

The Port Coquitlam & District Hunting & Fishing Club

The First Twenty Years 1955 - 1975

Man's survival has depended on his ability to live in harmony with nature. Applied ecology is our only hope for survival, yet fifty years ago the word ecology was very seldom heard. Due to increasing awareness many environmental societies have come into existence. The first one in our area was the 'Port Coquitlam & District Hunting & Fishing Club'. This group of primarily sportsmen was alarmed at the deplorable miss-use of our natural resources.

A few men of vision gathered during the evening of March 24, 1955, to discuss local ecological problems, especially those of the ailing Coquitlam River. The late Frank Urquhart, long-time Game Warden for the area, chaired the meeting and Dick Littler, President of the Lower Mainland Zone of the B.C. Fish and Game Protective Association (the precursor of the Lower Mainland Region of the B.C. Wildlife Federation), spoke on the benefits of forming a club.

Stuart McLaren was elected President and the other Executive members chosen were George Headley, George McChesney and Elmer Pyle. At the second meeting, a draft Constitution was discussed, membership was set a \$2.00 per member, and 10 directors were elected. The first Executive of the Club was composed of Tuohey, Ricjie, Baumgartner, Hodgson, Fawrey, Bradley, Campbell, Latta, Lawson and Thompson. Meetings were held in the Aggie Hall, the Commercial Hotel, and the Legion Hall.

By the end of the year, the club was already involved with the B.C. Fish and Game Association trying to stop the illegal gillnetting of steelhead, the dredging of gravel from fish spawning grounds, and other conservation issues.

Operating on sheer enthusiasm, with no clubhouse, no range and no money, Club membership reached over two hundred that year. A fall dance started our fundraising activities, a tradition carried forward

by the Wicklunds, the Dagerts, and other devoted volunteers.

Committees were organized to search for land, to work on resolutions for the provincial convention, and to organize a junior program. Most of today's active committees were struck during that first organizational year.

The first steelhead derby was introduced when the Fish and Game Branch requested scale samples from the Coquitlam River. Biologists were urged to tour the river, and politicians were approached regarding the numerous problems encountered along the river. The Club demanded a ban on the use of DDT decades before it became a popular cause.

Ken Hodgson, an early and ardent supporter, who excelled in promoting the club, took over and served four years as President. He later was elected to serve two years as the B.C. Wildlife Federation president. Ken was a valuable asset in the promotion of the little-known club, which soon gained respect and influenced environmental and conservation decisions throughout the province.

In the second year new names were added to the Executive: Paul Colodin, Doug Michie, and Anna Arthur. Anna was the first of many ladies to take a key position on the Executive. Doug was involved in every facet of the club, but is probably best remembered for his literary talents. Paul turned his energies to finding and purchasing land from the city with a very low down payment. The Club had a home of its own, five acres on Harbour Street, Port Coquitlam. The first call for a work party went out (and the club's unofficial theme song was born: The Work Song). A trap house and rifle range took shape and soon shooting events and family wiener roasts were scheduled. From these small beginnings the popular public corn roasts began.

Throughout its history the club was blessed with enthusiastic outside support, given by men like Jim Railton, Publisher of the "Northwest Sportsman". Also influential local newspapers granted excellent coverage.

In 1958, Bill Campbell, our leading conservationist, took on his first of five arduous (wife's description) years as President, and Gil Arthur became our capable treasurer. Gil held the position until 1969 when Gordie Clegg took over and continued to police the purse strings until the end of last year (1958-1973).

During Bill's presidency he promoted a better understanding of ecological problems. During this time he was seldom in cold water with a fishing rod, but often in hot water with authorities as a result of his determined efforts. Because of their devotion to the reclamation of the Coquitlam River, Matt Bradley, Bill Lawson and Frank Graham, all well recognized for their interests in clean water policies, were nominated for the O'Keefe Award.

Members reported on pollution from an asphalt plant and sewage from Essondale, which led to the formation of a dedicated river committee. Night net patrols were carried out with the game warden, Bob Leighton, to try to stop illegal gillnetting of steelhead in the mouth of the Coquitlam. As a result of the club's efforts sixteen thousand steelhead were planted in 1958. Three years later Sid Friskie, chairing the fishing committee, reported that of 88 steelhead caught, 41% were marked fish. In the next few years several more plantings of smolts were also made. The club was eventually honoured by receiving the treasured O'Keefe Conservation Award in recognition of its efforts.

