



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Earl Stewart, *The Sunshine Coast*

Retired Notary Earl Stewart is enjoying life in Pender Harbour and building a new home on Savary Island, just off Lund.



Earl in Bali

Myrtle Winchester **A Community in Transition**



Myrtle's cat, Fraser

The Sunshine Coast remained hidden from public attention until just a few years ago when Vancouverites realized the commute was easier than from the Fraser Valley and that real estate was cheap and so were property taxes. Add to this, the

most temperate climate in Canada, spectacular scenery, and abundant year-round recreation and the move was on.

A gentle, 40-minute ferry ride takes you from Horseshoe Bay to Langdale and the beginning of the Sunshine Coast Highway, which winds its way through the seaside hamlets of Gibsons, Sechelt, and Pender Harbour. Following the break of a 50-minute ferry ride, the journey continues along the highway to Powell River and Lund—which locals insist is the beginning of the road, not the end. Along the way, the coastline is dotted with islands, overlooked by mountains, and scalloped with bays and inlets.

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Using his well-honed delegating skills, he ably organized several people to write about the beautiful area of British Columbia in which Earl and the authors reside.



Myrtle Winchester photo, (c) 2007.

The Sunshine Coast has been known as a boater's destination and salmon-fishing paradise since early in the 20th century and, until 1935, water was the only access to this part of the southwestern mainland of British Columbia. World-famous Princess Louisa Inlet, a narrow fjord with 7000-ft.-high granite walls and spectacular Chatterbox Falls at the head, is still accessible only by water.

There isn't a great deal of resource-based industry left on the Sunshine Coast; the area developed around commercial fishing and logging, with a bit of mining thrown in.

Here's some local trivia . . .

- Stone for British Columbia's parliament buildings came from neighbouring Texada Island quarries.
- The Sechelt Indian Band owns the country's largest gravel pit (in Sechelt).
- The original timbers for Stanley Park's "Lumberman's Arch" came from Pender Harbour.
- The Powell River Pulp and Paper Mill was once the largest in the world.

You'll still see small trollers and seiners tied up at local wharves, and you'll meet the occasional logging truck on the highway, but the biggest employer is the service industry. Seniors are the largest part of the demographic and home-based businesses are common. The area is not attractive to young families because of its lack of high-paying jobs and shortage of rental accommodation, but it's ideal for dot com cowboys and artists. The blooming arts community drops names of residents like Terry Jacks and Joni Mitchell at a flurry of Summer events including music festivals, film festivals, and the esteemed Festival of the Written Arts.

The Sunshine Coast has seen a recent, unprecedented real-estate boom. Eager investors from all over the world caused skyrocketing property values and zoning densities. Today, local governments struggle to maintain an adequate infrastructure in rocky

terrain while locals suffer growing pains as they adjust to increased traffic, crime, stresses on existing services, and squabbles between environmentalist and industry groups.

This kind of growth and the resulting *status quo* upset is occurring in rural areas throughout the province. Change is difficult but people are adaptable, so they will adjust—and they can do so in what is probably the best part of the province. Someday, there will be a bridge from the Lower Mainland. Someday, the infrastructure will supply drinking water to all residents. In the meantime, the Sunshine Coast remains a unique and beautiful area for residents and visitors alike.

Websites

www.penderharbour.org
www.penderharbour.com

Myrtle Winchester visited the Sunshine Coast in 1986 and quickly decided she wasn't going back to The Big Smoke. Today she lives in Pender Harbour, where she is a freelance writer, graphic designer, and Webmaster. With a population of 2500 folk who are mostly retired, business isn't booming but the pace allows her to pursue her passions—photography and gardening—most of the year and, most important, take time to smell the flowers.

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David Sweetz



I feel very privileged to be able to live and work in a community such as Gibsons, BC. Our family vacationed on the Sunshine Coast many times prior to moving here. In fact, my wife purchased a home in Gibsons about a year-and-a-half before we moved here. (There's something to be said for a woman's intuition.)

The Sunshine Coast seems to have more artists *per capita* than any community in which I have ever lived. The range of gifts and talents is amazing. To appreciate the depth, quality, and quantity of the local exhibitions, please see the schedule of events at www.gibsonslandingbc.com. Keep in mind Gibsons has a population of 4000, representing about 10 percent of the 40,000 people living on the Sunshine Coast.

The view from my office window encapsulates a lifestyle. Forty acres of trees and paths border our property with no fence between us and the land. Deer prune the plants in my wife's gardens. There is a tree fort built by our sons—and now enjoyed by our grandchildren—and a pond just off the deck. When I am quiet, I can hear the fish splashing. The good old



Myrtle Winchester photo, (c) 2007.

red utility trailer hauls my son's ATVs, topsoil for the gardens, and the model kiosk for Gibsons Family Network in the Sea Cavalcade parade. I can see the dogwood tree we planted 2 years ago, fertilized with the ashes of our deceased golden retrievers. Java, our newest retriever, is playing in the yard.

