



My Life with Carl Borden in the 1950s

by Maureen Carlson

For the Canadian Archaeological Association meetings in the spring of 2005, Sue Rowley of UBC invited me to take part in a Symposium which she was organizing to honour Dr. Charles E. Borden in what would have been his 100th year. I was delighted to have the opportunity to talk, not about the archaeology, but about the man himself, the man who changed my life so profoundly. What follows is my contribution to the Symposium, given in Nanaimo, BC at the Canadian Archeological Association annual meeting.

It all started in the fall of 1951 when I registered for Anthropology 420 at UBC. Having no real idea what this course would entail, but needing one more course in anthropology to complete a major for a B.A. before heading into the School of Social Work, I felt this might be interesting. There were only four of us in the class; one other woman and two men. The instructor was one Charles E. Borden, Professor of German.

Above: Carl Borden at Chinlac, June 1952. Photo by Natalie Burt.



Lunch at Chinlac, June, 1952. Left to right: Maureen Kelly (Carlson), Bob Theodoratis, Helen Piddington (Campbell), Carl Borden, Roy Carlson, Paul Tolstoy, and Jack Darling. Photo by Natalie Burt.

Carl had for several years been working on his own to find and excavate various sites around the Lower Mainland, and it was these sites: Locarno Beach, Marpole, Whalen Farm and Musqueam, where his interest lay. His archaeological and geological knowledge of the Old World too, was vast. (For some reason, things like Gunz, Mindel Rise and Wurm have stayed in my head to this day—something to do with the Pleistocene in Europe I think. . .)

Carl did not get a lot of support for his archaeological work from UBC. No one seemed too interested in his archaeological endeavours, and it was only just before his retirement that he was made Professor of Archaeology and no longer had to teach German! The powers that were in those days were more interested in getting the UBC Museum of Anthropology started, which at that time was housed in the Library basement. The Hawthornes obviously did a fine job of that — witness the MOA today!

As for being housed in basements, the Archaeology Lab was squeezed into the basement of the Old Arts Building, and I had the pleasure of being one of Dr. B.'s first lab assistants. This work I did for two years, even throughout the year spent in the School of Social Work. Not ideal working conditions: windowless and grungy; a little different working conditions from those of Patricia Ormerod today! But I was paid 75 cents an hour and the work was interesting. Carl would often bring people through to view our efforts. For instance, H.R.

McMillan, the lumber magnate of BC at that time, was interested in archaeology and he would donate funds from time to time. Dr. B. had a way about him; a way of presenting his work and his ideas to others which piqued the interest of everyone around him. Even his faculty colleagues in English or History or whatever, he could convince to venture out in the rain to help him dig! He did everything well and efficiently. I remember having to record on a special sheet he prepared, precisely every minute I worked in that lab, to write in the exact minute of arrival and the exact minute of leaving, but I was always paid right on time. This careful attention to detail was typical of Dr. B. in whatever he did. He had me follow him around on the site when he was taking photos, recording every little detail about every photo; subject, f-stops, directions, time of day, etc. He was a great photographer and so proud of his state-of-the-art Leica cameras. Very German, of course. The Japanese hadn't started making good cameras yet!

Our course work in Anthro 420 involved digging every week at Stselax Village at Musqueam. No matter what the weather, every Thursday afternoon we trundled down to the mud of the Musqueam Reserve and excavated the site. It was always raining and we were always covered in mud. Going home on the bus after an afternoon digging in the rain was not much fun. My family could not quite figure out what kind of a university course this was or how it related to Social Work, but it was certainly more interesting than any of my other courses, and when Carl invited me to join the group going to survey and excavate at Chinlac and Tweedsmuir Park during the



On the road to Tweedsmuir, Roy and his 1940 yellow convertible, June 1952. Photos by Natalie Burt.

summer of 1952, I was ecstatic!

In the early 1950s, the Aluminium Company of Canada was about to begin construction of the Kenney Dam on the Nechako River to service the needs of an aluminum plant to be built at Kitimat. The building of this dam would cause the flooding of a large portion of Tweedsmuir Park. The area of the park to be affected was a series of lakes and connecting rivers, and a great many trees which are still there under the flood water, and of course, archaeological sites, to say nothing of the people still living in the surrounding area who were not consulted about this incredible upset in their lives. But that was then and this is now. Now we know better, I hope.

In the summer of 1951, Dr B. had undertaken a major survey of Tweedsmuir Park, the first salvage archaeology ever done in B. C. That summer he was accompanied by Alan Bryan, an anthropology student at the University of Washington. It was decided that a full-scale survey and excavations of the area would take place in the summer of 1952.

