

MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH – SPECIAL EDITION – TAKHINI HOT SPRINGS –
November 26, 2003 - Compiled by Sherron Jones sherronjones@shaw.ca

This edition of the Moccasin Telegraph has been put together in sequence which is an attempt to catalogue the history of the springs. Newspaper articles were obtained from Yukon Archives. Submissions of photos and memories were collected from MocTel readers. I have attempted to put the material together in a time sequence however there are some exceptions.

**"News Item: The Weekly Star, Friday, June 28, 1907
Published at Whitehorse Yukon**

TAKHINI HOTSPRINGS

Recent Discovery Told of by Mr. Hamacher Photographer

E. J. Hamacher has favored us with the following description of the Takhini hot springs, **the property of Messrs. W. A. Puckett and S. A. Simmons.**

The springs are distant from Whitehorse about 30 1/2 miles, 14 miles to the mouth of the Takhini River, 15 miles up that stream to the springs landing and one and a half miles from the river northward to the springs.

The springs are located in a beautiful spot almost level but sloping gently toward the river. The water boils up from a bowl-shaped basin, overflows it at one edge, and runs over the sloping ground until it reaches a deep canyon through which it makes its way toward the river. At the foot of this canyon is a large crescent shaped slough or lake, which has an outlet to the river.

The volume of water, which flows from the spring, would fill a six-inch pipe and its deposits below the springs show large quantities of iron and lime. The temperature of the water is about 120 degrees, Fahrenheit (sic)."

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A MESSAGE FROM - HENRY BREADEN to BUCKY KEOBKE

How is the memory?

We have a Whitehorse Star for June 1907 where Puckett and Simmons own the newly discovered Hot Springs.

Since Bill Puckett and his wife Anna were running the roadhouse at Takhini, it would not be all that far to the hotsprings. Likely on a hunting trip he would have found the outlet on the Takhini River and wondered about the warm water.

As I understand, there was a trail in from the old Dawson Road from Takhini to Little River, which likely Puckett developed.

Do you recall any information on Bill Rolling building the first log wall pool that we have photos for? Somehow his name doesn't ring a bell in my memory, or was it Rollins? This

info came from Ralph Lortie who seemed to know him in 1949. After he sold to Bon Kunze, he apparently had a cabin at the top of Hawkins at about 6th Avenue at the escarpment. Will be interested in any info that you can come up with. All the best to you both. Henry.

P.S. Just had a mail in with a Whitehorse Star that says it was Bill Rollin so that corrects both of us.

HOT SPRINGS MEMORIES

By Neil "Bucky" Keobke

keobkens@marshlake.polarcom.com

I did not know that Puckett discovered the Hot Springs, or that Puckett and Simmons owned them. I don't remember any of the Hot Springs when we were in Whitehorse before the war. When we left Mayo during the war, Dad worked for BYN construction Division (the Highway Division came later), had a company car, and we used to go to the Hot Springs on a good day. We went north out the Alaska Highway to Takhini Crossing, where the Overland trail crossed the Takhini River and where the US Army had followed and built a bridge over the river. A short way past the river, there was a road (trail??) off to the right that led to the Hot Springs. Actually the road went all the way to Lake LeBarge. The pool was built of log and lined with canvas. It was not very clean, the canvas always felt slimy! No one went to the Hot Springs if it looked like rain. If we were already there and it looked like rain coming, everyone left very quickly. The road was all clay and you know what that gets like when wet!!

At that time **Rollins** owned the Hot Springs (I understood. **T C Richards** was also part owner). Rollins has some green houses there, heated by the hot springs and I remember the tomato plants being giant ones.

Later **Bon Kunze** bought it, built a cement pool further down stream.

He sold it to **Harry Gordon-Cooper** and it burnt in the 1958 fire. I can't remember if Gordon-Cooper re-built it. I know there was a court case and he got some money from the Government (that part of the fire was started by the RCAF destroying some old munitions at Lake LeBarge).

Later he sold it to **Irwin Kreft**, who built a new pool and building close to the source of the hot springs. He also built a campground, had trail rides and a ski trail.

He sold it to **a group** of people from Whitehorse.

My **niece, Sheree, manages** it at this time.

