

GOT

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YOU ~~ARE~~ BEAR? WE ~~ARE~~ FISH!

Growing up on Salt Spring Island was much the same as growing up in any rural area in Canada. It was isolated, cut off by the sea, but no more isolated than in the middle of thousands of acres of prairie. It was primitive - no electricity before 1937 or thereabouts, but many ^{places} ~~cities~~ were ^{power-less} ~~without refrigeration~~ until the second world war.

Talking to people who grew up on Salt Spring, you get the impression that they were always busy, and they were never bored. In direct contrast with the youngsters of today, who spend much of their time glued to television sets, and the rest of the time complain that there's nothing exciting to do.

There was always something to do in the early days, and even a ride into town was exciting.)

~~Some~~ Children lived and played on the beach. Twice a year, if you lived near Vesuvius, the great herds of whale would go through, ~~travelling~~ south in the fall and north in the spring. And if you missed them the first or second day, there was always the third. ^{Yes,} There were so many of them that it took three days for them all to get through the narrow Stewart Channel. They may not be well-named "killer" whales now, ^{only} (say those ^{early} observers, but ~~they~~ is probably because they are so few and in danger of extinction. In those days they were certainly aggressive to other species - the sea-lions all fled to the land and sat up on the rocks and beaches shouting hoarse defiance from a safe distance. And the fights they ~~had~~ among themselves were awe-inspiring. No fisherman went near those waters once they were sighted; and they made sure all stragglers were through before they ^{boats returned} ~~went back~~. In the ^{Fall} ~~spring~~, ^{the whole} ~~on their return journey~~, they were ~~of course~~ accompanied by their young, and it was a touching sight to see the huge fins slicing through the water with ^{the ~~smaller~~ much smaller} ~~little (comparatively)~~ fins sliding along beside them.

~~The~~ Sea-lions ^{posed} ~~were~~ a problem from time to time. Their rookeries up at Cape Mudge ^{became} ~~were~~ over-populated, and at certain times of the year the Fisheries ~~was~~ Dept. would authorise ^{manhies} ~~the police~~ to go up there armed with machine guns to thin out the

flocks. (Conservationists must pass over this paragraph with a shudder or two.)
 Sooner or later the dead bodies would float down with the tide and come to rest in
 one of the bays off Vesuvius or Southey Point. The great distended corpses would
 lie rotting on the beach ^{until} ~~unless~~ the local residents could think of ^{how to get} ~~any of getting~~
 rid of them. One way was to tie them to a row-boat and tow them somewhere else -
~~like~~ to another bay, if there was nobddy around; or a log-boom if one happened to
 be passing and the lookout was looking the other way, or even as far as Crofton,
 where there was a substantial wharf to tie ^{them} ~~it~~ to. The main thing was to get rid of
^{them} ~~it~~, quietly, quickly and preferably at night.

Then there was the whale that beached itself up Booth Canal. After it smothered
 in the mud, the local teenagers thought dynamite would disperse the huge creature.
 It did, of course, but not out to sea. Most of it finished up in the trees, from
 whence it was liable to descend on the heads of unwary walkers, ~~from time to time.~~

~~But~~ The beaches were sources of fun and profit ~~also~~. Octopus was a treasured
 catch, even then being considered a delicacy by certain ethnic gourmet groups.
 Clams were gathered, ^{for eating or feeding to chickens. There was a difference}
 Coons were hunted at night (pit-lamping was an ancient and honourable occupation)

^{from} ~~the~~ beaches, ~~as they couldn't so easily take to the trees.~~ Their skins fetched
 75¢ each - a considerable sum in those days. Ruth Heinekey tells a delightful
 story of her father, a crippled World War One veteran, who never wasted ammunition,
 as it was too expensive. He went/hunting ^{off-shore} ~~coons~~ one night, taking the children along
 to carry the booty. He fired into a tree, right between the glowing eyes. But
 nothing fell down. Incredulously, he told the children to move the boat, so he could
 get another shot. Then realised ^{to his embarrassment} he'd been aiming at two stars shining between the
 branches! Hunting was over for that night.

Another hunting story involving ^{ed} teenagers. There was a certain dead-eye
 marksman who was not too popular with the young people. They rigged up a log on a
 crest, fitting it with a stag's head, full of antlers, where it could not fail to
 be seen on a clear night. Sure enough, the hunter drew a bead on the head, fired,
 and fell backwards in horror as the whole crest ~~seemed to explode~~. The log had been
 packed with dynamite!

Flavour between eggs + clam at that time of year!

Wanted ← from

Only the relatively rich had bicycles in the early days. Then, if you were a young and daring boy, you rode down the wharf at Vesuvius (and quite often, into the water) or, when nobody was looking, perhaps in the ~~late~~^{early} evening, you rode down to the water's edge, where a handy log-boom was moored. Then, with a small but admiring audience, you would ride backwards and forwards on the logs until a grown-up appeared or until you fell in the water, whichever came first. (It was a good idea to have an audience, so they could call for help if you and the bike fell in between the logs where you couldn't get out right away.)