It was around this time that Carl was beginning to think about a method of designating site locations in such a way that they could be universally located. That of course was the beginning of the Borden System for Site Designation. One of the problems

he had with it was worrying about whether or not any of the Sites would spell an unacceptable four letter word! None did. The closest we came to a naughty word was in our own backyard in Tweedsmuir—FiSi was the designation for most of the sites in that area. The spelling of it made it acceptable.

As mentioned before, I was thrilled to be chosen to be a part of Carl's crew. Although, at first he agreed that I could go to Chinlac in June, and then we would "see" after that whether or not I would be going into Tweedsmuir. Carl was not too sure about women in the field. Remember, this is 53 years ago and attitudes were definitely different!

The work at Chinlac, a prehistoric village site at the confluence of the Stuart and the Nechako Rivers, and the salvage work in Tweedsmuir Park was supported by the Ministry of Education in Victoria and the Aluminium Company of Canada, or Alcan. I think Carl was able to round up about \$10,000 or so.

And so it was on June 5, 1952, we set out from Vancouver on our adventure into the hinterland. Jack Darling, from our 420 class, drove the new blue truck. Riding with us were Paul Tolstoy (now a Professor of Archaeology at the University of Montreal) and his wife Christie. Coming behind us with Dr. B. in his car were Helen Piddington, a student at UBC (now Helen Campbell, a BC artist and writer); Peter Oberlander of UBC; and Bob Theodoratus from the University of Washington. It took us about 12 hours to reach our first campsite in Clinton. Carl had all of the campsites along the way planned in his usual efficient way and in spite of the incredibly bad roads, we always managed to reach the planned-for campsite each evening. The pavement, if you could call it that, ended completely at Lac LaHache. The roads were incredibly rough, bumpy and dusty — and deep mud when it rained. But, on we journeyed, north to Prince George, then west to Vanderhoof and down to the Nechako River at a tiny whistle-stop of a place called Finmore on the worst road I've ever been on. From there we loaded all our gear onto river boats, then down the Nechako and up the Stuart to Chinlac. We set up camp on June 8, and began excavation of the first house depression on June 9, 1952, just four days after leaving Vancouver. Apart from the rain, the mosquitoes and the horrendous black flies, all went well in our camp. While the rest of us dripped with OFF and were shrouded in netting to fend off the hordes of mosquitoes and black flies, nothing ever seemed to bother Dr. B. He strode about the site observing and remembering everything that went on. He hardly ever took notes throughout the day and since he regarded me as some kind of secretary, in the evenings we would go to the lab tent where he would dictate all of the day's activities in minute detail and I would have to write it all done in longhand (Did anyone ever read those notes?). He spoke slowly and carefully and it seemed to work. On the site each day, it was my job to record all of the artifacts as they were excavated by the diggers. I've never seen anyone else do things this way, but to Carl it was more efficient and his middle name was efficiency.

The work carried on apace for the first week or so while we all settled in to camp life and got used to bugs and rain. We had a few visitors from time to time in spite of our isolated location. Wilson Duff came from the Provincial Museum and took a lot of film. Wilson also taught us to play Indian gambling games. Then on June 17, 1952, two students from the University of Washington, Natalie Burt and Roy Carlson joined our group. Getting there



Off to the site, July 1952. Bob Theodoratis, Jim Baldwin, Unknown, Unknown, Maureen Kelly (Carlson), Paul Tolstoy, Jack Darling, Natalie Burt, Roy Carlson, and Carl Borden. Photo by Jack Sewell(?).

from Seattle was not a lot of fun for Roy and Natalie. Roy's car was totally unsuitable, a 1940 yellow Plymouth convertible. But eventually it made it to Finmore with a lot of help. Now, at the start of this treatise I mentioned how Carl had profoundly changed my life. Well, this was it! What can I say these 53 years later? I think something clicked and it just worked! Would that everyone would be so lucky! Carl followed our courtship throughout the following year and was pleased. He didn't live to know that one half of our offspring and their spouses would be involved in British Columbia archaeology, but he would have been very pleased!

