

A TUESDAY MORNING WITH THE SALTERS

(submitted by Karen Loerke with permission from the Salters)

The Salters have lived in the Shuswaps region for over 50 years, and having lived here for such an extended time, consider the place home. Dot celebrated her 95th birthday on July 22nd, and Bob will be 98 on October 16th. They are looking forward to their upcoming 75th wedding anniversary on October 21st. When I asked them if they were excited about this milestone, they expressed their anticipation of being with family but also reflected on the passing of many friends over the years. While living in your nineties in good health is quite an accomplishment, aging can be associated with challenging life changes.

Bob grew up in Saskatchewan, where his family owned a 180-acre property near Saskatoon. He mentioned the Dust Bowl Days during the 1930s when they endured 9 years with no rainfall. The family later moved to Vancouver and purchased land near the airport. Bob humorously described their home as a fixed-up chicken house, and he wondered what that property would be worth today.

Bob joined the Air Force at 16 but did not meet the requirements to enlist as he was too young. In the meantime, he met Dot at Richmond High School. Dot was good friends with Bob's twin sister Betty. On their first date, Bob picked up Dot in a fish truck. He had been in a motorcycle collision with a dog and was riding without a helmet. The accident, although not life-threatening, left Bob with some temporary facial injuries - not too handsome, Dot explained. Obviously, his winning personality made a good impression.

After a while, the couple were married and moved to Victoria, where they lived and worked for 17 years. Their two sons and daughter were born in Victoria. Bob operated cranes, and his children fondly commented on their drives through the city, pointing out, "There's daddy's high rise." Bob was paid \$3.75 per hour, which was considered substantial.

One day, Phil Gaglardi offered Bob a job to operate a crane in Kamloops for his company, VEGA Corporation. Gaglardi was known for his work as BC Highways Minister and Mayor of Kamloops, involved in preaching, politics and business. The Salters resided in Kamloops on the north shore, where Bob served as the president of the North Kamloops chapter of the Lion's Club.

Bob's ability to multitask also enabled him to sell farm machinery. On one occasion in Savona, he met actor Bobby Dan Blocker, also known as Hoss Cartwright and Lorne Greene, who played Ben Cartwright in the TV series Bonanza, one of the longest-running Western series, lasting from 1959 to 1973.

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During their time in the Kamloops area, Bob and Dot bought property near the narrows on Shuswap Lake, as they loved the natural beauty and water recreation in the region. They were eventually offered jobs at Wild Rose Camp and Marina. After a Kelowna investment team took over and hired Dot and Bob to manage it (1975-1981), they worked hard for six years to quadruple its profits. The fishing camp had 11 cabins, 50 campsites, and a marina with 20 boat slips and gas for boats on the lake. Dot described hectic days when Bob went into town for supplies. She had to manage the store and gas pumps at the marina, requiring her to clamber up and down the hill to ensure visitors received their goods. The summer rush led them to hire teenage boys as help, and the store became a popular location for people to visit and chat. The coffee pot was always on! Such places of hospitality are hard to find today.

In 1979, Darrell Kelly and Dan Goodale responded to an ad in the Salmon Arm paper to take on the challenge of walking around Shuswap Lake. There was a lot of debate about the distance, with estimates ranging from 400 to 1,000 miles. On Day 19, Wednesday, June 6th, 1979, the boys encountered a drop in temperature. Bob and Dot Salter insisted the boys stay in one of their cabins for the night. It was the first comfortable bed they had in 19 days. A warm shower, delicious food, and a good night's sleep helped the boys complete their quest. Not only were Bob and Dot gracious hosts, but they also provided the encouragement the boys needed to finish their journey. In gratitude for their hospitality, the boys gave Bob and Dot a signed copy of their book when it was eventually published 41 years later. Bob and Dot played a significant role in the memories of Dan Goodale, the author of *27 Days Around Shuswap Lake*. The Salters are recognized as critical supporters in the last leg of an arduous journey.



Bob met people worldwide while working at Wild Rose Bay, from countries such as Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany. One memorable encounter was with a man from Belgium who was surprised that Canadians could buy waterfront property. He was concerned that in 30 years, there would be no public water access, thus excluding Canadian citizens from enjoying the water. This insight is now being recognized and addressed.

Six years later, Bob and Dot left the Wild Rose Bay area (1981) and bought property on Galligan Road, where they have lived for over 40 years. Bob started a service business, operating an appliance shop opposite the Balmoral store at the current-day Sprockets Café. While he was licensed to fix refrigerators, he was proficient in repairing most machines. He also monitored the water system in Eagle Bay Estates, showcasing his versatility as a jack of all trades.

Bob was proud to have obtained his pilot's license. He developed a close friendship with his neighbours, John and Ernie Whitehead. Ernie owned and stored a float plane on the shoreline of his lake property, and Bob often flew with him. On the day of Ernie's accident (1987), Bob had other plans and could not fly with him, so a friend went instead. This near-miss caused Bob and Dot to reflect on life.

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Bob and Dot shared memories of their days in the community theatre, The Hamsters. Dot frequently took on roles in the group's yearly play. Bob served as the MC, entertaining the audience with jokes and stories, sometimes even playing the piano. Bob mentioned that Al Houston was the best actor in the group, despite Al's own reservations about his acting abilities. At a recent Strawberry Social at the community church, I overheard Al reminiscing about his days with The Hamsters, recalling that it was the best time of his life.



Dot has an extensive collection of vintage dolls and enjoys designing and producing accessories and clothing for them. She stores most of them in closed cabinets away from bright natural sunlight. I also discovered that Dot enjoyed square dancing in Sorrento, attending every Saturday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. She stopped dancing at the age of 82. That is quite an accomplishment!

Dawn Grosset is the Salter's caregiver who manages their medications, appointments, household chores, and meals. She shows kindness and respect to the family and is a dear friend to the couple.

It was a true privilege to spend a day with Dot, Bob and Dawn, reconnecting with stories of the Shuswaps and the events of their lives. If given the chance, I look forward to more visits and stories.



Eagle Bay Community is collecting and organizing archival documents. If you have any historical stories, collections of papers, photographs and other records to add to our current archives, please submit originals or copies at the Eagle Bay Community Hall.

Volunteers are needed to help sort and organize archives. No experience is required. If you have a few hours and are interested in helping, contact Karen Loerke at kloerke@telus.net