

An Interview with an Eagle Bay Community Church Pioneer

History builds empathy through studying the lives and struggles of others, allowing us to reflect and learn from those who came before us. The Denhollander children wanted to inquire into the background of the house and place they live in today. In doing so, they contacted Mr. Bob Davidsen, the former family owner of their property. The children were delighted to have an opportunity to interview Bob on March 20th, 2023. These are the highlights of what they learned.

Signe and Robert Davidsen bought a quarter section of land (160 acres) in 1935, including the properties from Ivy Road to Parker Road and up the hill that now incorporates many Ivy Road acreages. The property was sold and parcelled into diverse family dwellings.

Bob Davidsen was an only child and lived his early years on this property. The Davidsens first lived in the green wooden house on the ridge – visible today from Eagle Bay Road just past the Community Church.



Signe, Robert (Sr) and Robert (Jr) Davidsen



Father and son with Minnie, the horse



Davidsen's First Home

Bob's father built a second house, barn and shop. Ms. Christy now owns the second house (yellow with red shutters), and the Denhollander family lives in what was the Davidsen's barn. The Denhollander family renovated the building; hard to believe this beautiful heritage building is 75+ years old.



Davidsen's Second Home – Now Ms. Christy's Home



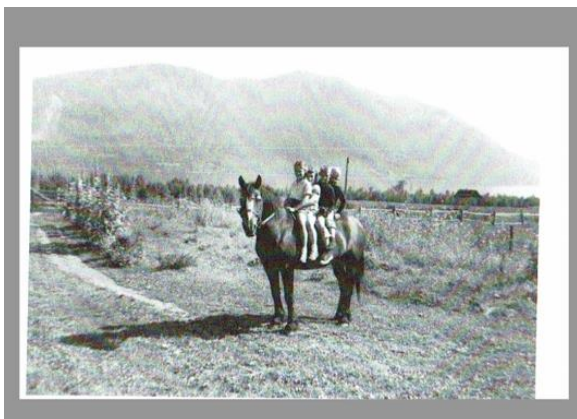
Denhollander's Home – Former Davidsen's Barn

The Davidsen family donated two acres of land to the Eagle Bay Community for a cemetery and church. The Eagle Bay Church was built in 1946-47.



Eagle Bay Community Church (present and past)

The Davidsen's barn housed Minnie, the horse. Bob remembered riding his horse regularly in his younger days. Minnie loved children and lived with the Davidsen family until she was in her 20s before passing. Bob invited many friends over who also enjoyed riding Minnie.



Minnie the Family Davidsen's Horse

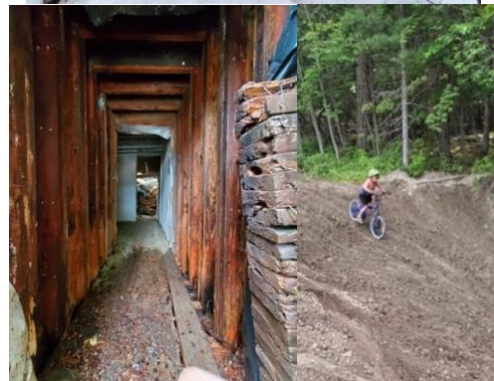
The Davidsens built a garage by Eagle Bay Road. Today the Denhollander family has turned this building into a children's playhouse and home for three bunnies Floppy, Storm and

Lightning. This gives the children their own space to play and be kids.



Davidsen's Garage – now a playhouse for the Denhollander children

The Davidsens had a mixed farm, growing food and feed crops – beans, corn, potatoes, and lettuce. The fruit trees were already on the property from the original homesteaders. The land was cleared with expansive pastures along Eagle Bay Road to Ivy Road. The Davidsens had a cold cellar that they stocked up with food for the winter. This root cellar collapsed and is not usable today. The Denhollander family dug out this underground structure and made it into a bike ranch of trails and jumps, a sporting venue that the children greatly benefit from today.