When we first came to Whitehorse, we lived in a log house on the corner of 5th Avenue and Wood St. (a teacherage was later built on the corner) Pucketts had a house on the other side of the street between 5th and 6th avenue. Wood St was the way up to the Airport at that time. It went to the base of the hill, turned right (to where Wheeler St is now) and went up the ravine to the airport. The ravine was called Puckett's Gulch. When the US Army expanded the airport they put in a new road at the end of Main St and to the left. It later sloughed in because of poor drainage at the airport. They also filled in the top part of Puckett's gulch so that it was unusable. The road to the airport terminal then (CPA & Pan Am) was up the Two Mile Hill, to the US & RCAF side, around the north end of the 2

flight strips and to the Terminal building. DOT had bunk houses and houses on the escarpment overlooking the town

HOT SPRINGS MEMORIES

By Bill Weigand

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Yes too...I remember going to the Hot Springs in my early days...can't remember exactly what year the first time. I just remember a bunch of us firefighters borrowing a jeep from the Motor Pool. (We were allowed to do this for recreation occasionally). We crossed the Takhini at the old Dawson Road bridge north on the highway and a few miles in turned off on the road to the Hot Springs. The pool was then made of logs. I remember them as "slippery logs". Later on when the Mayo road was built and the "new road" to the springs was made it was much easier to get there. Is my memory serving me right? Anyone else remember the "back road"? Maybe Al Tomlin or Stan Walsh can add some thoughts to dates 47 or 48?

I promise to work up some more "Fire Hall" stories. Jeri & I have been on the go steady since April it seems. But I always log in to catch up on your latest editions! You're really building memories for a lot of people and their families!

Jeri & I are off to Kelowna in the AM for a couple of weeks so maybe we can get together with you & Bill for a coffee.

Will be in touch,

Love -- Bill & Jeri Weigand

Takhini Hotsprings, 1949

By Ralph Lortie

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In the summer of 1949, my mother, brother Grant & I went to Takhini Hotsprings with Grace Steeves and her son Johnny. Mrs. Steeves and her husband Eric lived in the log house on the north side of Hawkins St. (306 or 308), next to Jack Cherry's house.

The Steeves were good friends of **Bill Rollins**, the man who built the original log pool, the cabins, change house, and even greenhouses. He also built an outhouse, which spanned the pool's outflow creek. There was no smell in that outhouse – all waste was quickly washed away, except for the paper, which caught in the brush along the creek.

There was a small stream, from the spring, running across the cleared ground between the cabins and the pool. Bill had dug a small hole in this warm stream and lined it with concrete (or something), creating a basin for washing clothes, dishes, etc.

Bill had a big problem with bears, and several good bear stories. His cabin door had several bullet holes through it.

After selling out to **Bon Kunze**, Bill had a house at the top of Hawkins St., backing against the slope below the cliffs (so the house was on 6th Ave., facing east).

[I have put a link in here for the photo. Too much trouble sending large attachment]



Me (age 6), Mike (Cocker Spaniel), Mom (Connie) and Grant (9) at Takhini, 1949. – R. Lortie photo



Grace Steeves & my mother, washing dishes in the warm stream. In right background is a cabin and two greenhouses, near the spring. The greenhouses were heated and humidified by the spring. – R. Lortie photo



TAKHINI HOT SPRINGS – 1952

Photo Courtesy MaryAnn (Laurin) Kelleway

Don (Geddes) and I looked after the Hot Springs for 6 or 8 weeks in Feb/March 1969.
That was a hoot!

MaryAnn Kelleway mawsypapa@pocketmail.com

Recollection from Henry Breaden

This is a real oldie, but in the 50s **Bon Kunze** built a concrete pool in the same location. It looks like the pool was encased with logs. The log change room was replaced with a nice building when the new pool was built which included a snack bar along with change rooms. In 1958 the whole area was wiped out by the forest fire. A new pool was built, and although it had a section for children I considered the pool dangerous as the steps led into the deep end. My daughter near got into difficulties in that deep end not knowing. I am not sure just when, but **Konrad and Anne Domes** were running the place for quite some time. Likely Anne could give a better understanding on the years that they were there. Anne has retired to Faro and is on the list.

The original hot springs were to the left of the photo and uphill about 30 feet, and a pipe carried the hot water to the pool. Before the new highway was built following the old C.D.E. trail about 1948-49, the access was from the old Dawson road from Takhini Crossing to Little River. As I understand, at that time there was only a timber bath that somebody had built to make use of the springs. That old Dawson trail holds a lot of stories.
Henry Breaden breaden@shaw.ca



TAKHINI CROSSING – September 2002

Photo Courtesy Jenny Roberts

The original hot springs was a hole in the ground where hot water came out and ran down the hill. In the early years I understand somebody built a timber bathtub to make use of the springs. The only access at that time was by the old Dawson trail at Takhini Crossing which is still found about 30 miles north on the Alaska Highway and the first roadhouse was Little River. There was a trail from the old Dawson trail to the hot springs. I don't know who put in the large log pool shown in the photo. When the new highway was pushed through I think by **John McIsaak** in 1948-49 it could have been **Bon Kunze** who had a road pushed in from there which was all on level ground. The first time I was there was in about 1954 and they had a new concrete pool and nice change rooms.

All of this burned in the forest fire of 1958. I don't know who built the next pool, but I think that Bon still had an interest in it. The last time I saw Bon, he was getting quite feeble but still around.

It could be that **Anne** can give you some info, for the last time I was there she and **Konrad**, I think, were running it.

