Collection title: Papers of W. D. Farr

Collection code: WWDF

Description of item(s) separated:

1 3x5 inch color photograph of Ginny and Don McLean

Old location:
Series 4
Folder: Dean River Diary

New location:
Photographs series

Name of processor: [Signature]

Date: 6/23/11
Adventurer will be missed

Bob Stewart, a well-known pioneer in British Columbia’s fly-in fishing industry, passed away April 21, 2001 at the age of 74, following a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease.

Born in Lacombe, Alberta and raised in Summerland, B.C., Stewart was the second son in a family of four children born to Charles and Agnes Stewart, Free Methodist ministers. He was a born adventurer and ran off to war at the age of 15. By the age of 16, he was an aircraft gunner with the RCAF, stationed in Yorkshire, England, and by 18 had completed 33 bombing raids over Europe.

Posted back to Canada in January 1944, he soon returned to Summerland and married his childhood sweetheart, Virginia Harvey. Perhaps it was his early association with the horrors of war, and of the good principles passed on by his parents, but whatever it was, Bob was a man who chose to enjoy life, love his friends and family, and have as much fun as he could in the process. After a few short years running an apple orchard in Winfield, he once again started out in search of adventure, this time in the fishing resort business.

In 1953, Bob and Ginny and their growing family staked out a large piece of lakeshore property on Nimpo Lake and started Stewarts Lodge and Camps. In 1957, a year after the road was put through to Bella Coola, they moved there for their winter home and Bob began guiding steelhead fishermen on the Bella Coola River. This eventually led to a tent camp being established on the Dean River, to fish its now-famous summer run of steelhead. Bob was also seeing the benefits of flying into otherwise inaccessible lakes, and he bought his first aircraft, a Piper Supercub, for that purpose.

Over the next few years, Bob expanded into big game outfitting and bought other aircraft to service his growing clientele. There was a tremendous amount of work involved in building up a successful business in what was still a very remote area, but Bob was always ready to drop what he was doing and take the family on a picnic or throw on his backpack and head into the mountains for a couple of weeks with a friend.

The Stewarts spent winters in various B.C. communities, including Bella Coola, Qualicum and Williams Lake, before settling back in the Okanagan Valley for their winter residence. At the age of 42, Bob took up skiing as winter recreation, and after managing Last Mountain outside of Westbank, B.C. for two years, decided to focus on ski instructing as a winter occupation. As in every other area of his life, Bob jumped into ski instruction with full force, getting his senior instruction level and working at Silver Star Ski Resort near Vernon for many years. His favourite expression was “Let’s go!” and whether it was to go fish some new river or lake, or ski the avalanche chutes in Rogers Pass, Bob was always ready for the next adventure.

Although he developed Alzheimer’s disease at a relatively early age, in his early 50s, Bob lived his life to the fullest. He is survived by his wife, Virginia Stewart of Vernon, sister Eleanor Bradley of Pahrump, Nevada, children Robert (Margaret) Stewart of Bella Coola, Bonnie (Walter) Kantymir of Williams Lake, Wendy (Doug) Clarke of Williams Lake, Duncan (Rhonda) Stewart of Nimpo Lake, Eleanor (Darryl) Pengeley of Carline, Alberta and Donna (Brent) Lindahl of Kelowna, as well as 18 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Bob, you will be sorely missed; adventurer, war veteran, pioneer, father and friend. What an example you were for us all.
Hi Bill. Thanks for your letter. I should have been in touch before now but haven't caught up since my Russian trip.

Sounds like you've been out on the Platte quite a bit, hopefully with one of the boys. I hope everyone in the family is doing OK.

I will try to call you in the new year so we can have a visit. Christmas has been hectic here but we are all well. Take care.

Best, Rob.
W.D. Farr
P.O. Box 1930
Greeley, CO 80632
Dear friends:
2001 has been a very unusual year for everyone and the Stewart family is no exception. Rob didn't need to go to the Dean for the first time in 38 years. He did a little consulting, a bit of flying (not enough for him), some contract cat work, cut hay, and spent as much time as possible fishing and guiding on the Bella Coola/Atnarko River. In August we made a trip to Kelowna to check on our house and buy a new camper for our truck. We even spent a night at a Stewart family reunion on our way back to Bella Coola. We also helped Walt & Carol Foster (Pegge's brother & sister in law) with a packhorse trip into the mountains near their ranch in the Westbranch valley. There were 10 guests and 21 horses so there was plenty to do. We made some new friends and had a great time.

