

I Married a Land Surveyor

I first met Doug Dodge in 1969 after a dance at UBC where I was a student. Doug was attending Simon Fraser.

He worked summers with the Department of Highways survey branch, travelling the province to Terrace, Revelstoke, Williams Lake.

It was here in Williams Lake, while playing fastball, that Doug met Monty Exton, a BC land surveyor with his own business. The boys of summer bonded and Monty asked Doug if he had ever thought of becoming a BC land surveyor. Bingo!!! The SFU grad, no longer destined to become a school teacher, was off to BCIT for a survey diploma, then back to Williams Lake to begin his articles with Monty. That was 1973—also the year Doug and I were married. I, too, did not become a teacher.

Because of Doug's previous education and work experience, he was exempt from the first set of article exams. He still had two sets of professional exams to write, however. So began the intense studying of laws,



The author with President and Chair at 2003 Annual General meeting, Kelowna

environment, geomatics, plans, etc., with a week of exams in Victoria for each set.

By 1976, Doug was studying for the final set of exams when I arrived home with a gallon of ice cream, a rather large jar of pickles, and the encouraging statement, "You had better pass these exams, honey, cuz we have a baby on the way."

The sweet scent of sweat, dirt, chainsaw gas and oil, and the great outdoors permeates the house.

By the Fall of that year, Doug had received his commission and a beautiful baby girl. In January of 1977, Kimberly and I proudly watched Doug being presented with his "shingle" at his first annual general meeting at the Bayshore Inn, Vancouver. He was now a full-fledged British Columbia land surveyor with the authority and knowledge to set legal boundaries and sign his name to legal survey plans and documents. He was a professional! We were now part of the elite that could stay at finely appointed hotels and dress up in beautiful clothes—for a few days each year, anyway!

The other 51 weeks of the year are reality. Doug's usual work attire consists of jeans, flannel shirts (torn from barbed wire and/or rosebushes), wool socks, simply stunning longjohns, big steel-toed boots or sorels (depending on the weather), and that red survey vest. Sexy! Sawdust from the chainsaw; needles from pine, fir, or spruce trees; and dirt and other granular stuff fill his pockets and cuffs and adorn our floors, furniture, and the inside of the washing machine.

The sweet scent of sweat, dirt, chainsaw gas and oil, and the great outdoors permeates the house. Then there's the occasional insect—like the tick attached to Doug's chest that we discovered in bed. Seeing me coming at the tick with a red-hot needle was too much for Doug—he was off to the hospital that very night to have it removed. Now, during tick season, I check everything a hundred times before sitting beside Doug or crawling into bed.

Doug's work often took him away from home for days, sometimes weeks at a time, leaving me alone with our young, expanding family and all the household chores. Invariably something would break down or go awry when Doug was away. Each time was an adjustment but I would always manage. By the time I was into a routine, BCLS #545 would arrive back home and interrupt the flow and we would all have to readjust again. It took Doug some time to learn to curb his "field language" and get used to the idea that no one was going to give him a menu, much less take his order and serve him coffee.

Communication with Doug while he was in the Chilcotin was interesting. I remember the first radio telephone call I got when we were still very young and so in love. I was talking naughty and Doug felt compelled to tell me we only had semi-privacy. This meant no one else could hear *him*, but that I could be heard loud and clear across the countryside by all those tuned to the same channel.

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Cooking meals for the family was much simpler while Doug was away. The kids were content with beans and wieners and Kraft dinner—a meal Doug actually missed when all he was eating was steak or lobster or roast beef or . . . He would look forward to coming home to relax, while I

would look forward to going out when he returned.

At a time later in his career, Doug called me from Smithers or Houston to let me know the job had been hampered by weather and that he would be away another week. I assured him we were fine, the finishing of the basement TV room was coming along nicely, and that no one else wanted a woman with red hair and four kids. Things change when the husband is away too often and too long—hair colour, wall colour, house design . . .

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Doug with Son Brent at Franklin's Meadow survey, north of Alexis Creek, December 2002



Doug and Brent at Franklin's Meadow survey north of Alexis Creek, December 2002

When Doug became Monty's business partner in 1977, as well as a BCLS, his responsibilities increased; he spent more time in the office and met with clients. After he was elected to the Board of Management, there were more meetings, more trips, and there was more correspondence.

In 2002, as President of the Corporation of Land Surveyors, Doug travelled across Canada representing the Corporation at the annual meetings of other professional land-surveying associations, which added a significant amount of additional duties to his

routine. I was fortunate to accompany Doug on these trips because our youngest child was old enough to be left at home with his sister.

Our kids have grown into fine young adults, in spite of their dad's many absences. Kimberly, now 28, is an interior design graduate living in Toronto; Amber is a respiratory therapist living at the Coast; Susan is an airlines supervisor and ticket agent here in Williams Lake; and Brent is a third-year college student and soccer player in Kamloops.

Doug and I still live in Williams Lake in the same house our kids grew up in.

Doug still goes out of town on jobs—sometimes as a BC Land Surveyor and sometimes as a Canada Lands Surveyor. I still look after the home and the kids' pets at a moment's notice, work as a part-time salesclerk, and teach quilting.

When BCLS #545 and I are travelling down the road, with Doug at the wheel—and the vehicle slows a little—I know my surveyor has been here and left his mark. ▲

Sharron Dodge, a resident of Williams Lake, is the wife of Doug Dodge, BCLS, who served as President of the Corporation of Land Surveyors in 2002.



Monty Exton, BCLS (retired), Bob Russell (client), and Doug, sipping Chilcotin Buck BrushTea at day's end. July 2004