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2007 AGM ANNOUNCEMENT

The 2007 annual general meeting of the FHABC will be held on Saturday, September 22nd beginning with a business meeting at the Kamloops Museum, 207 Seymour Street, from 2:30 to 4:30 PM. A reception and dinner will follow at the Plaza Heritage Hotel, 405 Victoria Street, Kamloops, starting at 6:00 PM. The dinner speaker will be Randy Chan, who will describe the area's forest history. Everyone is welcome to attend the business meeting, no-host bar reception, and dinner (7:00 PM start, cost approx. \$30 per person). Bring your significant other and renew acquaintances or make new friends.

Hotel rooms are available at \$89.00 per night. Please reserve directly with the Plaza Heritage Hotel (phone 1-877-977-5292 or fax 250-377-8076) and mention the Forest History Association meeting. Please advise either of the following of your attendance by Wednesday, September 17th so that we can finalize the size of the meeting space and the number for dinner.

Stan Chester
Phone (604) 921-9880
E-mail stanchester@shaw.ca

John Parminter
Phone (250) 384-5642
E-mail jvparminter@telus.net

Some Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland members are planning to drive to Kamloops on the morning of September 22nd. Those on Vancouver Island would catch the 7:00 AM ferry and drive directly to Kamloops – approximately a 3½ hour drive. Please advise if you would like a ride as some space may be available.

WHISTLER FOREST HISTORY PROJECT **by John Hammons**

With the upcoming 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games close at hand, increasing attention has been focused on Whistler as a leading winter ski resort. Starting with the opening of the first gondola and chairlift system in 1965 at Creekside, the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) evolved into the number one ski resort in North America. What is not widely appreciated is the earlier history of the local forest industry that developed following the arrival of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE) in 1914, linking the Whistler area to the deepwater port of Squamish. The objective of the Whistler Forest History Project is to more fully document and communicate this rich history.

The Whistler Museum & Archives (WMAS) was founded in 1986 as a non-profit organization for the purpose of collecting, cataloguing, and conserving artefacts and photographs of the pioneer history of the Whistler Valley. The museum has since expanded to include information on the resort development and natural history of the entire Whistler region. One of the early initiatives of the WMAS was publication of a booklet entitled "Whistler Reflections." This booklet, which is available at the WMAS, focuses on the period before the establishment of the RMOW and has one section on logging, sawmilling, and camp life. The WMAS also holds a small collection of photographs and other records relating to early sawmilling and logging in the area. Although these materials are very useful for understanding the earlier history of the local forest industry, it was felt that additional work was needed.

Consequently, in 2004, three Whistler residents – Don MacLaurin, Peter Ackhurst, and John Hammons – initiated the Whistler Forest History Project under the auspices of the WMAS. Funding for operational expenses was supplied by grants from the Community Foundation of Whistler (CFoW) and the RMOW supplied additional operational support including office/work space and computers. The initial three years of the project have now been completed under the auspices of WMAS and the anticipated final two years of the project are in progress under the auspices of the Forest History Association of British Columbia (FHABC), with continued operational funding coming from the CFoW.

This project has two basic focuses: firstly, to develop a collection of historical maps and aerial photographs related to the forest industry that will serve as a long-term museum resource. Secondly, to produce a series of thematic maps that illustrate the land cover changes that have taken place in the project area since the arrival of the PGE in 1914. These maps will also show the location of early sawmills.

Maps will be in standard Geographic Information System (GIS) format suitable for presentation as posters or web-based applications and will illustrate the history of disturbances from wildfire, insects, forest harvesting, infrastructure development (rail, roads, and hydro), and urbanization in five-year periods. It is anticipated that these materials and products will be used to strengthen the museum's interpretation of the history of the local forest industry and will also supply context for understanding the region's natural history.

The project area is based on landscape units (catchments) to facilitate understanding of changes at a larger level. The project area consists of three landscape units – the Callaghan, Whistler, and Soo – which cover just under 180 000 hectares. The project area is generally rectangular and approximately 40 kilometres by 60 kilometres in size. Geographically, the area extends along the Sea-to-Sky Highway from about 20 kilometres north of Squamish up to Pemberton and includes a significant area in Garibaldi Provincial Park, as well as provincial forest and private land in developed areas.

The project has received support from a number of agencies and individuals. Among other sources, fire and insect disturbance data were supplied by the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) in Victoria. Past harvesting and current land cover data (Vegetation Resources Inventory) were supplied by the provincial government. Paper copies of early forest cover maps (the second Soo Public Sustained Yield Unit [PSYU] inventory of 1975) were retrieved from the CFS archives in Victoria. Finally, access to a 1976 Simon Fraser University thesis on land use changes in the Soo PSYU, based on the first Soo PSYU inventory in 1964, was granted by the author.

