

OLD BILL YOUNG

Texada's longest-residing citizen was William Neil Young (1888-1992). He arrived at remote Gillies Bay in 1897 as a 9-year old, dropped off on the beach with only his mother and little sister. They bundled their belongings and searched for the 3-mile trail up to his Aunt Annie Sumner's ranch on the "High Road", Bill carrying his sister.

Bill's favourite childhood memory was of his "escape" to the big city of Van Anda with his 10- year old cousin. The boys rode on the back of the family bull and were AWOL for three days!

To make ends meet Bill's mother did miners' laundry for which Bill hauled water and chopped firewood. Bill worked his traplines, sold trout and, at 17, tried the miner's life but found it wasn't for him.

In 1908 Bill constructed his first boat - *Comeback* - for beach combing and mail transfer between Van Anda and Blubber Bay. (In rough weather Bill hiked the coastal trail.) In 1912 Bill had a 18hp, 30-foot, 20 passenger boat built in Vancouver - *Louvain* - which he operated as a water taxi for 37 years. People imagined the noisy engine coughed out "2 bits, 2 bits" which happened to be the passenger fare (25 cents). Marine operations were shared with Fred Lowther in their PO/store beside the wharf.

In 1918 Bill married his childhood sweetheart, Florrie Lowther, with whom he shared the next 73 years.

Many memories were accumulated over 95 years and Bill was a remarkable storyteller. He told of the salmon that towed him out to sea, the lumber scow that almost got away, the midnight medical emergencies, the cargoes of booze packed in the bilge, the sinking of the Cheslakee, shooting off his finger in a hunting accident.

Bill retained his physical abilities, sharp mind and sense of humour until the end. (He gave up his driver's licence at age 98!) A familiar sight to Texadans was an elderly man off fishing alone in his dugout canoe, herring rake at his side.

Bill was a "walking encyclopedia of Texada history" and was a respected pioneer.

"You couldn't find a better place than Texada. I love every rock of it."