Members persevered in spite of knee-deep mud on the access road and similar problems on the range, as well as a couple of stray cows and sheep. However due to B.C. Electric's expansion the club once again became an abstract entity and an orphan. Undaunted, a committee repeated the search for land, but this time with \$12,000 in seed money. Consideration was given to many areas, including the present location. Members persuaded Recreation Minister Earl Westwood and the Municipality, to accept an offer to lease thirty-five acres on Burke Mountain in October 1963. To cut down on official survey costs a small group headed by Les Gilbert lined up the property. A sweating clearing crew slashing out boundaries made slow progress until Vic Hutchinson and his educated power saw

came to the rescue. The first building to appear was a cabin, which was moved to the property. Much work was needed so willing hands built a foundation, a chimney and a new roof. In due time the first caretaker moved in and then Tom Campbell arrived in 1967, leaving behind a wealth of humour-filled memories and strict regulations, when he past away six years later.

The building Committee, headed by George Uitz, presented many designs and after seemingly endless controversy, a cement block building was chosen. Other activities by no means slowed during this time. Ernie Fawdrey and Bill Blencow instructed the juniors in the fishing arts while Harry Lein, Bob Woodworth and many others aided them in their 22-rifle ambitions. The membership soared to 623, the Como Lake Fishing Derby attracted up to fifteen hundred kids, and the Junior Firearms Safety Course had 124 graduates in a season. The club backed the Pitt Waterfowl Sanctuary as well as continuing with its original cause, the crusade on the Coquitlam River.

The crusade helped to bring about the Pollard Hydraulic Survey done by the Department of Lands, Forests & Water Resources at the request of the City of Port Coquitlam in 1961.

Jim Culp published his excellent brief of the Coquitlam River, with the help from the river vigilantes Willard Munroe, Harley Bradley, Ernie Fawdry and others. The report, supported enthusiastically by the Club, dealt mainly with a flood control scheme and park development in the river valley as the most logical method of maintaining a safe lake level while providing an appropriate flow of water for the migration and rearing of fish stocks.

The brief was distributed to all levels of government. The club was represented on the Coquitlam River Valley Committee, which was a task force endorsed by the Municipal Council. Club member Willard Munroe chaired the meetings comprised of representatives from gravel companies, local organizations and council. Its purpose was to provide council with a meaningful policy in regard to gravel pits, parks, flooding and dykes. City Hall wastebaskets were greatly

nourished by this tremendous effort.

Only token improvements have been made, to date. The club has always insisted that one resource must not be destroyed to benefit another. This is especially true when you consider that a renewable fishery resource was being traded for the exploitation of gravel reserves.

In 1967 President Elton Meyers proved to be the building boss supreme, the one who got the job done. The following year 13 years after the formation of the club, the first function was finally held in the hall. Everyone who attended will long remember the glow of pride that everyone wore that night putting a shine on the bare and basic building, a glow seldom produced by natural means these days.

Presidents came and went with the years. Bill Otway, the eternal optimist, consistently promoted the club, whether in or out of office. George Sheets, always a reliable member and generous supporter, was especially valuable where building was concerned. Elton Myers' mighty drive meshed at just the right time to keep construction rolling at a feverish pitch.

In 1969, after this sustained and strenuous push, enthusiasm leveled off and a slump threatened to set in. 'Old Faithful' Gill Arthur, who had held the purse strings from 1958 to 1969 decided to take a breather. Besides having to find someone to take over this thankless position, the club started the year with no president, a bank balance of \$74.87 and outstanding bills of \$450.00.

Vice-President Bill Brookes, after being subjected to considerable arm twisting and unfair pressure, 'offered' to step up to the top position "just until the next meeting the following month." Under his quiet but firm leadership enthusiasm again took hold and activities shifted back into high gear. Gordie Clegg took over as treasurer until Shirley Martin fell heir to the position in 1974.

A Search and Rescue Group was formed at the request of Mayor Jack

Campbell and Phil Matheos drew up an efficient Hunter Training Program, before CORE (Conservation and Outdoor Recreation program) was ever mentioned. Club policy has always favoured an education program to promote firearms safety and the protection of the environment. Members like Phil can vouch for the fact that this is a long up-hill battle to influence government to support such programs.

The club successfully kept its sinking balance sheet from entering into the red by issuing debentures, and fundraising experts such as the Dagerts kept the lease and taxes paid. Shooting events and dances were profitable and so subsidized junior activities and paid upkeep expenses.

The club entered into another expansion project, to provide a two hundred yard range for the Canada Games in 1973. President Les Holmes survived the inevitable turmoil of such a move and was able to get started on the clearing and building during his year in office. Building chairman, John Martin, spearheaded a tremendous push to be ready in time for the event and succeeded with only moments to spare. The Club's 9th President Frank Apel, a stickler for good sportsmanship, with a sincere interest in conservation, and Club policies, presided over the events of the Games.