From the photo of the timber pool, the hot springs would be up the slight hill and over to the left. You are quite right in your thinking, but I am sure that Anne can give us a good grasp of the years they were there. She had a home on the Hot Springs road for several years before she moved to Faro. The last time I was at the hot springs in the late 1970s, I think I had a hamburger that Anne grilled.

Cheers, **Henry Breden**

Thanks for the e-mail, got in contact with Henry and made the correction to him and also like to make it to you. Neither my husband Konrad nor I ever ran the place; I worked there for 20 years for **Erwin Kreft**. More soon. Warm greetings. **Anne Domes**

I knew that I had seen Konrad with Anne, but I guess that he was visiting. We are starting to get some names, and there is a chance that we will get some info from Anne. Attached is a photo from Donna of the pool that Anne describes. **Henry Breden**

I am trying to locate a booklet, which goes back to the earliest time of the Takhini Hotsprings, so far I was unable to get it, but I have a few more people to contact and surely

will forward it to you, if I am successful. I just can tell about the last 20 years. **Anne Domes**

It was Anne's comment that got us heading in the direction of Heather Jones who found the News Paper stories in this MocTel. Every comment from you folks helps put pieces together. - Sherron

There has to be a lot of history of the hotsprings. I know my dad mentioned it when he was on the overland trail through Little River in the 1920s. Something of interest, in 1958 when the forest fire was coming into the hotsprings, **Bon Kunze** loaded all their stuff onto a truck to get it out. But then the truck would not start when they wanted to get out of there. As the fire was moving fast they had to leave the truck and lost everything including the truck. If I remember correctly, Thelma his wife was alive at that time. She unfortunately later lost a battle with cancer. We knew them well in Mayo along with Ed Kunze his brother. Ed married Betty, the Matron at the Mayo hospital and they retired to Australia in 1968. Betty and Ed were at the Yukoners Banquet in 1985 and visited us here at our home after we returned from Vancouver. I still remember that Ed was born in Dawson in 1901 so they all were real old-timers of the Yukon. Cheers, Henry Breaden

1958 TAKHINI FIRE FELT IN WHITEHORSE

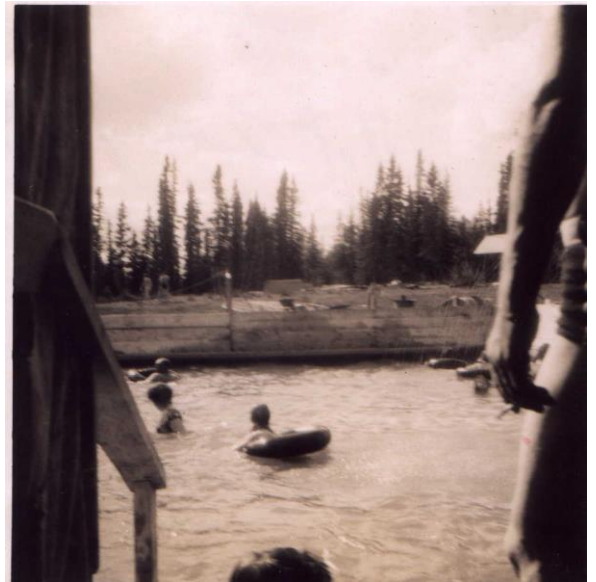
By Henry Breaden

During the period that the Hotsprings was lost in the summer of 1958, I was a member of the Eagles Lodge. We were in a meeting in the Whitehorse Inn Ballroom, and during the course of the evening there were reports in that it looked bad. A north-west wind was bringing the smoke over Whitehorse and a lot of debris with it. When we ended the meeting, I went down to get to my car and had the surprise of my life. Could not tell whose car belonged to whom for they were all coated with ash and all grey. The smoke was high over Whitehorse but had dumped pine needles and ash all over the place. At home in Moccasin Flats, Alice had a panic attack and cut down a nice little spruce tree that I had planted fearing that it would catch fire. The first thing was to wash all the ash off the car before it marred the paint. Early in the evening when I went to the meeting I could see heavy high smoke and the fire burning fiercely in the Takhini region. This fire had started at Stony Creek and had been racing east for several days. The Forestry got control of it at the Yukon River. After the first snow we hiked the area, and what a sorry mess of the country.

That same summer, the Braeburn Lake area burned and eventually crossed the Mayo highway about at 20 mile. I have several shots in slides, which could prove interesting if I scan the slides and put them into a disc. As my Dad and I had boats at Braeburn, we tried during the day to get down there but were unable due to fire on the highway. Returning we got cut-off at 20 mile, but waited till the fire crowned and settled before trying it. There was still fire on both sides of the highway, but by booting it with all windows closed were able to get out of it. That night around midnight when the fire cooled

we went down to Braeburn, but our boats were OK as we had them anchored out. Forestry had been able to save the cabins, but the area was a mess.
Cheers, Henry Breaden

Takhini Hot Springs Abt. 1953



These four photos courtesy of Mary Lou Christensen (nee Foster) louken@magma.ca

Hi Sherron - just want to thank you for the great effort you put into the MocTel. Read recently that you are thinking about doing an article on Takhini Hot Springs - I came across some old pictures and thought you might be interested (they were taken in the early '50's).