This is the view my clients see when they come to execute documents at our diningroom table. It gives them a sense of ease and comfort and a more relaxed setting during times of stress.

I realize the home office is not for everyone—but I'm at home in my office.

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Sam Simpson



Gibsons, the gateway to the Sunshine Coast—the home of the CBC television show *The Beachcombers*—is a town like many, struggling with the demands of growth as well as hanging onto the quaintness that makes it a tourist destination.

For the traveller, getting here is spectacular, with the scenery of Howe Sound and the islands on all sides as you sail from Horseshoe Bay on BC Ferries then take the Lower Road into Gibsons along the shores of Howe Sound until you see Molly's Reach, still in the centre of town—a fully functioning restaurant with great homestyle cooking. Just up from Molly's sits Nick's boat *Persephone*, restored and waiting to set you off down memory lane.

Across the street, Gibsons pays homage to its past with a full-size bronze sculpture of George Gibson looking out over the harbour, no doubt marvelling at the changes that have taken place. Gibsons has become a thriving community of artists. Numerous galleries show off the talents of Sunshine Coast residents. Ranging from paintings to glasswork to fibre arts, the talent seems limitless.

Downtown Gibsons has much to offer the traveller, from its recently renovated wharf, docks, and gazebo to the many little shops tucked away in the nooks and crannies of the town. Exploring this area is a delightful way to spend a day.

When hunger or thirst develops, an array of bistros, coffee shops, pubs, and restaurants abound to rejuvenate the tired tourist soul.

With its beautiful setting overlooking the harbour, Gibsons enjoys the Summer. It hosts the Annual Sea Cavalcade Festival at the end of July, which leads into the annual Regatta of outrigger canoe races with entrants from as far away as Hawaii. This is followed by the Fibre Arts Festival, a week-long celebration and workshop of all things fibre.

Musicians play in the waterfront park and in many other public areas by the harbour, to help while away the afternoon or evening.

The small-town feel, yet close proximity to the Lower Mainland, has made the Sunshine Coast a historic draw for the cottage crowd. Now it's becoming attractive to new full-time residents who want to escape the hectic pace of The Big Smoke. It still makes a delightful day trip—starting in Gibsons and meandering on to the many delights of the Upper Peninsula.

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Myrtle Winchester photo, (c) 2007.

Jody Conroy



Photo Credit: www.danaburnett.com

I have the honour of being one of the few people born on the Sunshine Coast.

Whatever happened to all those little dirt roads and knowing almost every single person living in the area? There was a time you really didn't need to take a vehicle on the ferry or make prior arrangements to be picked up because there would be someone travelling at the same time who could get you to your destination.

There have been so many changes. Our little community has turned into a bustling, busy place. Despite the fact the area has grown tremendously and we are seeing more and more amenities every day, the small-town feel and intimacy remain.

I have watched my business grow in leaps and bounds over the last few years; property prices and new housing starts have skyrocketed.

Many years ago, the area was so small, you could dial just the last 4 digits of a phone number to be connected. I can recall the excitement of the very first traffic light on our one and only highway. We had really progressed. Now we have a number of highways and the roads are no longer dirt, for the most part.

The Sunshine Coast holds a wealth of things to do and places to see. A lot of permanent residents rarely leave the Coast. Three golf courses

between Gibsons and Earls Cove are open year-round. Our area is also one of the premier diving destinations in the world.

The area is abundant with wildlife. On a regular basis, you can watch eagles soar above you and a trip to the local landfill will almost guarantee the sighting of eagles and bears. There is also a growing elk population and the occasional cougar-sighting—not as common as bears, but here nonetheless.

The Sunshine Coast has always been a Summer destination. If you walk along any beach, you see cabins that have been converted to permanent residences looking out at the spectacular view. Visitors to the area always find the beauty breathtaking. Even though I seem to get caught up in work so many times, I occasionally take a moment to stop to enjoy the splendor that surrounds me and realize I am proud to live in one of the best areas in Canada.

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Tracy Parker



The Sunshine Coast isn't a place to live . . . it's an attitude!

Most of us here are smart enough to know how lucky we are to live in Paradise. When I moved to the Sunshine Coast almost 20 years ago, I knew this was where I would stay and put down roots for future generations of my family.

Having grown up in the snow belt of southwestern Ontario and in Hazelton in the north of BC, I can truly appreciate the short, balmy Winters here. Some people come to visit on a rainy day and tease us that it shouldn't be raining on the "Sunshine Coast." Little do they know that oftentimes, when the weather forecast is predicting rain all over the South Coast, our little nook in the world will experience a full day of sunshine.

