

Claire Viti, Treasurer 2015

The family came to Canada from the south of France... 2 adults, 6 children ages ranging 3months to 18years. We were city people, spoke no English. My parents settled straight to Vancouver Island rented a small acreage in Duncan. A week later we had 3 horses... this was the Far West after all, had to have the horses! Shortly after came a cow, chickens, and 3 pigs. This was August 1975... by November 1st there was 2ft of snow... the feeling in the "homestead" was... "What did we get into!"



A year later we moved to an 80 acre farm at the foot of Mt Maxwell on Salt Spring Island. My first horse a Welsh x Shetland gelding... rode him for 3 years bareback. That horrible little horse would chase me out of the field and around trees, teeth bared...that never stopped me from racing him up the hill to the barn full tilt over and over again... you know ...the thing you don't let your children do nowadays...

The other horses were a retired racing QH mare and an Arabian x Percheron (excellent fence jumper).

In 1978 the QH mare foaled a half Arabian filly, named Kaline. Her sire was "My top Hat" from Galiano. She became my best friend for the next 19 years. We chased cows, did gymkhanas and rode everywhere, through everything ... Man! She was fast! We would go down to the beach, there she would lower herself a few inches and turn into Aladdin's flying carpet, no motion under the saddle just the sound of her hooves hitting the sand and I that breathless feeling where time stands still...

Meanwhile my parents had purchased 176 acres in Deep Bay, a wild piece of land. No electricity, the water came to the house via gravity from a hose in the river. I was home schooled and for 8 years rode wild through the bush. Alas, all fairy tales do come to an end and the farm sold. We moved to Comox, a new phase of my life was to begin.

Across the street was (what was then), the largest dairy farm on Vancouver Island. I was hired and spent 7 years bathed in the sweet smell of cow manure and acrid fumes of tractors. I learned a lot working with the large Holsteins. A little bored, those cows would join their collective brain power to work the locks on the gates. The resulting "stampede" through the barn yards was hilarious. Tails high in the air, much higher than any self-respecting Arabian! Those 2000lbs cows would revert to their calve hood, bucking, bawling, those large udders swinging right and left, milk splattering everywhere!

The next 18 years went whoosh, I blinked and they were gone. I got a new car, a boyfriend (he is still around after 25 years, so I think he like me... LOL) did a season on a salmon trawler off the coast of Alaska, went back to school took 6 years of accounting classes, moved to Nanaimo, had a kid, raised her to be a wonderful young lady, started my own bookkeeping company, was treasurer of the Nanaimo Business Women's Network for 2 years... gained 30lbs.(40lbs in the winter)

On my 48th birthday I got a gift from my "still boyfriend☺" and daughter both non-riders, they would go riding with me! We booked Paradise Acres Ranch for a ride. I was back in the saddle! That was 3 years ago. Now, I train for Competitive Trail Rides with Trixie. We are a team, I tell her where I want to go and she picks the path and the speed, she love new trails and always wants to know what is around the next corner.

I do have to thank Bev Voigt for being my friend and showing me the "safe" way to ride. Yes ...I now wear a helmet, and proper foot wear, I carry a phone and let people know where I am going... a long haul from the wild days of Deep Bay. Looking forward to my next 20 years in the saddle!