

The Bartelts

Friedrich (Fritz) Bartelt

- Friedrich was born in Rendsburg, a small city in the province of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in 1900.
- During the Second World War, Fritz was an officer in the army. This forced service haunted him for the rest of his life.
- He held a university degree in agriculture and put his agricultural training to use when he immigrated to Canada in the 1940s.
- He moved to Saskatchewan and purchased a house and land near that of his brother, who had preceded Fritz to Canada.
- Fritz worked at Campbell Red Lake Mines, Limited until he was well past standard retirement age. His wife Johanna had to persuade him to retire when he was 72.
- He died on November 20th, 1986 at age 86 at the Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital, after a long battle with bowel cancer.
- Upon Fritz's death, the annual ski loppet has been held in his memory, a gesture which greatly touched Johanna.
- Fritz's ashes were interred in Woodland Cemetery in Balmertown.

Johanna Bartelt (nee Albert)

- Johanna Albert was born in the heart of the German city of Nürnberg in the province of Bavaria, on December 11th, 1918—only one month after the end of the First World War.
- Johanna's father was a professional accountant.
- Her parents valued education and ensured that Johanna attended private, then convent school.
- Johanna grew up with a brother and a sister.
- She learned, late in life, that she had a half-brother. After her parents had died, a terminally ill aunt told Johanna the secret that had been kept from her for over 60 years. When she finally met her half-brother, he was in the final stages of cancer.
- As a young woman Johanna trained to be a florist and worked in a floral gallery.
- She became adept at retail sales, but her early passion was for aviation.
- During the Second World War, Johanna trained as a glider pilot. She remembered that she was one of only 30 women in all of Germany to learn the craft.
- Johanna spent the duration of the war working as a glider instructor.
- She was horrified by the devastation left in wake of war. It was a life changing time, and Johanna decided that she could be most useful as a nurse.
- Johanna earned her nursing degree at the Ursulinen Hospital which was operated by nuns in her birthplace of Nürnberg.
- With a nursing colleague, Johanna immigrated to Canada in 1953, first to Eastern Ontario and then to Northern British Columbia.
- Canada's north greatly appealed to Johanna and she jumped at the opportunity to come to the Red Lake District in 1958.
- When she learned that nurses were being hired to work at the Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital in Cochenour, Ontario, Johanna applied, was interviewed, and quickly hired. Dr. Joseph I. Weinstein was the resident physician at the time.
- Her skill and compassion were appreciated and in time she was promoted to the position of matron. In this managerial role, Johanna was responsible for overseeing the nurses, domestic staff, all patient care, and the operation of the hospital. She gained wide respect from patients, nurses, and physicians alike.
- Without warning, Johanna suffered a stroke when she was 55. It was the worst possible time – she was on McKenzie Island during the break-up period. She battled back from this setback with her characteristic strength.
- When the new hospital opened in Red Lake in 1974, Johanna became its first pharmacist.
- One of her happiest days was June 11th, 1975 when, at Kenora, she became a Canadian citizen. Johanna often spoke of her deep love for Canada.