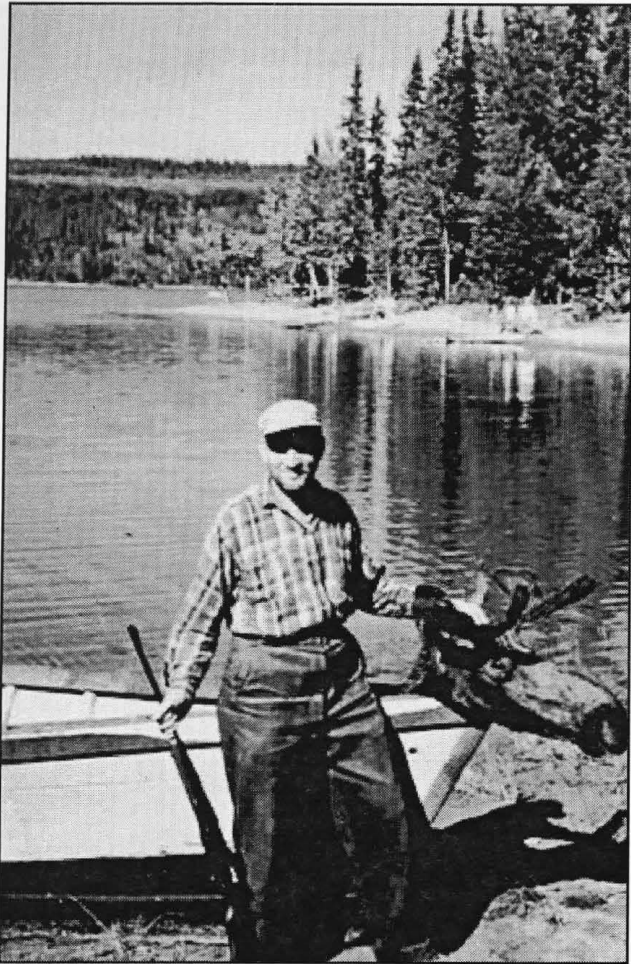
We finished our work and broke camp at Chinlac on July 5th, and on the 6th, a local farmer came in his airplane boat to take us back to Finmore, where it was time for swimming and a party! Carl supplied the beer. He loved his beer and kept a private supply which he sometimes shared with the rest of us.

And so it happened that in early July, Carl led this little band of diggers into the wilderness of Tweedmuir Park. He agreed to take Helen and me, since Helen had agreed to cook and I seemed to have developed an aptitude as a secretary. Even though Helen and I were both archaeology students, trained in field work, we were nonetheless 1950s women and as such, Carl's assigning us to "women's work" didn't seem particularly out of line and I certainly have no recollection of feeling put down or denigrated in any way. That was not Carl's style. He treated everyone equally and with the utmost respect and as I have said before, that was

then and this is now.

We arrived at our first campsite at Ootsa Lake where others joined our crew for the expedition into Tweedsmuir: two students from the University of Toronto, Ken McPherson and Doug Stephen, and also Carl's son, 16-year-old Harvey, and Jim Baldwin, a boy scout from Prince Rupert for whom Carl named the Baldwin Phase. Jim was later killed in a climbing accident in Yosemite Park. Some of you might know Carl's son Harvey as Dr. John H. Borden, an award-winning entomologist, of the Biological Sciences Dept at SFU, involved in pine beetle research here in BC.

Accessing our first campsite on Euchu Lake in Tweedsmuir involved a six-hour trip sitting on top of loaded, open river boats while traversing the lakes and small rivers, which wound through the Park before it was flooded. It was glorious. The trip took skill and careful maneuvering on the part of the boatmen, one of whom was Carl himself. Again his skill and knowledge in whatever he undertook was outstanding. One had complete trust in his ability always to do a job right. (Although I'm told that he and Alan Bryan overturned their boat in the river the previous season and had lost most of their gear!) But at the time, I didn't know about that, and had complete confidence in his ability to lead us through this wilderness into paradise, which was an Island on Euchu Lake. Here we made camp and each morning would set out for the various sites in the area. In retrospect, the organizational skill involved in this project, in such a remote area



Carl with the moose, July, 1952. Photo by Jack Sewell (?).

, was phenomenal, but then Carl Borden could do anything! He even shot us a moose!!

Since we had no refrigeration, our meat was all from cans and was pretty awful. In fact, the meat paste that Carl enjoyed so much was so bad that at every opportunity we would take a few cans on our way to the site and throw it overboard. However, the moose was wonderful, and since one of our crew was Jack Sewell, a butcher and amateur archaeologist from Vanderhoof, he cut it up and made corned beef out of it. And lots of steaks which, as time went on, became riper and riper, but anything is better than canned meat paste! Over all, the food was excellent considering our isolated location, and there were very few complaints about Helen's cooking.

