

It was in the early summer of 1944 when Dad resigned his commission in the Army. His health had declined rapidly from dysentery, which he contracted in the Aleutian Islands (he always blamed it on the Russians, with whom he had much contact as cargo officer on Liberty ships that carried supplies from Seattle to Adak, Kiska, Dutch Harbor and other ports in Alaska.) The doctors didn't know what more to do for him. There were no anti-biotics in those days, and Dad figured that he had to get back to nature, with fresh foods and dairy products, and hard physical work to build up his strength.

Out of the Army, Mom, Dad & I went on a trip to find a farm, or acreage that could eventually be developed. We traveled from Port Angeles, around Puget Sound, stopping at real estate offices as we went. One interesting parcel, located on Marrowstone Island interested Dad enough to make an offer that was declined. It was a farm and waterfront, and really beautiful, with a big barn and a comfortable old farm house. It must have been over priced (for those days) and we moved on. On the second leg of our trip, having gone back home for a couple of days to the house on Magnolia Bluff, we took a turn in the road to Gig Harbor, having come from Bremerton. It was late in the day, so we got a horrible hotel room located over the drug store. The next morning, Dad went over to the realtor across the street. The man, Woodburn McDonald was an old acquaintance, and immediately demanded that we see Raft Island. Old Woodburn knew what he was doing, as he commandeered an old rowboat with ancient outboard motor, and we went directly to the "Boy Scout Camp" on the northeast corner of the island, that was the most beautiful place on the island, with fine beach, trees and ferns and which became our first campsite when we moved aboard.

I must interject that Mom's enthusiasm for this venture was only a slight reflection of Dad's (and mine-- at 11 years of age I could become very excited at the chance to own a whole island) During this time Nat & Lee were elsewhere. Nat worked somewhere on a summer job. He was between 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Check with Lee. She must have stayed in Seattle.

George & Katheryn Noble owned the island and lived in the only house, if you don't mind using that term. It was a building with five outside doors a fireplace with leaning chimney in a large living room. There were 3 bedrooms (small) and a master bedroom (large) on two floors.

Dad bought the island for \$30,000 (big bucks) and the deal was concluded and we had to move in before school started for me (Nat too) That meant that George & Katheryn had to move out. When the time came for them to vacate, they hadn't packed a thing, nor had they made any plans or arrangements. Dad hired some local help and I think an old oyster barge to haul their belongings to Rosedale. Among their possessions were original oil paintings, fine china and goldware service. They had been very wealthy people before the crash of '29. When all had failed they retreated to an island they had purchased without having ever set foot thereon, having seen it from a yacht years before. I bet that would have been a story in itself.

By the time we were able to move into the house, the rains had come. There was no firewood. We gathered faggots in the woods, and beat back the nettles on all the trails. Slugs were everywhere. Skunks kept us company until Prince (Dad's Great Dane) came aboard and decimated their ranks. He got sprayed by the first one, but never again.

I started school at Rosedale. It was a two room schoolhouse, with grades 1-3 in the small room and 4-7 in the other with two teachers. Mrs. Evalyn Miller was my teacher, and everyone in 4-7 as well. Dad had made me swim from the middle of the bay to shore to prove that I could survive, before he would allow me to take a boat alone.

That first winter was the pits. We hand carried everything. Groceries, fuel oil, everything had to be loaded into row boats and carried by wheelbarrow about 150 yards, up hill all the way. A young city boy had to shape up fast. By night time we collapsed into bed after having done about a full day's work after school. Felling small trees and sawing them up, and then splitting the wood for the stove and fireplace. My romantic notions about the adventure on an island faded considerably. I did make friends at school, and I enjoyed it for the social aspects, if little else. Nat was a Senior at Gig Harbor High and always was a popular fellow. He played football and of course was in the band, as he was a trumpet player, and even joined a jazz band formed at school.

I grew 6 inches that year, and my legs ached (growing pains). I was no longer chubby or small, and I could row a boat from Rosedale to the island in nothing flat.

That next summer we worked from dawn to dark. We rebuilt the old barn enough to install a cow and horse (Jerry & Elsie) Good cow, terrible horse. He was huge and lazy. Nat took charge of the horse, I learned to milk the cow and to tend the chickens. We had joined the Co-op in GH and acquired chickens and feed and hay, and had to haul it all over to the island in boats. We got a calf also, Elmer and raised him to eat. Eat his meat we did, and I must say that I relished it. No nostalgic nonsense for me.

