

Clara and Roy Emerson
-by Renee Hester

Friends and neighbours learned with sorrow of the death of former long-time Eagle Bay resident, Clara Emerson. She was pre-deceased by husband, Roy, in 1991. Clara was ninety-four years old when she passed away in a nursing home on the lower mainland.

Ken tells me his mother's family did what he calls "the Norwegian trek". They landed in New York, thence to Minnesota, then North Dakota where Clara was born, on to Saskatchewan with last stop, B.C. Roy was born in Ontario; he also found his way to B.C.. The Emersons were married in New Westminster. They have one son, Ken, (wife Georgina), with grandchildren, Randy, Sherry and Kim.

Roy worked in a mill in New Westminster. When World War II started, he was transferred into maintenance of heavy-duty mill equipment. Shortly after the end of the war, mill management decided Roy was too old for this job and he was out of work.

In 1948, Clara and Roy moved to Eagle Bay. I asked why they chose Eagle Bay. Ken says he had a friend whose parents owned property in this area. He showed the Emersons a snapshot of Eagle Bay. Roy always wanted to live on a lake. He heard there was property for sale and he liked the photo. The rest is history, and a most happy chapter, indeed!

There was a 12 x 16 log cabin on their land when the Emersons moved here. They added a couple of small rooms and lived in the cabin for many years. According to all who visited with Roy and Clara, the log cabin was like a doll house, and Clara, the perfect hostess. Roy built a new home later but the cabin remained and remains to this day. When it came time for the Emerson home to be sold, the new owners dubbed the property, "Emerson Place", as a tribute to these fine people.

Roy was a carpenter and builder by trade. He built more cabins on Shuswap Lake than one can imagine; many in Glenwood, or "Little Calgary", as it was once known.

Jane and Gil Gillies had Roy Emerson and Robert Davidsen, Sr., build their home, "The Owl's Nest". The Gillies shared the two men with Elva Evans who was building "Evan's Nook" at the same time. It was 1964, and since there was no power in the area, the house was constructed without electricity. The Gillies and the Emersons became life-long friends and Jane describes Clara and Roy as "beautiful people".

Roy and Clara Emerson were community minded. Roy helped with building Eagle Bay Community Hall, and Ken recalls helping his father and George Whitehead cut the timbers for its construction. They took part in hall activities, and at over eighty years of age, both were dancing at cabarets. The Emersons gave generously of themselves to all community endeavors.

Roy loved to tell stories. He had the classic "fish stories" as well as great tales of flying over the Rockies with a friend in a small aircraft. He loved his grandchildren. The youngest, Kim, spent a lot of time with his grandparents, and Roy told everyone that Kim had to leave before the snow came for the wee boy worried about whether Santa could find him in Eagle Bay! One often sees Kim as a reporter on a Victoria television station where he covers everything from soup to nuts.

According to Thelma Pendergast, Clara was very independent. In her early 80's, Clara fell from a chair while hanging curtains! Clara turned the accident into something positive. Her friends came, made tea and everyone was able to enjoy each other's company!

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to know the Emersons. One thing is certain; Eagle Bay became infinitely richer when Roy and Clara chose it as their home. All who knew them have happy memories.

A memorial service for Roy and Clara Emerson will take place at Eagle Bay Community Church on September 7th, with grandson, Pastor Randy Emerson, conducting the service.

This article appeared in the weekly column, "A View From Eagle Bay", in The Salmon Arm Observer by Renee Hester.



Clara and Roy Emerson.
Roy built many of the cabins and
homes in Eagle Bay.
eg. Glenwood Estates.



Eagle Bay Community Heritage Church
built by Roy Emerson and other
gentlemen of Eagle Bay.