

SALTING, Don

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Don Salting as interviewed by Phil Rounds Jan 5th, 1987. Transcribed from tape by Berte Berry (nee Salting). Also thoughts of his life by daughter Berte Berry.

Naramata, J.M. Robinson's 'California of the North' apparently appealed to many new settlers. The Wells, Walters, Frank Rounds and the Hans Saltings were from Michigan. Phil remembers his Grandad telling him that some of the men came out as a scouting party to have a look at this new land then went back, packed up, sold their homes and moved. Many however, left their homes, friends and families and bought land sight unseen. No one mentions how they crossed the states to the Okanagan from Michigan, but we do know that the Saltings and Frank Rounds families came down the lake to Naramata around 1909 by boat. Hans Salting, his wife Mabel and three children, Vera, Marg and Don lived for about a year on the beach in a tent house -in the area of the old co-op. The story goes that one of the girls went swimming - went out too deep and nearly drowned. I can imagine that Mabel was ready to turn around and head back to Michigan. Hans bought a five acre piece of land out north where the Volkharts now live (actually the land changed hands many times over the years-with his son Don living there with his family from 1933 to 1950. Don sold the property and now it is back in the family again with Don's son, Buck , and his children owning it). Hans then bought the Nettleton property and lived there in a tent house for a year before building the house that still remains. Hans also bought the land that the pub is now on.

Hans planted his orchards with the help of son, Don, as well as doing water repairs on the wooden staves for the water board. Frank Rounds was the water bailiff at the time and Don recalls that Frank worked during the day and then with the aid of a lantern, would walk to the Big Dam at night to make sure everything was okay. Phil wondered who originally designed the water system and Don recalled that both the Big and Little dams were originally beaver dams. When the contract was to be put out to construct the dams as they virtually are today, Don and George Raitt bid on it but fortunately someone out of town won the contract. Apparently you can still see the signs of the beaver dams when the water is low in both the Big and Little dams. Phil remembers a big truck garden in the middle of Brodies Flats (now Manitou Park) and the ball diamond was over on the Reilly property (across from the school). There was at one time a fairly active creek coming down past Wilda Pugh's home (formerly George Cooks) and the water was diverted to irrigate the truck garden. The park at one time was divided into 30 foot lots. Information is not too clear but Phil and Don remember Mr. Mathers donating some of those lots to the town for use as a community park. There was a board of trustees which changed over the years but they remember Bill Steele, V.O Wiseman and Bill Nuttal as being the first. Don and Phil talked about the price of beach lots in the town-they were \$10.00 and corner lots were \$25.00. Don had the opportunity to buy all the lots between 4th and 8th streets for the princely sum of \$300.00! How times have changed over the past 50 years! It's great to have two old friends reminiscing about the "OLD DAYS". Apparently there was a two story building where the condos are now, that housed a dress shop, apartments and then a pool hall. Don and his two sisters grew up in Naramata-went to the first school which was fondly known as THE LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE. It was a one room school on Ritchie Ave, built in 1909 and hosted eight grades. By 1914, the whole town turned out to turn the sod for the new school on Robinson Ave. In the new school, there were two rooms with full base-

ments underneath. Don writes about his school days. There are memories of mischief and adventure. The ditch near the school teemed with frogs and as the toilets were outdoors, it went without saying that on their way to the outhouse the students made detours. The mysteries of the ditch were too tempting for the best of the scholars and needless to say by the end of the day, a good deal of the frog population would be in hand. Don went to Pullman, Washington for a short course(???) and then finished his high school there. While in the States, he filled out an application to be a Fruit Inspector in Okanogan, Washington, but receiving no quick answer, he came home. Looking for work he promised Fred Baker the Co-op manager that he would work for him for a certain length of time, then the Okanogon job came through but he was already committed to staying home. Who knows what might have happened if he had left? Back to the tape----Phil and Don talked about making boxes in the orchards. Don and many of the other farmers did this for one cent a box-they averaged 500 per day so \$5.00 in those days was a princely amount of money. Phil asked about *Smile of Manitou*, the book Don wrote in 1982. (Just as an aside, Don was in need of things to do at one point in his later life and his family suggested that he should write down Naramata's history as he remembered it. "This will keep him occupied for the winter", we all thought. What a joke, when Don, or Dad, does things, he does them with a vengeance and it seemed like three minutes after he started he was finished. Anyhow, Skookum Publishing printed the book and it has been a great source of information over the years.) Don and Phil remembered that the Roe family thought that Chute Creek would be a good place to start a settlement and apparently there was some activity in the early days - even a wharf was put in by the government. Somehow the town-site never materialized but the pilings from the wharf are still visible.

