

## GORDON IVANS - A TRIBUTE FROM BMID

On behalf of Black Mountain Irrigation District, we are honoured to be asked to speak about Gordy. BMID was a large part of who Gordy was. It was his second family. All families go through highs and lows. Sometimes they agree, sometimes they may disagree. Usually they have the same values, and they stick it out together in the long run. Gordy helped BMID feel like a family and over the decades, that caring extended out into the communities of Black Mountain, Rutland and Scotty Creek.



**Becoming Board Chair:** Gordy was a cornerstone of the organization, serving on the Board starting in 1979. He served for 40 years. He served with many trustees, but early-on his mentor was Fred Stevens. Fred served on the board from 1955 to 1994 (also 40 years). There is a 1994 photo of the ceremony for the opening of Stevens Reservoir named after Fred. The board at that time was Fred, Gordy, Jim Kitura, Heinz Koetz and Alfred Kempf. Fred passed away at Christmas of 1994. Fred left big shoes to fill. No one was ready to fill Fred's chairman position so they temporarily rotated as chair. By April, after the Annual General Meeting, the older trustees told Gordy to accept it, as he was the young guy, he had the energy, commitment, and love of the district. He finally accepted. That was 24 years ago.

Gordy carried Fred values forward, added his own and led the District. He was passionate about protecting BMID from falling into the hands of organizations that **he believed** did not have the same care or commitment to the serve the public.

Gordon Ivans was passionate, combative, caring, trusting, he had a huge heart, and he was one of the funniest people I have ever met. He was genuine, a true one-of-a-kind original, and what you see is what you got. He either liked you or he did not. And he liked most people.

Politics were in his blood, both for the Fruit Grower's Association and for BMID.



He was at ease talking to a Provincial Deputy Minister or the Premier himself as he was, talking to you or me. He hosted several events at his house where he had MLAs, the entire caucus and Premier there. His goal was always to look after BMID. He understood how important it was to educate the high-level Provincial decision-makers of the real story.

**Translating for Gordy** The first time I met Gordy was in the spring of 1994, right after we had finished building Stevens Reservoir. We were at a water convention in Vancouver with Phil Ruskowsky. We were at the hotel discussing why Stevens Reservoir cost too much and Gordy wanted to throw me out the window. We were on the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor. Phil intervened and said BMID might need an engineer and I might be useful.

In 2004, with Phil retiring, BMID would need an Administrator. Both Phil and Gordy took me out for lunch and mostly because of their honesty and directness, I took the job. I had no idea that I would have develop a whole new set of translator skills. You see, quite often, BMID would have to comment or communicate to some new employee at City Hall. I would be tasked with translating Gordy's colourful commentary into something acceptable to print. We had a special dictionary of Gordy-isms.

**The Board meetings were legendary.** Twice a month, usually 2 hours of business, 2 hours of keeping up with absolutely everything that was going on in the region. Gordy was of the old school (before WCB regulations). He smoked during the Board meetings. We installed a high-capacity exhaust fan in the ceiling above his chair and business went on as usual. The fan is still there. Around 2006, the Board consisted of Gordy as chair, Alfred Kempf, Heinz Koetz, Lawrence Petch and Allen Kirschner. In those days, everyone used more water. Sometimes our orchardists irrigated onto the roads. Sometimes our Trustees irrigated out onto the roads too. At the Board meetings, there was always the Belgo Carwash, that was Alfie's, and there was the McKenzie Road carwash which was Gordy's. Fortunately, we tightened things up since then. Alfie, Heinzy and Lawrence were all in their 80s. if they ever went away on a vacation, the first question back from Gordy was, "Well, did you and the Missus do it...(insert

colourful Gordyism here)... With one of them turning red, and all of them laughing, it made them all feel like they were 18 years old. It was innocent, unbelievably funny, and an absolute treat to watch.



