

AULD LANG SYNE FROM TEXADA'S PAST

New Year's Eve usually brings thoughts of the year ahead, but sometimes it illicit memories of New Year's past as well.

New Year's dances in the old days on Texada were huge community events. In Blubber Bay the community hall sprang to life on December 31. After the oil furnace was fired up early to avoid coating ladies' dresses with soot, the hall was decorated for the party. Ladies would spend all day concocting special goodies for the midnight feast. In the 1940's the dance bands consisted of local musicians including Lorne McLeod (piano), Rubin Becher (banjo), Fernie Becher (violin) and Glover Hall (drums). On occasion a band would be "imported" from Powell River, but sometimes they became marooned due to weather or breakdowns (boat or individuals) which often resulted in all-night festivities.

Later, the Elk's Hall in Van Anda would compete with Gillies Bay Hall as to which would have the grandest celebration. Partiers would enjoy "progressive" dinners (travelling to different homes for cocktails, appetizers, main courses or desserts) then continue to the Elk's Hall crammed with 150-plus dancers. Music was provided by Carl Hagman (sax, clarinet), Joe Kempe (drums), Leita Lockstead (piano), Maisie Kuryluk (accordion) and Leon Kuryluk (guitar). Leita Fahlman remembers Virginia Hagman and Elma Haapanen who would entertain the crowd with their Scandinavian-flavoured waltzes and polkas. All the ladies waited eagerly to view the lovely gowns gracing Gladys Parsons and Tip Barker ("The most stylish ladies on the island," says Leita).

Transport home was not a problem. The "designated driver" was Bob Richie who filled his mine crummy (bus) with revellers and deposited them home safely. Otherwise the marsh at Andy's Corner provided a soft, squishy landing for those "unable" to negotiate the tight corner themselves. Many recall the story of the partier who, while being driven home by friends, fell out of the car and was dragged all the way back to Van Anda without anyone in the vehicle knowing. He was surprised the next day when he woke up to discover his body covered in black, blue and purple bruises. Upon grim reflection, he was able to vaguely recall the events of the previous night!

The Texada Heritage Society hopes that your New Year's Eve was not as dramatic as that one, but was filled with fun, family and friends. Best wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2012.

BOOK LAUNCH - November 26

Heather Harbord signed over 200 copies of her new book "Texada Tapestry" in a special reading at the Historical Society's meeting room last month. Her book is full of interesting personal stories from Texada's past and has proven to be so popular that it is slated for a second printing! Thanks to Heather and to those who attended. A special thank-you to Ken Barton for organizing the event and to Lynn Schroeder, Donna Lechner and Joyce Rodseth for the great refreshments.

See you at the Texada Heritage Society/Commission AGM on January 25 at 10am at the Van Anda museum.

Peter Lock

Texada Island Heritage Society

