

SPOT NEWS

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"WINTER MORNING AT 'ALBERNI PACIFIC LUMBER' 'CAMP ONE'"

Painting by Doug Harrison, a retired logger who grew up in "Camp One. It is used by permission of the artist. —"Baldwin" "No. 7", ALCO "No. 6" and "Shay" No. 9" waiting. This Edition features winter stories and memories from several Valley logging camps.

APR News

"Steam is back in 2018!" This was announced in a News Release in late February. In 2017, the 1929 "Baldwin" "No. 7" remained in her stall in the Roundhouse, due to the weight restrictions imposed on the two trestles on the line to the McLean Mill. The BC Safety Authority required that bridge ties be replaced and certain other bridgework be done. Following further assessment, subject to the replacement of 20 bridge ties, both the "No. 7" (90 tons) and the "RS-3" ALCO diesel (120 tons) will be allowed to cross the trestles this year. The Tie Replacement programme is to continue this spring, with a contract let to change out another 500 ties. Preparation of the "Seven" for the summer season will begin shortly.

CANFOR "No 112" Project

Work is proceeding on the 1923 "Baldwin". A new cab is to be fabricated this year for the cost of the steel. The engine was moved inside the Roundhouse in February for the next stage of its restoration. The "MBL "No. 11" was used for the move (*See left*). The next photo shows some of



Photos: D. Hooper



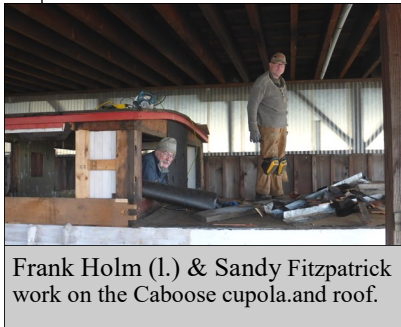
the Crew who did the move. (l. to r.) Steve Middelkoop, K.G. Campbell, Frank Holm, Bill Walker. Ted Mollet was on the engine.

1909

"CN" (Macdonalds) Caboose Project

Great progress has been made on the project this winter, thanks to the assistance of Sandy Fitzpatrick—Carpenter, and Saskatchewan visitor, Cec Barrett. Exterior and interior siding has been replaced, as well as the flooring. Sandy has made new window and door frames Rod Gledhill cleaned up an old potbelly stove to go in the Caboose.

Work is underway on the furnishing of the interior of this "mobile home on rails."



Frank Holm (l.) & Sandy Fitzpatrick work on the Caboose cupola and roof.

RETIRES HONOURED

A dinner was held in January at "Smitty's" restaurant to recognize three long-time volunteers on the "Alberni Pacific Railway". More than 45 people gathered to honour Pat and Barry Miller and Rollie Hurst.

Cec & Frank—priming the interior siding



Barry was a Founding Member of the Industrial Heritage Society back in 1983 and began his Conducting career on the "Two-Spot", when it used to run excursions along the Waterfront, pulling one coach. **Pat** eventually became a Conductor and the APR now had the "Double Conductors", as both were musical "Conductors" in real life.

Rollie moved to town so he could drive "No. 7", after a lifetime working for CPR. He had started at the end of the Steam Era and had to wait to retire before he could drive a steam locomotive. As well as driving "No. 7", Rollie was a key player in the BCIT Conductor Training Programme since it began here in 2006.

"Well done! Barry, Pat and Rollie".

Pat & Barry Miller



Raeburn & Rollie Hurst

WINTER TALES from the Logging Camps

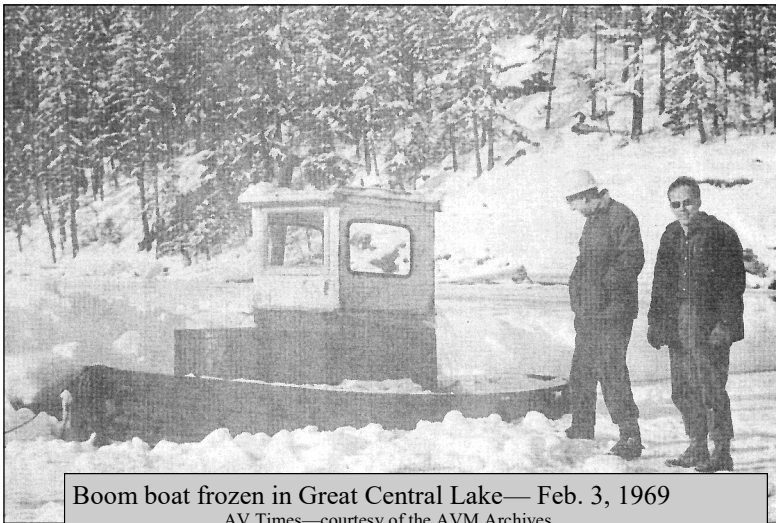
In the last 150 years, the Alberni Valley, situated in the middle of Vancouver Island mountains, typically has experienced more severe winters than the East Coast of the Island, with more snow and cold. In the time of first European settlement around the Anderson Sawmill, it was recorded that the Alberni Inlet froze over out to Pocahontas Point – more than 40 km. (1861-62).