The focus of the final two years of the project is to fill in missing disturbance information. Although the available disturbance information is useful, the project has found that a considerable area of disturbance has not been documented and remains to be identified. Local historical information indicates that harvesting activities started in 1917, but areas harvested before the 1960s are not well documented, including areas that were selectively logged prior to the 1950s to remove Douglas-fir and western redcedar. The earliest aerial photography for the project area was taken in 1946 and has proven very useful. It is also anticipated that additional field examinations and conversations with early residents and forest industry participants will fill in many gaps.

One principal lesson learned from undertaking this project is the difficulty of retrieving historical information for a specific area. It seems that too little consideration has been given to preserving information that could have significant historical and natural history value. A good example is the first detailed forest inventory undertaken for the Whistler Forest History Project area – the 1964 Soo PSYU block inventory. Although the Ministry of Forests and Range library has copies of the inventory report, no maps were retained, and an extensive search by the project, including the B.C. provincial archives, has failed to locate copies.

Another example would be the difficulty the project has had in locating early sawmill information. The Ministry of Forests and Range has mill lists from the 1980s, but so far, the project has not been able to locate earlier ones. Some mill lists are included in federal documents issued by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, and later by Statistics Canada, but these mill lists were released very sporadically after the start of World War II and do not appear to include all sawmills.

The project participants are particularly pleased to be able to finish the remaining two years of the Whistler Forest History project under the auspices of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. It is hoped that this relationship will bring to light additional information and the involvement of FHABC members in the project. The project participants can be reached at:

Attention: Forest History Project
Whistler Museum & Archives
Box 1122
4329 Main Street
Whistler BC V0N 1B0



THE TEE FIRE AT MUNCHO LAKE
by Edo Nyland

On July 21, 1971 I received an urgent phone call from Jim Phelan, head of Canadian National Telecommunications (CNT) in Whitehorse, Yukon. A huge and fast-moving wildfire was approaching their extremely important microwave installations near Muncho Lake, B.C., possibly the busiest such installation in Canada. He requested the use of our Yukon Forest Service air tanker group to help the B.C. Forest Service. They had a large crew and some 11 bulldozers fighting the fire but they became overwhelmed by the speed of the fire and had pulled everybody out.

Jim Phelan was very concerned that the fire-fighting effort had been abandoned. I asked him to come over and discuss with my fire staff the many problems involved in sending our aerial fire-fighting force so deep into B.C. As I hung up the phone, another call came in, this time from a U.S. army General in Fairbanks, Alaska who told me that all military radio traffic to and from Alaska and the lower 48 states went through the Muncho Lake facility and a service interruption would be enormously costly and harmful. He sounded extremely concerned. I assured him we would do what we could.

We had a long-standing agreement with the B.C. government that we would take initial action on all wildfires that occurred up to 16 kilometres south of the Yukon border. Any such fire-fighting was to be paid for by B.C. This agreement was desirable because B.C. had little road access from the south, hardly any population, and no airstrips close to the border, except for the short one at Atlin. We, on the other hand, had the Alaska Highway and the many large Land-Lease airports the American army had built during World War II, and also several towns. The problem with Muncho Lake was that it was over 300 kilometres into B.C. and no thought had been given to the possibility that we would ever be asked to take over from the B.C. Forest Service if things got too hot for them.

Jim Phelan came to the office and said that CNT would pay all expenses for whatever we did to safeguard the microwave installations at Muncho Lake. Chief Fire Control Officer Wilf Taylor phoned the B.C. Forest Service Ranger at Muncho Lake, Henry Miskovich, and learned that B.C. had entirely given up on fighting the fire near the microwave site, pulling out all their equipment and men because it was just too dangerous. In places, the fire was moving faster than a man could run. He also commented about the stupidity of having the power supply cable for the site lying on top of the ground, in places even on top of the brush piles along the access road. There was just no way that cable would keep functioning. Wilf Taylor thought we could do something worthwhile so I agreed to take the chance and move in where the B.C. Forest Service had given up.

The main difference between us and them was that our operations were entirely aerial, while B.C.'s were mostly ground attack. I informed Commissioner Smith, the head of the Yukon, and he agreed that the Muncho Lake site was of utmost importance to the Yukon and we should take action. After all, the penalty for shutdown of the telecommunications facility, according to the contract, was \$3,000 per minute or over \$4 million per day. The Commissioner promised to inform the Minister in Ottawa. The fire season was shaping up to become one of the wildest in Yukon history and to our great surprise, we were ready to meet the challenge.