Bob doesn't recall being threatened by cougars or bears, but he does remember a bobcat that got into their chicken coup and made off with some chickens and eggs.

Going to town was a big event while growing up in Eagle Bay in the 40s and 50s. Bob has fond memories of the hour-long family trips to Salmon Arm. Although Eagle Bay Road is much the same today, the new Trans-Canada Highway was not yet built, and the old road was windy and much longer. Salmon Arm was a small town in those days. Bob's favourite memory from these trips was going to the local café and ordering a lettuce and tomato sandwich.

During their many adventures outside, the Denhollander children found an old plough, wheel barrel and rusty trailer. These items belonged to the Davidsen family, used to farm the land. The children inquired about the big spruce tree in their yard, and although Bob thought his mother planted a Blue Spruce, it doesn't appear to exist today.



Remains of an old plough and wheel barrel

The Davidsens did not have electricity at first. When Bob was about 13 years old, he recalled buying an old generator and using it to wire the house – a 12-volt system that served its function. Bob was obviously an inventive young man. Bob remembered when the power and phone came into the property sometime in the 1950s. The phone was a party line, a dial-up system with an area code of 675. The house was heated by a wood stove, and his mother did all the baking and cooking on the old stove. Bob reminisced about the fresh bread his mother baked and how delicious it was to smother peanut butter on a warm slice or two.

There are many wells on the Davidsen property, according to Bob. The first one was about 200 feet east of the main house. The children talked about an old well covered by stones, believed to be the well Bob was referring to.

Bob went to school in Eagle Bay. He had to walk along Eagle Bay Road for about two and a half miles. The school is no longer operational, and children in the area now go to Carlin Elementary-Middle School or Sorrento Elementary.

Bob went to church every Sunday at the Eagle Bay Community Church. He remembered his mother playing the guitar regularly during services. Bob still has his mother's guitar and has generously offered to donate it to the church.

Bob reminisced about snow days when there was so much snow the road was closed for up to a week. Like most children, Bob loved to play with the neighbourhood kids. He recalled that the Galligan family lived across the way. Bob also fondly remembered visits from the Hislop kids who lived down Eagle Bay Road. Bob enjoyed swimming, horseback riding and helping his dad around the farm. He was 12 years old when he first learned to drive the tractor. Bob built a 12-foot boat in his father's shop and enjoyed many pleasurable times with his family on the Shuswap. He recalled when the lake would freeze over and that he and his parents would skate on the ice in the bay. It used to get really cold in Eagle Bay!

Bob moved away when he was 16. He wanted to see the world. He first moved to Kamloops and eventually found his way to Vancouver, attending post-secondary school at Simon Fraser. Bob's parents sold their property in 1978 and moved to Campbell River to be close to Bob and his family. Bob has two children; a son who is a teacher and a daughter who works for the BC ferries. He is a proud grandfather of two grandchildren.

Upon reflection on his life, Bob talked about growing up in a time when you had to be self-reliant to survive. Being raised in rural British Columbia taught Bob to value the little things and forced him to make the best of what he had. Bob developed skills from unique experiences not afforded to children in the city. There are advantages to growing up in a community like Eagle Bay.

The Denhollander children enjoyed their research into the history of their property, gaining a deeper connection to the Davidsen family who lived here before them. They talk about the buildings, artifacts and stories of their place, more aware of the land around them. They benefited greatly from researching and writing this article.

The Denhollander Family



Miriam and Joshua Denhollander have four children. From left to right: Louie (6); Jamie (5); Finley (4); Zoe (8); Miriam in the back row.

Zoe loves horses and cats and would love a horse of her own one day. She likes reading and

can read a whole chapter book in a day. Louie likes snakes, bunnies and bats. There are bats around the house outside at night. Jamie likes cats, bunnies and dirt bikes. He also wants a horse and a cow and would name the cow Daisy. He goes dirt biking with his brother at Uncle John and Aunt Sue's place. Finley loves to play with Lego sets, and his favourite colour is blue. Miriam, a busy and proud mother, homeschools all four children.