

TEXADA'S "GERMAN PRINCE"

Newcomers to Texada used to hear rumours of a mysterious playboy "German prince" who owned a large portion of the island's forest reserves. Really?

True! In 1965 Prince Johannes von Thurn und Taxis purchased Texada Logging Ltd. Although there were around 20 different logging companies on the island at that time, the prince's main competition was another German company, TIFR (Texada Island Forest Reserve). Together they proceeded to buy up parcels of vacant private land including many old homesteads. Ernie Jago was hired as Thurn und Taxis' local manager. To prevent squatters from living in abandoned cabins many historic buildings were unfortunately torched in the 1970's.

Prince Johannes was the latest in a long line of German aristocracy. Dating back to 1440, an ancestor established a European postal system and, in the 1500's, the family amassed a fortune serving as postmasters for the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire.

The prince's substantial local holdings included a large part of Texada and sections of Saltspring and Vancouver Islands. He also owned businesses, breweries and properties in South America and Europe including 10 palaces and castles.

Texada's forests helped provide income for the prince's high-flying lifestyle. In one trendy Munich cafe he met Gloria Maria, a 19-year-old with brightly-coloured hair and avant-garde fashions. "Johnny TNT" married the "Punk Princess" (33 years his junior) in 1980. The couple's reputation grew as they partied with international "rock royalty".



When Gloria threw a 3-day bash for Johnny's 60th birthday, she dressed as Marie Antoinette and descended from a "gilded cloud" to sing "Happy Birthday" to the ensemble which included the MJ's (Mick Jagger and Michael Jackson).

When Johannes died in 1990 the estate was said to be worth at least (US)3 billion dollars. However, the young widow discovered that they were actually in debt for over half a billion dollars!

Gloria sold off jewelry, art treasures, all but 3 of her 27 cars and many foreign properties. All Texada holdings were sold to Doman, but the prince's "Texada Logging Company" continued operations on Saltspring Island (with much recent controversy).

It is a modern reality that decisions made far away by a corporation have an impact locally. There is no doubt that the interests of the "German Prince" have had a major influence on life on Texada.