My husband and I made a trip to Whitehorse in July 2003 (first time back in 46 years!) and definitely saw some changes. Takhini Hot Springs was one of the changes - it is even on the opposite side of the road now! Have fond memories of trips to the Hot Springs, driving over corduroy roads and later going on bus trips with the Army teenaires.

A former Yukoner
Mary Lou Christensen (nee Foster) louken@magma.ca



Summer 1976
Photo courtesy Donna Clayson

Whitehorse Star, December 28, 1977

(Permission to reprint received from Jackie Pierce, Whitehorse Star, Nov. 3, 2003)

THE HOTSPRINGS ARE OPEN AGAIN

By June Hutton

Staff Reporter

Two staff reporters hauled their scantily-clad bodies from the comfort of a hotspring this past weekend to take a roll in a snow bank.

A strange thing to do in -20 weather, true, but nevertheless an invigoratingly skin-tingling experience that makes one feel as good as any Swede.

The occasion was the recent re-opening of Takhini Hotspring, **17 miles from Whitehorse and six miles off the Klondike Highway.**

The hotsprings closed in May when the former owners decided to sell. It was bought three months ago and has since been renovated.

It is now run by **Rudy Kuschel and his wife Barbara**, and **owned by Kuschel and locals Erwin Kreft and Ross Hatten.**

"We have a lot of plans," Kuschel said. "We would like to build a lodge and get some horses."

He said they have applied for a liquor license and that the liquor Inspector was at the hot springs and liked what he saw.

The dressing rooms are clean and warm and the spring water, clear and hot. A chemical called aquadene polyphosphate is pumped into the pool to keep the iron and calcium in suspension.

"You need something that really keeps the water stirred up," he said explaining that if the minerals are allowed to settle, the water becomes murky.

Kuschel moved from northern Germany to Canada Several years ago, living in Vancouver before moving to the Yukon about three months ago.

He is no stranger to the north, however, having hunted the Haines Road area and participated in the flour sack (sic) competitions during Sourdough Rendezvous.

He is 36 years old, a well-built man with thick hands and a flat stomach. An auto mechanic by trade, he now maintains the pool, keeps the dressing rooms clean and regulates the well and pump systems. He swims frequently and has a lifesaving certificate.

His wife is 28 years old and a friendly woman who laughs easily. She is a lab technician – cum – airline stewardess – cum – cook. Originally from the Black Forest area in Germany, she met her husband in Vancouver.

Her specialty at the hot springs is baking the cakes famous to her home town.

Part 2 (And Snow To Roll In)

She uses a liquor called kirschwasser, which she told the Star is the ingredient that makes the Black Forest cake, but which few North Americans know about.

In addition to baked goods, her coffee shop offers goulash, wiener schnitzel and an assortment of other foods including the North American favorite of hamburgers and french fries.

“People really like my food,” she said, “They’re always come back for more.”

The prices are reasonable, with most items under the \$2.00 range.

Once a week, fresh water is trucked in for the kitchen and bathroom sinks, as well as for the drinking water supply. Spring water is pumped into the showers, so there is never a short supply of hot water.

The building is heated with pipes of spring water that run under the floors. In case of power failure, a generator can be switched on to keep the water flowing.

“If the power stays out for more than three hours, I have to start the generator,” Kuschel said, “otherwise the lines freeze up and then we freeze,” he laughed.

“It’s so rich in minerals, this water, in two days it could settle on the bottom, and look dirty.”

Mrs. Kuschel interjected.

Because of this the pumps are kept running 24 hours a day.

“This water is best for muscle pain” she explained, breaking into a bright, white smile that would appear frequently during the interview.

“People say if they come here for two weeks in a row they feel much better.”

The hot spring re-opened Dec. 16, and by the 23rd, 250 people had visited.

“I think that’s good,” Kuschel said. “It could be better, but some people still don’t know the hot springs are open.”

He said they have started advertising and expect the attendance to increase soon.

The hot spring resort sits on 240 acres of land, 160 of which is government land. If the three partners can make improvements totaling about \$8,000 by June, then the land can be theirs.

There have already been numerous improvements and renovations. The coffee shop has been carpeted and the walls papered. The walk leading to the spring has been boxed in so that the cold wind doesn’t whip across the bathing suited bodies heading for the spring.

The cement walk is cold on the feet, but an all-out charge into the water soon cures that. For those daring enough to venture onto the snow, a quick roll in the stuff will rejuvenate your longjohn-stifled skin.

