

## OUTDOORS

**Our Precious Rivers** by Gordon Davies

The Ocean Parker has run a number of columns by area outdoor writer Gordon Davies, author of the books *The Living Rivers of British Columbia*.

The author's connection to the Ocean Park area goes back to the 1950s when his parents, Albert and Elizabeth Davies, decided to build on their acreage on Cotton Drive, which is now 25th Avenue. They bought the old Columbia Stage Lines office, located in downtown New Westminster, and had house movers bring it out to this area. They used it as the basis for their house, adding to it over a period of years until they sold their house in New Westminster and moved out here permanently.

In the mid-1960s, Gordon Davies, his wife Pauline and their family printing shop published a monthly advertising paper for Ocean Park, Crescent Beach and White Rock. It was called the 'Seabreeze'.

The following is a composite of some of Gordon Davies' river stories which have appeared in the Ocean Parker.

Rivers are precious. Remote alpine trout streams are no more precious than our abused, neglected, mundane suburban creeks and rivers. We have three suburban rivers in South Surrey: the Nicomekl, the Little Campbell and the Serpentine.

It would be stretching the truth to describe the Nicomekl River as lovely or majestic. But this river does have its own individual character traits that set it apart from all other streams.

The Nicomekl has its own homely personality. Every fish-holding hole, and each tree that overhangs its lazy waters, is a part of the river's personality. No pool or run or bend in this winding pastoral stream will ever be duplicated in any other river on Earth.

I always enjoy one of the Nicomekl River's most obvious traits: restfulness. I find this slow-moving river extremely relaxing and soothing. There are no steep canyon walls to descend and ascend, no dangerous rapids to keep me alert, and no life-threatening whirlpools to avoid. Izaak Walton would have said it is a fine river for "the contemplative angler."

One of British Columbia's smallest coastal streams, the Little Campbell River supports a fairly good run of salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout.

For their success on this diminutive river, sport fishermen owe a debt of gratitude to the Semiahmoo Fish and Game Club and its Little Campbell Fish Hatchery. In addition to improving spawning beds and clearing the river bottom of obstructions, unpaid volunteers raise and release tens of thousands of salmon and trout annually.

Particularly in its lower limits, the river has a distinctive song – an unlikely symphony of voices – the raucous cawing of the ever-present crows and the strident voices of gulls, combined with the gentle thumping of waves on the ocean beach and the vibrating roar of railway trains. This inharmonious blend of sounds is the music of the river.

Perhaps the most neglected and abused of our local suburban streams is the Serpentine. Quite understandably, most of us see the old Serpentine as a lethargic, unattractive, boring, wide ditch moving slowly between dikes through farmers' almost-treeless fields.

But at its headwaters, the little Serpentine River still is clean and wild, with verdant bushes and trees overhanging its banks. The Serpentine there is a totally natural, exquisitely lovely little stream. The headwaters of the Serpentine, and its tributaries, provide ideal spawning habitat for salmon and trout. Many of the fish that migrate up the Serpentine River to spawn began their lives at the fish hatchery in Tynehead Park.

Established in 1985, the hatchery is operated by the Serpentine Enhancement Society, a hard-working non-profit volunteer group. Each year the Tynehead Fish Hatchery raises a quarter of a million chum, chinook, coho and steelhead eggs to the fry stage. In May or June the fry are released into the Serpentine River system, and eventually find their way to the sea. They live in the ocean for several years before returning to the Serpentine to spawn.

## CARRUTH

Jim and Evelyn (Queenie) Carruth purchased the three-acre corner property at 16th Ave. and 128th Street in 1947 from Ben Stevenson. They moved to Ocean Park with their two sons, Lew and Wally in 1948.

A small grocery store across the street was purchased from Bert Parrott and John Greene. This store was moved across the street to the three-acre property. A larger store was under construction next to the small one, when both buildings were destroyed by fire.

It was a very hot summer night when the fire occurred, so neighbour Heather Spears was sleeping outside. She heard the crackling of the fire, ran to the Carruth home, pounded on the French doors to raise the alarm. It was felt that without this early warning they could have lost their house and perhaps lives.

The new store (Ocean Park Marketaria) was rebuilt with the help of a lot of volunteer labour. The meat department was operated by Cliff Cameron. The store became well known for its large ice cream cones. The store had a hand-cranked adding machine but the customers marvelled at Jim, who in his head, could quickly add up their grocery bill in double digits.

Jack Douglas was the local police constable who proudly drove a 1947 or 1948 Hudson convertible. Also remembered is the travelling saw filer, Percy Buchanan, who moved from place to place sharpening saws, axes, etc. The back of the truck, built by himself, was a home and shop on wheels. He brought with him his wife, Barbara and baby, Violet. The Fraser Valley Regional Library Van came to Ocean Park every second Monday afternoon, parking at the Community Hall.

Mrs. Edith Lewis, mother of Queenie, was social convener of the Hall for about three years. By having whist drives on Friday nights, dances on Saturday night (music supplied by oldtime records) and country fairs in August, it was possible to put a new roof on the Hall with the proceeds.

– by Lew Carruth



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