty Carroll

By Sherry Stewart



Once upon a time, some time ago, a young nurse, fresh from Manitoba, took her meals at a favourite Vancouver restaurant on 25th and Cambie. As fate would have it, a young Vancouver policeman also made that restaurant his home away from home. The restaurant owners introduced them, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Over a bowl of soup at Kitty Carroll's the other day I coaxed this venerable Sheridan Lake pioneer into telling me her story. The soup was very good, the story even better.

Young Kitty Peterson took her nurses' training in Manitoba, and then practiced at both the old Grace Hospital and then Pearsons Hospital in Vancouver. But she missed her country home.

Tex Carroll was a city policeman fresh from the RCAF who also wanted to live in the country. They were married at the coast in April of 1950, and three years later they were planning their escape.

"In 1953 we bought the property on Sheridan Lake that is now the Loon Bay Resort," Kitty told me. "We would come up whenever we could, and then we finally moved up permanently in October of 1956."

Many a newcomer has found life in the Cariboo a shock when they first settle here. In the mid-fifties winters sometimes went to 50 below and snow lasted six months. There was no hydro, no telephone, no indoor plumbing. Kitty Carroll was thrilled.

"I was brought up in Manitoba, out in

the country up north," Kitty says. "I had six brothers and two sisters. My people were Icelandic on my mother's side and from the Faroe Islands on my father's side. They were hardy people. The weather in Manitoba was every bit as

severe or more so than it was here, because we had wind that whistled all winter long, and it was just as cold. All my life, until I left home, there was no power, no phone and no running water, until you ran to the well for it. So, for me, moving to Sheridan Lake was not an extreme change. I enjoyed it as a matter of fact. I missed the quiet of the country when I left home. I wasn't a city girl.



Kitty and Tex

"When we arrived here permanently in October of '56 it was about 47 below for a couple of weeks, all the lakes were frozen over and there were snowbanks just about as high as the car. It never got very warm again throughout the winter. And I was so happy to see that kind of weather, because I hated the damp cold at the coast. I could never get warm at the coast, and I never really have been cold here."

The roads, apparently, did take some getting used to. The road from Sheridan Lake to 100 Mile House was pretty much single lane, made up of some gravel, but primarily pot holes, and took a long time to traverse.

"We would usually only go to 100 Mile once a month, and it took a long



Tex and Kitty were both delighted to move to the Cariboo

time," Kitty says. "I remember, there was one big frost heave this side of Lone Butte, and it was always a joke how many more broken axles and buried vehicles there were at that spot.

"In the early days Tex and I had no hydro, no phone, and no running water," Kitty told me. "We'd get water from the lake. Then we dug a well in our basement in the winter time and hauled the dirt out and then we ran a line from the lake to the basement and filled this well up. We had a gas light plant, a generator, which we used sparingly, and only when it worked! We could then pump water from the lake to fill up the well in the basement. We thought that was wonderful! We only used the light plant for necessities like the well and doing laundry. We used a car battery to run the radio.

"The Malms were the first people I met when we came here. The only phone in the country when we moved up here was at the Malm place," Kitty says.

"I was so impressed with Velma Malm. She was just the nicest person. Her house and yard were just full of plants and flowers. So beautiful. She had a green thumb like you wouldn't believe. She was just the loveliest woman, so kind and helpful. And such a nice family too.

"One time, when we had first bought the place, before we moved up, I was here for the summer, alone, and I got a message

that Tex had been in an accident coming up here. I didn't know he was coming up, and he was on a motorbike, and apparently a rock came down and hit him and knocked him over the edge of the road near Boston Bar.

"It was quite a drop, and not visible from the road. Very fortunately an old prospector, who used to walk to town once a week along a trail below the road, came across Tex where he had landed face-down, unconscious and in serious condition. The prospector had decided to come this day rather than day before, otherwise Tex wouldn't have been found. So, they got Tex into hospital in Lytton.

"I received a message from the Mounties, through Malm's phone, that he had been hurt badly and was in hospital, but no one knew where or which hospital. So I used Malm's phone to contact the Mounties, and they did a search, found him, and I had to get a ride down to Lytton. At that time the Lytton hospital had only one doctor and one nurse, and then whoever they could scrounge up to help.

"Tex was unconscious and in serious condition and he needed more sophisticated care, so I called somebody at the coast who had a truck and said, 'Throw a mattress in the back of your truck and come up to Lytton and help me take Tex to Vancouver.' His cheeks were broken, some teeth were broken and his nose was broken. He recovered well, but I would always tease him afterwards that the accident gave his face character."

When the new road came through, so did the people who wanted to vacation on fishing lakes in the Cariboo, so Tex and Kitty's Fishing Camp was born. Kitty says that they both loved their many years together creating a great place for people



Married in 1950

to holiday. In 1989, Tex and Kitty sold their camp and moved to a lovely spot further east on Sheridan Lake, building their new home 100 feet from the water's edge.

Tex passed away in September of 1996, and since then Kitty has continued to be a vital and beloved presence in the community. "I like being out here," Kitty told me. "I have a lot of family that come back and forth, and they stay with me for periods of time. As long as I've got a driver's license and a vehicle—if I get to where I'm talking to the dog too much—I

just get in the car and go somewhere and do something. I'm usually involved with local activities. I spend lots of time with my carpet bowler friends at the Roe Lake Hall. We meet once a week from September to May. They are really a great bunch of people, just like family."

"I couldn't wish for a better life," she smiles. "There have been rough times, but if you don't have rough times you can't appreciate the good times."

I sat there across the table from this much admired woman and saw a person with serenity, wisdom, great humour and a delight in just about everything life has to offer. And I knew that I had only scratched the surface, that the young people around Kitty Carroll couldn't have a better example of how to appreciate the good things about this world. Thanks, Kitty, for the soup and the inspiration.

Carpet bowlers host pairs finals

On May 9, Interlakes Carpet Bowlers hosted the BC Carpet Bowlers Association Pairs Final at Interlakes Hall. Six zone champions from Vanderhoof, Chemainus, Little Fort, Coquitlam, Cranbrook and Interlakes competed. After a day's play, it was Chemainus that took the laurels, followed by Coquitlam and, in third place, our own Sophia Dunne and Dolores Miller.

Father's Day dinner

To celebrate Father's Day, the Roe Lake & District Recreation Commission is hosting a Father's Day Spaghetti Dinner at the Interlakes Hall on Sunday, June 17th. Father's dinner is free, the cost for other adults is \$7, and children between 7 and 13 pay \$5, children 6 and under are free. Dinner will be served between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. so drop in any time for a delicious dinner and a good visit with your neighbours.

Lions club elects officers

Highway 24/Interlakes Lions' Club's newly elected officers take over July 1. Ed Stacey will become president for the third time. Harry Bishop, who is now an Interlakes resident again, will be first vice-president, while Dee Hlavach will be the second vice-president.

Secretary Linda Bishop and Treasurer Darlene Furber will continue in office. Directors Harv Allen and Harry Bishop have accepted two-year terms and Al Bishop and Colin Bromley each have one year remaining in their term.

Be sure to support our Lions—they do a tremendous amount for Interlakes' non-profit groups and for residents in distress.



The Interlakes Volunteer Fire Department
reminds the community:
For all Police, Fire and Ambulance Emergencies
CALL 911