Hunting went on pretty well all year round in those days. Not for sport, but strictly for food. Venison was the staple meat, and fish was a luxury for which you often had to trade something else.

Families of Indians from Kuper Island would come to Vesuvius to fish and visit. The Goodrich family remembers one mother, father and twelve children who would row down from Kuper in a crazy old boat, towing dugouts. The father would come into the house to visit Mr. Goodrich and drink tea with him, with the mother and children did the fishing. Then they all would file into the ^{big farm} kitchen where Mrs. Goodrich would offer them cocoa and buns. They would drink and eat their fill, then say "Adenuff" and this was the only name by which they were known - Mr. and Mrs. Adenuff. ~~Thaxoxaka~~

The orchards in Vesuvius Bay were planted by Mr. Bittancourt, an early Portuguese settler who built The Lodge (later the Vesuvius Hotel). He had five sons who had to be kept out of the bar (which he ran) and ~~off the streets~~^{at Quischief}, so he set them to work cutting wood and building snake fences. There are still five miles of snake fence behind the Heinekey farm which go nowhere and enclose nothing. Cords and cords of wood were neatly stacked (which could never have been used up in their lifetime) But it kept the boys busy! That and the authority he wielded, which must have been absolute to keep boys working at jobs they must have known were make-work rather than for any real purpose.

Children walked to school in those days. And in those days the school for the northern part of the island was at Central, which then was three miles from Vesuvius.

although now it has shrunk to two! (or ~~sixteen~~ shrunk even further to 3 kilometers according to the Highways dept!)

That was a long walk, in the dark in the winter, and they had some severe winters in those days. Sudden gales would blow up in the channel, strong enough to blow ^{Packs of} the chickens right over the house ^{farm} into another valley. Strong enough to take four hours for young arms to row a ten-minute journey, as happened to ^{eight years old} ~~young~~ Ruth Goodrich and her ^{with her younger sister} ~~sister~~. ^{the Cranberry water} They had rowed over to ^{brother} ~~Crofton~~ to pick up their father, and were ten minutes from shore when a sudden gale hit them. Four hours later they were still rowing, urged on by their mother who gave them great moral support, but physically ^{was} ~~was useless in the~~ ^{helpless} boat. She weighed ninety pounds soaking wet, according to her daughter, and had just recently undergone surgery, so was still convalescing. However, her indomitable spirit kept the girls at it, and they finally made it to shore. ^{at Rainbow beach.}

~~And~~ Indomitable spirits were necessary to survive in the early days, whether it was before the turn of the century, when the Bittancourts arrived, or before the depression, when the Goodrich family settled in Vesuvius.

So many of the things we take for granted ~~were~~ unknown then. There were no roads, so the CPR boats called in at the ~~nine~~ ^{boats} nine wharves around the island. And if the ~~boats~~ were a day or two late, so what? They arrived, didn't they? It was still possible to visit Vancouver or Victoria on rare occasions, and it was a longer though cheaper journey than it is today.

Children worked harder then than they do now. Everyone worked hard in a rural community, ^{with dignity} ~~except perhaps~~ the store-keepers, ^{although} and theirs was a different kind of work. Perhaps it was as nerve-racking then as it is now. Especially when you had the kind of customer who would buy a 3¢ cake of soap, then, finding he still had some at home, ^{ed} ~~would~~ return it with the comment: "I've only washed on it once, so please be kind enough to take it back!"

Certainly children who grew up in a farming community had no doubts about their own worth. They proved it every day in their physical labour, and they knew it at night when they went wearily to bed. But first there was that suspenseful trip to

the outhouse to be endured. In summer it wasn't too bad, but in winter you ~~had to~~ ^{armed} arm yourself with a "bug" (a tin can containing a stubby candle) and carry ^{ied} it very carefully so ~~that~~ the wind would not get at the flame. If you were lucky, you got there alright, but quite often, ~~while~~ manoeuvring around the door, the bug would catch the wind and there you were in the dark. Imaginative children would people the outdoors with cougars, snakes or anything else their commonsense would ignore in the daylight. They might even ^{wait} ~~wait~~ there, petrified, until someone else, also armed with a bug, would come looking for them.

There were other duties they had to perform. Sometimes a Game Warden would be compelled to visit the island - reluctantly, it must be noted. Then the children of a would-be hunter would be sent to visit the Game Warden with artless - and loud - prattle, until the sound of a shot (which they were supposed to hear, but not let the Warden hear!) told them it was time to get home and ^{help} plug in the carcass.

^{Everyone stored their surplus}
~~Most families with access to~~ fruit and vegetables ⁱⁿ ~~had~~ root cellars. ~~They would~~
^{These would be used as to}
~~store bushels of apples, and trade them with the~~ Indians who came selling fish. But the prize which the Indians sought most eagerly, was pears. For some reason they called them "bears". And the extent of their bartering conversation would be:

"You got bears? We got fish!"