The Kuschels advise prospective snow rollers to be in fairly good shape since the two extreme temperatures can be a shock to the system.

In addition to the walkway, a wellhouse has been built so that debris does not fall into the spring.

Though Kuschel and his partners have many plans, he said the resort must be “something, well thought out.”

They would like to build a camping ground with a cook house and enlarge the grassy picnic area near the spring. He said it is against health regulations to have patrons eating near the edge of the spring in case food or bottles fall in, but the grass can be extended in the other directions.

The Kuschels are optimistic that the hot spring will be a successful venture and are still looking for ways to improve it.

The springs are open from 1 PM to 10 PM during the week and 11 AM to 10 PM on weekends. Admission is \$2.25 for adults, \$1.50 for students, and \$1.00 for children.

For those who never dreamed they'd need a bathing suit in this cold weather, the hot spot of the Yukon will rent them to you for 25 cents.

William Puckett

By Henry Breaden

Where Anne Domes mentioned that William Puckett staked the Hot Springs in the early 1900s, this does bear out. I find William A. and Anna Puckett running the Little River Roadhouse in 1905 and those two areas are not that far apart. Also find William A. and Anna Puckett at the Takhini Crossing Roadhouse 1905 to 1909.

I feel pretty sure that this is the same Puckett who had a store on First Avenue in Whitehorse. The original Northern Commercial store was a group of stores adjoining from Steele Street southward to Taylor and Drury which included Puckett's. I don't know when Northern Commercial started, but when I was in Whitehorse first in the fall of 1942 there was still the name, "Puckett's Store" over one of the doorways.

In the spring of 1943, that whole quarter block burned, and Kippy Boerner of Mayo came over to oversee and manage the new Northern Commercial store built over the ruins. Owen Williams, one of the old-timers was working in the store and took over management when Boerner retired. History does go on, doesn't it?

Going into the Whitehorse Pioneer Cemetery records, I do not find any Puckett's, so would assume that when William and Anna sold to N.C. that they headed south to warmer climes! Of course Grey Mountain Cemetery had not even been thought of.

I assume you know about the first cemetery in Riverdale? It was off Teslin at the intersection of Donjek Road. In the latter 1960s, someone realised they had made a mistake. About 12 graves were exhumed and moved to the new Grey Mountain Cemetery. Bucky's brother, David was one of these who died in June 1961. We were living right across the street from Keobkes' and that was a real sad day for the whole neighbourhood.

Cheers, Henry Breaden breaden@shaw.ca

November 9, 1979 Whitehorse Star

The History of a Yukon Landmark

(Permission to reprint received from Jackie Pierce at Whitehorse Star - Nov. 3, 2003)

By Sheila Whyte
Staff Reporter

In the olden days they would come up what is now the Alaska Highway to the "Takheena" River, cross the river and head up the old Dawson Trail to the **Takhini Hot Springs**.

Nowadays you can drive up the Mayo Road and conveniently head along the Hot Springs Road and toss your bones into the water that is said to have revived the spirits of weary travellers and trappers even before the turn of the century.

The hot springs, according to its brochure, "were formed by volcanic activity and act as a natural safety valve, keeping the pressure stable and the area inactive." What a relief. They pour out a continuous volume of water, 86 gallons per minute, at about 45 degrees celsius (118 Fahrenheit).

MANY MINERALS

An analysis of the water reveals about 20 salts, mainly calcium, magnesium and iron. No sulphur.

The springs was first purchased, along with 160 acres of land in 1907 by William Pucket and Stephen Simmons.

A written story says the Commissioner of the day, Alexander Henderson, approved the sale of the land at \$2 an acre, but there is no record on file to show the full purchase price was actually paid.

It has always been a popular spot of sorts.

The May 3 1907 edition of the weekly Star cried, "Boil out! Get the tin cans, pewter and moose blood out of your system...just discovered, staked and recorded on the left limit of the Takhini River and only three miles below Puckett's roadhouse".

PERPETUAL YOUTH

It described the springs as "a regular Ponce de Leon fountain of perpetual youth... the water is believed to possess medicinal properties such as will cure every ailment in the human category from gout down (or up rather) to chambermaids' knee..."

It described the temperature of the water as "hot enough to parboil a Yukon pioneer."

Many Whitehorse residents find there is nothing more soothing than being parboiled in the giant bathtub, especially at minus 40 celsius weather.

Other oft-described “loonies,” however, find nothing short of a roll in the snow and a plunge back into the sizzling springs is enough to satisfy them.

It was a great source of enjoyment to the army during the second world war when they were building the Alaska Highway.

It was owned by **Bill Rollin**, who built the first pool, a wooden one.

THERMAL HEAT

Records are sketchy but it is known the army built greenhouses at the springs to take advantage of the thermal heat.

