

### Connie King's Younger Years at Fintry

By Susan Funk  
Summer 2004

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I first sat down with Connie King (nee Milne) in her home in Okanagan Centre, on a beautiful and sunny Wednesday in July. Her son, Don King, and a family friend and member of the Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society, Mick Wentworth, were both present to help guide and clarify the discussion. Connie was so friendly and patient as I sat in her living room, taking notes and trying to capture the details of her childhood stories. It was clear, listening to Connie, that the few years during which her family lived at Fintry were the highlights of her childhood and left a large imprint on her heart. I have attempted to capture each detail of the events which Connie described to me during our afternoon chats. Please enjoy reading and accept my apologies for any errors.



Aerial view of the orchards at Fintry, circa 1924.

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Aerial view of the orchards at Fintry, circa 1924.

Connie King's colorful life began in Scotland in 1915. Both Connie and her older sister, Dorothy, were born in Scotland and in 1919 the family made the decision to venture to the new country of Canada. The Milne family's journey across Canada, at the beginning of the twentieth century, resembles so many of those described by European immigrants who were searching for a better life in North America. The Milnes first settled in Ottawa, but soon moved on to Alberta, to live near relatives. Connie's mother hated the prairie life. More than anything, Mrs. Milne hated the cold weather and it would get so cold during the winter that now and then they would hear the twang of piano strings snapping. Connie's mother would cry regularly out of unhappiness. When the family finally moved to Vernon it was felt like home to them. They were only in Vernon for a short period of time before moving to Fintry where they settled for three years. Connie's mother was much happier in this setting and as the landscape provided an exciting and safe environment for young children, the two girls thought that they had died and gone to heaven.



The Milne family lived in this home during their stay at Fintry, from 1921 to 1924.

Connie and her family moved to Fintry, from Vernon, in 1921. Connie was six years old at the time and her older sister Dorothy or "Dot" was 8 years old. The family lived in the herdsman house at Fintry for three years in total as Connie's father worked as a herdsman for the laird of Fintry, Mr. Dun-Waters. Connie describes all of her adventures and memories as wonderful ones and compares her childhood spent at Fintry to fairytale. It is obvious that the Milne's sisters were well liked by the families living at Fintry, and by listening to Connie's stories, it seems that Mr. Dun-Waters truly enjoyed spending time with two Milne girls.



Connie and Dorothy Milne at ages 6 and 8 years old.

Mr. Dun-Waters was the first person that Connie referred to in her recounting. She explained that when the Milne family arrived at Fintry, Mr. Dun-Waters had bought her sister, Dorothy, a Shetland pony. Connie remembers the day that the Shetland pony was brought to Fintry aboard one of the sternwheelers. She said that she couldn't help but get her nose out of joint because her older sister was given a pony but she was not. It wasn't long before Mr. Dun-Waters bought her one as well, this one being smaller in size but certainly not in personality. When Connie and Mr. Dun-Waters were discussing a name for the pony, the small animal suddenly kicked Mr. Dun-Waters in the stomach. Connie specifically remembers Mr. Dun-Waters suggesting they call the pony "Satan" until he had learned some decent manners. Eventually "Jack" was the chosen name for the small pony

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(Left to Right) Connie and Dorothy on their Shetland ponies, Jack and Elsie.

and "Elsie" was the name of the pony belonging to Dorothy. Connie's pony, Jack, proved, more often than not to have an agenda of his own. Connie remembers being kicked off of his back frequently. Despite that, the ponies were great pets for the girls. Connie explained how, like clockwork, every Sunday the two ponies would come up onto the veranda of the Milne house and get a piece of white bread each.

From Connie's stories, it sounds

like these animals were not only entertaining pets but also the perfect mode of transportation for the girls to explore their surroundings.

The Milne sisters rode their ponies all over the delta, visiting many of the Fintry families daily. They would make sure to stop and visit with the families whenever the occasion. Connie explained that they were always warmly welcomed by everyone. There was a kind man named Mr. Sigawara who worked up at the falls above the delta. He was a



The Blacksmith and his family at Fintry circa 1924.

