

FOUNDER'S AWARD ADDRESS:

THREE SHORT, TALL, TALES

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Thank you, members of the Western Forest Insect Work Conference, for this great honour. I believe that the best appraisal of one's work is given by your co-workers who have interacted with you on a regular basis, meeting to discuss and compare ideas, which leads to better theories and better solutions. To be selected by those people for a distinctive award - that is the greatest honour of all. I will cherish it dearly.

I should like to point out two people who also deserve to be named in this award. The first is my wonderful wife who worked tremendously hard to provide a happy and gratifying home and supported me throughout my career. The second is my co-worker, Tom Gray, who worked ceaselessly to meet our objectives. He was always coming up with new ideas and better ways to accomplish things. Together, we used a team approach that was unbeatable. To them both I am highly indebted and give a heartfelt thanks.

Today I promised to tell you three short, tall, tales. They are short because I have reduced them to the barest of details, just enough to give you a hint of these intriguing, but true stories. They are tall because they represent some of the people who helped establish this country; people who stood very tall in courage and stature, people who accomplished their objectives in an unknown and very wild, rugged country.

THE LIFE OF FRANCES BARKLEY

The first tale is about a heroine, Frances Barkley, the first white woman to appear on the coast of BC. Let me set the scene; in 1778, Captain Cook landed at Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The Spaniards from Mexico had made some tentative explorations northward and the Russians had set up some fur trading posts in Alaska, but the central coast of western North America was essentially unknown to Europeans.

Although Cook's prime objective was to find the "Northwest Passage", he incidentally stumbled onto a potentially highly rewarding business opportunity. After Cook was killed in Hawaii, his crew continued to China and were astounded by the price the Chinese would pay for sea otter skins from the Northwest Coast. It was obvious that fortunes could be made by trading with the Chinese. Upon reaching England, word spread rapidly, and many commercial interests began fitting out ships. Among these was a group of business men who hired an experienced captain, Charles Barkley.

Charles had a ship built in England called the Imperial Eagle and brought it to Ostend, Belgium, for final outfitting. During this six-week stay in Ostend, twenty-seven-year-old Charles met, fell

in love and married seventeen-year-old Frances Trevor who had long, golden-red hair. Frances was born in England but raised in Germany and Belgium. Her father was an Anglican minister serving small English communities in Hamburg and Ostend. When she was fourteen she entered a French convent to complete her education. Thus, her upbringing was extremely protected and structured. When the ship was ready, the newlyweds left Belgium immediately, and Frances' life changed abruptly. The sheltering convent walls vanished and Frances found herself married to a man she hardly knew, aboard a small ship with little privacy, bound for unknown coasts. As soon as they entered the Atlantic they experienced fierce seas sweeping over the ship, removing all poultry and animals on deck which were to supply fresh meat. Charles caught rheumatic fever and was confined to bed with little hope of recovery. The first and second mates took advantage of the situation and tried to force their attentions upon Frances. Eventually they put into Salvador on the Brazilian coast to allow Charles to recover and to take on provisions. Thereafter conditions improved. Due to Charles' sailmaster skills they rounded the Horn without incident and reached Hawaii six months after leaving Belgium. After provisioning they continued to Nootka, arriving nine years after Captain Cook.

Trading was brisk and a good number of sea otter skins were obtained. Copper was the main item desired by the natives. After a stay of a month, they sailed south-east along the west coast of Vancouver Island, where they discovered Clayoquot Sound and Barkley Sound. Charles named the latter after himself, as he was the first European to discover and chart its shores and named many landmarks. Again, trading for sea otter skins was quite successful. Continuing south the Barkleys rediscovered the Strait of Juan de Fuca which had been vaguely reported by the Spaniards, but missed by James Cook.

At times, dealing with the natives was often difficult and risky. They were a proud and warlike race of people. As an example, near Cape Flattery, six men were sent ashore to contact natives for trading purposes, but, to everyone's horror, they were massacred and cut to pieces. On another occasion, a large number of natives came on board the Imperial Eagle supposedly to trade. When they became dangerously aggressive, Frances suddenly appeared from the cabin with her hair blowing free like a golden cloud. The natives fell down before her, thinking she was a goddess and left in terror. The Imperial Eagle left North America and sailed for Canton, China with 800 sea otter skins on board. White women were not allowed in China, so Frances had to remain alone in Macao while Charles spent two months in China selling the skins and obtaining another cargo for transport to Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean.