Vegetables were grown successfully all year round at the time. The greenhouses were abandoned with the war.

T.C. Richards and Carl Springer owned the springs for a year, after Rollin. They turned it over to brothers **Bonner and Ed Kunze and Hugo Seaholm** about 1950.

It was the Kunze family who opened it up to the public, as it had never been before, putting in the first cement pool and the Hot Springs Road to make it more accessible. **Seaholm sold out** early to the Kunzes.

DISASTER IN 1958

The pool thrived until disaster hit – the big fire that swept through the area in 1958. At the time it was being **leased by Harry Gordon Cooper** but it was **turned back** over to the **Kunzes** after that.

In 1969 the springs changed hands again, but remained in the family with Bonner’s daughter Linda and her husband Ed Brennan. They had the present pool installed.

Two years ago they sold it to the new owners, **Mary and Erwin Kreft**. They now have a campgrounds and horsetrails for the summer, cross country ski trails for the winter months.

Takhini Hot Springs – Whitehorse Star - June 25, 1981

(Material was untitled in Yukon Archives)

It doesn’t look like much to base a business on. A clear, deep rock pool, about two metres across, steaming gently, smelling slightly, with numerous shining bubbles rising briskly to the surface. This is the source of the Takhini Hot Springs.

One Elderly couple in a trailer from Abbotsford, B.C., came for a night last summer and stayed a month. In late May they came back, for another night, or two, or 20. "It's the perfect place to spend a Yukon summer." They explained, and it is.

Takhini Hot Springs is 30 km from Whitehorse, and many local people consider it the town's recreation center, but it is the tourists who make the hot springs a thriving business. The **present owner, Erwin Kreft**, estimates that 80,000 – 100,000 people visit the hot springs each year, and the summer months account for the majority of visitors.

In April, the Krefts received the Yukon Visitors Association's sourdough award for their contribution to tourism in the territory.

The pool is the main attraction. When the water bursts up from the ground at a steady 190 liters per minute, it is almost 50 C. Kreft adds chlorine and cold water and pipes it under the restaurant and changing rooms to warm them, and the water then emerges into the pool at a soothing 40 C. "We haven't had heat on here since April," Kreft says proudly.

In summer, the pool is drained five times a week, "It takes about 14 or 15 hours to fill it each time, but it's necessary because of leaves and grass and the sediment – and Band-Aids," Kreft says. In winter, with fewer customers, he changes the water two or three times a week. Summer hours are from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.; during the winter it's noon to 10 p.m. "It would be easier, and more economical, to only open part-time in the winter, or just on the weekends, but that would confuse people. And not everybody gets the weekend off," Kreft explains.

Alleged "healing properties" of mineral springs may not all be imagined, Kreft says. He has had the mineral content of the water analyzed and says in small amounts it is good for people. "Unchlorinated, of course," he adds quickly. The springs contain calcium, magnesium and iron. The constant warmth relaxes the muscles. Kreft says some of his most satisfied customers are truck drivers who soak away the bumps and bruises of Yukon driving.

In winter the springs hover around 33 C, but at -20 and with a brisk wind, that sometimes doesn't seem hot enough. "I'd like to put in a boiler to boost the pool temperature in the winter, but that's an expensive operation," Kreft comments.

Since taking over the hot springs four years ago, Kreft has cleared 30 km of trails around the property. He has paid for and had surveyed, an additional 85 hectares, but is still waiting for title to it. "It's going to come eventually. It's been eight years, four for the previous owners, and four for us. Maybe in another two years," Kreft remarks optimistically.

In the winter he breaks about 10km of the trails for skiing and leaves the rest untouched for those who like their skiing rough. In summer the trails are for hiking and horse riding. Trail rides are an added attraction from mid-May to October, or "until the snow gets too deep." Six days a week the horses take riders on a comfortable hour-long ride at \$6 an hour. There are two routes, one more demanding than the other, and the skill of the riders determines which ride they take.

"We don't make money on the horses," Kreft says reflectively, "It costs about \$2 per day per horse, and a bale of hay is \$6 to \$8, if you truck it in yourself. It costs about another \$4 a bale if you get it delivered."

In winter the horses are kept in a huge log barn, but roam in wide fields when it's warm enough. In summer they are mostly corralled close to the pool, although they are also put out to pasture, especially on Friday, their "day off" Kreft explains. "The weekends are usually pretty busy for the horses, so on Fridays they rest."

Visitors can tent in one part of the private, wooded campground or hook up their trailers in another part. Kreft has some visitors who want to be away from the other campers, and those

people he allows to stay in the woods in another part of his 35 titled hectares. Campers are supplied with firewood and barbeques, and the outdoor biffies come complete with cut-out moons in the doors.

Now, Kreft is busy putting in a picnic area near the pool. "Usually people rent a campsite for a picnic, but this will be better," he says – and cheaper. Campsites are hard to come by in June, July and August, and the outdoor area beside the restaurant is for its patrons.