We moved camp a time or two during the course of the summer to various other lakes like Natalkuz and Tetachuk, both of which have disappeared now. September found us at Natalkuz Lake and then it was time to return to the real world.

I think it was that summer that a real bond began to develop between Roy and Carl, one that continued to grow over the next few years. To Roy, Carl was a teacher, a mentor, and later a colleague, and so began the seeds of a developing archaeological community in BC, although it would still be some years before any real expansion would take place.

The trip back was one adventure (or disaster) after another, far too numerous to mention here. The river levels had

dropped rather drastically, so that we kept hitting bottom and losing shear pins and propellers and things, cars lost their gas tanks, batteries fell out, mufflers didn't survive at all.

We arrived back in Vancouver on Sept 18, 1952, and the next day Carl took us all to the faculty club at UBC for lunch. We were such a motley crew, that the doorman, a Mr. Chalmers, was not going to allow us in, but Carl rescued us, and in fact seemed proud of us, grubby as we were. He even introduced us to the snooty Mr. Chalmers. Ah, the fifties — they had to be lived to be believed!.

In June 1953, Roy and I were married and spent our honeymoon digging at Wakemap Mound, on the Columbia River near the Dalles. We were chaperoning the unmarried female students on this University of Washington dig. So it was not until the summer of 1954 that Roy and I again joined Carl in British Columbia, to do a survey in the Kootenays, prior to the flooding of the Libby Dam on the Columbia River. At the time, the people of the area were all prepared and waiting to be moved, but the dam was not built until 1972.

It was a small crew consisting of Carl, his son Harvey, Jim Baldwin, Roy and myself. I was invited along to do the cooking which was better than staying home. A minor problem which we managed to keep from Carl was that I was pregnant. Rather old fashioned gentleman that he was, he would never have allowed me to venture into the field in my delicate condition. (Catherine was doing fieldwork before she was born!)

In the summer of 1959, Carl asked Roy to work with him at a large site in the Fraser Canyon, which had been discovered by Gus Milliken, a local collector, after the advent of a landslide over the railway tracks. The opportunity to once again participate in BC archaeology, and to get away from the summer heat of Arizona where Roy was working on his PhD, was too good to pass up. The problem this time was that we had two small children by now, ages 4 and 3, and Carl felt it would be much too dangerous to have them with us, since our camp would be on a narrow ledge above the Canyon. I agreed, and so we left them in Vancouver with my parents for the summer. This was the only time we did not have our children with us in the field. They hated being left behind!

Getting to the Milliken Site was interesting. Since the site is located on the CNR track just above Yale, on the east side of the Fraser, it was necessary to take the "mixed train," one that carried both freight and passengers, from Port Mann, a railroad yard on the South side of the Fraser just below where the east end of the Bridge is now. After a 6 hour trip through unimaginable natural beauty, the train deposited us and all our paraphernalia by the side of the track at Mile Post 23.3.

Once again, and, I might add, for the very last time, I agreed to be the camp cook. I learned to hate camp cooking that summer. Our kitchen was very tiny; one two burner Coleman stove and an oven which was set on top when you wanted to bake. No refrigeration, water had to be dragged up from the river in milk cans — a very difficult task, so we often ran out of water. Our meat was mostly canned, much of it still left from 1952 or so, including some of the dreaded meat paste. For the 1952 field season, the Home-Ec. Department had rather misjudged how much Spam and canned chicken or stew or meatballs, we would need, so we were still eating it. Carl was very frugal, as he had to be, as there was very little support for archaeology at that time, so we didn't waste anything, and tried not to spend a lot. Roy's salary for the field season was \$ 200.00



Baking bread at the Milliken Site, Summer, 1959. Photo by Roy Carlson.

while mine was \$150.00. However, Carl understood our need for fresh fruit and vegetables, and soon made arrangements for fresh supplies to be sent up on the train from Hope each week. So things got better. Also berries ripened, so I could make pies occasionally. I made friends with the cook at the construction camp who once in a while sent up a big roast of beef.

But the fish kept coming, and it was never cleaned, just brought to my tiny waterless kitchen as is. Carl and I had our only real row over this. One day when I could no longer bear the sight of one more huge salmon "in the round" as they say, Carl came smiling to my kitchen with a huge Spring Salmon. I blew up and said I refused ever to clean a fish again and if he couldn't find someone to do it, then we'd continue having canned meat. I never was asked to clean a fish again.

