

Martha's Place: Another Bequest

We were first introduced to Martha Warde in the summer of 2004 by her friend and later estate executor, Richard Bridge. Several NALT people met with Richard and his son at Martha's place—a 22-acre wooded property in Qualicum Bay. There we also met Martha and her goats; then we followed Richard along woodland trails to the back corner of the property, where we encountered Nash Creek—a small, clear, salmon-bearing stream.

Martha was 87 years old when we met her. Previously, while preparing her will, Martha had indicated to Richard that she would like her property to be gifted to a conservation group that would take care of her trees and other habitat values. Richard suggested NALT—and that's how it all started.

Over the next three years, NALT volunteers and staff got better acquainted with Martha and her property through several visits. As Martha became more frail, NALT summer staff sometimes spent a day with her, helping with weeding the garden and other light tasks. They also interviewed her and learned some of her life story. Here are excerpts of that story, as dictated by Martha in a letter to NALT in 2005.

I would like to tell you a little about myself, and why I've decided to leave my property to the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust as outlined in my Will.

I was born in Alberta, one of 10 kids. When I was old enough I moved to Banff to live with my sister and work in summer months; then to Nelson BC for the winter to work in a hotel. Then I got a job working on a cruise boat, playing the Hawaiian guitar. I moved to Victoria for a year with a friend and got a job as a waitress—I was there the year the King and Queen visited.

I met Milton in Port Alberni where he was working at the Mill. We bought our first property, five acres near the golf course, with a mortgage from the Credit Union. From there, Milton went up to Tahsis to work as a Millwright. Then he befriended a fisherman, [and began fishing]. I used to cook on the fishing boat when we went out.

Milton and I moved four times in one year and I was tired of it—so I went looking for a place to settle. We wanted a property with natural areas that we could protect. We always worked towards protecting the natural environment, and we wanted to make a home for the deer.

I found this property in Qualicum Beach and we put a bid on it. Milton and I bought the property in 1971 and moved in in 1973 [and] finished building [the house] while we lived in it. We cleared just enough land for gardening, and left the rest alone for wildlife. I have enjoyed the garden's abundant growth, which is enough to feed my goats and me.

I want to leave the property to Nanaimo & Area Land Trust because Milton and I were always devoted to the natural environment and the preservation of it; we cut only those trees that needed to be cut. Bears, cougars and deer are often on the property. Sincerely, Martha Warde

In the few years that we knew her, Martha's health deteriorated. In 2007, she moved into a nursing home in Qualicum. She died in June 2010 at the age of 93. Since then, NALT and Richard, the estate executor, have worked together to complete transfer of the property in accordance with Martha's wishes. Initially, she had requested that a conservation covenant be placed on the property and NALT agreed to undertake this step; but when we learned that the property is zoned ALR, we knew that a covenant was not likely to be permitted by the Agricultural Land Commission—so NALT had to back off that move, at least for now. Instead, we have signed a voluntary stewardship agreement with the executor, which includes the statement that *it is NALT's intention to revisit, every 5 to 10 years, the potential for filing a binding conservation covenant on the Martha Warde property. When it becomes apparent that the guidelines of the B.C. Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) have been modified to allow a conservation covenant on ALR land that incorporates agro-forestry options such as selective native food-plant harvesting, NALT will submit an application for ALC approval of a conservation covenant...* The title to the property was transferred to NALT on June 5th 2014.



Martha tending to her goats.