**Parliamentary Channel** One time, Gordy was watching the Parliamentary channel. He watched it a lot. Our MLA, Al Horning, who was also his friend, was sitting there on TV during Question Period. So Gordy figures little Ally, as he called him, was nodding off, so he phones him. Al's phone buzzes, he looks at the number and sees it is Gordy. He picks it up low, on the side of his desk and says, "What do you want, I'm in question period right now?" Gordy goes, "I know I can see you on TV." So Al says "What do you want? Gordy "Well do something, or I will keep calling" "Like what" "Well show me the bird, then I will go away.... So there is Al on the Parliamentary channel scratching his head with his middle finger and then hanging up the phone"...That is the typical price that you would pay having Gordy as your friend.

**Gordy Bing** In 2008, Al Horning sets up with meetings for BMID with 4 Provincial Ministers to discuss watershed and water treatment issues. So Gordy gets Don Dobson and me to go down to Victoria for the meetings. All Al said was "Don't waste their time, make sure you have useful to tell them!" Some of the forest management techniques Don Dobson suggested then are finally being implemented now, like logging so there are fire defendable cut blocks and interface fuel reduction. We were in black suits with dark sunglasses and looked more like gangsters than water supply lobbyists.

At the end of that Victoria trip, we had a few hours so the 3 of us visited the Provincial Museum near the Parliament Buildings. The Titanic exhibit was showing. Upon entering, we each got the name of a crew or passenger on the ship. Gordy got Mr. Bing who was a mechanic who worked in the depths of the engine room. Don and I got names of a first-class passenger and a helmsman on the Bridge. Well Don and I thought our chances of survival were good and Mr. Bing would be in trouble. Upon exiting, they let you know if you survived. Don and I, well, we both didn't make it. Gordy Bing though, against all odds, made it out of the engine room and somehow survived. We called him Gordy Bing for a long time.



**Gopher Flats** Back in 1984, the Gopher Flats valley was owned by Bill Jurome whom had bought it from Kelowna Ranches (Jim Stewart who bought it from Joe Casorso). Since 1949, the 285-acre piece of land was known to be the site for a future major water reservoir. The land was for sale and for reasons unknown, Bill Jurome would not sell it to BMID. Gordy was only 5 years onto the board then, but he had a plan. He knew

Lawrence Petch quite well and convinced Lawrence to buy it. Lawrence then flipped it to BMID. The purchase price for BMID was \$135,000. Today it is worth more than \$5,000,000. BMID still owns the land and it is the site of the UV Disinfection Facility.

**BMID Projects** During Gordy's time on the Board, the District grew from 2000 connections to 9000 connections. The domestic customers increased and BMID needed to improve water quality. In that time, BMID had a Giardia outbreak in 1987. In 1988, a new chlorination building was constructed. Stevens Reservoir followed in 1993, then the Water Treatment Plan in 1999, the separation of Scotty Creek to feed only irrigation in 2010, transmission mains were installed from 2011-13, and in 2017 the UV Disinfection Facility was completed. There was constant progress through his leadership. The District is well respected by the Province and it came in-part from the political awareness of our chairman.

With BMID turning 100 years old next year, there is a book being written on its history. Gordon Ivans will have a significant story within the book. We are looking for the picture of him in the orchard on his tractor with the spray helmet. Gord had a unique spray helmet. There was a tiny hole in the face shield. He needed to be able to get in a smoke while he was spraying.

At the Board meeting last week, the BMID Board decided they would like something permanent set out for Gordon Ivans. With his long service and commitment to the community, the Board would like his name on the new UV Disinfection Facility in some form that is acceptable to his family. We hope to work that out with the family. A grand opening for that facility is planned for later this year.

In closing, we extend our sympathies to Bev, Lee and Lindsay and the extended family. We at BMID will miss him a lot. The community of Rutland and Black Mountain is a better place because of Gordon Ivans.

Prepared by Bob Hrasko and the BMID Board of Trustees