Carl was usually understanding and reasonable, but because this site was going to be so significant in the scheme of BC archaeology, he invited ever so many guests to view the work. Even though we were fairly isolated and difficult to access, there was a steady stream of visitors, everyone from the Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip to teenagers from Seattle who volunteered with us. We enjoyed having Gus Millken visit us from time to time and, on occasion, to be invited to his home in Yale for dinner. We had a schoolteacher from Toronto, executives from the C.N.R., the late Earl Swanson, an archaeologist from Idaho, various engineers who made maps for Carl, Keith Borden (Carl's younger son), Catherine Capes and her father, and untold others on and on. Sometimes there were as many as 14 people for dinner, often

their visits were unexpected and it all became a huge burden. The strain on our limited resources was sometimes a problem, but we did cope. By the way, the Queen and Phillip did not join us for dinner, they simply went by on the train, waving at us in their inimitable way. The RCMP sent a Mountie to our camp that day. Poor fellow walked all the way down the tracks from Spuzzum, just to make sure we behaved ourselves when the Queen went by. He didn't stay for dinner either. Unlike the RCMP officer, we usually traveled via hand car with Roman Pasika, a patrolman on our section of track who was very helpful throughout the summer delivering mail, goods, people or whatever else was necessary. It was for him that Carl named the Pasika Complex. He was a Ukrainian immigrant from Poland, who kept us enthralled with tales of the Polish Army. It was always an adventure driving down to Yale with Roman, or Roy, as he liked to be called. One never knew when a train would be along and you would have to jump pretty fast — especially fun in the tunnels.

While we did manage quite well, it was very exhausting for me and as a result I decided this was my last time as cook in the field and I have stood by that decision.

At the end of it all and when we were safely home again, I realized, in thinking it over, that Carl really was a gem. As a complaining, screeching drag of a cook, he had put up with me and continued to be kind and forgiving. After the fish incident, everything he asked for was in a pleading, apologetic way ("Could we please have our cucumber without vinegar sometimes?"). And, according to David and Maryjo Sanger, who worked at



Carl Borden with pebble tools, Summer 1959. Photo by Roy Carlson.

Milliken the following year, he didn't hesitate to tell them how things were done last year and couldn't they do the same?

And so ended the '50s. I continued to have children and do volunteer field and lab work for Roy while we were in the Southwestern United States, but the call from the Northwest was always ringing in our ears, and when SFU opened in 1965, Roy was there, highly recommended by Carl, as the archaeologist BC needed. So Roy proceeded to found the Department of Archaeology at SFU and the expansion of the profession in BC started on a grand scale. Many of those first SFU students in archaeology found employment as teachers in the various colleges, as government employees in the Archaeology Branch, at the Provincial Museum and as consultants and contractors. Some of these early people have retired, but others carry on.

After moving back to BC in 1965 (obviously I am now beyond my mandate of the '50s), we resumed our friendship with Carl and his wife, Alice. They would have evening parties to which they would invite Carl's students, like Bjorn Simonsen, Al Mcmillan, Knut Fladmark, Gay Frederick and others. Don Mitchell was a student of Carl's too in the early '60s.

The field of archaeology has burgeoned since the '50s when Carl Borden and Roy Carlson were almost the only ones doing any. (I think there were people called Smith, Hill-Tout and Drucker who did a little BC archaeology in the olden days!)

Today there are countless archaeologists working in the province, most of them with a connection directly or indirectly

either to Carl Borden or to Roy Carlson and so it would seem that maybe we really are just one big family!

From a personal point of view, Charles E. Borden has had more of an effect on my life than any other person. He got me interested in the field of archaeology back in the days of digging at Musqueam, he introduced me to my future husband, and all of this has influenced the lives of half my children and their spouses who have chosen to contribute to the field as well. Our late son Arne's favourite farewell to the crew leaving for survey was "Find Sites." Carl would certainly have encouraged this effort. Charles E. Borden's dedication to the past, the striving for answers, is a model for us all. He got most of us started, and we hope some of us will find some answers.

Maureen Carlson earned her B.A. in Anthropology from U.B.C. in 1952 under Dr. Charles E. Borden and has been associated with archaeology in BC ever since, serving as an assistant and volunteer on many important archaeological projects in BC. Maureen has been a volunteer for more than 30 years at the Vancouver Museum in both the school programmes in archaeology and in caring for the archaeological collections, and she continues in that capacity. She has also served as a Board Member at that Institution. Maureen is an active volunteer in the marketing of publications of the S.F.U. Archaeology Press and can be found at most professional meetings selling books. But mostly, she is a wife, mother and mother-in-law of archaeologists.
