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A Change of Seasons

Dora Payne from Saturna ~ Lisa Train

'Those Payne children must be the worst in all of BC,' relented an exasperated Miss Pridham to no one in particular on the ferry but missing knowing looks passed between a few old-timers. Desperately needing something to calm her abraded and irritated nerves- not counting sore muscles, she was en route to anywhere other than Saturna Island where she had just terminated service as governess to Audrey, Reginald, Dora and Margaret Payne. Dora would later tell the story that Miss Pridham fell victim to a game appropriately called "Get the HouseKeep." Every governess was fair game

The need for a governess was tragic. During childbirth, their mother, Ruth Katinka Maude Payne, died of a hemorrhage leaving her husband, Harold four young children to raise in a new World. It was therefore, understandable as one relative recalls, with the trace of a smile, 'the children had access to the land and beach, and ran- perhaps, a little wild.'

Harold bedridden, with the Spanish Flu, had decided the children needed a summer governess to catch up their lessons. Would they succumb to this? As Dora reminisced, "This idea went over like a lead balloon." They held the notion that during the summer months where lazy days could be spent outdoors- climbing, swimming and beachcombing -no one would want to teach.

To their disappointment a governess was found. During dinner conversation, Miss Pridham regaled them with stories of her fondness for horseback riding. "Out of the blue there was a ray of hope!" Dora recalled. They looked at each other with knowing eyes. 'Get the Housekeep' was in motion again.

Some time back they rescued an old army horse being so bad tempered no one could ride him. Miss Pridham was told they had a horse on the farm; unfortunately, they had no gear. "No problem," Miss Pridham replied excitedly, "I have often ridden bareback.' With the aid of treats, 'Meatface' was caught. Miss Pridham climbed the fence in order to mount the huge, raw-boned animal. It had only taken seconds. Miss Pridham hit the dirt. This convinced her that Saturna Island was no place for civilized people.

Early Paynes Go Wild

Many siblings borne from the union of Salusbury Gillies Payne and Catherine Chadwick would leave England and venture to the rural West Coast of Canada.

The eldest, Charles Robert Salusbury was convinced to become partners in land holdings on Saturna Island. He became the first Payne to put down roots as he felt 'the call of the wild,' to claim, clear, settle and begin a new life.

Back in England, while Charles was on Saturna, things were stirring with another brother, Gerald. It was discovered Gerry had poor eyesight and the London specialists' prognosis was to take Gerry out of school and encourage him to lead an outdoor life! In two years he would quite likely regain full sight! Gerry was sixteen. He too would feel 'the call of the wild.' Brother Harold's desire to serve his country and become an officer was shattered when color blindness was discovered.. There came another son bound to 'the call of the wild.'

More Payne brothers and sisters would answer their call-setting down roots, building homesteads, and finally enjoying the fruits of their labour with family and friends.

These roots became their legacy to the many generations to come, each to answer their own personal "call of the wild."

Dora & Libraries

Dora Maude Payne had an audacious resolve that led her to accomplish many unique feats in her lifetime. Reading to ascertain her wealth of knowledge would become a large part of Dora's vocation.

Dora was accepted into the Student Apprenticeship Class with the Victoria Public Library at the age of eighteen. During 1930-1937, she became a temporary substitute librarian and in 1937 was appointed to the clerical staff.

In nine short years, Dora would leave this security and open a book and gift shop in Duncan until 1954. It would afford both the tourist and resident not of just books and gifts, but stories regaled by Dora.

In the outlying areas, Dora, at the age of 43 was instrumental in bringing her love of books to its residents by the way of the Bookmobile. Dora's commitment to her people did not stop there as she made mechanical repairs to her 'machine,' after earning her diploma in Automobile Mechanics in 1942. Only twenty years earlier women were given the right to vote. Dora set out to get what she wanted-female or not- she was far beyond the times. Seventeen years later, Dora retired from the bookmobile. She was 60 years old.

Dora's Retirement

Prior to Dora's retirement, she purchased land in rural Sooke. The home she would build was drawn on quadrille paper, all neatly arranged in a binder.

On one page she has detailed the roof to the last rafter, ridge board and shake. The ceiling joists and number of studs are measured to the last foot and quantity. The interior and exterior are drawn with great care to detail and accuracy.

Until the construction of her house was completed, Dora built a cabin with hand-hewed logs. As a kid on Saturna, she had built a four-storied tree house with her brother from beachcombed material, this made building the loghouse a modest endeavor.

Family members with children who needed 'straightening out,' would be sent to Dora, where they would find like their forefathers, 'the call of the wild.' Days would be spent

being loved and frolicking around the forest with the little stream under the wee bridge. In this atmosphere, delinquency quietly faded away.

As Dora aged she moved her vast knowledge of mechanics, gardening, and building to Saanichton to be closer to family. Projects included a sun room to winter her prized orchids in full bloom and revamped garden beds.

Spring would avail itself to the hundreds of bulbs with snowdrops, cyclamen and crocus in abundance followed by daffodils and tulips. It was a time to spend on the lawn, the turning of earth for vegetables and her herbaceous perennial garden.

The summer months were spent on the pruning back of flowering shrubs such as rhododendrons, lilac trees and roses.

Just when you wouldn't expect it, the large maple tree which provided shade for the house and beds would become hues of gold, yellow and red. Fall would arrive in all its glory.

As winter emerged, it was time to pay attention to the worm farm. The largest worms added to the compost boxes and the smaller ones returned to their 'home' to grow.

On a spring day, with the aroma of freshly cut, dew covered grass, the smell of recently added compost to beds, the tips of plants warming to the sunshine, the whiz of hummingbirds all around, the birds chirping, the dog barking, the cat lounging; a serviceman once said he felt an ecosystem radiating from Dora's garden.

A temporary job landed from my gardening company turned into a full time job at Dora's Saanichton house, lasting ten years prior to her death. On every Tuesday at 1030 AM, I would be found having coffee in Dora's sunroom, the gardening finished for the day. It was during these times I grew to love Dora and her entertaining stories of family history and life. With her warmth of human kindness, she will live with me until it is my turn to change the seasons.

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