



Thursday, September 11, 1986 O&E

(T-6D, Ro-10A, \*3C, R.W.G-8B) \*55C

## Travel writer takes vacation of her own

Dear reader:

I am sitting on the deck of an A-frame cottage on Mayne Island watching the sea otters at play in Bennett Bay. Mayne is one of the Gulf Islands in the Georgia Straits between the Canadian mainland and Vancouver Island. In the United States, this same group of islands is called the San Juan Islands.

We've had a couple of days of the light rain for which this northwest coast is famous, but the sun has come out now, burning the mist and clouds out of the sky, and Mount Baker has raised her snow-capped head, peering there on the distant skyline of Washington state.



Iris Jones

Every stretch of water on this glorious coastline has its own look. This bay is a glistening sheen of water that spreads flat between green arms of land at high tide and wears a reef of rocks across its mouth when the tide is low.

The shoreline is rocky and barnacle-covered, slippery with seaweed, but the small rowboats and the big pink buoys are there all the time, just off shore, as are the stairways and high walkways that lead from cottages to docks.

THIS is rain forest country and the great trees are painted against the blue sky around me, the huge tall trunks of Douglas firs, the single pine tree that has been growing at right angles from the bank over the beach for years, making a perch for crows, hawks and eagles.

I came to Paddy and Eileen Clark's place here on Bennett Bay for a weekend wedding. Nobody in their right mind brings 80 guests on an hour's ferry ride across the Straits of Georgia for a wedding, with everything needed for a two-day reception, but there it was on my niece's wedding invitation.

Vicki Ion and David McKenzie and their parents invite you to a wedding at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Mayne Island. Accompanied by a map and ferry information: Leave Tsawwassen for Village Bay at 9:25 a.m., arrive at 10:45 a.m., wedding at noon.

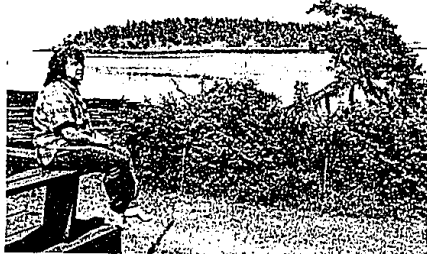
Eighty guests followed the bride and groom in Fred and Trudy Dunn's silver 1939 Cadillac to the tiny wooden church near Miners Bay, so called because this was the half-way point between the mainland and Vancouver Island during Gold Rush days.

THE BLACK-TAILED deer paid little attention as we went by they wander in and out of backyards all the time, so people aren't much of a novelty to them.

The reception was here on this deck, with the bride's parents, Marg and Gord Ion, as hosts, and a team of friends manning the before-and-after party food and the bar.

This is a typical summer cottage setting, a few hundred cottages on a beautiful piece of treed rock about 18 miles long, so the official reception wasn't easy. Dennis from the Center Store somehow dug up the tables from the Lions Club; Barbara Russell, whose homemade bread makes the island smell so good, did the catering; and Wayne, from the Trading Post, showed up unexpectedly on wedding day to hang baskets of flowers around the deck.

Guests wandered around back and



Mayne Island dweller Margaret Ion looks out on picturesque Bennett Bay.

forth to the Blue Vista Motel, the only motel on the island, conveniently located across the road from our cottage. The wedding party filled all the one and two-bedroom cottages this weekend, filling up the pullout beds in the living-kitchen areas.

Naomi and Gerry Dalgoutt just bought the motel last spring and they counted on Expo 86 to bring tourists into the islands, riding the big white B.C. ferries that run back and forth several times a day from Tsawwassen on the mainland of B.C. to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island, and back and forth between the Gulf Islands.

THE FERRIES land on the other side of the island, none here in Bennett Bay, but there is lots of activity in the water below me. Birds always make their little skim lines on the water, of course, and the binoculars are always ready for the seals, who often lift their glistening heads out of the sea to put on a show.

The seals are outdone only by the crazy sea otters, who come in groups to dive and roll, play and show off against the glistening sea. The last batch that came by decided to jump into a new boat just for the fun of it, leaping on deck and sliding back into the sea.

Everything would have been fine if one hadn't nosed open the flap of

the canvas cover and slid inside. He couldn't get out and it took a whole convention of sea otters thrashing around in there before they found their way into the sea again.

You will probably never get to a wedding on Mayne Island, or even stay in the Blue Vista Motel, but if you ever decide to explore the inside passage between Vancouver Island and the mountains of British Columbia/Washington, you could certainly sail a boat through these scenic waters or ride a ferry just for a day.

MOST PEOPLE ferry through on the way to Victoria, but a few knowing travelers stop at places like this. There isn't a thing to do on the island unless you drive or hitch a ride to the Five Rooster Restaurant or hike the island trails.

You could rent a cottage, I suppose, or find a hotel room in Ganges, on Salt Spring Island, the most populated and civilized of the Gulf Islands. Call the Blue Vista at (604) 539-2463, or Pacific Shore Realty in Vancouver at (604) 222-1188. Try Tourism B.C. at Expo or in their Victoria office at (604) 387-1842. Or just get off the ferry and take the next one back if you don't luck out.

As for me, I'm just going to sit here in the sunshine and watch the sea otters going by on their way to other fabulous destinations



The atrium of the Wheels Inn in Chatham presents a scenic setting.

Mickey Jones

## 3-day trips Ontario has many interesting places

Three-day trips in southwestern Ontario offer some attractive possibilities.

In Kingsville, you can visit the Pelee Island Winery only 45 minutes from Windsor on Highway 455. Daily tours at noon, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Wines may be sampled and tourists will visit the European traditional wine cellars. Call (519) 733-6551 for information.

Back on Highway 401, head for Wheels Inn in Chatham with its seven acres of indoor health resort facilities.

Under one roof, you'll find racquetball courts, a bowling alley, a fitness gym, saunas, whirlpool and indoor/outdoor swimming pools where you can swim laps or do water exercises. There is a special activity area for children featuring a waterslide, ping-pong tables and putting greens.

In addition, there is a day-care

center so children are cared for while mom and dad are being physical at the Fitness and Racquet Club. Free weight equipment, six indoor tennis, nine racquetball and four squash courts are available for use by inn guests.

WHEELS INN also offers one, three and five-day programs at its Country Spa. These include exercise classes, a herbal wrap and massage, facials and hair care, depending on the program you choose. Prices range from \$125 per person per day to \$850 a person for the five-day Super Tune-Up. Call (519) 351-1100 for reservation information or write to Wheels Inn, P.O. Box 637, Chatham, Ontario, Canada N7M 5K8.

Not far from Kingsville, in Ruthven, is Colasanti Farms, a tropical garden featuring exotic birds, small animals, flowers and plants. The gardens may be seen in 15

green houses all year round. Admission is free.

HOLIDAY BEACH Park, on the shore of Lake Erie, south of the historic town of Amherstburg, is a 275-acre park with 50 sites for trailers or tents.

The dark can be used as a base while campers explore Fort Malden National Park, the north American Black History Museum, the King's Navy Yard, Colasanti Gardens and Bobo Island, all within minutes of the park.

Other places accessible from the campgrounds are Point Pelee National Park and Jack Miner's Waterfowl Feeding Grounds near Kingsville. U.S. campers can pick up a Holiday Beach brochure at the Ontario Travel Centre near the Ambassador Bridge or the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel. For reservations, call Essex Region Convention Authority at (519) 738-3772.



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