Wilf Taylor chartered one of Dr. Ailard's Lockheed Electras and sent fire instructor Ray Des Roches with the plane to Clinton Creek to pick up all the pumps, hoses, canvas tanks, tonnes of retardant, eductor mixers, and radios available there. Fire fighters on standby in Dawson City were asked if they would volunteer for the Tee fire. They all did and were soon ready to go. John Klassen, the Ranger in Mayo, was put in charge of the airstrip at Muncho Lake and Terry Kennedy Jr. was bird dog officer in charge of the air tankers, which were on standby. We had two very large Sikorsky S-58 helicopters, belonging to Okanagan Helicopters and equipped with 1800-litre buckets, in the Yukon. The pilots had been trained by Wilf Taylor to bucket retardant out of large canvas tanks, topped up by pumps – the first such action ever in Canada and possibly the world. It was night when they arrived at Muncho Lake and they immediately unloaded, set up, and refuelled.

At first light they started bucketing on the most aggressively advancing point of the fire, approaching the microwave tower site from the most vulnerable and steepest side of the mountain. The Department of Transport quickly issued a Notice To Airmen, ordering all airborne sightseers out of the immediate area of the fire action. Back and forth flew the big machines from the airport to the microwave installation, painting the mountain redder at every pass. At our advice, CNT chartered another S-58 which was available locally because it had been chartered by the B.C. Forest Service. Fresh flight crews arrived from Kamloops and were trained in the new bucketing technique. More fuel was sent by the company so the helicopters never had to stop. We used up our own supply of Phoschek retardant and also all regionally available retardant belonging to B.C., but much more was needed. CNT promised to pay for more retardant and the B.C. Forest Service in Prince George supplied us with 18 tonnes of Fire-trol retardant, which required a different mixing technique.

The microwave facilities were plastered red again and again in ever-widening circles, including the buildings and the surrounding area, being careful not to touch the towers themselves. Again the retardant ran out but there was no supply left anywhere in northern B.C., so at 1700 hrs Wilf Taylor made arrangements to charter a Hercules aircraft to bring a load of Phoschek from Abbotsford. At 1900 hrs John Klassen, who was in one of our reconnaissance planes over the fire, reported the entire area around the CNT site to be on fire and ordered bombing to stop. The fire then exploded unexpectedly toward the Muncho Lake airstrip, our base of operations, and at 2000 hrs we advised the local Ranger, Henry Miskovich, to order all Muncho Lake lodge occupants and campers to prepare for immediate evacuation. At 2100 hrs the fire hit the microwave site from all directions but our marvellous helicopters had done their job. The CNT staff had been withdrawn from the site before the fire came close. It was a most dramatic climax. The Hercules flight was cancelled before the aircraft was loaded.

At 2100 hrs I sat in Jim Phelan's office, where he had a dedicated phone connection to the microwave site. Then the power supply cable burned through and the site was engulfed by flames. For seven seconds all radio and telephone traffic halted dead, then we heard the emergency standby engines kick in and after a few hiccups, and seventeen more seconds, the communications business was completely restored. We learned later that the incoming fire had been so hot that some of the dish antennas high up on the towers had buckled or twisted, but they kept on operating. Most buildings had the paint blistered off the outside walls, insulation in the metal walls had melted, but no building burned and no equipment was damaged to the extent that it couldn't function properly. Back in the office, Jim Phelan heaved a very deep sigh of relief and so did I. It was a rather extreme situation for both of us to be in, one that could have had serious repercussions had someone been hurt. But the fight went on because there still was enough forest fuel around the site to burn the buildings if a strong wind whipped up the fire again.

When I came back to my office there was a telex from Cy Phillips, the head of the Protection Branch of the B.C. Forest Service in Victoria, saying that he was very annoyed with me for having taken suppression action so far into B.C. without asking him for permission. I thought the local Ranger would have told him. He did, but not right away. Victoria was very distant and out of our minds and in any case, he couldn't have done anything to help in the effort. I had hardly heard of the existence of Cy Phillips before his message. CNT paid all the bills as had been agreed. We paid for the salaries of our permanent staff and those who had come in from Edmonton.

When the fire cooled down a new power cable was quickly laid and this time it was buried. I never received any comments, thanks or feedback, either good or bad, from Ottawa. Not even a comment about the millions of dollars I was over budget. It was as if this event had never occurred. Commissioner Smith realized that I was in no position to spend time keeping him informed and so sent Ron Hodgkinson, an Assistant Commissioner, to keep him informed about all that was happening. If we needed help, Ron Hodgkinson was there and did not have to be asked, he knew what to do. The Commissioner in turn kept the Minister in Ottawa informed, bypassing all layers of bureaucracy and making sure that we had everything we asked for.

