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RED MORRISON – ANOTHER VIEW

Part two of two

by Donald M. Ream, Jr.

The diary-like log or day book of John W. Coburn in the provincial archives at Victoria provides no clues as to the reasons for Red Morrison's departure from his logging operation at East Wellington and his replacement by Chris Meyland. The critical time period when Red left and Chris appeared is part of a large void in Coburn's book — a fact he comments on in a bit of self-criticism, noting the long gap from the date of his last entry until he again commenced making his customary journal entries.

Thus, a bit of mystery exists as to Red's motivations for ceasing employment. But it appears from the voters list of 1924 that the Morrison family continued to live at East Wellington. The surviving members of Red's family do not know what caused Red to leave the New Ladysmith Lumber Company's East Wellington woods operations. Red worked in the woods afterwards out of camps near Cowichan Lake and lived at Chemainus and Duncan. In about 1919 Red and his family lived at Courtenay, where he and another man operated a mill just outside of town.

Recycled paper



Jack Fleetwood related a bit about the Scottish Palmer Lumber Company, with its post office at a place called Benallack, at Mile 60.5 on the CNR line at Palmer. It is believed that Red worked for the company for a while. When Red was living in Duncan he knew a policeman whose dog would let anyone into the house but wouldn't let them out until his master gave a certain sign. Jack also recounted the story told to him by Pete Aitkenberry of how a turn of logs got hung up on a stump or some debris and the donkey blew for stop on the mainline. Red, the woods boss, became furious. So livid, in fact, that he went over and clamped his teeth to the silent mainline!

Yes, Red had a temper as Jack Fleetwood, Bob Swanson and Jean Morrison attested to. Jack Fleetwood said that Red would fire his crew over something or other and then, realizing what he had done, would go and apologize to them for blowing up and tell them they still had their jobs.

After the Cowichan Lake logging work was done, Red went up the coast to run his own camp. The Morrison family lived in Vancouver for a while, but when things got tough the family moved to camp and there Red's wife and daughter did the cooking and the boys worked in the timber, according to his daughter Helen. Some of the camps and logging were at Cracroft Island, Thomson Sound and Guilford Island.

J. Russell Jones of Burnaby told of meeting Red quite by chance in the summer of 1965. Russ and his bride had moved into their home and needed furniture. They found a used bedroom suite in the want ads and as the telephone number given was also in the Burnaby area they followed up on it. The seller introduced himself as Red Morrison and said that he was a long-time logger. The bed had been for his housekeeper but as he had trouble keeping them he decided to get rid of the furniture. As the bed was near-new, the Jones decided to buy it and still have it.

Red told Russ that his son Walter was running a barge dumping and log sorting operation at Andy's Bay on Gambier Island, in Howe Sound. The company was M & M Log Sorting Ltd., with Walter's partner being Bill McIntosh. Their office was at the Point Grey Towing Ltd. dock on the Fraser River, near the Weldwood plant. Then Red related how his son Willie (or William, or Bill or "Cougar") was killed on Guilford Island, working for M & M Logging, in a logging truck accident in 1940.

That fateful day Willie had been assigned to drive a logging truck with hard rubber tires. It had a good load on its bunks. Willie was proceeding very carefully, especially because the sapwood was pretty greasy in the spring time. As Willie snubbed the brakes lightly, the logs slid forward on the bunks and spiked him to the steering column. As many readers know, not all logging trucks had protected cabs in those days.

Jean Morrison of Nanaimo added that Willie had been assigned to that logging truck because the regular driver was in hiding. A government officer was out looking for him with process as the regular driver had not been paying his child support. And to add to this tragic event, Willie's young bride, Audrey, watched it all happen. The fatal accident occurred at Forward Bay, on Cracroft Island. Red and his sons logged at two different sites on Cracroft Island.

Willie's funeral was held in Vancouver. On their return the family found their woods to be on fire. As Jean Morrison noted it was "a very hard time for the family." Not too long after Willie's tragic death and the fire, the family operation broke up and Walter and Don went their own ways. Red bought a large home in the West End of Vancouver and had it remodelled into suites. His daughter Helen and her husband, Stan, stayed in one of them. Walter married Wilma and occupied another suite. Later the two couples moved to their own separate homes.

By this time Red had become restless and headed back to the woods to run a camp up Toba Inlet. Red's son Donald got married on Christmas Day, 1946 and he and his bride spent their first six months at Walter's camp at Blind Channel on Thurlow Island. Subsequently Red and Don got the camps at Fraser Creek and Potts Lagoon. The latter was called D & E Logging.

After leaving the woods, Red and Elizabeth first moved to North Vancouver. There Red bought a new lawnmower, a rotary. One day Red bent down to clear some grass that had plugging the housing and, forgetting to first turn off the motor, lost the tips of two fingers to the whirling blades. Soon afterwards his neighbour mentioned the need for a new lawnmower and Red handed his over the fence, saying "You can have it – the damn thing's no good."