Restaurant business is brisk all day. Many campers wander in for bacon and eggs after an early morning swim. The house specialty is black forest cake, and hot dogs, hamburgers and sandwiches are always on the menu. But each day the cook provides a special dish, which can be anything from curried chicken to barbequed ribs.

All pies and cakes are made on the premises, and nine girls work in two shifts in the restaurant. Kreft says he keeps his prices competitive because the pool business subsidizes the restaurant.

Most of his staff are neighbors or their children, and getting help is never a problem. Younger kids have part-time jobs cleaning up the grounds, "lots of garbage at the end of each day," Kreft's wife, Mary Ellen, remarks.

Kreft has plans for future expansion of the hot springs, but says the interest rate on his loan makes it impossible for him to launch into new projects at the moment. But he brightens up when he reviews his afternoon. "We are going to ride out to a lake about 12 miles from here. I just cut a trail to it. I've ordered 4,000 rainbow trout fingerlings from Vancouver, and I have to make sure the lake is open before they are flown up." The fingerlings will be helicoptered into the lake, and Kreft hopes fishing will be good next year.

The Krefts and their two teenage children live in a log house on the edge of the small lake. Runoff from the pool keeps the lake open all winter, and a group of mallard ducks have decided this is a good place to call home. Last year Kreft built a duck house, which the ducks scorned, but wintered happily beneath. The duck house will soon become a nursery, however, and the ducks dine well from the restaurant scraps.

"I'd like to put in a sauna, and do something with the old pool," Kreft remarks, surveying with satisfaction the busy parking lot, cheerfully splashing swimmers, a surprisingly large number of filled camping spaces and a brisk trade in french fries.

"Certainly we're on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the summer, but I like that. I've always been busy and working at full speed," Kreft says.

In the well house he has built over the origin of the hot spring, Kreft gazes down into the source of his quarter-million-dollar-a-year operation. "It would be nice to build a little railing around the pool and let people see where the springs come from," he remarks. "That's what I like about out here, there is always something to do."



The Duck House – built 1980 by Erwin Kreft

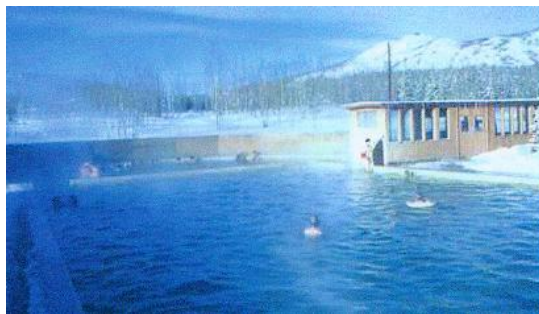
Attached are two pictures of ducks that spend all their lives at the Hotsprings. - Donna

RECOLLECTION OF LIVING AT THE HOTSPRINGS IN 93.

I almost forgot I lived at the hot springs for 2 months while I worked the bar in the capital for Anna Marie in 93. I worked the night shift bouncer from 12-2, cleaned the bar 2- 6, worked front desk 6am –8 when day shift came on. I had a trailer 23' in the campsite which I later pulled to Carmacks where I worked for the Esso as store manager for 3 months. I then left & pulled my trailer down the hi-way to the Island. Saying good-bye to the Yukon for 10 yrs now.

Well not much help here I believe it was about a 10 minute drive about 3-4 miles from town to cut off then about 5 miles down Dawson road and left turn, I think I paid \$250.00 month for electricity and dumping station. I packed water. I think there was only 1 pool then, sorry not too many memories of my time there. Oh small coffee shop sandwiches etc. and showers.

Moge Mogenson elgolfo@shaw.ca



Winter 1995

Yukon News – January 13, 1999

(Permission to print was obtained from Doug Bell)

Local investors will revamp hot springs

By John McHutchion News Reporter

A popular Whitehorse area recreation spot will be sold to a group of local investors for roughly \$1.5 million. The 10 families buying the Takhini Hot Springs hope to take possession of the business, and roughly 88 hectares of land, by March 31.

The new owners say their highest priority is to replace the springs current concrete pool and create a new series of natural looking pools.

They also plan to add accommodation facilities and a family resort.

In an added twist, the owners are planning to build new homes for themselves on the their new land over the coming years.

Investors buying the property from current owner Erwin Kreft include Barbara Bergman, Cindy Breitreutz and Amo Springer, Gutner Glaeser and Fay Tangerman, Barbara and Leigh Gower, Katie Hayburst and Dennis Kuch, Bev and Gary Keukom, Carla Pitzel and Garry Umbrich, Alison Reid, Elke and Ian Sinclair, and Eleanor Velarde.

A shareholders' plan for the 10 families is still being worked out, but the families' investment in the deal range from \$20,000 to \$150,000, said Garry Umbrich.

