

Fire on the Trestle - 1988

**BY RALPH MORRIS, THE COWICHAN VALLEY CITIZEN
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Ralph Morris has long been one of the Kinsol Trestle's biggest fans. Since 1961, when he took over responsibility for the trestle's maintenance with CN Rail, he's visited the historic structure many times. Even now, almost 50 years after his first visit, he still makes the trek from Edmonton to see "his Kinsol." In this short essay, Ralph recalls a visit in 1988, when a fire nearly destroyed the wooden Trestle

In June, 1988, my wife, Margaret and I were visiting Vancouver Island. Our son-in-law, Paul, grandson Andrew and I had been invited to go fishing, but the weather was forbidding and too stormy for a small boat

So the next best thing when on the Island was a visit to my favourite Island bridge -- the Koksilah at Mile 51.1 Cowichan Subdivision. We didn't call it the Kinsol Trestle then, just "the Koksilah at M.51.1". It was Saturday, June 18, 1988. The three of us had a ball climbing around the trestle, wandering up and down the river and taking a few photos. Grandpa's bridge became Andrew's bridge

One week later on Sunday, June 26 we had been visiting friends and got back home about 10 o'clock in the evening. We were met by Andrew shouting out "they've burned our bridge!!" Andrew, seven, had been allowed to stay up so he could be the one to break the awful news about a fire on the Koksilah River railway trestle that had been reported in the evening news

Fortunately the fire department had been able to put the fire out before it had destroyed the whole bridge but the initial stories had little else to say.

The next day, Monday, June 27, my wife Margaret and I went out to see the damage. A short portion of the ties and stringers had been gutted, but the trestle overall was still intact including the six Howe trusses at the bottom. What a relief

Ralph Morris, Former Regional Engineer Bridges & Structures, Mountain Region, CN Rai

If you have a story or some pictures that you'd like to share, send them to kinsol@cfcowichan.ca. If you have a Kinsol-related story, photo or artifact, contact the Cowichan Valley Museum (www.cowichanvalleymuseum.bc.ca) about including it in their upcoming virtual exhibit "The Kinsol Trestle: Abandoned, Then Embraced."

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The damage to the trestle after the fire



The Kinsol Trestle, in 1988