This was not Red's only injury accident. Jean Morrison remembers him getting a foot badly smashed while working near Squamish. It was hours before they could get Red to a hospital in Vancouver as he had to be taken by boat. He almost lost the foot but the surgeon operated for a long time and connected the damaged nerves and tendons. For a long time afterwards the family members took turns rubbing his injured foot with liniment.

While living in North Vancouver, Elizabeth Morrison became ill and had to be hospitalized. To be near her, Red took an apartment in Burnaby, where Elizabeth passed away in the Edith Cavell Hospital in 1963. After her death Red moved in with his son Don and daughter-in-law Jean at Nanaimo. Subsequently Red moved back to the Vancouver area and bought a house in the Brentwood area of Burnaby, where Russ Jones responded to the want ad for the bedroom furniture.

Red had cut off the bed's cornice-like projections at a 45° angle, apparently because he barked his shins on them. Even in retirement Red was cutting wood, even if it wasn't standing timber. This was not the only case of Red logging in the furniture forest. When he and Elizabeth lived in North Vancouver he hit his knees on the bedposts. So out came the saw and off came the offending posts.

Russ Jones said he often wished he'd gone back to visit Red to hear more stories of his logging life but beginning a family and undertaking his university studies took a reasonable priority. But that was not quite the conclusion of the Morrison – Jones connection. Several years ago Russ purchased the logbook of an old tug, or perhaps a small freighter, in a second-hand store. The first entry is for September 8, 1915 and the vessel, the *Lady Grey*.

The log for October 13, 1917 shows the ship arriving at Morrison's Camp on Redonda Island at 10:10 and departing at 11:05. Another entry for October 15, 1917 indicates an arrival at the same camp at 07:50 and departure at 21:15. The *Lady Grey* was towing the vessel *Monroe*, which was left anchored at Deceit Bay (now known as Redonda Bay) while the *Lady Grey* went on to Morrison's Camp. The *Lady Grey* later picked up the *Monroe* and delivered her to the small shipyard at Lund. The log notes that the *Lady Grey* was sold on August 13, 1919 to the North Pacific Lumber Company. Was Morrison's Camp one of the many that Red operated?

Bob Swanson said that while visiting Red in Courtenay he would talk about various things in a roundabout manner, feeling Red out in the conversations. Bob made sure that Red was not "rangitang." Jean Morrison indicated substantially the same, saying that Red took his work seriously and was a "man's man." She also said Red had a lot of respect for Bob Swanson.

When living in the Brentwood area of Burnaby, Red became ill. His son Don decided to take Red to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Tests there revealed that Red had cancer. Upon his return he went into a private hospital, believed to be the Willingdon Hospital. Red passed away from his cancer in 1967 and is buried in the Vancouver area.

Thus closed the life of a man who saw and actively participated in horse logging in Washington state and then hand logging, steam logging and truck logging on Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. Perhaps benefiting Red Morrison, the American poet James Russell Lowell wrote in "A Glance Behind the Curtain":

No man is born into the world whose work
Is not born with him; there is always work,
And tools to work withal for those who will.
And blessed are the horny hands of toil.



I wish to personally recognize and sincerely thank each of the following persons or entities who directly or indirectly contributed information concerning Earl "Red" Morrison: the staff of the provincial archives in Victoria; the late Mr. William J.H. "Jack" Fleetwood of Duncan; Riv Tow of Vancouver; Mrs. Helen Bell of Vancouver and Mr. J. Russell Jones of Burnaby.

A very special thanks in recognition to the late Robert E. Swanson for an interview at his office at Airchime Manufacturing in Burnaby. The greatest of gratitude to Mrs. Jean Morrison of Nanaimo, for her untiring efforts to seek the answers to many questions and for meeting with Red Morrison's daughter, Mrs. Helen Bell, in Vancouver. Her help was invaluable to the preparation of this profile of a character of Vancouver Island and mainland forests.

Donald Ream, Jr.
Indianapolis, Indiana

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thanks to John Parminter's arrangements, an enjoyable annual general meeting of the FHABC was held at the West Coast Railway Heritage Park in Squamish on June 27. Reports from the Editor, Treasurer and Membership Committee Chair were received.

By acclamation the following members will serve on the Executive for the next year: Geoff Bate - President, John Parminter – Newsletter Editor, Edo Nyland - Treasurer, Ralph Schmidt - Membership. Also in Victoria are Terry Honer and Allan Klenman. Serving the greater Vancouver area are Clay Perry, George Brandak and newly-elected Stan Chester (welcome Stan). Jack Robinson is our member from Kamloops.

We therefore need FHABC Executive representation in the Nelson and Prince George areas as well as one position in Victoria. I would greatly appreciate persons interested in supporting the objectives of FHABC volunteering to fill these vacancies. If you wish to become involved or to recommend FHABC members to the Executive please contact me.

Our survey regarding oral histories of old timers received greater than expected response - over 50 replies. We have 100% support from the membership to proceed with taped interviews. However the consensus is somewhat different than we first visualized. Most of the membership believe that it is more important to get interviews taped and a written transcription prepared from as many people as possible. It has been suggested that we place less emphasis on publishing. We will therefore proceed in this manner.