In September Rob went on a fishing trip to the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia with Jeff Vermillion. They were there on September 11 and saw the WTC attack on Russian TV. The fishing and the company were terrific but it was hard not to wonder what was going on at home, particularly for those who had family and friends in New York city. The group had to fish an extra week there as a result of the U.S. flight restrictions. Tough!

In October, Rob and Dick Blewett went to Saskatchewan to hunt Sharptail Grouse and Partridge with Pete McVey. That was a new experience and the hunting was spectacular. In November, Rob spent so much time hunting deer, chasing cows, getting Steeproof ready for winter, and going to meetings that he didn't get to Kelowna in time to pen a Christmas greeting; that's why we're calling this a New Year's letter. We did have a very Merry Christmas here; most of Rob's family were at Big White ski area for December 24 - 26 and we spent much of our Holiday time up there. We've had a lot more snow this winter and the skiing has been excellent. Rob's son Scott, his wife Laura and our pride & joy; grandson Samuel, came up from Vancouver where Scott has been flying a King Air 200 and a Beech 1900 for Pacific Coastal Airlines since last spring. Our son Robertson also came up from Vancouver where he has been working as an apprentice carpenter for Paul McGrath since the Dean season ended. He and his Dad have been snowmobiling whenever they can; that's been exceptional this winter too. Our daughter Eleanor is a senior and will graduate this spring from George Elliott high school in nearby Winfield. She continues to work summers at the Dean and to do very well in school. Rob's daughter Wendy wasn't able to get to Kelowna this Xmas; she works for a rape crisis center and is even busier than usual this time of year. We are very proud of all of them. Hope you and your family are well and happy and that we'll see you in the New Year.

Best fishes from Rob & Pegge Stewart and family

P.S. SEE NOTE ON BACK OF CARD
December 13, 2001

Mr. & Mrs. Dick Blewett
P.O. Box 481
Hagensborg, BC V0T 1H0

Dear Dick & Rose,

Another Christmas is getting closer. I am sure it is better for you than a year ago. I hope you are continuing to make progress.

I had a Christmas note from Virginia Stewart that included a picture of her and her new husband. A fine looking happy couple. Also, a copy of a story of Bob with a picture of him and his Piper Super Cub.

This picture brought back memories of the many happy years we had with you the last week of April and the first of May spent fishing on the Bella Coola.

I also remember several trips in your boat out to the edge of the ocean where we fished, caught crabs, and dug clams. I remember one night Bob Noffsinger and I ate crabs for several hours. Then of our trips on the Dean River where I saw your sons grow up. Mike like you have all that built in ability along with being a fine person and a great fisherman.

Now Billy and his wife run the Dean River Lodge for the new owners. I am so proud of them. They are managers of a great fishing lodge that you and Bob Stewart started. It must be a great feeling for both of you.

Everyone here is fine. They are all getting older but in good health. John is in Taos, New Mexico and is 66 years old. Do you remember when we first came to Bella Coola; he was only a boy? I am approaching 92 and can’t do too much but still in good health for my age. I still come to my office everyday for a few hours.

My best to both of you and your family.

Sincerely,

W. D. Farr
December 13, 2001

Mr. Rob Stewart
2135 Bennett Road
Kelowna, BC V1V 2C2

Dear Rob,

I haven’t heard from you for a long time. I hope everything is going okay and finally you are settling down for the winter and some fun skiing.

Bob Ruyle reported that they had a fine trip to the Dean but he didn’t see you. I had a nice letter from your mother with a picture of her and her new husband. They looked very happy. She sent me a copy of a story about Bob standing in front of his Super Cub. A nice story. He was truly a fine adventurer.

You picked up the pieces of the original camp on the Dean. I remember so well when Bob took Judy and I to the Dean and the tent camp. We had spent several days going from lake to lake plus the cabin at the head of the Dean. Great memories.

You made a great representative for yourself and the Dean River as you put it on a solid business basis and developed a clientele of wonderful fishermen.

Now it is time to move on. You have my sincerest wish that whatever you do will be pleasant and that you will enjoy a happy long life.

I am still in the same routine. I am writing this at my office. My family is all fine. I floated the North Platte on twelve different days from May to September. I don’t walk well anymore.

Please give Peggy and Eleanor my very best as well as Robertson. I often think of all of you. Happy Holidays.

Very Sincerely,

W. D. Farr