**Creation Story – Building the Cabin**

*This story is my grandmother’s. I’ve heard it many times from her, and also versions from my aunt and my dad. It’s the story of how she created a place that is very special for our family. My Nana is 93 now, and her memory is not very good, but my father believes she would be very happy to hear this story is being shared.*

In 1976, my grandmother Betty was 50 years old and her life was changing fast. Now that her children Michael and Brigit were grown up and leaving home, she finally felt free to leave my grandfather Don, who had for years lived with undiagnosed and untreated bipolar disorder. She didn’t know at the time that Don was living with a mental illness – what she experienced was a person who could at sometimes be manic and impulsive, and at other times, completely inert and withdrawn. My grandmother was the opposite: she was warm and generous, stable, a bit of a hippie. She loved to read and make pottery and had many friends. Her whole life was ahead.

In the divorce, Betty was entitled to a bit of money. It was enough to put a down payment on an apartment in New Westminster, where she was living, but she liked her apartment well enough and after so many years of being practical and raising a family, she was ready to do something that would bring her joy. She decided to look for a piece of land by the ocean.

She explored the Gulf Islands, but decided she didn’t want to be bound by a ferry schedule. So she looked south. At the time, it was easy to pass back and forth across the border, and traffic was light. Finally she found something she fell in love with: a small piece of land on Whidbey Island in Northwest Washington. The property overlooked the sea from a high cliff, and was dotted with pine trees. In the evening you could watch the sun set over fields to the west. She bought it.

She started out with a trailer, and slowly, eventually, built a small cabin that still stands today. It has big windows that overlook the cove, and the pottery studio that her second husband – another happy story – built for her. Betty spent many happy years there, on her own, and with her many friends. Today, it is a precious place in our family.