During the nice weather of summer, the guests descended upon us. We had no phone, but that didn't stop all of the friends and family from coming to stay for varying lengths of time. That is another story. This summer we cut wood and put it away for winter. Nat's model A was hauled across to use for power for a buzz saw that Dad bought. The war ended August 14, 1945 VJ Day and it was Dad's 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. The various scarce commodities became plentiful and gas rationing along with the various food items ended. We cut hauled and bucked up about 16 cords of wood. Nat and Jerry hauled logs out of the woods and the two of them did very well. Jerry broke into the feed room and about foundered himself on felled oats. He swelled up horribly and Dad was going to stab him, but we all argued against it. He just laid on the ground and rolled his big eyes at us and then he had the world's most remarkable flattulation, that could be heard for great distances. We, of course, evacuated the area, protecting our noses and mouth as best we could, with Dad shouting every man for himself, or some such remark. Jerry recovered.

I was raising a heifer named Bonnie. She was the sweetest Guernsey any of us had ever seen. She was beautiful and good natured, and we took her to RB Meyer's to the bull. We bred her twice more, and she learned the way to the farm. When we loaded her on the barge (after the first time) she was most cooperative. I had to restrain her from running, on the last trip. Dad and I were the only ones to milk. Nat was the horse man. Dad did most of the poultry work. We built a new float with steel pontoons, and of course the 30'x 10' barge was built for us. We bought a work boat from a man in Olympia. It was ugly, but did the work and I got to be very skillful at maneuvering the boat and barge combination. Occasionally the weather would be bad when we had to pick up a load and it got tricky in the wind.

In 1946, late in the year, we were able to purchase a new tractor. It was a Farnall Model A (or some such) and with it was a mower and a plow, disc harrow and a grader. We built a stone boat (sled with plain wooden runners) to haul loads up from the dock and float house. Talk about relief from hard labor. Dad had worked on trails to go around the island, and the tractor made that job a lot easier. He simply drove the tractor w/stone boat and cleared trails. Our quality of life had improved immensely. Jerry was out of a job, but somehow was able to keep his place in the barn. In fact we didn't sell him until we moved off the island in August 1948. Bonnie went to a very nice dairy farmer, who promised to treat her right.

I believe it was in the summer of 1947 when my grandparents Ez & Gang (Thompson) were visiting us on the island, as they frequently did, that Ez died one night suddenly. He collapsed and died instantly. I went for a doctor, and had to bang on the door of Gene Abel at Rosedale to use his phone to get Doc Bacon who drove from Gig Harbor and met me at the Rosedale beach site. I rowed him over and there was nothing to do but write a death certificate. The undertaker came at just before dawn and we carried Ez to a rowboat, on the stoneboat and to the hearse at Rosedale. It was probably the worst night of my life. I had dashed off for the doctor before any discussion of death, and I prayed all the way over and back that Ez would be up and OK and we would still go fishing in the morning. I can still see the light shining on Ez's face as he lay on the stretcher on that stoneboat. Gang wouldn't let us cover his face. Life did go on. The chores were still there to do when the sun came up an hour later. Gangie stayed with us for a few days. The funeral was in Olympia, and then she went out and got a "practical nurse job" and worked almost until the time of her death many years later.

Nat had been with us the night mentioned above, thank God. He had gone on to the UoW for a year after graduation from GHHS in pre-med. He decided he didn't want to pursue medicine, and took a job in Tacoma at one of the banks, living at the Y. After we moved off the island to Bellevue, he moved up with us and went to work at Boeing, as Dad did also. The money was running out and the taxes on the island were demanding.

Life on the island was a mixed bag. The summers were beautiful. Nat & I had pooled our resources and bought a speedboat. We had fun, and worked very hard keeping all our equipment and animals, and whatever social life we could muster. The winters were cruel on the water, and in having to cross it on a daily basis in stormy weather.

There is a certain nostalgia, when I reflect on this time. I wouldn't care to go back. I wouldn't be up to it. Every time I carry groceries into the house from the garage, I remember carrying them to the boat, out of the boat to the wheelbarrow (later the stoneboat) and then up to the house. Arlene doesn't hear me complain a great deal about it.

L GAY'S WIFE

Some of the characters that should be noted at another time are:

- RB Meyer & family local dairy farmer and insurance man
- Bobby Abel friend that lived in Rosedale and worked for Dad occasionally
- Mrs. Eide got up before dawn and built a fire in the schoolhouse for heat
- She also opened the grocery store at Rosedale and 76 station.
- Vivian & Nona Jean Eide, sisters close to Nat's age, Mrs. Eide's daughters
- Bob Langhelm & Jack Jacobsen, who came back from the war to raise hell
- Jeannie & Marti Jacobsen, Jack's sisters (both very attractive)
- Mrs. Miller the teacher at our 2 room school
- Mary Frances Cooper older than I by two years, but my first crush
- Don Gardner, my age who moved to Rosedale in '47 and my friend