They enjoyed these French islands. Frances had learned to speak fluent French in the convent and she in turn taught Charles. Frances remained in Mauritius, while Charles sailed to Calcutta, only to find that the other partners, unknown to him, had sold the ship. Charles was released and much of his funds lost. By the time he returned to Mauritius, Frances, all alone, had given birth to a son after a difficult labour. They left Mauritius as passengers on an American ship bound for England. The captain was incompetent and they were shipwrecked off the coast of France. The officers and crew took the lifeboats and abandoned the passengers on the wreck. Fortunately, the cargo of cotton kept the wreck afloat until they could be rescued.

After seven months in England the Barkleys decided to go to India to set up a business. Charles was given command of a ship to sail to Bombay. They met violent gales off the Cape of Good Hope during which Frances gave birth to a daughter. The storms delayed progress and they ran out of supplies. They stopped at Mauritius to restock. Off the coast of Bombay another storm made landing impossible, forcing them to sail around India to Madras to unload. They then sailed to Calcutta, where Charles was persuaded to lead another expedition to the North Pacific in search of sea otters. All friends and relatives advised Frances to remain in Calcutta with her children but she refused, preferring all the dangers of the sea to being separated from her loving husband.

The ship Halcyon was much smaller and considerably inferior to the Imperial Eagle. As soon as they left Calcutta they spent ten days in a hurricane tossed about in their tiny craft with all port holes and hatches secured in spite of extremely high temperatures and humidities. This was hard on the sea-sick children. They were too late to catch the trade winds and spent three weeks becalmed in the East Indies with terrible heat. Charles contracted a tropical fever with excruciating pain. After many weeks he survived, but their twelve-month-old daughter also contracted the fever and died.

After six months they arrived at Kamchatka, where cold rain and icy fog caused considerable suffering, particularly for the crew from India. They left after a month, frustrated, because the Russian governor and army blocked their attempts to trade for skins with the local natives.

From Kamchatka they travelled across the North Pacific to Sitka, Alaska. Having received bad treatment from previous traders, they found the natives here, also, quite threatening and warlike. Bartering was more difficult as the natives were by now more conscious of the value of otter skins and were demanding muskets, shot and powder. Although they obtained some skins, they left with only a partial load, as they were running short of supplies. After spending six weeks selling the skins in China, they embarked for Indo-China, where they sailed forty miles up the river to Saigon, which, at that time, was the rich, thronging capital of Southeast Asia. Frances was the first white woman to enter that city. When she travelled in an open sedan-chair with her young son to the Cochin Chinese court, an armed guard with whips had to precede her through the masses of people gathered to see this pale-faced, red-haired stranger.

After Indo-China they headed for Bombay with a cargo, but were blown too far south and put into Mauritius for food and water. Unknown to them, England and France were again at war and the Halcyon with its cargo was seized as a prize of war. They were kept there for a year and were released only by travelling on an American vessel to the States and thence to England. These two voyages lasted eight years and by then Frances was twenty-five years old. She remained in England thereafter and died at age seventy-six after bearing a total of seven children, of whom three died before adulthood.

Today, if you sail north-west of Victoria, as I have done, up the Pacific coast side of Vancouver Island, you will arrive at a beautiful Sound which contains a National Marine Park. This is Barkley Sound, named and originally charted by Charles Barkley. Names like Imperial Eagle

Channel and Frances Island bring to mind this courageous woman who experienced so many dramatic events in her first eight years of marriage.

For our second tall tale let us move north of Vancouver Island to the Queen Charlotte Islands, to the Haida people and to Charles Newcombe who witnessed their near extinction:

HISTORY OF THE KUNGHIT HAIDA

The Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands were composed of four linguistic groups, one of which was the Kunghit of Moresby Island. Because they lived off the sea on shell fish, halibut, cod, etc., they built their villages in the first protected spot inside a reef or inlet and paddled their hand-carved cedar canoes out along the exposed Pacific coast on a daily basis to collect food. Their houses consisted of split cedar planks set into large corner posts. Living was good and they were able to devote some of their time to carving large totem poles.

