

British Columbia



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REGIONAL FIELDWORK IN THE EARLY 1950's

by Geoff Bate

Part Two of Two

The trailer was used to make corrections for slope. The cruiser, standing at the known station or point on the cruise strip, would wait for the two chain mark to pass his point and then call out "chain." (We never used the vulgar terms used by other cruisers and inventory staff!) He would then take an Abney shot, if possible at the head of the compassman, to determine the slope correction and then yell "go." The compassman would advance until the cruiser called "chain." Then the compassman would blaze a tree and establish the exact point on strip.

Each cruise strip was broken into 20-chain segments. The segments were called "forties" and they provided the raw data for that specific 40 acre block of timber. The diameter (at 4.5 feet) of each tree was estimated by the cruiser in 2" classes by species. All trees located within 33 feet (1/2 a chain) of each side of the strip were tallied. Biltmore sticks or diameter tapes were used to check tree diameters. The cruiser paced or used the chain to check the strip width. With a little practice he got good at making strip width and tree diameter estimates.



Recycled Paper

On reaching the height of land, or when arriving at a point where we were beyond commercial timber, we would offset 20 chains at a 90 degree angle then return at a direction parallel to the previous strip, advancing to the base line and tying into another predetermined station.

A map was made which identified the forties, 100 foot elevation changes, timber types, creeks, rock outcrops, swamps, grasslands and alpine, immature timber types and other non-commercial areas. If there was a significant change in timber type within the forty a second sub-forty would be identified and tallies taken on a separate sheet.

We were expected to cruise a minimum of eight forties or 320 acres each day. However, accomplishments were actually determined by what could be done efficiently with a minimum of back-tracking. For example, if a crew arrived back at the base line in the early afternoon they continued in the opposite direction to the height of land, made the offset and on completion of the second strip would arrive back at exactly the same point they had started at in the morning.

One cold autumn morning, due to heavy undergrowth, I decided to tie the chain to the back of my belt in order to have both hands free. I had forgotten that my cruiser was one of those who preferred to yank back on the chain when reaching the chain mark. I came upon a fairly large and deep creek, pulled a bit of slack on the chain, then took a running jump to cross the creek. At this point the cruiser yelled "chain" and I landed up to my chin in the creek. After that I always remembered to tie the chain to my belt axe.

After six or seven days of cruising it was generally too far to the next station point on the base line to both travel there and get in a decent day's work. Therefore we moved camp. In some instances we would move and get a second air drop at the same time.

In order to conserve weight our camps were pretty crude affairs - only in the most adverse weather would we consider anything more than a fly, ground sheet and sleeping bag. Construction of a bough bed was developed into an art, not a science.

Safety was always a major consideration. We were too far away from assistance and had no communication with the outside world. Radio communication could have been made available but the old Model "B" AM radios had huge battery packs and were simply too heavy to pack. Therefore, unsafe practices were not tolerated. I do not recall one instance where there was a serious injury.

Each cruiser created a unique method of identifying his stations at the start and end of each forty. I chose the "totem pole" - five blazes, three in line with two others on each side of the second vertical blaze. With all due respect to my native friends I certainly hope that none of my old blazes are ever identified as a "culturally modified tree."

When the cruise was completed we would pack up all our gear, including the parachutes used for air drops, and hike out. When we arrived back in Nelson we would compile our cruise notes, prepare a map, determine the acreage and volume of merchantable timber, identify recommended boundaries and prepare a draft of the cruise report. Fred Sutherland approved our work and then it would go to the Management steno pool for typing and to Drafting for completion of the final cruise map. If the next cruise did not have too high a priority we would then take compensatory time off for Saturdays and Sundays worked. If not, we were off on our next cruise.

Two cruises stand out. In September of 1954 four of us cruised most of the headwaters of Monk and Nunn creeks, an area of about 16,000 acres. We walked in, at first, on an old tote road located on the Kootenay River near the B.C. - Idaho border, and followed Monk Creek to the junction with Nunn Creek. We received two air drops and were in the area for almost a four weeks. It was beautiful country, containing some of the biggest and best quality Engelmann spruce I have ever seen. The weather was perfect during the entire month - warm days and cool nights.

