

## ***The History of the Parksville Community Park***

The original idea for the community park was sparked by the Women's Institute, and the rest of the community was quick to support the idea. There were two pieces of land that were put up for purchase at that time in 1925. Mr. Rushton and his group suggested the piece of property that the Island Hall currently occupies and Fred Shelly suggested the property that became the Community Park. The decision to be made was between the smaller more affordable piece proposed by Mr. Rushton or the larger more expensive piece proposed by Fred Shelly. At the initial meeting where the vote took place Fred Shelly had presented his foresight for a community hall and sports field as well as community access to a beautiful beach. Needless to say, Fred Shelly won the vote.

Those that are considered the founding fathers of the Parksville Community Parks are those that were elected to the first board:

Robert Craig - President  
Robert Hickey Sr. - Secretary  
Col. Greig - Director  
Fred Shelly - Director  
James Kingsley - Director

The property that became the community park was purchased from Joseph Hirst. He agreed to the price of \$3,000 dollars and then offered a discount of \$500 if the amount could be paid off within 3 years. It was Fred Shelly who was determined to pay off the property within 3 years to ensure they could take advantage of the \$500 discount. To that end Fred held a fund raising barn dance in his own barn which was a huge success and netted \$1,700 for the park. Three sports days were also held, the first two were fairly successful but the third was the greatest success. The third was organized by Fred Shelly and drew in over 2,200 people. Dancers and performers were brought in from Nanaimo, there were all kinds of sports, horse races, the crowning of the May Queen and games that involved many people in the community.

"Fred Shelly was operating a game where you put silver on the table and throw rings from a certain distance. If you ringed a coin, you kept it. He was raking the money in when a policeman from Duncan by the name of Mustart stopped him. So he sent home for a canvas and a few cases of eggs, and a friend of his made up a helmet and put his head through the canvas and you could get three eggs for twenty five cents and hit the chap whose head was in the canvas and get a prize for it. By four o'clock that afternoon the stench was so terrible we had to stop him! He covered the mess with sand, moved the tent and sent home for strawberries and the show carried on. You just couldn't beat him."

The Community park was built largely on volunteer efforts and by donation. Alan Ford, Willet Shelly and Wilson Braddock each supplied a cat, Chris Pettigrew and Matt Glenday worked on the grounds. Bill McDermid supplied a team of horses, chairmen and secretaries who served with great dedication included Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Middleton, Mrs. Hanley Harrison, Vern McNeill, Mrs. Rheumer, and James Craig to name a few. However, a large credit was also due Fred Shelly.

"I make no bones about saying that there should be a monument erected on the community park in memory of Fred Shelly and as an original Director I can honestly say that Fred is the father of that park. The rest of us didn't contribute anything compared to Fred". From the Memoirs of Jim Kinsley

The local Kinsmen group took on the task of organizing and acquiring a community hall. In 1947 the Community Hall building was bought in Nanaimo from the Nanaimo Army Camp. It was transferred in pieces to Parksville and put back together.

In 1952 the ball fields were cleared and prepared.

The local Lions Club took on the responsibility of the children's playground in 1985. The playground has now grown into a wonderful **Venture Land** that is well known up and down the Island. In 1991 the Lions added a **Water Spray Park** and they are currently still adding to and maintaining both playgrounds.



Although many individuals have contributed to the acquisition and construction of the Parksville Community Park, Fred and Willet (Fats) Shelly certainly helped lead the way. Naming a part of the park after the Shelly Family for their part in the acquisition and construction of the Community Park is well warranted. It seems clear that Fred Shelly was the driving force behind getting the park going, and that his son, Willet (Fats) Shelly also played a part in construction and maintaining the park.

#### **In Dedication:**

That the sports field in the Parksville Community Park, all or in part, be named Shelly Field in recognition of the dedication and work of Fred and Willet (Fats) Shelly.

And that a cut log or a wooden post and sign be placed near the field to commemorate the Shelly Family's involvement in the creation of the Parksville Community Park.

The recommendation was approved by City Council and on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995, Canada Day, the ball field next to the Lacrosse box, previously locally referred to as the "Dairy Queen Field" because of the Dairy Queen across the street, was renamed **Shelly Field**.

In 2003 the old community hall was replaced with a new community centre next to the new city hall on Jensen Street and the old one was destroyed in March 2004.