FROM THE ARCHIVES JANUARY 1996

Ft. Steele, December 17, 1923 To B.G. Hamilton from R.L.T. Galbraith in response to an earlier letter:

"I am in a position to say that there is no truth to the story of Tatley and Isadore buying a hearse in Spokane for their wives.

"What the story is, is as follows --- The Nez Perce Indians were voted a large sum of treaty money by the U.S. Congress and weeks prior to the Commissioner from Washington coming to pay out the funds, traders from Walla Walla, Portland, Spokane, Boise and from other places quartered at Lewiston. They represented some large firms with groceries, hardware, saddles, harness and goods of all kinds which were offered to the Indians and a good trade was kept up for several weeks. Amongst other things I may mention there was a great demand for democrats and all were sold out and as there was still a demand for vehicles, the happy thought struck a trader to offer a white hearse from one of the local undertakers for sale which was readily purchased by an Indian from Mount Idaho or Camas Prairie into which he bundled his family and drove off home in great glee. This is the true story and I remembered the story at the time very well. Out Indians were in no way connected with it."

Thanks to Winn Weir for this newsclip from the <u>Calgary Herald</u>, a column written by John Schmidt:

FRITZ TRACHSEL

"Fritz Trachsel is a ruddy-faced, gleeful little gnome of a man who lives in the heart of the Windermere Valley in British Columbia. Everywhere he goes he radiates a bucolic charm and wit that makes people smile and laugh and feel gay.

I strolled down the main street in Calgary with him the other day and it seemed that half the people on the street knew him by his first name.

"They all know me," said Fritz, "But I can't remember all their names." But whether he knows a person's name or not, he'll stop for a chat, a jest or an exchange of witticisms. The laughter and smiles that follow are infectious.

Hundreds of people in Calgary know roly-poly Fritz from the days when he was the Christmas tree king here. He brought his first truckload of evergreens to Calgary in 1938. there was no heavy haul road from Invermere to Banff in those days and he hauled them the long route through Cranbrook and the Crow's Nest Pass. They were some left over from a contract with J. Hofert Ltd., a Christmas tree wholesaling company in Washington State. However, over the intervening years his tree sales in Calgary rose to a peak of 15 truckloads.

I think many youngsters used to believe the rotund woodsman was one of Santa Claus' helpers because he always appeared before Christmas with the tree.

In the last two years Fritz Trachsel hasn't shown up with his usual consignment of trees. He was imprisoned (and for this tough wiry outdoorsman, that's the right word) in hospital. Last winter it was with a broken shoulder blade and collar-bone; the year before a broken back. The year before that he received a bunch of broken ribs working in the bush but he was able to brush off any suggestion that he stay away from his beloved Christmas tree limit high on the mountain above Radium Junction. Over the objection of his wife and friends, he says he's going to be back in the woods this winter. At 69 he says he's too young to sit idle when there are trees to be cut.

Six weeks before Christmas he was working in his limit. So intent was he on the job that he fell over a 150-foot cliff. After a while he picked himself up and started limping towards town. He came upon the local telephone lineman who could see there was something wrong but couldn't get Fritz to admit it.

"Take me to the hotel for a beer," Fritz gritted.

In the hotel, one of his friends saw him and said, "Fritz, what happened?"

But Fritz remained tight-lipped --- and gratefully accepted a ride home.

Three days later he was back working in the bush. Later he noticed his arm and chest turning black. One of his men made a hasty run with him to the doctor in Invermere. The doctor took one look, gave him a shot of pain killer, got him into an operating room --- and found a broken shoulder blade and collar-bone. They let him out of the hospital three days before Christmas.

For Fritz Trachsel, life just wouldn't be life if he couldn't live in the mountains. Mountains were the prime force of his boyhood years in his native Frutigen, Berner-Oberland, Switzerland. His father was a slate miner and like most other people of the area, he owned a small mountain-bound farm. it was here Fritz played and worked (although to him there always seemed more of the latter) during his youth.

"I think the reason I never got to be very tall is because I had to pack so much salt up the mountain to those goats," he said, and burst into uproarious laughter. it wasn't all work. He and his brothers and sisters learned to ski on polished barrel staves. Fritz can cut a mean slalom down the slopes of the Panorama ski hill back of Invermere today.

With the school over he went to work in a hotel operated by some of his father's relative as an apprentice cook and gardener. After three years of this he went to the grill in the Kaiserhof Hotel in Berlin to advance further as a cook.

"And so you graduated as a chef," I observed.

'Ach, no, I was never a chef. I was a cook," he said. "It takes 20 years to become a chef." Which provides the answer to a lot of things I have suspected about some of the "Chefs" hereabouts.

At the time Trachsel was there the Kaiserhof was one of the biggest hotels in the world and certainly boasted one of the best dining rooms. Its kitchen staff of 127 was the cream of the crop of Europe.

He left the Kaiserhof in Berlin in a hurry in 1917. From there to the ownership of a small dairy farm at Windermere B.C. in 1937 is another story."

Heritage Day Luncheon
Friday, February 16
12 o'clock
Invermere Inn
Soup and Sandwich <u>or</u> Pasta
\$7.00