While the retardant bombing was taking place at the Tee fire, back in the Yukon a truck carrying a large amount of aviation fuel crashed 55 kilometres north of Ross River, with three people badly hurt and 16 hectares of forest on fire, but we had enough people and aircraft to look after it quickly. On Friday July 30, 1971 our people were ready to come back home to Watson Lake and the B.C. Forest Service resumed ground suppression activities on the Tee fire. Its final size was 110 337 hectares, and the grand total of costs and damage for B.C. alone was \$4,645,797. This did not include CNT's expenses or the Yukon's. I never inquired how much that was. The fire was declared out on October 21, 1971. A job to be proud of, in spite of the enormous amount of timber burned. In the meantime the supplies we had ordered to be delivered by Hercules aircraft had been loaded on trucks and were on their way to Whitehorse to replenish our supplies. They arrived just in time for the next big wildfire battle, along the South Nahanni River. I never heard another word from either Commissioner Smith or from Ottawa about the Muncho Lake operations or the expenses but I know we had been watched very carefully.

The fire report of the B.C. Forest Service mentioned the Yukon's involvement and called our people a very cooperative crew and a pleasure to work with. They gave us credit for teaching their men how to mix retardant with the regular fire pumps when the eductor mixers could not keep up. But there was no rest for the wicked because I had to spend all day in the office on Saturday, July 31, 1971. Ottawa was in a hurry for next year's budget estimates, a task I had neither desire nor time for. No one had told the money people in Ottawa what had been going on and that we had no time for such bureaucratic stuff.



HUNGARIANS CELEBRATE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARRIVAL AT UBC
Reprinted from a UBC Public Affairs
Media Release June 14, 2007

The contributions and achievements of 220 UBC alumni were celebrated on June 14, 2007 at the University of British Columbia, along with a unique slice of Canadian history.

The Hon. Murray Coell, Minister of Advanced Education; Jim Farrell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada; and His Excellency Dr. Pal Vastagh, Hungary's Ambassador to Canada joined UBC President Stephen J. Toope in a ceremony celebrating the 50th anniversary of the arrival of faculty and students at UBC from the Sopron School of Forestry in 1957, following the Hungarian Revolution in the fall of 1956.

Seventy Sopron alumni dedicated a kopjafa, or post, carved by Sopron alumnus Les Józsa from an 800-year-old western redcedar that was felled by the December 2006 storm in Stanley Park. The post, bearing symbols of forestry, education, B.C., and Canada, was

erected next to the traditional Welcome Gate – also carved by Józsa – outside the Forest Sciences Centre at UBC.

“The Sopron alumni’s contribution to B.C. and Canada, both in the building of the forestry industry and in shaping Canada’s refugee policy, is a testament to their perseverance,” said Professor Toope. “The UBC community is proud to have played a part in this extraordinary story of achievement and compassion.”

UBC became home to faculty members and 200 students of Hungary’s Sopron School of Forestry in 1957, after the Soviet invasion displaced one of the oldest and best known forestry universities in Europe. The Sopron Division was established in the UBC Faculty of Forestry and maintained for five years to allow the Hungarian students – who arrived in the Maritimes en masse by boat on January 1, 1957 – to complete studies in their native language. More than 80% of the students remained in Canada upon graduation, becoming a major force in the Canadian forestry industry.

“It is fitting that both the storm-ravaged tree from Stanley Park and the survivors of a revolutionary storm in Hungary found a new life and a home here at UBC,” said Miklós Grátzer, president of the Sopron Forestry alumni, which has met regularly for the past 50 years.

The Sopron graduates have collectively published 1,200 refereed papers, 1,000 conference proceedings, 46 books, and 56 patents in 26 academic fields including pulp and paper, forest regeneration, timber engineering, fire protection, and park management.

As part of the celebration, the Canadian Institute of Forestry announced the Sopron alumni as recipients of the Group Lifetime Achievement Award. The UBC Alumni Association also awarded the group the inaugural Alumni Milestone Achievement Award. An earlier ceremony opened the first western Canadian showing of the Hungarian Exodus Exhibit, a travelling exhibit commemorating the 37,000 refugees who came to Canada during 1956–1957.



This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. Please submit newsletter material and send changes of address to the Editor: John Parminter, # 3 – 130 Niagara Street, Victoria BC V8V 1E9 Phone (250) 384-5642 home or (250) 952-4123 office. E-mail: jvparminter@telus.net

Membership in the association is \$10 yearly, or \$45 for five years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Art Walker, 564 Oliver Street, Victoria BC V8S 4W3 Phone: (250) 598-4455 E-mail: jaws564@telus.net

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