You will be interested to know that work on the Tom Wright memoirs continues. In addition, Gerry Burch, who has been mainly responsible for the Wright memoirs, has also completed taping the memoirs of Viv Williams, a well known contract logger on the west coast. The FHABC executive thanks Gerry for his contribution.

It is important that members of FHABC undertake similar projects in their area. The FHABC does not have the funds to pay for the transcription costs but the Executive agrees that there is sufficient money to reimburse members for tapes and other minor items. Plans are now underway to ensure cataloguing and safe storage of the tapes.

If you have access to a tape recorder and wish to undertake interviews please do so. If you wish additional information on how to conduct the interview or how to access a recorder please contact me. We all know of old timers in our communities who had interesting lives working in B.C.'s woods and whose experiences should be recorded.

The 1999 AGM is scheduled for June 26 and will likely be held at the Pacific Forestry Centre in Victoria in association with the Canadian Forest Service's centenary. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. Details will follow in future newsletters.

Geoff Bate
Saanichton, B.C.

FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

The Forest History Society of Durham, North Carolina, has updated its website. It now contains information on the society's library, archives, photography collection, oral history program, publications, awards and fellowships and membership benefits. The website also provides search access to the society's bibliography of more than 23,500 records on the history of forests and forestry and related topics.

The archival guide lists 6,500 records describing forest and conservation history collections at more than 450 universities, historical societies and government archives in the United States and Canada.

The website is <http://www.lib.duke.edu/forest/>

For information contact:

Cheryl Oakes, Librarian and Archivist
Forest History Society
701 Vickers Avenue
Durham, North Carolina 27701-3162 USA

Phone (919) 682-9319, fax (919) 682-2349, E-mail coakes@acpub.duke.edu



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Sharon Angleman-Noble is working on the history of logger's festival competitions and the origins of the sport. If you can provide information please contact her at:

776 Cr 912
Brookland
Arkansas 72417 USA

or E-mail: san@bscn.com



NEW PUBLICATIONS

Casselman, Verdun. 1988. Ties to water: the history of Bull River in the East Kootenay. Kootenay Kwik Print, Cranbrook, B.C. 275 p.

Due to continuing demand, this book was reprinted in 1998 and is available from

Bob and Lucy Bjorn
Box 74
Fort Steele, BC V0B 1N0

for \$42.80 plus \$6.50 for mailing within Canada and \$8.50 to the USA.
(money order or certified cheque please). The book won the author an award of merit from the B.C. Historical Federation in 1989.

Claire, Rémy. 1998. David Douglas (1799 – 1834): naturaliste écossais, explorateur de l'Ouest américain. Imprimerie Scheuer, Drulingen, France. 335 p. (in French)

Cyr, Hélène. 1998. Handmade forests: the tree planter's experience. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, B.C. \$24.95.

Drushka, Ken. 1998. Tie hackers to timber harvesters. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. 304 p. \$44.95

Honer, T.G. 1998. Without fear or favour: culling & scaling timber in Canada: 1762 – 1992. T.G. Honer & Associates, Victoria, B.C. 225 p.

Order from

T.G. Honer
3835 Haro Road
Victoria, BC V8N 4A6

for \$34.95 + \$2.45 GST = \$37.40 total.

May, Elizabeth. 1998. At the cutting edge: the crisis in Canada's forests. Key Porter Books, Toronto, Ontario. xv + 294 p

Parfitt, Ben. 1998. Forest follies – adventures and misadventures in the great Canadian forest. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, B.C. 220 p. \$16.95

Rajala, Richard Allan. 1998. Clearcutting the Pacific rain forest: production, science, and regulation. UBC Press, Vancouver, B.C. xxiii + 286 p.

Wilson, Jeremy. 1998. Talk and log – wilderness politics in British Columbia. UBC Press, Vancouver, B.C. 468 p.

WEST COAST RAILWAY HERITAGE PARK

If you missed visiting this museum complex during our 1998 AGM, it's well worth the time. Located just north of downtown Squamish, it is best accessed by bypassing downtown and continuing north on Highway 99, then turning west onto Industrial Way and following the signs. It is about 1 km from the turnoff, at 39645 Government Road.

Over 50 vintage railway cars and locomotives are on display, including a restored 1890s railway business car. The complex houses cabooses, snowplows, passenger cars and more. While a logging component has not yet been developed as part of the displays, rolling stock from several logging railways are on the site.

The PGE carshop, the largest wood frame building ever to be moved in one piece in B.C. is a focal point. There is also a miniature railway circuiting the property.

The park is open from May to October, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

For information phone 604-898-9336 or 1-800-722-1233, or write the

West Coast Railway Association
Box 2790
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2

They also have a website at <http://www.wcra.org>



This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. It is distributed at no charge to members of the association, libraries, archives and museums. Items on forest history topics, descriptions of current projects, requests for information, book reviews, letters, comments and suggestions are welcomed.

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Membership in the association is \$7.00 yearly, or \$30 for five years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Mr. Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, BC V8L 4E8. Phone (250) 656-9276. E-mail: edonon@islandnet.com

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