The other instance was also memorable for another reason. In February of 1955 a large sale had been applied for in the upper Kettle River valley. Seven of us, including Fred, travelled to the area on the road which now links Rock Creek and the highway between Vernon and Edgewood. We were on snowshoes, had our usual packboards and pulled a large toboggan as well. It took us a full day to get to the sale area. The weather was clear but it was bitterly cold for the entire trip. We built a fairly good camp even though the snow was over 6 feet deep. In order to ensure a stable fireplace we built a "log cabin" stand of green lodgepole pine logs (three logs thick) and established our fire on top.

On the morning of day seven or eight we found that there were only a few fringe areas on various parts of the sale which still required cruising. It was at this point that the fireplace burnt through, dumping mush and coffee pots down into a six-foot-deep ice-filled cavern. It was at this point that Fred said "You know, for two cents I'd get the hell out of here." Dave Malenka dug into his pants and handed Fred the two cents! In less than an hour we were on our way out. The old Edgewood Hotel had some rather dirty and rowdy guests that night.

In the spring of 1955 I successfully passed the Assistant Ranger exams and was assigned to the Creston Ranger District under Ranger Buss Ross. This ended my cruising career until 1966 when I was appointed Cruising Supervisor in the Prince George Forest District.

I always look back with a great deal of fondness on those three years in Nelson on the field crews. We were always made to feel our work was important. I was fortunate to have worked with dedicated and interesting fellow Forest Service staff.

Forest History Association of B.C. Annual General Meeting

The 1992 Annual General Meeting of the FHABC will be held on June 13, 1992 in Maple Ridge, B.C. Following the annual meeting and lunch we will be offered a conducted "historic" tour of the U.B.C. Research Forest. Of course, guests are welcome.

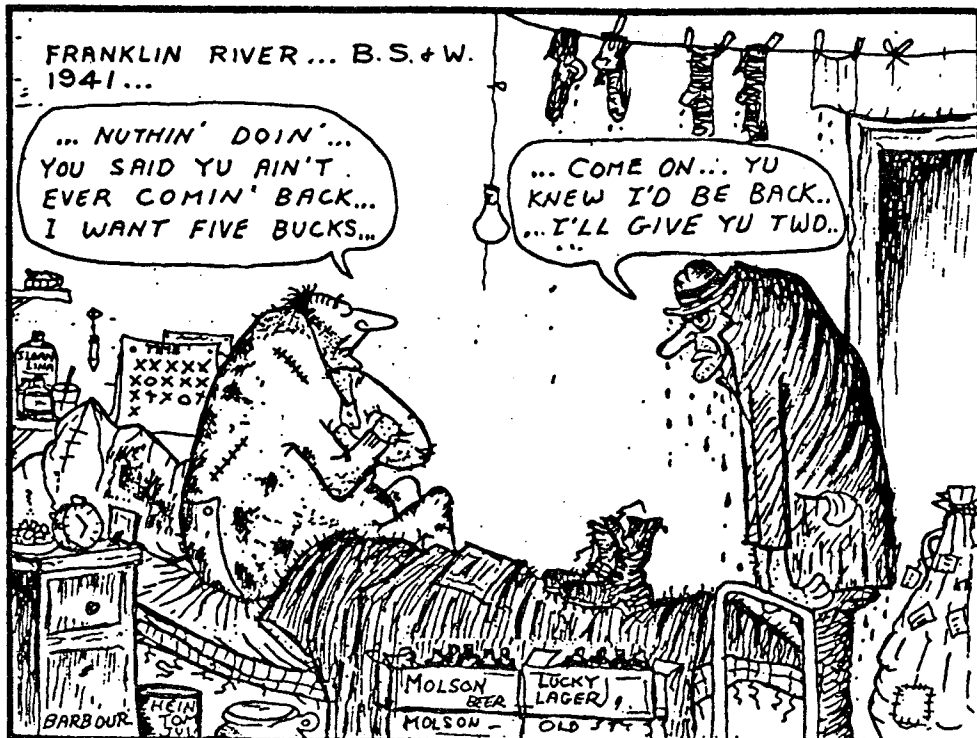
In order to facilitate catering, it would be appreciated if you would indicate that will be participating by phoning or writing W. (Bill) Young at 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria B.C. V8Z 5Z7 (652-3002) or W.G. (Gerry) Burch at # 512 - 4101 Yew Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6L 3B7 (738-4959).