Japanese man who worked to maintain the dam that generated the power for Fintry. The Milne girls would go for a pony ride and go to visit him which he and his wife loved because they didn't have any children of their own. Connie says that she and her sister were little brats and they would call him "Mr. Sugarwater" for a giggle. Connie mentioned that the Blacksmith family was also quite friendly. Above all, Connie has the fondest of memories visiting the Dun-Waters' Manorhouse. It is clear, listening to Connie, that Fintry was quite intimate and that each family had a role or a job that contributed to the whole community that Mr. Dun-Waters had created. Mr. Dun-Waters governed the people at Fintry very well and left a positive impression on everyone.

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Connie has fond memories of Mr. Dun-Waters and her days playing around the Fintry delta. Mr. Dun-Waters used to call her "Susie" as a nickname because she had red hair and a face covered in cute little freckles. Connie remembers he would often point to a spot on her cheek and tell her "Susie, there's room for one more freckle, right there". He would also keep an eye on the girls when they rode their ponies, watching over them and making sure that they got to school safely. Mr. Dun-Waters never had any children of his own although he was married while the Milnes lived at Fintry. Looking back, Connie



Connie and her pony Jack.

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The first Mrs. Alice Dunwaters (nee Orde).

suspects that his wife, Mrs. Alice Dun-Waters, may have been ill. The Dun-Waters would often invite the girls and their mother over so that their mother could visit with Mrs. Dun-Waters. The girls remember that their mother and Mrs. Dun-Waters would often go off somewhere together and chat in their own little world. Connie suspects they would talk about Mrs. Dun-Waters' health although Connie's mother never repeated what had been discussed between the two of them. Nevertheless, the girls were always happy to visit the Dun-Waters' home, especially when the occasion involved their mother playing the piano for everyone.

Connie's mother had a passion for playing the piano. She had such a passion for it that she transported her own piano along

with her all the way from Scotland and all across Canada. Connie can remember her mother playing often. At the time that the Milne family lived at Fintry there were only maybe 7 or 8 families living there, therefore the social life and any kind of entertainment was limited. This is where Mrs. Milne's musical talent was appreciated. The Dun-Waters, along with all of the families at Fintry, would love to listen to her play her Scottish and Classical tunes; she was their entertainment for the afternoons and evenings. As for the young male workers at Fintry, Connie explained that they would have to go off to Vernon for any kind of young social-life and a chance to meet others their age.

There was a bunkhouse for the seasonal workers, mostly young men, to stay in when working in the orchards or at the stables at Fintry. The main export at Fintry when the Milne family lived there was apples. There was a packinghouse and a C.P.R. wharf built for this purpose and the sternwheelers would stop at Fintry regularly to transport the fruit. Connie can remember though that the apple business did not bring in sufficient moneys and during the latter part of the Milne family's stay



The stables and orchard at Fintry, circa 1924.

at Fintry, the main business at Fintry was turning to cattle and dairy herds. The octagonal dairy barn (now called the round-barn) was built in 1923, a structure designed by the Vancouver architect J. Honeyman which was years ahead of its time. It had a silo in the centre with its stanchions and stalls 360 degrees around it creating a much more efficient method of feed the animals (p.96, Falconer, David). Connie doesn't remember much about the industries at Fintry but she recalls that Dot and she thought of the young workers as cowboys. Although there was a young population at Fintry, Mr. Dun-Waters kept a tight rein on everyone. He was the 'Laird of the Fintry' and took this role quite seriously.

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J. C. Dun-Waters

From Connie's stories, it is obvious that Mr. Dun-Waters oversaw everything at Fintry. Connie explained how, unlike today, in the past it was more common for a group of people to somewhat govern themselves. That was the case at Fintry. For example Mr. Dun-Waters made a rule that no one, other than himself of course, was allowed to own a gun. His reason for this was that he claimed that he was very aware of all goings-on in the area and that no one need worry nor possess a gun. Despite this rule, there was a Japanese man, perhaps one of the seasonal workers, who once shot a bear at Fintry. This behavior was not accepted by Mr. Dun-Waters and the man was asked to leave Fintry immediately. Mr. Dun-Waters assured the people at Fintry that they had nothing to fear as he was always on the lookout for danger and for wild animals. This detail introduces another one of Connie's great pony stories.

