

Hollyburn Heritage Society



Issue No. 14 - December 2010

Since 1998 Hollyburn Heritage Society has been producing an annual newsletter to inform you of the history & heritage of the “Cypress Mountain” ski area. A small group of society volunteers have preserved almost 100 years of recreational activity since the first ascent of Hollyburn peak in 1908 by Vancouver Mountaineering Club, forerunner of the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

Incorporated in April 2000 and having a registered charitable status with Canada Customs & Revenue Agency. We welcome financial donations for which you will receive an income tax deduction, if over \$25. Funds assist in the publication of these information bulletins and support other HHS programs that advance the Society’s mandate. HHS membership is by way of donation: financial – volunteer time – items: photographs, news articles etc. (please, no equipment – we have no place to store it!) Cypress Bowl Recreations LP, the ski operator permits us to display panels in the “Back Room” Hollyburn Ski Lodge.

Restoration of this lodge is the centerpiece for our society. It was constructed at this site, 3,000 ft. elev., beside First Lake in 1926, using reclaimed materials from a building at 2,500 ft. elev. part of then abandoned Nasmyth logging operation

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Accomplishments

2010 has been an exciting year for HHS. Several members were volunteers for the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. This once in a lifetime experience dominated our winter activities. Early February, as all the world watched, Cypress Mountain had a true lack of snow. Then March & April nature endowed it with abundant snow for to produce a cold wet spring. However, for the actual events, VANOC was able to provide nice snowy venues – freestyle skiing, snowboarding. Such that Canada’s first gold medals for winter Olympics were won on Cypress – Maelle Ricker for snowboard cross and Alexandre Bilodeau, ski moguls. Produced for the Olympics, Don assembled an excellent film, “Heroes of the Harnessed Hickory.” It documents the development of winter sports, skiing and ski jumping on Vancouver’s local mountains.

May, as a result of Don Grant’s Email contact in December ’09 with family members of Oscar Persson (Pearson), one of the “Three Swedes” that founded HSL, Monica Ronnkvist, a cousin from Leksand Sweden visited Vancouver with a couple friends. Don gave them a guided tour of the lodge and its surrounding area. It should have been a lovely spring jaunt, but left over winter snow still abounded on trails. HHS has also received some interesting photos from these people.

July, HHS received an excellent collection of vintage photographs from the family of Hugh Aikens (1914-1999), mountain photographer during 1930’s to 1970’s. This collection covers all North Shore mountains as well as Pacific Northwest mountains. From this collection, Don has assembled the film, “Hugh Aikens, Mountain Photographer.”

Regarding restoration work on HSL, Cathy Matheson, Manager Arts, Culture & Heritage, has indicated that as we reported last year, “going slowly.” It would indeed be great if we could report otherwise, but as we all know ‘money is tight.’ Some work has been done to maintain the lodge. However, despite the lack of actual work on restoration, people have been supporting it with

financial contributions. If interested, please do not hesitate to mail a cheque – please phone 604-922-7358 – for directions re mailing. This past few years HHS has received a ‘nice start’ to its “funds committed to restoration of Hollyburn Ski Lodge.” Also, it would be appreciated for folks to think of this project in estate plans. And, receipt for Charitable Donation applies.

In conversation with the folks at Ronsdale Press, publishers of our book, “Hollyburn, The Mountain and the City,” sales are around 1200 and it is still available at local bookstores.

2010 Pioneer Skiers’ Reunion

HHS hosted the 18th Pioneer Skiers’ Reunion on Wednesday September 15th, 2010. To make this event more accessible to everybody, it was held in Cypress Mountain’s new Cypress Creek Lodge. It attracted over 80 oldtimers – some of whom came for the first time. Much chatter, visiting folks not seen over the decades, and refreshments provided a great afternoon on one of the few sunny days this past September. A nostalgic visit to Hollyburn Ski Lodge was available to attendees, about 20 went to visit the site of their fun those decades long ago.

As has been this event’s tradition, 2011 Pioneer Skiers’ Reunion will be held on Mt. Seymour at a date in October that will be announced later by host Alex Douglas, Mt. Seymour History Project.

Hollyburn Heritage Society Annual General Meeting

We will be holding our 11th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on Wednesday May 18th at 7:30 p.m. in the Seniors’ Centre West Vancouver Community Centre, northwest corner 21st & Marine Drive.

At this writing, we don’t really know what exciting information might become available for this meeting. Become a member and come on out!

Brian Creer’s Story

Brian was one of the pioneer skiers interviewed in HHS’s first film, “A Place of Memories,” produced in 2000 by Inglewood Productions. In his story, Brian mentioned that he and some of his buddies used carry other people’s loads up the mountain for 5cents a pound.



Brian Creer on Hollyburn Mtn. circa 1940
Brian Creer Collection, HHS Archives

Now in his 90’s Brian wrote and related this story at the spring 2010 viewing by Don Grant of his film “Heroes of the Harnessed Hickory.” It has been printed with his verbal permission.

“My Relationship with Hollyburn”

“My first relationship with Hollyburn came in 1932 when I was a student at Vancouver Technical High School and became acquainted with some boys who came from West Vancouver.

Jack Edwards, Jack McGeechie, Paul Thackery, Fred Fennings and several others including two girls, Betty Hodgson and Ginger Smallwood who had a cabin that they had named “Kwitchur-Bellyakin.” It was located west of junction of the Old Mill Trail and what is now the highway. It

was without a floor which was not uncommon in those days.

Paul Thackery and I started building a new cabin which we called “Wander Inn” which was completed in December 1932.

That winter there was lots of snow and we had a great time learning to ski on the “Pop Fly” and the Old Mill Trail on the way down to our cabin.