Robinson's houseboat and motor launch cruised the lakes for many years but in the end they were left to rot on the beach. The two men remember people going to dances in Summerland during the winter. At times when it started to warm up, many people had scary trips trying to make it across. Don remembers his dad taking *The Manchesters* (the band) over for the dance and on the way home his dad would go ahead to make sure all was safe. Don remembers running and skating across the lake and nearly jumping out of his skin when the ice kept cracking. Money was scarce in the early years and the barter system was used a lot. Men from the town used to go to Chute Creek to catch Kokanee and Don can remember going with his dad and others and coming back with 1100 fish. These were salted down in barrels or smoked and provided food for the winter. Phil remembers Hans taking his team down to the packing house and somehow getting his hand kicked by a horse that was nearby and the skin on the back of his hand was pulled almost off. Fred Baker the Co-op manager came out with a bottle of iodine and poured it all over the wound - Ouch! Another time Hans was bringing the team down the Gulch Road when the horses shied and over they went down by the now Sandy Beach Lodge. He dislocated his shoulder and was laid up for quite awhile.

Don remembers that in the early days, he and Bert Partridge were hired to work on the south intake. They were doing some blasting but found that the dynamite was frozen so they lit a fire and put the dynamite around to thaw it out. After a time Don looked at the fire and found the dynamite was on fire. Panic set in so much so that Don couldn't get the words out to yell. Finally they dashed behind some big rocks and waited for the onslaught. Fortunately nothing happened and they lived to tell the day. Phil and Don both have stories to tell about horses drowning in intakes - the South and the North (Don's was in the north). Not a pleasant sight-Don's comment was "Well nobody died and they certainly didn't have chlorination in those days!" Old Mr. Kennedy was filling his spray tank with lime sulphur and forgot to shut the valve off and the polluted water somehow got in everyone's drinking water. I guess it was a lovely, smelly, yellow color for awhile. Things were very different in those days!!!! Don remembers Capt. Languedoc and Peter Roe being on the *Skookum* (boat) at night with no light and the barge ran them over. It took the top off the boat. They were pretty smashed up! It seemed that it was never decided who was at fault. That was back before 1920. Later the two talked about the Crow brothers who ran sheep from Pentiction to the north bench in Naramata. There were all of three hundred sheep and I (Berte Berry) remember pulling the wool off the barbed wire along with my cousin Mary Cossentine, and we would take it to our grandmother - Lillian Raitt and she would card it and then spin and knit it. Jack Hanam also had sheep out near the now Hindson property. Phil remembers he and Don going to Manitou Park one fall night - their purpose was to take the raft out before winter. Finding that it was out further than they thought, they stripped, swam out and brought it to shore. As they got into shallow water they heard this, "Yahoo". It was Mrs. McMynn over on the east side of the lake asking if they wanted a cup of coffee. When they finally dressed they went over, had their coffee but not without Phil noticing some very high powered binoculars on the table. He was convinced you would be able to see a dime over in Summerland. Oh well, the raft was at least safe!!!!

This ends the interview of Phil and Don, and now I, (Berte) would like to include a little of the life of Don and Helen Salting. Don and Helen met after Helen moved up from Arizona where she had been teaching school. She came to visit her mother, Lillian Raitt who had a home and orchard at the junction of Partridge and Naramata North road. The story about Don and Helen's courtship goes something like this: They were both working in the co-op. Don was dumping fruit for the grader and Helen was sorting. He wrote a love poem and sent it down the grader belt. Of course every sorter read the poem before it got to Helen. In due course, in 1930, they married, bought a house in the town, had two children - Charles Phillip (Buck) and two years later, Roberta June (Berte). Several years later the family moved to the original Salting orchard on the North Bench and lived there until 1949. In 1949 they moved to Gulch Road, planted another orchard and lived there until 1955. Don was happiest when he was planting new orchards. They were very involved in the community and their kids and grandchildren. Helen was always cooking meals or looking after her family. Don was a jack of all trades and he was there whenever anyone needed him. Don died in 1991 at the age of 87 and Helen in 1996 at the

age of 94. They leave behind two children, eight grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren - at the moment. All but three live in Naramata.