In the mid-eighteen hundreds, it is believed there were about four thousand people in this nation when tragedy struck in the form of successive waves of smallpox which decimated the population. What was one of the most feared and independent aboriginal nations proved to be one of the most susceptible races to this disease. As populations decreased, villages were abandoned and survivors grouped into a few remaining villages. Where possible, they took their long house planks and totem poles with them. After twenty years of disease outbreaks, only thirty-seven people remained of the original four thousand. They were clustered into one village called Skang'wai at the southern tip of South Moresby. About 1875 this last village was abandoned and the remaining people moved to Skidigate where Haida from other groups had collected. They left behind an amazing cluster of poles standing on a beautiful village site. Subsequently this location has been declared a World Heritage Site and the southern part of Moresby Island has been designated another National Park.

Twenty-five years after the abandonment of Skang'wai, Dr. Charles F. Newcombe realised that this once proud nation had all but disappeared along with the wooden artefacts of their culture. The better artefacts were being scavenged for museums and the remainder were rotting away rapidly. Newcombe was a medical doctor from England who travelled widely up and down the coast. As far as we know, he never practised medicine in BC, but followed a deep interest in native cultures. By 1901, only six of the Kunghit people were left, of which one was a chief of Skang'wai called Ninstints. Newcombe organised a small expedition of himself, Ninstints and Newcombe's young nephew to circumnavigate Moresby Island and record the location of all abandoned villages, long houses, totem poles, protective forts, etc. He sketched important views with landmarks to locate villages; he also took many glass plate photographs of sites, homes and totem poles. They did all of this in an open eighteen-foot rowing and sailing dinghy in cold, wet, windy weather on the open Pacific shoreline, fighting strong tides and currents with huge waves and surf. They took turns rowing, and sailing when possible, and recorded tens of village sites, fished for food and camped ashore. It took them only about three weeks to travel well over three hundred miles of uncharted wilderness and they produced the best records that anthropologists have today of this vital and dynamic nation.

In May, 1996 I had the great pleasure of following in the footsteps of Newcombe and Ninstints in the company of an anthropologist from the Royal BC Museum as we sailed around Moresby Island in a ninety-foot sailing vessel. Using Newcombe's records, we visited many old village sites, and spent a whole day studying the totem poles at Skang'wai. We learned to locate house sites by distinctive Sitka Spruce, which had germinated on top of the cedar corner posts of the house. Roots had penetrated down the centre, splitting the posts, while other roots encompassed the posts outside and down to the ground. Thus, evenly spaced spruce at the four corners with swollen butts and a rotting post sticking out at an angle were the distinguishing clues. We also had a great opportunity to hike through the unique "moss forest", characteristic of this archipelago of islands. This is a huge undisturbed temperate rain forest except for one factor - deer. About 1925 blacktail deer were introduced to provide a food source for natives and settlers. The deer population exploded and nearly all brush disappeared, leaving the huge trees above and thick moss on the ground. This is an interesting contrast to the salmonberry-devil's club jungles in the nearby rain forests of Vancouver Island and the mainland, where deer are controlled by predators.

The last short, tall tale is a modern one, involving a couple of young people in Jasper National Park. It is best told in a verse penned by John W. Chalmers of Edmonton:

IN JASPER PARK

Two, imbued with sudden passion,
By a mountain highway parked,
Locked their car in careful fashion,
Sought a glade that they had marked.

Hidden by a screen of bushes,
Underneath the summer sun,
By a lakelet edged with rushes,
Shed their garments one by one.

But a disapproving critter,
Clothed in fur like other bear,
Muttered imprecations bitter,
Though it wasn't his affair.

"Dress as I do" was his motto.
(Bruin was a hide-bound prude).
Swift he chased them to their auto,
Ending their behaviour lewd.

Naked though they were, they scampered,
Leaving all behind them far.
Lacking keys, they then were hampered,
Gained no entrance to their car.

To escape the angry ursine,
Climbed they to their car-top high.
Long that bear they stayed there cursing,
But delighting passers-by.

It is interesting to compare the characters in these three tales: the tremendous courage of the seventeen-year-old Frances in her pioneering adventures around the world and the foresight and seamanship of Charles Newcombe in his search for the last remains of the Kunghit culture. I think, however, you must have the greatest admiration for the fellow who had the patience and fortitude to train a bear to come out of the woods at just the right time, follow the transgressors to their car and circle around and around the rooftop aerie to clinch the couple's embarrassment!