

JOURNEY TO MY BIGFOOT FAMILY

By JEFF & TRISH CREED& dogs Cricket, Amber & Tucker

My Rving journey started before I could even walk...and that was well over half a century ago. My first trailer was made by my father who had to laminate sheets of plywood together to make a water proof top. It was tiny by today's standards, but it was a magical place in days gone by. We had an inside toilet that consisted of pulling out a cupboard and placing oneself over a hole cut into the plywood top. I don't know what collected those deposits; I was in diapers and I couldn't care less. I do though vividly remember how our Coleman lantern was mounted on a bracket that could be swung inside the trailer or it could be swung outside to light the entire campsite. At bed time the table folded down and myself and my two sisters slept beneath it, mom and dad slept on top. It was always amazing to watch dad transform our trailer from something that was only three feet high to a huge trailer that even the adults could stand up in. It even had hard shell sidewalls. I wonder what ever happen to that old trailer, and the 1956 Chevy that pulled it. How many other families experienced its magic transformation from camping mode to towing mode? How many cherished memories did it facilitate?



Our 1959 trailer tht Dad built, pulled by our 1956s Chevy! It even had hardshell sidewalls!



Mom handling her kids with ease.



Hey, where does Dad sit?

Dad then upgraded to our new to us 16 foot Glendale trailer, it was a real head turner; it was so high tech that it even had a propane lantern mounted on the wall above the table.

Dad joined the Burnaby Trailer Club the first year it was formed. I still remember when he proudly came home one night and he proclaimed that we were now in a trailer club! Our first outing was in a field at Belcarra. In those days there were dozens of trailer clubs in the Greater Vancouver area. As a child it was a special time as twice a month we would have a trailer outing with 20 to 30 rigs. In those days there were Volkswagen vans, campers and trailers. We regularly had 50 or more other kids that we met twice a month to play with. Mom used to joke that she would feed us breakfast and then not see us again until dinner. The Pop Shop pop was a staple, we would go with mom and fill up a couple of cases with every flavor of pop that they had. In retrospect having raised my own children, I can see why we ran around so much...we were on a sugar high! We would camp at places like Birch Bay and we would all go roller skating in the big barn...it is no longer there. When we camped at Linden we would sneak over to a farmer's field and steal some delicious carrots...at least they were healthier than all the junk food that we normally consumed. We always camped on the banks of the Chilliwack River when the corn was ripe. Everyone ate as much corn as they could during our corn feeds. Pancake breakfasts cooked in meeting halls was also a staple, as was Hobo stew; everyone would throw a can of whatever into a big pot to make dinner for the group. And of course we had potluck dinners; no restaurant can match an offering like those home cooked meals.

Once a year all the trailer clubs would camp together at the Aldergrove fairgrounds. Every trailer club proudly displayed their club banner and colored flags were strung everywhere. There was always a parade where every rally attendee would participate. Many clubs had their own colour coded jackets. Our club's were bright yellow with a bee on them that my father had designed.

Us kids would always sneak under the stadium bleachers and look for any change that had fallen there. We also harvested all the discarded Popsicle sticks to make flying contraptions. This was before we knew anything about infectious diseases, we were just having fun. Sometimes we got to see and pet the horses and even see a horse race.

Games were always popular, especially rotation games where the winner would have to move onto the next trailer. We would also often bike ride or canoe together as a group and at one time square dancing was very popular. Lawn darts were very popular back then, and yes we had our share of close calls, no wonder they were finally banned. Horseshoes were popular if there was a pit nearby, if not we improvised games like tossing a raw egg back and forth. The toss involved everyone starting by standing across from their partner on one of two parallel lines. The rules were that after every successful toss you would take one step backward, whoever put the most distance between his or hers teammate without breaking the egg after it was tossed won.

There was never anyone that did not participate, everyone always had fun. Evenings most often involved a campfire with chairs circled about.

Whenever the club was camped at a location that had some form of power or water, the adapters and cords and hoses came out in abundance. There was quite a jokester in the club, In the later days, whenever the club dry camped he would pound into the ground a weathered post that had a water tap and an electrical box. It was very legitimate looking and inevitably a newbie or other camper would ask if he could also hook up to it. When the unsuspecting camper couldn't figure out why he didn't have power or electricity the answer was always the same "Mine is okay, you must have a problem with your rig." This was usually good for a few hours of entertainment, usually by then it involved a group of men trouble shooting. The gig usually ended when another member would declare that he would like to hook up too but the power/water post was too far away. At that point the post would simply be picked up and moved. It is hard to believe but even this did not clue a few campers into the joke.

We graduated from our Glendale trailer to a brand new 20 ½ foot Terry trailer. My dad pulled it with a 1969 Ford pickup truck with a canopy on the back. My dad made seats in the canopy that also folded down into a bed so that we kids could have sleepovers in the canopy. No seatbelts to worry about in those days, we would pile 6 kids into the back when we were heading out for outings. My dad did add a heater in the back which kept us all toasty warm. We used an intercom on the odd occasion that we had to converse from the cab to the canopy. A few years later there was a bad accident where people travelling much like what we did were thrown out of the back of a pickup truck. ICBC ruled that their insurance only covered three people because the truck was only manufactured with three seat belts. Soon after that my dad purchased a Chevy Suburban to carry all of us.