Connie remembers this one particular day when Mr. Dun-Waters called all of the families at Fintry to meet on the Milne's lawn because he had an announcement to make. It seems that the two Milne girls had ridden their ponies to school the previous day, completely unaware that Mr. Dun-Waters had sighted a bear in the area. Apparently the other children had been notified of this and so no one else had risked the journey to school. Needless to say, the Milne girls got to school and back home safely, having "braved" the bear although they had been oblivious to its existence. Mr. Dun-Waters was so proud of them for being so brave, he presented each with a large piece of toffee, as a reward. Connie explained that they most likely weren't very popular with the other children for having received this special treatment but that they were happy nonetheless. The girls had simply followed their parent's rules. Connie explained that no matter what the weather or conditions, she and Dorothy always rode their ponies to the Ewing's Landing School and back home, no questions asked.



Connie sitting on her pony, Jack.

Connie remembers that the little one room school house at Ewing's Landing, three miles North of Fintry, was quite remote. She spoke of her young school teacher and imagines that this woman must have lived an unhappy life, being so isolated and having no life outside of teaching. Connie can remember that there had been roughly thirty children in her class, from grades one through eight. They became good friends with the Ewings girls and often made Ewing's landing one of their destinations on their pony rides during their free time. It must have been quite an intimate community



The Milne sisters giving their friends, the Ewings girls, a ride on their ponies.

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because Connie said that there was a shed at the school that was used to house their ponies while the children were in class.

Connie told another story about how one winter she was wearing a pair of new felt boots on her way to school, that her mother had purchased for her from the Eaton's catalogue. At that time folks either went to Vernon by boat to do their shopping or they chose what they needed out of the Eaton's catalogue. Connie explained how these new felt boots from the Eaton's Catalogue rose all the way up to her knees. She was to wear them to school in cold weather over her rubbers. Prior to this Mr. Dun-Waters had insisted that the girls have safety stirrups for riding their ponies so that if they fell their toe would come loose and the stirrup would let go of the foot and not drag them along behind the pony. On this particular day, Jack the pony threw Connie off of his back but her safety stirrups were not in good repair. The safety stirrup ripped one of her new felt boots right down to her rubbers. But as Connie explained, the girls knew better than to turn around and go home, so she rode the rest of the way to school in a bad state. She arrived at school with one felt boot on one foot and a nothing but a rubber on the other. It never occurred to the girls to go back home because they would simply be told to return to school and not be late. Connie remembers being well behaved when it came to getting to school on time although when the sisters went exploring around the delta they would sometimes lose track of time.

There were falls not far from Fintry. The girls would go there on their adventures and they would take their ponies and go visit their friends, the Ewing's girls, or just go for a ride. One day their mother packed the girls a lunch and they went off flower picking. They must have got carried away because the girls did not return home when expected. They had full stomachs from their lunch and they were having fun. It didn't occur to them to head home. When they finally did wonder home, their arms full of flowers, they learned that their parents had sent out a search party. The girls sure did get into trouble for that adventure.



Connie and Dorothy posing with their Shetland ponies.

There was another occasion on which the girls got themselves in trouble with their parents. There was a silo filled with corn at Fintry and in order to tramp down the corn, goats were used. The girls were specifically told that by their parents that they were not allowed to ride the goats. Well, they rode those goats regardless, thinking that their mother would never be the wiser. Unfortunately, the girls didn't realize that by spending any amount of time riding a goat, they were bound to end up smelling like a goat. Needless to say, they got into trouble that day as well. The childhood at Fintry that Connie described sounds so picturesque and innocent. When asked what she thought it might have been like for her parents and the hired people at Fintry she explained that the facilities provided to them by Mr. Dun-Waters were very comfortable and up-to-date.