The financing to buy the property – a factor that is typically responsible for holding up deals – is already in place, he added.

The idea of buying the Takhini Hot Springs and turning it into a place for families to live is not new.

Umbrich and his wife have been batting the idea around for about a decade, but the idea really took off this past fall when two groups of people interested in the concept of co-housing met. Co-housing is a European-developed concept of shared living meant to promote the idea of community.

In a typical co-housing development, families buy a parcel of land, but share responsibilities for things such as meals and childcare. Here in Whitehorse, the two co-housing groups have been looking for a suitable piece of land to start building their new homes. One group was looking for an urban setting, while another for a rural location.

When members of the two groups got together in the autumn, interest again turned to the hot springs.

In addition to the 88 hectares included in the current deal, the new owners also have an option on another parcel of land that would give them a total of 100 hectares.

Under current zoning regulations, up to eight residences could be built on the 100 hectares. "It's going to be a couple of years before people start moving on to the property," said Umbrich.

There are several issues the new owners want so address, including the quality of the water at the springs.

The high iron content in the water stains everything an orange-brown color and there is a lot of particulate suspended in the water.

The new owners are looking at the feasibility and cost of installing filtering systems to improve the water quality.

It wasn't cost effective in the past to filter out the iron in the water, but newer and cheaper technology could make clearer water a reality at the hot springs, said Umbrich.

The RV campground and the horseback riding that already exist at the hot springs will continue for the time being, he said.

Also the new owners hope to offer groomed cross-county ski trails by next winter.

"We are looking for more family recreation opportunities for Yukoners. We'd really like to see more people from Whitehorse use the Takhini Hot Springs."

Under the hot springs' current zoning, the new owners of the springs could add a myriad of new facilities to the property, including a hotel, gas bar, and even a golf course.

The new owners are still drawing up their business plan and promise to reveal more details in the coming months.

However, they were already trying to allay any fears their neighbors on the Hot Springs Road might have about development.

The new owners want to work with their neighbors, offered Umbrich.

"We're very proud that Yukoners have kept this hot springs in their control because we have to live and work here. We're not absent landlords and we're not controlled or dominated by Outside investors."

The local investors were apparently competing with some Outside interest to buy the property.

Under the current zoning, those Outside investors could have built a hotel and convention center on the property, operated it to cater to the summer tourism market, shut down in the off-season, and done little if any consulting with the nearby residents, said Umbrich.

"I think there is a real advantage to having Yukoners own (the property)," he said.

For Umbrich and Pitzel the purchase of the hot springs means they will be putting their current business – the Hawkins House Bed and Breakfast – up for sale shortly.

But not everybody in the investors group will be giving up their present careers to run the hot springs, Umbrich added.

From the Yukon News dated January 13. 1999

Notes - (for clarification purposes.)

It is amazing the amount of material that you have put together on the Hot Springs.

In the History of a Yukon Landmark, I am aware that this is a quote from the Whitehorse Star, but 45 degrees C (118 Fahrenheit) is a bit off. 45°C is actually 113°F. No problem as you are just quoting an article.

There is one gaping fact left out in "THERMAL HEAT". 'The green houses were built by the army', what army? The Canadian Army did not come to Whitehorse till 1943-44 with about 4-armoured track personnel carriers.

From 1942 there was only one army, and that was American along with American contractors as, Dowell Const., Backtel, Price and Callahan and Utah Const. Finally Canada woke up to the fact that they had better establish their sovereignty and send a few of their men in. Who

built the bridge across the Takhini River at the old crossing? It was American to give access to the Takhini Hotsprings. The greenhouses were abandoned at the end of the war.

Now that makes sense if it was the American Army. The sticker was that the greenhouses were abandoned "with" the war. Was it at the start of the war or the end of the war? I think the sticker is the "with" because the war was not abandoned, it was won!

The Canadian Army that came into Whitehorse originally were minimal, for they came via White Pass with about four armoured track vehicles. It was not till the turn over of the highway that the Canadians came in force. So it had to be the American Army that was doing the growing in the greenhouses. It would have been nice if that was stated in the text and I would have fully understood.

Cheers, Henry Breaden

November 18, 2003

Greetings,

I'm still the manager at the Hotsprings and read the news clipping that you sent me and regretfully wanted to let you know that none of what was said was going to be done has been done as of yet. We have upgraded the facility in some areas but no housing project has been started other than buying the parcel of land that was needed and nothing done with the pool as of yet, except we did install a heated walkway. Will try and get you a recent picture and can find out through Erwin Kreft who owned the Hotsprings before him. He may have a lot more information than the current owners do. There are **48 shareholders** now and they're still looking for more investors. Don't know what direction they are going to go in as of yet. Let me know if I can get you any other information.

Cheers,

Sheree Newell svannew@polarcom.com