Following what was to become a pattern for my whole life, as soon as I was able to ski myself, I was able to assist other beginners in learning.

Gus Johnson and I ran a ski school at the Ski Camp, charged 25 cents for a 1 hour lesson

For several years I spent the winters up Hollyburn skiing frequently alone during the night with only a carbide light, testing my ability sense of direction to get me back to my cabin. During this time I spent a couple of Christmas Days skiing all alone.

I remember one year when I was up Hollyburn peak on Christmas Day all alone crossing an open area on the west side of the peak in deep snow which later, viewing it from the top of the peak, I witnessed an avalanche which might have taken me away down to Harry Collins valley.

Several years later I narrowly missed becoming a drowning fatality while skiing one spring. I came close to drowning once while I was skiing alone up Hollyburn Ridge.

It was in the spring of the year and some of the trees had large clumps of snow on their branches, which were draining down, into pools of water below the branches. I fell into one of these pools with my skis crossways close to the tree trunk. My head was under the water but I could raise it up and get a breath of air. However, the clump of snow on the branch of the tree prevented me from sitting up to release my ski harness and escape. Fortunately my harness released as a result of the downwards pressure of my weight and I was able to slide down into the pool and then clamber out from under the clump of snow on the branch.

Eventually when Peter Vadja arrived I unilaterally cleared a practice strip on the south east side of the peak intending to have him visit Hollyburn for a ski instructor’s class which never materialized. It can still be seen from Granville Heights in the City of Vancouver.”

“A West Vancouver Boyhood” – by James Harrison

Reprinted permission West Vancouver Historical Society “History-onics,” vol. 22, No.3 – May 2005

“One bright early summer day about 1925, my father, mother, brother and I went on a hike by way of the 26th Street trail up Hollyburn Ridge to the old mill site where in years past red cedar shingle bolts cut from the forest were sent **down** the mountain by water flume to be milled into shingles at a site that was later 27th and Marine drive. We lunched in the mill clearing, played in the piles of sawdust, sailed boats on the pond and watched the dragon flies dart about. It was a memorable outing.

In the late afternoon, on descending the mountain and entering the lower forested zone, mother suddenly stopped and exclaimed, “Ben, there’s a bear!” Sure enough, on the trail a few hundred feet ahead was the hind end of a bear protruding from the underbrush. We could see it move. It took no notice of us and appeared to be eating. There was no suitable way around it and to go back up the mountain and cross over to the 22nd Street Trail was a long hike. After watching and deliberating Father advanced and threw an object at the bear, but the bear appeared to take no notice and continued eating. When Father ventured closer he started to laugh. We followed and similarly laughed with relief. Our bear’s hind end was the blackened end of a log protruding from the bracken and underbrush. The movement we saw was the blackened end of a log protruding from the bracken and underbrush.”

It is probably quite certain that many of us have had a similar “black bear blackened log or stump” experience.

Crazy Raven Bar

Cypress Bowl Recreations LP when they built their new Cypress Creek Lodge at “Cypress Mountain” they named the bar and grill “Crazy Raven Bar.”



Ravens greet a skier in Cypress Provincial Park
Rob Newell photo courtesy “The Outlook”

Hikers and skiers are familiar with this large all-very black bird, Common Raven (*Corvus corax*), a common year-round resident on our local mountains. To a certain extent they are ‘people birds’- hanging out around our habitations and coming in to clean up our garbage. The raven figures prominently in First Nations lore. However, on Hollyburn people find them ‘cute’ and ‘cunning.’ Hiking to a mountain’s summit and as you enjoy a snack, a raven will visit you and bum a tidbit – perhaps not as friendly as their cousins, the Grey Jays who will perch on the toe of your boot or come and sit on a hand to pick up their morsel of food. Following are a few raven tales that led to the naming of the grill and bar.

Snow man and Raven

This scenario was observed one day from inside a vehicle.

Adjacent to Black Mountain Lodge, on top of a pile of snow from parking lot snow clearing some enterprising individual had constructed a small snowman. The head had two pieces of small rock for eyes, a tiny carrot for a nose and two drink straws for arms. A raven about the height of the

snowman saw it and settled on the snow a short distance away. It looked at the snowman, hopping a little closer, looking at it carefully – then hopping even closer until it was right next to the snowman. Quick as a wink it grabbed the tiny carrot and flew away to devour its vitaminy snack.

Skier on Strachan “Skychair” and Ravens

Reported in “Outlook,” January 2003 is the following true story of a pair ravens and a skier, The Ravenman of Cypress Bowl. A pair of ravens, after their first encounter with him on Mt. Strachan nine years before when he tossed a bit of sandwich to them, have since then followed him every time he was on the Skychair. Every winter, as soon as this senior skier appeared at the bottom of the lift they would be waiting for him and would flit from branch to branch on the way to the top. As he descended his favourite run, the ravens glided closely behind. The skier brought tidbits that he gave to each one. They were attracted by the colour of his jacket and only in winter. He has hiked up Strachan in summer wearing it, but these ravens, he named Chuck and Suzy have not appeared. This was their winter territory.

Modern vehicles and Raven

Parking your vehicle at the cross country ski parking area can be hazardous for its windshield wipers, especially on a wet snowy day – and at a certain time of the year – late winter. Left for any length of time nosy ravens check out the rubber tips of the wipers and rip off the entire strip of rubber with their powerful beak. Is it for food? For nesting material? Who knows – only the ravens know and they don’t tell. Crazy ravens must have some use for wiper rubber.

Solution to retain these rubber strips - slit a piece of garden hose or water pipe insulation and slide over wiper blades.

Are our ravens crazy? Not really – just tricksters that are also fun to watch. They just might encourage you to take up the popular hobby of ‘bird watching.’

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