Little Hoquiam

In the 1920s a group of families from Grays Harbor who were drawn to Hood Canal came to Union. They bought property and built homes along Highway 106, from Alderbrook east about over a mile toward what is now called "The Castle" and Pebble Cove. Albert Callow, a lumberman, was said to be the first. He visited, saw the Canal, and said, "We've got to come here." Throughout the 30s and 40s, friends and other families stayed in cabins and cottages, some also choosing to buy and build, joining what became known as *Little Hoquiam*.

The names are not all familiar to Union residents today. Property records show Peterson, Lightfoot, Wandel, Tuttle, Logue, Murnan, Crim, Crumpacker, McClanahan, Leach, Arthaud. They called themselves "The Bunch". Some of their descendants live here still and got together to share remembrances of spending summers here.

The stories reflect growing-up memories of the 1950s with many common themes. Swimming, paddling, and boating figured often in most of them. Taking a swim or a homemade paddle board out in sometimes freezing water. Or swimming across the Canal, a rite of passage, with boat rowers for safety because the current could take you off course.

Taking a rowboat out, singing at the top of their lungs, not realizing parents on shore could hear it all. Building flat-bottomed dories and kayaks, leaky until fiberglass was applied. Or taking wooden fishing boats and speedier motorboats out for spin. There was one memory of a trip across the Canal and losing the rudder on the way back; another of going to Bald Point to fish, to have the motor die and paddling with a jury-rigged milk crate as an oar until they got it going again.

Fishing off a boat or a dock for perch and flounder was also a shared pastime. Shrimping and crabbing, too. And learning to waterski, including for some of the

intrepid, skiing in a pyramid. A 5-man or 3-man (and woman) version was practiced one year in order to put on a show on Capitol Lake in Olympia. Even more industrious, one person remembered her brother building his own deep diving suit with a breathing tube and walking out into the Canal. She didn't think it worked all that well. As they grew older, there were motorcycles racing up and down the road. And boys would cruise the docks along the water, looking for action… "Not that they got any."

Parents never worried about the kids on the water or in the neighborhood. After chores, out they would go until dark—playing outdoor games, like kick-the-can, Red Rover, hide and seek, badminton, baseball in a field. And bicycle riding for hours, no helmets. But you had to be close enough to home to hear your mother's whistle. On rainy days and in the evenings, there'd be board games and cards.

Did everyone get along? There was a rivalry between Aberdeen and Hoquiam, although it played out more back in Grays Harbor, not so much on the Canal. Sometimes there'd be fistfights, but in the end kids made up and continued their fun and friendship.

Another recollection was about some of the girls going to the Aqua Follies in Seattle and their coming back to recreate what they'd seen at Green Lake. Putting on their own show on the beach. There were the 4th of July celebrations every year, with picnics and fireworks blow outs. Regular small gatherings with shared food—hot dogs, chicken, and baloney or peanut butter & jelly sandwiches. Then, the big parties to observe major events… the end of World War II when people dressed up on the sunny day to watch a blimp flying low over the Canal, throwing out paper confetti. Another big one was in 1971 when the University of Washington was shut down to protest the Vietnam War.

Phones were not common in the early days of Little Hoquiam. At first only the Callows had one, but they rigged up a house-to-house intercom system they use to ring another family to say, "You've got a call." In time, a few others were added. Little green box phones on the wall. Families also didn't have washers and dryers, so mothers would pack up the laundry and trek or bike down to Robin Hood. If they had a boat, they might power over to get it done.

One of the group talked about feeling the Canal in summer was like the *Wizard of Oz*… blue skies and sunshine, not at all like the gray skies of Hoquiam. I like that! To hear the town I grew up in, the town I now live in, could be such a dream-like place. So, here's to Little Hoquiam and all the memories.

My thanks to those who participated in the conversation or chimed in later to read the draft of this story. Jean Arthaud Fisher, Jane Nelson, Tim and Cathy Wandell, Kevin Hoonan, Dan Hanson, Wendy Hagen, Weedy Hagen, Betty Kay Anderson.