

Rocky
Martinson

Hard
Rock
Miner

Dubbed himself
“The Rocky Mountain
Swede”



Rocky Martinson, Hard Rock Miner

-written by Renee Hester

Every community, large and small, has its unique characters who added colour to its development. One such gentleman was Rocky Martinson who had acreage and a rustic cabin about half a mile up the road known as "Rocky's Road" to old timers, but known today as McHale Road on the highway map. I believe Rocky's daughter still owns this land. Rocky Martinson is remembered with affection by Frank and Marion Adley, Bunny Oakland, Audrey Sloan and others, as a unique, kindly and caring person with all the foibles that made him a true human being.

In his younger days, Rocky was a hard-rock miner and dubbed himself "The Rocky Mountain Swede". Things have changed vastly since Rocky was a miner. Today, if you seek the meaning "hard-rock" in the dictionary, it mentions not its relevance to mining, but rather describes it as "rock music marked by a heavy beat, amplification and usually frenzied performances"! Rocky would surely have a laugh at that.

Before Frank and Marion Adley built their present home, they vacationed at Eagle Bay. Frank often walked up Rocky's Road for a visit and a chat. Frank found Rocky a most interesting person, quiet, not at all boisterous and most kind. He was short in stature and very lame. Speculation is that Rocky was crippled while mining, a fate often suffered by miners of the day. Other folk had other theories.

The ceiling in Rocky's cabin was so low that Frank could not stand erect without hitting his head. This ceiling was the ultimate in recycling for it consisted of newspapers nailed to the rafters.

Rocky lived with his housekeeper, Katie Booth. Bunny remembers Katie as a wonderful cook, but her workplace would never take an award for exemplary sanitation. Katie was not above going after Rocky with her frying pan if he displeased her. Once when he went to Chase for supplies and returned a couple of days later than he should due to some excess tipping, Katie met him at the door frying pan in hand. He cleverly let her know he had a present of a new egg-beater for her "kitchen". This saved Rocky from the frying pan, but only until Katie received the bill for the egg-beater one week later.

Rocky had a window which he left open for the squirrels; the cabin was free range you might say. The small animals toddled back and forth and ate from the hand of their friend. This was fun but not too sanitary. The donor and the donee were happy, so what the heck?

One day, when the Adleys returned from Salmon Arm, they found a fresh loaf of bread in an unmarked bag on their step. It was simply delicious but they had no idea who brought the gift. A few days later, Rocky asked them if they enjoyed the bread. Visions of resident squirrels doing the tango on the cooling bread popped into Frank and Marion's heads. It was a wise man who said, "What you don't know never hurts you", and a wiser one who said, "It's the thought that counts".