In spite of the fundraising and planning required, and the tremendous amount of work necessary to host the Canada Games, the remarkable achievement of the time was that the club never lost sight of its ideals. Our insistence on conservation and sound environmental principles to be applied throughout the province was finally appreciated with the respect we attained when the Club was presented with the treasured O'Keefe Conservation Award.

As only a fraction of the money expected for completion of the range and building was ever realized the club found itself deeply in debt again, resulting in executive members backing a large loan in order to meet commitments. A generous timely Provincial grant helped renew faith in the club for hard working members like the Thurner brothers when our financial obligations were met and the

long awaited trap ranges and trap house were finally completed.

During the last several years Henry Prante has put some fist into the Environment Committee. He has not only continued our "Clean Up The River" campaign, but by pushing the extremely successful Schuetzenfest Shooting Festival, he has provided funds for the club in its legal actions.

The club honoured five of its own by presenting Life Memberships to Anna and Gil Arthur, Bill Campbell, Elton Myers and Bill Otway.

In accepting the memberships, these members felt that they were merely representative of the numerous sincere workers who have contributed throughout the growth of the organization from its inception to its emergence as an influential body. No one has worked alone. Strangely, many members feel they have contributed more than anyone else. This is as it should be. Numerous and varied talents have been volunteered and harnessed throughout the years, and the personal pride of giving is perhaps what has held this fiercely proud body of individuals together.

In March 1975 the club completed its 20th year of existence with our eager and new President Ed Balazs in the chair. Many problems are behind us and forgotten but many new ones are on the horizon.

The club property was originally inside the Provincial Park boundaries, but with the newly planned development of Burke Mountain the boundary line has been moved farther up the mountain. We expect this to create more problems. The President needs the support of the membership more than ever before. And the club has never been accused of stagnating as many well-known clubs have. Indeed, many have considered the course the club has flowed along as being too turbulent!

It is said that animals possess no conceptual thought beyond knowing the present, but humans know that they have a past and the possibility of a future.

We often excuse ourselves for yesterday's mistakes claiming

ignorance, however, the 'Port Coquitlam & District Hunting & Fishing Club' knows its principles, knows its past and knows it stands determined to preserve an environment for all future generations to enjoy.

Norma K. Campbell

This digest-sized history touches the highlights and mentions a few of the people involved in the Club's formative years. The members slogging through the mud and donating countless hours of volunteer time are the true "heroes." Their names are all forgotten. Going into its twentieth year this month, what does the future hold for the club? The future is the completion of the trap and skeet range, bigger and better socials, family outings, and shooting competitions. These are the necessary ingredients to give our organization unity. And what of our environmental endeavours? Let's not be too modest about it, the Port Coquitlam & District Hunting and Fishing Club commands respect throughout the Province and don't forget - YOU ARE PART OF IT! Get behind your ecologist, Henry Prante! "Evil succeeds when good men do nothing."

1975
PORT COQUITLAM & DISTRICT HUNTING & FISHING CLUB

Executive:

President – Ed Balazs

Vice President – Tonie Rentmeester

2nd Vice President – Sandy Lamberton

Secretary – Bev Holmes

Treasurer – Shirley martin

Committee Chairmen:

Lands and Buildings – John Martin, Les Holmes

Environment, Resolution, Photo – Henry Prante

Rentals – Les Holmes

Trophies – Al Pegg

Membership & Bulletin – Heather Macpherson

Ways & Means – Marg Wagner

Junior 22 – George Sheets

Large Bore – John Bertram, Paul Helenius

Fishing – Al Wheatley

Senior 22 – Shirley Martin, John Martin

Canteen – Hector McLeod

Trap – Marcel St. Amand

Building – Ray Gervais, Marcel St. Amand, Al Pegg

Hunting – Bill Thurner, Sandy Lamberton

Public Relations – John Bertram

Archery & Hunter Training – Frank Apel

Pistol – Rimon Gendi

Conservation School – Tonie Rentmeester, Sandy Lamberton

Planning – Ed Balazs

Going through some of our old bulletins I came across this capsulated history of our Club and thought it might be of interest to our members. Old members will be familiar with the names and events enumerated here and new members will begin to appreciate the work and effort that it takes to make a successful Club last over 30 years. Whether the names are familiar or not, you are part of a club whose members' efforts are a testament to the facilities and programs you now enjoy and you should dedicate yourself to the principles and objects of our society listed in the Constitution. Whether you simply use the facilities or become a President of the Club you should volunteer your services in the areas of your choice and respond to a call for help when you read of one in your bulletin. Thank you for belonging and participating.

Norma Campbell's "Early History" was originally written in the March 1974 Club Bulletin.

First Revision by
Chuck Zuckerman
President - 1987

Second Revision by
Chuck Zuckerman
President - January 2011