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The house that the Milne family lived in from 1921 to 1924 while Mr. Milne worked as the herdsman at Fintry.

A clear example of this can be understood by looking at the house that the Milne family lived in, which was provided by Mr. Dun-Waters. They lived in the "Herdsman's" house, one of many homes provided for married men. The house had indoor plumbing and was quite "sophisticated". Connie explained that it was "very luxurious as ranches go", for the 1920s. Connie went on to explain that the conditions for everyone at Fintry were good, even for the hired single men, it was not a rugged life. They were cooked for and well fed and their laundry was done for them. In fact, when the Milnes first arrived at Fintry, Mrs. Milne was the one who cooked for the hired men although she didn't like that much. She later switched duties with the expansion of the ranch and cattle division. She spent much of her time helping her husband with the cows, milking them and such, which she didn't mind. Connie said that her mother enjoyed life at Fintry and that she was happy because she wasn't lonely. As previously stated, the Milnes were often invited to the Manorhouse for tea or just for a visit.

Connie remembers that the Dun-Waters Manorhouse was quite elaborate. It was built in 1911-1912 and was once known as the Fintry Proper (p. 97, Falconer, David). It sounds as though the Dun-Waters were wealthy and lived in that fashion. They had Chinese boys who worked for them and, as



Fintry Manorhouse built 1911-1912.

Connie explained, these boys most likely lived in the Manorhouse. Connie remembers that the boys would come to get the milk from her house in the mornings and that they were tall and slender and always dressed in black pants and white jackets. She remembers that they were very classy looking although nobody spoke to them and no one ever saw them outside of when they were doing their duties. She does however recall that the Manorhouse burned down at one point when the Milnes lived at Fintry. As Connie was only a child, it seemed to her that the house was rebuilt within no time at all. Apparently there had been a trap door in either Mr. Dun-Water's study or office that led to his stash of alcohol. It seems that he had had a bit of luck and this had not been destroyed. The Dun-Waters had a beautiful garden and a huge trophy room to display Mr. Dun-Waters prize hunting catches. His passion was hunting and he kept Airedale dogs for that purpose. Connie remembers being quite afraid of them. In fact Mr. Dun-Waters had about 12 dogs and Connie remembers one of the puppies jumping at Dorothy on one occasion, and catching her in the eye. Dorothy was forced to wear glasses for three years after that and the girls were forever afraid of those game dogs. The community would always know when Mr. Dun-Waters was going out on another hunting expedition because he would sound his bugle horn and trot off on his horse with his dogs. It sounds like such a fascinating life style.

A clear example of this can be understood by looking at the home that the Milne family lived in, which was provided by Mr. Dun-Waters. They lived in the "Herdsman's" house, one of many homes provided for married men. The house had indoor plumbing and was quite "sophisticated". Connie explained that it was "very luxurious as ranches go", for the 1920s. Connie went on to explain that the conditions for everyone at Fintry were good; even for the hired single men, it was not a rugged life. They were cooked for and well fed and their laundry was done for them. In fact, when the Milnes first arrived at Fintry, Mrs. Milne was the one who cooked for the hired men although she didn't like that much. She later switched duties with the expansion of the ranch and cattle division. She spent much of her time helping her husband with the cows, milking them and such, which she didn't mind. Connie said that her mother enjoyed life at Fintry and that she was happy because she wasn't lonely. As previously stated, the Milnes were often invited to the Manorhouse for tea or just for a visit.