Checking out the sand dunes While using
our brand new trailer



As a young adult I met one of
my old neighbours that was

four years my senior, which is an eternity to a boy. He stated that he so longed to go with us on one of our outings. He said he noticed that whenever we departed on a camping trip pulling our

trailer everyone was always laughing and smiling and having a good time. He said that he was so envious and jealous of us that he could not go. I told him that if he had of asked, we would have been glad to take him camping. What an opportunity missed. As an adult I remembered this and always allowed my children to bring any friends along camping that they wanted too. Our funds were quite limited back then so often at side trips like bus touring of the Columbia Ice Fields, my wife and I would stay behind, but our children's friends always had the adventure of their lifetime.

When my children were small I searched for a trailer club family just like I had growing up in my trailer club days...alas there are no more trailer clubs like in days gone past. Most of the camps that we stayed at in trailer club days have vanished or have been transformed into time shares or permanent camp sites. The few trailer clubs that survived did not have enough kids in them to make it worthwhile. Instead when we camped we would always let the kids just bring some friends along.

I have been fortunate enough to have camped in tents, a folding trailer, a tent trailer, hard side trailers, campers, a fifth wheel and now a motor home. Whenever someone asks me what is the best kind of RV to own I say there isn't one, just pick the type that suits your needs the best. The trouble is needs change and then so does your choice of RV. A good example is our current motor home, it has lots of space but we sure can't go places that we used to with our 4X4 truck and camper. If I could I would have two RV's for different types of trips.

Enter our Bigfoot years; we purchased our first Bigfoot Camper in 2006 and it included a free membership to Bigfoot Owners Club International (BOCI). I had no interest in that. Years passed and it wasn't until in 2011 that my buddy told me about his Honda motorcycle forum that I remembered that Bigfoot also had a forum. I decided to check it out. While searching the Bigfoot forum I noticed the rallies. I thought that we should give one a try. My wife who hates crowds said okay we will sign up and suffer through the first day of one and then we can leave if we don't like it. That was 2011 and now with our second Bigfoot we haven't missed a rally since. My wife says that I am just like a kid when we attend our rallies. She says that I am always smiling and she never knows where I am. I thought about that for a while and I realized that she is right; the magic that I experienced as a child in our trailer club years is exactly what I feel again all these years later. It's too bad that feeling disappeared for three decades.

Rallies are more than just spending time with friends, they always have teaching seminars. During one of these seminars Grant Bilodeau of Bigfoot RV impressed all of us when he took a hammer and pounded on a window cut out of a Bigfoot. He kept striking the fibreglass window shaped panel with so much force that his feet came off the ground. Not even a dent on the wall panel; who knew that the fibreglass wall could stand up to that abuse. If I had not seen that in person I would never have believed it.

At this year's rally at Osoyoos we also had Al Cohoe from the Okanagan College do an excellent presentation on propane safety and RV owners tips. Even a retired Fire Captain like me learnt something about propane safety and some new RV tips.

At our rallies all of our breakfasts are catered to, as well as most of the dinners. We also always have a serendipity pot luck dinner... just hope that your table doesn't get called up last. This year we also rode on the Kettle Valley steam railway, we always have a few volunteers who stay back to look after pets. John who has volunteered to do this the last few rallies carries a note book with him with notes about each pet. What their name is, what their personalities are like, their favorite snacks etc. When we returned this year we noticed that he handed back a small baggie to each owner when they returned. We all thought, what dedication he even saves their poop...it turned out that these baggies contained the keys for each RV that he had to visit.

We always have an afternoon set aside for rig tours; this is a great way to see how others have customized their rigs. Caution; these tours can be dangerous; this is why we are on Bigfoot number two.

As we pull away from the campsite and rally friends I can feel the tears starting to swell up in my cheeks. What gives; men don't have feelings like this. It is that same longing that you feel when you are leaving a family reunion. The reality hits that this may be the last time that you will see some of these friends. Life circumstances change; as I age I am acutely aware of this reality. In my own retrospect, who would have thought that the last time we had all the children together for a family vacation would be our last trip together, or who could have predicted that visit with Grandpa would be my last. The list goes on and on, the only common denominator is cherished memories and change. That empty feeling in the pit of your stomach means that something very special has been taken away. Like the feeling you have when your best friend moves away. Yes you probably will still see them again, but maybe not, things will be different from now on. So it is with fellow friends you meet in RV clubs, some will stay in your life until the bitter end and others will drift in and out.

Some of my very favorite memories have been formed around RVing and camping with my parents, and then my children. My newest memories are being formed with my extended Bigfoot family. Our Bigfoot's are what brought us together, but the friendships formed at our rallies are the glue that keeps those memories alive forever. If you want to rekindle that camaraderie that you had in your trailer club days of your youth, or if you have never been embraced by such a warm fellowship and want to experience some, get a Bigfoot RV and come and join us at <http://www.bigfootowners.com>

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