**The Carousel of Time**

submitted by

Graham Brazier

The article attached below originally appeared in the August 1974 edition of "***The Denman Rag and Bone***" It attracted my attention for many reasons, some of which I trust will be evident to readers. One of those reasons that lingers with me still, is captured by words written by Joni Mitchell who, in the late 1960's, wrote: "we're captive on the carousel of time". Perhaps the fact that 52 years ago a couple of Denman residents interviewed a woman who was celebrating having lived 50 years in the same house on Denman Island has something to do with it.

"**Happy on a 100 Year Old Farm**"

by Sandra Kennedy,

Daphne Morrison

The day we went to see Mrs. Celena Piercy she was quite prepared for us. She had spent the evening before writing a little story about herself and her life and we sat on the sofa while she read it outloud to us. She had called it, "Happy on a 100 Year Old Farm".

If she hadn't used the word 'happy' to describe herself, we would certainly have done so, because shinning through above everything else is Mrs. Piercy's enjoyment of life.

Proud as Punch, one of the first things she showed us was a certificate she had received from attending a week's course at UBC this summer. The lectures, arranged for a group of Senior Citizens, included geography, gardening and "Freedom in our Society", each one of which she had found interesting and stimulating. And one of her fellow "students", a cousin, was a freshman in UBC's very first class.

She's one of those older ladies we would like to have as a grandmother, interested in everything about her and blessed with a sense of humour that had us laughing constantly. Some of her funniest stories she considered too personal to put into print. Smart in her silk dress and stockings, with twinkling blue eyes and perfectly done white hair, she is warm and smiling and, may we say it, loveable. At the same time, her strength of character is very apparent and we were left in no doubt that she knows her own mind.

Her home is a nice complement to her. She has lived in for 50 years, ever since her late husband, Irvine, built it for her when they were newly married. It's a sturdy farmhouse with plain wood doors and ornately carved wooden furniture, a house that has the old, solid feeling of having been a well-loved home. Mrs. Piercy thought that we representatives from the younger generation would prefer a more modern style of house, and had a hard time believing us when we told her it was beautiful.

The walls were hung with family photographs. One picture is of Mrs. Piercy's father, a good-looking man who she jokingly referred to as "the original hippie" - pointing to his beard! His claim to fame is that he was on Vancouver's first voters' list when it was a small mill town. He also signed the petition having the town incorporated and the name changed from Granville to Vancouver in 1886.

Mrs. Piercy grew up in Vancouver and trained as a teacher. She came to Denman in 1920 "as a young school maarm" and boarded at the house now belonging to Doug Woods. She was courted by Irvine Piercy who, in true romantic fashion, had been the first person she'd met when she stepped off the train at Union Bay, They used to go to dances at the community hall. "Most of the residents came to socialize and watch the young folk having a happy time," she remembers. "The girls wouldn't dance with men who smelled of liquor, and a woman who smoked was a curiosity."

When she and Irvine first married they lived for a year in the original Piercy home: a low rambling farm house, gone now. "In the early days young men came from the British Isles, worked on the Piercy farm for a while and then moved on to their own farms. The old house saw a great deal of living: weddings, births and deaths. But that was before my time."

Then they moved into the newly built house which has been Mrs. Piercy's home ever since, and where her four children, George, Zeta, Jack and Wes were brought up.

She had baked fancy and plain cakes for us and we sat down to a formal tea at a large table, Mrs. Piercy very much the hostess. She recalled that when she first married she "hardly knew how to boil an egg. But I wasn't a bit intimidated even though the Piercy women were wonderful cooks. It was a case of rushing in where angels fear to tread! Not having lived on a farm I had to learn to bake bread, churn butter and do all the things expected of a farmer's wife. But I didn't work outside as I was too busy indoors."

Mixed farming and an orchard of 1,000 trees kept everybody at work on the farm. There were 11 children in the first Piercy family. Five sons, with their families, lived on adjacent farms all along the waterfront, and they all helped each other at haying time, barn building or whenever help was needed. She said that during the Depression "we hardly knew it was going on because food was so plentiful. And the men logged to meet expenses."

Community life was full, with basket socials, badminton, tennis and a bowling green, as well as the regular dances. There was a drama club, the Women's Institute, the Ladies' Aid and the Anglican Women's Auxiliary. Also the Farmers' Institute, the Gun Club, the Lace Club, Fall fairs and card parties. "Both little churches were well attended," Mrs. Piercy recalled. "I came as an Anglican, but joined my husband's family at the United Church. The ministers, along with their families, visited, and often the entire family stayed overnight."

Mrs. Piercy says her interests have changed as she's grown older. She watches television, and she has time to read a lot now: mainly biographies and history. One of the books she lent us to read was about Princess Margaret's romance and marriage. She's a great admirer of the Royal Family and has a large portrait of the Queen at the front of one of her photograph albums. This particular album has all the photographs she took when she went on a tour of the British Isles, organized by the Anglican Church. She sat on the sofa between us turning the pages and telling us all the stories. She'd obviously loved every minute of the trip. The other pictures she showed us were of generations of Piercy's: the family album. Nice illustrations to the story of her life.

We thought the last words should be Mrs. Piercy's,, so here is how she ended her little autobiography: "We shall all try to make Denman a special place, where children will grow in a healthy, happy environment, and where we, the Senior Citizens, will enjoy our golden years."