

# Highlands Gal

## Home is Where the Heart Is

by Pattie Whitehouse



Pattie Whitehouse, a personal historian since 1992, helps people save their life stories in books and audio recordings, making connections between generations and celebrating the extraordinary lives of “ordinary” people. Contact Pattie at 250-478-3319 or [pattie@pacificcoast.net](mailto:pattie@pacificcoast.net), or visit [pattiewhitehouse.ca](http://pattiewhitehouse.ca)

*I grew up on the Saanich Peninsula when it was still country.  
I rode my horse on forest trails through what is now Dean Park Estates.  
I picked strawberries where townhouses stand in Saanichton.  
Every spring, I fell asleep to the chorus of thousands of frogs singing  
from the irrigation pond at the farm across the road.*

When I was at university I moved into town, and I lived in cities for the next 15 years. I enjoyed urban amenities such as easy access to concerts and public events and being able to walk or bike everywhere I wanted to go. But I knew someday I would return to the country.

That day came in 1984, when the small cottage on the Highlands acreage next to where I boarded my horse came up



Photo courtesy of Dave Mackas

for rent. It was a chilly mid-December when I moved in. The cottage was old and drafty. Boxes were piled against the ancient electric baseboard heaters; I didn't dare turn them on. The only other heat source was an inefficient burner with an insatiable appetite for firewood that took hours to generate any warmth.

I went to bed cold, exhausted and miserable, wondering if I had made the right choice. I woke up next morning to discover it had snowed.

*And I knew I had come home.*

As I unpacked my boxes that day, I kept gazing through the windows at the wilderness wonderland beyond. I made time to go outside and flop on my back to make a snow angel. I looked forward to spring, when I knew I would fall asleep to the chorus of thousands of frogs singing from the pond on the property.

Time passed, and I became involved with the Highlands community. I was among the first to volunteer after we incorporated in 1993, and edited the council newsletter for the next nine years. I participate in public meetings and help organize community events. I am one of the leaders of the bullfrog control program. I belong to a group that goes around visiting one another's gardens. Anywhere I go in the Highlands, I know people.

Moving to the Highlands was a turning point for me. I never would have become involved in my community to the same extent if I had stayed in the city. In ways that have been true nowhere else that I have lived, I belong.

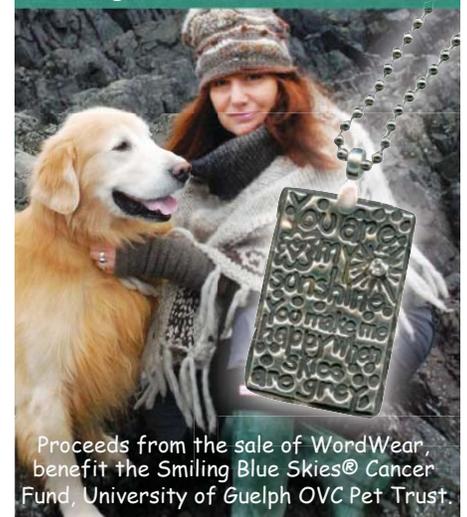
*My heart's in the Highlands  
wherever I go.*

\* \* \*

Turning points are important elements of a personal history. My move to the Highlands led me to unexpected richness found in relationships and community involvement. My life might not have been any less rich had I stayed in the city, but it would have been very different.

What have been the important turning points in your life? What determined whether you made one decision or another? How did your life change because of your decision? Knowing what you know now, would you make the same choice again?

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