On days like this, we smile and smugly comment that this is the real reason we are called the Sunshine Coast. Though many wonderful areas are tucked among the various inlets

of the Coast, my heart lies northwest of Sechelt. As you travel up the peninsula, the communities become smaller and include such rural hamlets as Halfmoon Bay, Secret Cove, Middlepoint, Francis Peninsula, and on up through the Pender Harbour area.

The recreational opportunities in these areas are almost unlimited and the views over the Strait of Georgia and Malaspina Strait are absolutely spectacular.

I have spent the majority of my years here at Halfmoon Bay—in existence since the mid-1850s when Union Steamships travelled up the Strait of Georgia. The main access to Halfmoon Bay—Redrooffs Road—is known around the world. I have often asked my nonresident clients how they discovered the area; many said they read about it in a magazine back in their country.

This small community is such a pleasant place, just 10 minutes from the hustle and bustle that has become the tone of Sechelt. Properties are larger, trees are taller, and the ever-present ocean borders your drive down this windy corridor, which used to be the main highway. After passing the saltwater marsh at Sargent's Bay and meandering past Welcome Beach, you come to a beautiful little waterfront park called Cooper's Green, complete with boat launch, barbeque pit, heritage hall, and beach volleyball court.

As it happens, my father is the resident caretaker at this park. We have gathered countless times for campfires and barbeques, playing baseball and volleyball, then relaxing to admire the stunning evening views as the sun slowly sinks behind Thormanby Island. Thormanby is a wonder in itself and the location of fabulous Buccaneer Bay. This sandspit between North and South Thormanby Island becomes visible to the world during lower Summer tides. We made many trips with the kids and spent countless hours combing the tide pools and coasts of the islands.

Every Summer the beach takes on a different shape as the Winter winds



Myrtle Winchester photo, (c) 2007.

move the sands below the water. The area becomes more popular each passing year. We see more boaters and kayakers coming to moor and stay for weekends. Last Summer our family moved to the Pender Harbour area at Madeira Park and I have found my haven.

Everything about it is peaceful yet vibrant; it feels good to the soul to be here. We look forward to Spring in the Harbour—May Day celebrations, the Pender Harbour Blues Festival, and Attack of Danger Bay—the biggest sporting event on the Sunshine Coast, with 5 days of world-class, professional longboard racing and other competitions, concerts, and an awards ceremony. July sees the Malaspina Regatta; August, the Wooden Boat Festival; and September, the renowned Pender Harbour Jazz Festival. In October, we have the old-fashioned Pender Harbour Fall Faire.

Come for a visit, but **beware**—you may experience an attitude adjustment and stay here!

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Leanne Rebantad



For almost 20, years I have been practising as a Notary in Powell River on the Upper Sunshine Coast. Powell River is on the north shore of the Lower Mainland, approximately 88 miles from Vancouver. (No, we are NOT on Vancouver Island.)

Getting Here

From Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver, take a ferry to Langdale on the Lower Sunshine Coast. Drive approximately 1.5 hours to Earls Cove, then take a ferry to Saltery Bay.

You can be in Powell River from Vancouver in about 30 minutes if you fly with Pacific Coastal Airlines from Vancouver Airport's South Terminal.

From Powell River you can also take a ferry across the Strait of Georgia to Comox on Vancouver Island.

Living Here

Life in Powell River is marine-oriented. It compares to living on an island, so you must have an island mindset.

The climate is great and the numerous beaches are never crowded. On sunny days, I love being able to

walk on the beach or paddle my kayak within 20 minutes of leaving my office for the day. Gazing at the sun setting over the Strait of Georgia, I watch ferries, tugs and barges, cruise ships, sailboats, fishboats, and sometimes pods of whales passing back and forth.

Powell River has miles of waterfront and an abundance of lakes.

My Recommendations

The Beaches

- Visit one of the many beaches.
- Try skim-boarding or windsurfing at Donkersley Beach.
- Try fly fishing at Wolfson Bay.
- Watch the salmon returning to Wolfson Creek.

The Lakes

- Cruise Powell Lake.
- Rent a houseboat.
- View the variety of floathomes nestled along the shores of the lake.

The Forest

- Mountain bike or 4 x 4 through the back country.

The Islands

- Take the ferry to Blubber Bay on Texada Island.
- Visit Gillies Bay and build a sandcastle.
- Drive to Lund and take a water taxi to the sunny, sandy shores of Savary Island (our version of Hawaii, complete with a few palm trees).

The Historic Townsite

- Walk or bike around the streets of the Powell River Historic Townsite and admire the old homes and blooming gardens.
- Take a photo of the old warships that form the breakwater.

Websites

www.discoverpowellriver.com
www.powellriverhistorictownsite.bc.ca
www.thesunshinecoast.com ▲

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