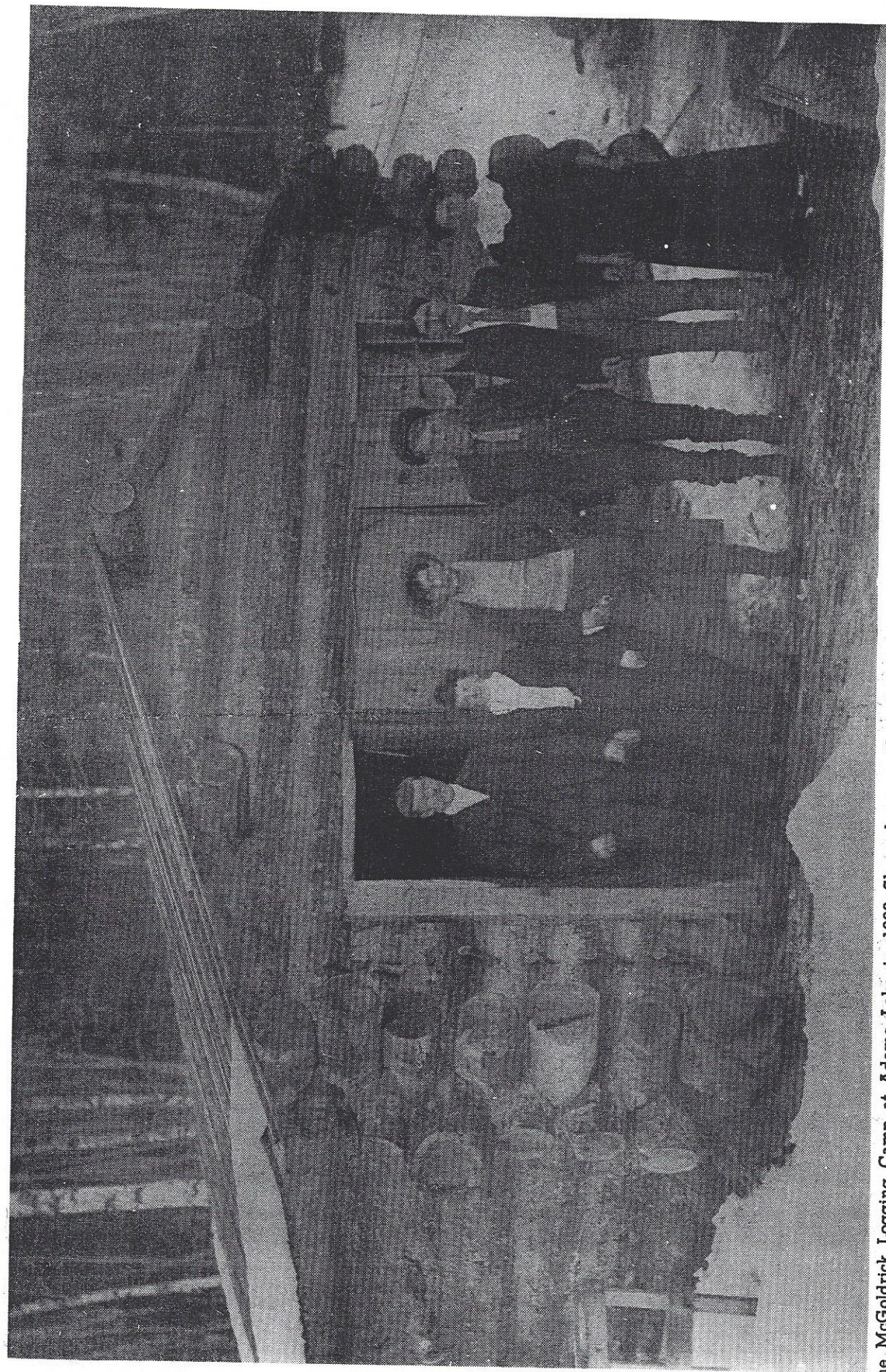
Katie passed away several years before Rocky and he was left alone. Those who knew Rocky acknowledge his frailties but are more happy remembering his many kindnesses, his humour and colourful personality. Those who were children when Rocky was an Eagle Bay resident, recall the pocketful of unwrapped peppermints he gladly

shared with them. Adults remember the stick of dynamite he and Johnny Whitehead exploded each New Year's Eve to welcome the New Year.

It is speculated that Rocky's wish to die with his boots on and a drink in his hand was granted. He is buried in Eagle Bay Community Cemetery. Two stones mark his grave, a stone placed on his grave by his loving daughter, and a simple concrete cross made and put in place by Johnny Whitehead.

At the stroke of midnight last New Year's Eve, we heard a great bang. We thought it was a gunshot or fireworks from someone saying welcome to 1996. Maybe we were wrong. Maybe it was Rocky reminding everyone "Tradition is tradition"!

The story of "Rocky Martinson" was written from material related to me by Bunny Oakland and Frank and Marion Adley. The precious pictures were provided by Ken Dunn.



The McGoldrick Logging Camp at Adams Lake in 1908. Shown here are (from left) Carl and Mrs. Marie Olsen, Alfred (Rocky) Martinson, George Haig, Hjalmar and Annie Christofferson. Photos courtesy of John Christofferson