

Shannon Beach

And



The Story

Of

Jim Shannon





## Shannon Beach and the Story of Jim Shannon

-by Renee Hester

Summer has finally come to the Shuswap and many of the people in Eagle Bay are thinking "Beach" as in Shannon Beach. This public swimming area and beach has been set aside for those who do not have waterfront property and who wish to have a safe place to bring children to swim. We who live in Eagle Bay today are inclined to take this area for granted, but it was a long time coming.

In 1953, residents of Eagle Bay knew a public beach and/or a camp ground would be needed. The Farmer's Institute petitioned the Minister of Public Works to set aside 40 acres for development of a park at Eagle Bay. Then as now, the wheels of government turned slowly. From 1953, frequent letters were sent to the Parks Department along with the concerns of local residents. In 1962, the secretary of the Farmer's Institute requested the Parks Department look into acquiring land once owned by an Eagle Bay bachelor who died in 1961. He had no heirs. People were already building and camping within the boundaries of his land. Those who lived at Eagle Bay also requested that land be set aside on Shuswap Lake as a public park and posted as a government park. At some point, this property belonging to Mr. Jim Shannon, one of Eagle Bay's more colourful bachelors, became Government Park.

Much later, "Shannon Beach" was put under the umbrella of the Eagle Bay Hall Society where it remains. Years of petitioning and years of work by concerned residents gave Eagle Bay residents "Shannon Beach", along with the green belt above it.

To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Shannon did not have a farm. He lived in a small cabin and lived to fish. Sometime after his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jim Shannon moved to Osoyoos and was married to a "widder lady" he had courted long distance for a number of years. He wooed her with handiwork he purchased at the sale of work on Eagle Bay Days. Audrey Sloan would help him with his purchases, wrap the gifts and see to sending them to Osoyoos. When his wife passed away, Mr. Shannon returned to his cabin at Eagle Bay. He died in his boat while out on the waters of Shuswap Lake. This was likely the way he wished to go. He is buried in Eagle Bay Community Church Cemetery. His grave is marked with a simple concrete cross, made by Johnny Whitehead and inscribed simply "Jim Shannon, 1951".

Mr. Shannon was a tall, friendly man who always wore a cowboy hat. The late Audrey Sloan told me she frequently met Mr. Shannon on the streets of Salmon Arm. He would greet her with "I guess a young, pretty girl like you wouldn't want to have an ice-cream cone with an old bachelor, would you?" Audrey ate many ice cream cones with Jim Shannon.

Mr. Shannon loved young people. That is why it is fitting his property is now used by families who need a safe and accessible beach for their youngsters. Ken Dunn, who grew up in Eagle Bay, remembers Jim Shannon as a man who supported all the children's activities in the area. He recalls him coming to the school concerts, the Christmas parties and especially the community picnics. His fondest memory is of Mr. Shannon, who was then over eighty years of age, jumping rope with the children at the community picnics. He says the old gentleman skipped with the best of them!

You can bet your boots, Mr. Shannon still keeps an eye on his beach, and if he were still here, would have an ice-cream cone for everyone.



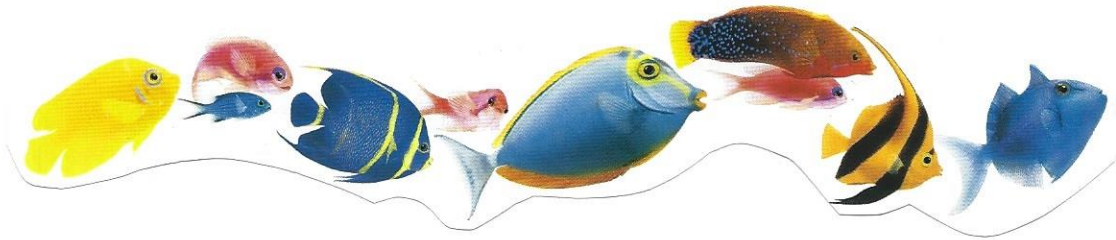


For several years, families enjoyed Shannon Beach and the children were able to have their swimming lessons there. Gradually, the vandalism on the small park became so intense Eagle Bay Hall Society could no longer afford to keep it under its umbrella. The ropes around the swimming area were destroyed, the rented biffy shoved over and litter spread everywhere. It was a sad day for the young families of the area and a sad day for those who worked so diligently to make the park a reality.

It is difficult to understand the mentality of those who would destroy something so precious to children. I am informed it takes all kinds to make a world. The vandals must live with the memories of their deeds for the rest of their lives. If they are still around and if they have begged, borrowed or stolen a conscience, I wish they could find it in their hearts to apologize to the community of Eagle Bay. It is likely too late to consider restitution. Did I hear someone say I was a dreamer?

R.H.

The majority of this article was written for "The Shuswap Market" circa 1996.  
The editorial comment came at a later date.



July 13 1996  
Chase B.C.

Dear Renee Hester:

I am sorry but I don't know if you are a Miss or a Mrs. and I hate the word Ms.

I am writing about your article in the Shuswap News concerning the old gentleman Mr. Jim Shannon.

Mr. Shannon came to Anglemont in early to mid thirties. He came down from the Lussan country and first rented an old house off the lot for Granham in Fraser Bay (Anglemont).

He didn't like the place so he moved up to a little log house that was built by a Mr. Hullet on property he had bought off my Uncle, Mr. Bill Hudson. The little house is still there.

Mr. Shannon became good friends with our family and worked part time for my dad, Tom Hudson.

We used to own a lot of what is now Anglemont Estates. I should say the Hudson's did as Bill and Tom went in there in 1909 and homesteaded in 1910.

I can still hear Jim with his funny little laugh saying "Alfred doesn't like picking gravel stones. He always finds something else to do."

I could go on and write pages on Mr. Shannon but due to a stroke I

I can't write well anymore so it will have to suffice to say I did know him, and a kinder, more generous old gentleman will be hard to find.

He always referred to my father as "Dad," even though they were about the same age.

I remember there was quite a hill in the road through his place and one day Clayton Pederson and I were hauling a load of poles out of Cedar Creek for Don Mathey. Trucks in those days were pretty small and we got stuck on the hill and had to block the wheels, rev up the motor, jump the clutch, go a little way then block the wheels and do it all over again till you got to the top.

Mr. Shannon came out to watch and he said to my brother-in-law, "Clayton, I thought you never ~~was~~ stuck".

In memory of a fine old man  
I am

Yours truly  
Alfred Hudson

If you see fit you may want to print this in your paper.

The letter on the preceding two pages was published in "The Shuswap Market in a separate column to "A View From Eagle Bay". It was published circa August 1<sup>st</sup> 1996.

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Jim Shannon and his wife.  
The "widder" lady from Osoyoos.

photo from Bunny Oakland.



Headstone on Jim Shannon's  
grave. Placed in cemetery and  
fashioned by Johnny Whitehead.

(poor photographer!).