- Besides being an avid gardener, Johanna excelled at handicrafts and other art. Her capabilities encompassed varied mediums – photographs, cards, and even decorated eggs.
- It was not unusual for her to nurse injured birds and various animals.
- Johanna had also nursed her husband Fritz throughout his battle with bowel cancer.
- In the year following Fritz's death, Johanna was encouraged by her sister, Elise Libal, brother, Hans Albert, two elderly cousins, and nieces and nephews, to return to live in Germany. After much deliberation, she reluctantly agreed.
- However, once overseas, she found life there very disappointing. The days and friends of her youth were gone and although she appreciated living close to family, she was often lonely and never stopped missing the north and the Red Lake District.
- Johanna became reacquainted with the great food markets of Nürnberg, and occasionally travelled on bus tours, to health spas in the Black Forest region, or to Fritz's home city.
- Flight and aviation were never far from Johanna's mind. After retirement, she was thrilled to fly over the Red Lake area with a friend in his small aircraft – even once guiding the controls.
- Once back in Germany, she made a friend who persuaded her to try gliding one last time. Even though she knew that another stroke could be precipitated by such exertion, Johanna said that at least she would die happy doing something she loved. Over 70 – and with all the strength she could muster (despite little feeling on her stroke-damaged right side) – Johanna accomplished the seemingly impossible. She glided off a mountain top and circled with the birds. She often said that such an experience leaves one a changed person who views birds with a deep sense of awe.
- Johanna's memories and imagination were vivid. When she felt homesick for McKenzie Island, she would lie back and envision being there. "In my mind I wander through my old yard, feel the wind, and hear the humming of the bees in it. My mind crawls around every tree and bush! Oh, I would now love to be able to go down to the water's edge to the dock, or go boating. My heart continually travels back and forth between Germany and Canada."
- Johanna came to the conclusion that even though she missed Canada terribly, she knew that returning in poor health was unwise.
- "I often think 'home' to Canada. It is a very normal thing, after having lived half of my life there, that my heart is split in half. It could not be different. I should be over all that hanging onto the past, but what can I do when my heart is really in the north. So, I live with this split heart remembering all the glorious and sad times and am satisfied that my time there was so good. One cannot have everything," she wrote.
- Despite suffering several more strokes in Germany, Johanna tenaciously remained in her comfortable apartment and enjoyed tending her balcony garden.
- A large aerial photograph of McKenzie Island (taken by Jacob Siegal) hung in a place of prominence.
- While Johanna never again saw any of her friends from the Red Lake District, she did have two visitors from Canada. Barbara Kostynuk (later Laverdure), while on a trek through Europe, spent one Christmas with Johanna, while John Richthammer, Jr. enjoyed several visits with her in Nürnberg. Their last visit was spent at the hospital, as Johanna had suffered another stroke only hours before the planned visit. That a visitor from Red Lake arrived at a time of critical need for Johanna in Germany was indeed ironic. Johanna could speak, but cried and hugged a great deal.
- She lived on, courageously, for another four years, with the last of Johanna's days being spent in the care of her sister, Elise.
- In one of her last letters, Johanna wrote: "I was only one little person. I wonder if, after a little while, anyone will ask who I was."
- Johanna, who had known much pain and suffering over the course of having about 10 strokes, had a motto: "Be happy and healthy, then you are wealthy."
- Her letters were characteristically – and articulately – imbued with her endearing warmth. In her last letter, Johanna wrote: "A lovely day comes to an end and I send you the golden shine which still lays over the roves. My life is almost over but it was wonderful mostly because of you northern friends, the rarest friends I ever made. I am thankful every day for what strength is still given me. I wish everyone peace and with love send my greetings over the lake to you all."
- Johanna's final stroke was massive and unconquerable. She never regained consciousness and died five days later, on May 16th, 1996 in Nürnberg, Germany, in her 78th year.
- Johanna often expressed the desire that one day her ashes would join Fritz's in Balmertown; however, this was not to be. When she died a world away from the Red Lake District, Johanna's ashes were interred in her family plot in Nürnberg.

The Couple

- Johanna and Friedrich met when they were both living in the Red Lake District. They had found soul mates in one another.
- Johanna was never phased by the fact that Fritz was 18 years her senior.
- In the 1960s, after they had dated for a long time, they went on a trip to Mexico and were married in the United States while enroute home to Red Lake.
- They shared a passion for the north, the environment, people, animals, sports, and the arts.
- They moved to their lakeshore home on McKenzie Island in 1966. "There could not have been more happy people on the Island," Johanna wrote in a letter.
- Eva Kirsky, who was raised in Vienna, Austria, and came to Red Lake in 1952, agreed that living on McKenzie Island brought the Bartelts much pleasure and contentment: "They thought it was a tremendously wonderful place to live. Johanna had a very stressful job at the hospital and she used to often say that going home at night on the ferry was like going to heaven."
- The Bartelts' enthusiasm for Island living never waned.
- They reveled in being so close to nature in their large yard and magnificent gardens which extended close to the water's edge.
- The Bartelts were passionate about skiing and were instrumental in fostering the sport on McKenzie Island. Their snowy white shocks of hair seemed to blend in with the winter season as they glided with speed and agility on ski trails they cut on the Island.
- Johanna once wrote: "What a wonderful life I had with Fritz – he still fills my thoughts. He was a wonderful man. I had not always appreciated that, just like most people in the world tend to do. Why do we have to see the past to realize what we had? The memories are engraved and I thank God daily for that time on McKenzie Island."