Connie remembers that the Dun-Waters Manorhouse was quite elaborate. It was built in 1911-1912 and was once known as the Fintry Proper (p. 97, Falconer, David). It sounds as though the Dun-Waters were wealthy and lived in that fashion. They had Chinese boys who worked for them and, as Connie explained, these boys most likely lived in the Manorhouse. Connie remembers that the boys would come to get the milk from her house in the mornings and that they were tall and slender and always dressed in black pants and white jackets. She remembers that they were very classy looking although nobody spoke to them and no one ever saw them outside of when they were doing their duties. She does however recall that the Manorhouse burned down at one point when the Milnes lived at Fintry. As Connie was only a child, it seemed to her that the house was rebuilt within no time at all. Apparently there had been a trap door in either Mr. Dun-Water's study or office that led to his stash of alcohol. It seems that he had had a bit of luck and this had not been destroyed. The Dun-Waters had a beautiful garden and a huge trophy room to display Mr. Dun-Waters prize hunting catches. His passion was hunting and he kept Airedale dogs for that purpose. Connie remembers being quite afraid of them. In fact Mr. Dun-Waters had about 12 dogs and Connie remembers one of the puppies jumping at Dorothy on one occasion, and catching her in the eye. Dorothy was forced to wear glasses for three years after that and the girls were forever afraid of those game dogs. The community would always know when Mr. Dun-Waters was going out on another hunting expedition because he would sound his bugle horn and trot off on his horse with his dogs. It sounds like such a fascinating life style.



The Milne girls, Connie and Dorothy, swimming at Fintry.

Connie explained some other surprising details during the interview. She said that even though everyone lived on the water, she doesn't remember many people at Fintry doing any water sports. She explained that swimming and boating were not popular past times during that period and so they spent their time doing other activities. Unfortunately, the family only spent three years at Fintry.

When I asked Connie why the family moved away from Fintry she explained that her father often got restless and would decide to up and move the family now and then. She explained that leaving Fintry was a "super-tragedy". She has nothing but fond memories of those times in her youth. It was a place of such freedom for her and Dot.

From Fintry the family moved to Kelowna. Connie's father got a job with Dr. Boyce, who owned a dairy-herd. Connie attended grade three at what is now the armory near the United Church on Richter Street. She remembers her teacher being very nice and she was elated to be in a classroom with children of her age and grade. From there, Connie attended what is now Central Elementary School, also on Richter Street. She explained that she loved the environment very much and she excelled at school. Excellence in school became something important to her and she carried on this positive attitude towards education when she entered the new junior high that was built across the street. Her class was the first to attend Kelowna Junior High School, later to become Kelowna Secondary School. From there the Milnes moved to Lavington which proved disappointing for Connie. She attended a very small school in Lumby where her abilities were not as recognized. Connie found this environment quite limiting compared to the school she had attended in Kelowna.

She went on to meet her future husband, George King, in Vernon and had two children, Joyce and Donald. Mr. Dun-Waters kept track of Connie somehow, throughout the years, and sent her a gift when she and George were married. The Kings raised their family in Winfield and went on to retire in Connie's current home, in Okanagan Centre. Both Joyce and Don live in Winfield and visit with Connie frequently.

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## FINTRY



Aerial view of Fintry circa 1921.



The new stables and barn at Fintry, circa 1924.



A top view of the stables at Fintry, circa 1924.



One of the C.N.R.'s sternwheelers docking at Fintry.



The irrigation system that fed water to the people at Fintry from the falls up above.



This Milne family lived in this home during their stay at Fintry, from 1921 to 1924.



The wharf and packinghouse at Fintry.



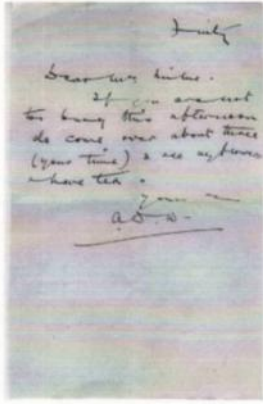
Connie's father, Alec Milne, showing a horse at the stables at Fintry.



Connie and her father showing the comparison between the largest horse at Fintry and Connie's little pony Jack.



Connie and Dorothy fishing with their father at Shorts Creek.



This note was written by Mrs. Dun-Waters, to Mrs. Milne. It reads:

Dear Mrs. Milne,  
If you are not too busy this afternoon do come over about three (your time) to see my flowers and have tea.  
Yours,  
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