Date: Saturday June 13, 1992

Times: Executive Meeting 11:00 - 11:30 AM
Annual General Meeting
and Guest Speaker 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Lunch 12:15 - 1:15 PM
"Historic" field trip 1:15 PM - ???

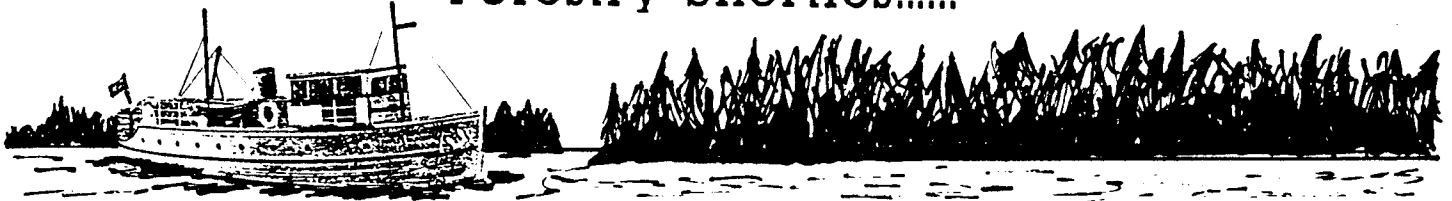
Meeting Place: Maple Ridge Municipal Centre
Craft Studio, 11949 Haney Place
(corner of Dewdney Trunk Road and 224th Street)

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... WHEN PANICKY QUIT HE ALWAYS GAVE HIS BOOTS TO THE BULLCOOK BOASTING HE WAS NEVER COMIN' BACK... COURSE HE ALWAYS DID... BROKE...

Forestry Shorties.....



Trevor Green - Some Memories of Lake Cowichan

"I was born in 1912 and I've spent just about all of my life in and around the village of Lake Cowichan on Vancouver Island. My Dad built his home along the Cowichan River in 1887. My wife, Yvonne, and I have lived there since 1947.

Up to the time of World War I, the forests around the lakes and rivers here were basically intact ancient stands. I can remember several 'remittance men' - the unwanted sons of the English upper class - living in our community. Others lived in cabins on Bear Lake and towards Honeymoon Bay. Some of these fellows supplemented their income by farming, doing odd jobs, building fences and working on the roads. None, as far as I can recall, ever worked as loggers or in the sawmills. All went to war; a few came back.

My father's two brothers built the first Riverside Hotel in 1886. Along with a sister, they managed this landmark for many years. My Dad, after a sojourn in Australia, started up a twice-weekly stage service to Duncan. The vehicle, a democrat, was drawn by a pair of horses. The trip to Duncan took about four hours. The next day Dad would load up for the return trip over the rough road between the two communities. When my parents were married in 1909, Dad was still running the stage.

Logging was always the vital activity for our people, and water was very important for local transportation. We travelled in everything from canoes to tugboats. Until the railway came, the river was used for log driving during periods of high water.

The Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway line was extended to our village in 1913. People would travel from their cabins or float camps along the lakes, often by tug, to the village and then by rail to Duncan, Crofton, Chemainus and other places on the coast. With road improvements later on, passenger rail service died out. For a while we had bus service. I remember one of our lady school teachers who would bicycle to Duncan on Friday to be with her folks, and then back again Monday morning to teach her classes for the rest of the week.

The Cowichan River has always drawn 'notables' for sport fishing our famous steelhead trout. Once it was rumoured that the Prince of Wales came here to fish in 1918. He is alleged to have stayed at the Riverside Hotel under an assumed name.

Today, the village of Lake Cowichan serves the various needs of its residents as well as those of the forest and recreation industries. It's a good place to live."

Forestry Shortie No. 6

Trevor Green has had a close relationship with the B.C. Forest Service's Cowichan Lake Research Station since its opening in 1929. He was a member of the staff from 1964 to 1977, and today serves as custodian on weekends and statutory holidays.

Mr. Green participated in the 1991 Annual General Meeting of our association at the station, where he recounted some of his wonderful experiences to the members present.

Bob DeBoo
March 1992

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AND NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET?

"In 1948 I was an Assistant Ranger in Campbell River and one of my jobs was to make a fire tool inspection of the logging operations in the district. One day I arrived at Bloedel's Camp 5 operation on Campbell Lake and asked for somebody to take me around to inspect the locies. Someone pointed to the engineer's shack and said the camp engineer was usually the one who got 'Joed' for the job. Well, it was young Bill Backman (44 years ago) and he said rather gruffly 'C'mon, let's get at it.'

After about three hours of crawling around the locies and speeders counting shovels and fire extinguishers we went for a walk up the railway track. You know Bill - a step and a half going five miles an hour on the ties. When we were about three-quarters of a mile away from the camp he finally said something. He asked me if I was taking engineering or forestry. 'Forestry' I replied. 'Good God!' he exclaimed, whereupon he turned about on his heels and, without losing a stride, walked even more quickly back to the camp.

It just goes to show you what the industry thought of foresters in those days. However, Bill relented. When I finally caught up with him at camp he invited me into his office for a drink of Scotch.

I have been told he was usually not that generous."

Bert Gayle

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RECENT BOOKS

Wonders, William C. 1991. The 'Sawdust Fusiliers': the Canadian Forestry Corps in the Scottish Highlands in World War Two. Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, 19th Floor, 1155 Metcalfe Street, Montreal, P.Q. H3B 4T6. 129 pp. Maps and illustrations. Order directly from the publishers: \$13.00 (includes GST and postage)

The Canadian Forestry Corps was one of Canada's least-known but most effective military units in World War II. The war had cut off most foreign sources of timber for Britain, forcing it to turn to home sources - mainly located in Scotland. At the request of the United Kingdom, the C.F.C. was organised from professional lumbermen drawn from all parts of Canada to provide the skilled manpower needed to meet civilian and military demands for wood products.

This account covers the experiences of the thirty companies of the C.F.C. from their mobilisation across Canada to their operations throughout the Scottish Highlands and ultimate return to Canada. It examines not only their primary military and economic roles, but also their social impact on the local residents. Personal commentaries from members of the Corps add to the interest of the record.

Research was based upon the war diaries of the C.F.C. companies held in the National Archives of Canada, historical sources in the National Library of Scotland as well as field investigations and interviews in the Scottish Highlands.

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Coulson, Barry (editor). 1992. The logger's digest. Orca Book Publishers, Victoria. \$32.95 (hardcover), \$18.95 (paperback).

Garner, Joe. 1991. Never under the table: a story of British Columbia's forests and government mismanagement. Cinnabar Press, Nanaimo. 274 p. \$14.95.

Straley, Gerald B. 1991. Trees of Vancouver. UBC Press, Vancouver. 288 p. Illustrations, photographs. \$19.95.

Swanson, Robert E. 1992. Bunkhouse ballads. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park. (collected works published in a single volume) \$12.95.

Wilson, Capt. Ted and S.C. Heal. 1991. Full line, full away: a towboat master's story. Cordillera Publishing Co., Vancouver. 168 p. Illustrations. \$16.95.

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THEY WERE NOT STUMPED
By Allan Klenman

The Pacific Northwest was known to have some of the largest trees in the world. Some of these were up to 12 feet in diameter and of 700 to 900, even 1,300 years of age.

Armed with the knowledge and experience of 60 to 70 years of handling these giants, one day in June of 1909, in Skagit County (near Seattle) one of these behemoths was felled by men of the English Logging Company. It was a Douglas-fir measuring 10' 6" in diameter inside the bark. After consulting with Washington's largest sawmills at Ballard, Everett and Milltown they had to admit it was too large for any sawmill of the time.

But the canny men of the forest did not give up. They ordered a special whip saw, 17' in overall length, 12" across at the centre, with uniform taper over the length to 10" at the tips, and to be made of 12-gauge steel.

It took nearly two days to make the first cut the length of the log and with four other cuts it took a total of 10 days to bring the log to suitable dimensions for the sawmill, which rendered it into lumber at Ballard, north of Seattle.

One butt section was preserved and shown in the Washington State pavilion at the World's Fair that year (the Alaska-Yukon Exposition in Seattle) where it amazed all who attended - including knowledgeable loggers from around the world.

It is also said that the 17' saw was the largest ever manufactured. But who were the magnificent men who worked such a saw? It was certainly the grandfather of all "misery whips."

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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. Please submit newsletter material and send changes of address to the editor: Mr. John Parminter, # 1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5.

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, B.C. V8L 4E8. The Acting President, Mr. Bill Young, can be reached at 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.