The winter of 1915-16 was another harsh one. Even Victoria was affected, with the soldiers called out to help clear the streets of snow. In Port Alberni, the Harbour froze over and 130 inches (325 cm.) of snow was measured. The E&N Railway into the Valley was blocked for more than ten days. Several barns and twenty houses collapsed under the weight of the snow.

The 1960's saw four years with more than 10 feet (300 cm.) of snowfall each winter, including the all-time record, in 1968-69, when 232 inches (19 feet) or 580 cm. of snow was measured. More than 17 feet (527 cm) of that snow fell between December 1968 and February 1969. Logging was shut down and the machines buried deep in the snow.

In the forest industry, logging has always been seen as a more seasonal occupation than sawmilling as the work is more exposed to the weather. It was said that a logger could expect to get about nine months of employment a year as the woods were often shut down due to fires in summer and snow in winter.

By the 1940's, with the industry dominated by several big companies such as "Victoria Lumber & Manufacturing", "Hillcrest", "Bloedel, Stewart & Welch" and "Alberni Pacific Lumber",



Boom boat frozen in Great Central Lake— Feb. 3, 1969
AV Times—courtesy of the AVM Archives.

old

to Deep Lake late one winter to check on the camp. Al measured 19 feet (580 cm.) of snow on the site!

*****EDITOR'S NOTES:*****

The following stories come from conversations with Doug Harrison, Jack James, Don Watt, Bob Dingsdale and Ed Spencer. Photos are courtesy of Kirsten Smith at the AV Museum, the ladies in the Archives, Bob Dingsdale, Don Watt and Jim Falconer. "Thanks" to Doug Harrison for the use of his paintings. Background information on weather was provided by the Archives. Geo. McKnight's book, "Sawlogs on Steel Rails" was a source of information, as were Robert Turner's works. Any errors are solely the fault of the Editor.

- BOOKS! -

Sandy Macham's book on rail logging in the Nimpkish Valley has been sent to the Printer. Stay tuned! This will become a "must-have" book, with many photos, maps and detail.

"Vital Voices: Alberni Valley Loggers" is a 250-page book of stories from interviewing more than 90 retired loggers. It is a great addition to the logging history of the Alberni Valley and a great 'read'. Available @ \$35 from the AV Hospice Society at 250-723-4478.

A Winter TALE FROM A.P.L. "CAMP ONE"

Doug Harrison is a retired logger who grew up in "Alberni Pacific" Camp One in the Beaver Creek District of the Alberni Valley. "Camp One" operated from 1937 until 1953, when the rail logging was shut down. He has many happy memories of his young days in the last of the Alberni Valley logging camps. IHS member Pete Geddes was one of his buddies and both families lived in the Married Quarters, apart from the 40 bunkhouses. Here is a winter memory from almost 70 years ago.

Dad was in charge of the Shop that maintained the gas and diesel machinery in the operation. I.e. The non-steam equipment. He had started out working on steam locomotives when "Alberni Pacific" was running a rail logging camp in the Nahmint Valley in 1929. He even got his Engineer's ticket but, problem was, it was tough to get steady work in the 1930's as the youngest 'hogger' in Camp. So, he became a heavy-duty Mechanic instead.

Responsible for the gas-powered 'speeders' and other non-steam rail equipment in Camp, Dad was still in regular contact with the steam locomotives and crews. He occasionally got to run a loci when the Engineer was sick or there was some kind of unusual situation. This is what happened the day of the following story.

"It was the winter of 1951 - December. It was cold, really cold – down to minus 10 degrees – and it had snowed a lot. The Camp was shut down and most of the men had left for town. Only a skeleton crew remained behind.

It was a Sunday morning and word came from the CPR Station at Bainbridge, where the interchange with the "APL" tracks was located, that "APL's "No. 9" "Shay" was being dropped off there. (The big "Pacific Coast Shay" had been on loan to Nanaimo River Camp and was being returned, via the "E & N Railway".)

Chauncey Jorgenson, an Engineer and family friend, came to the house and told Dad, "We gotta go right now!" An unattended steam locomotive with no fire would soon freeze up, resulting in serious damage to pipes, pumps and even the boiler.

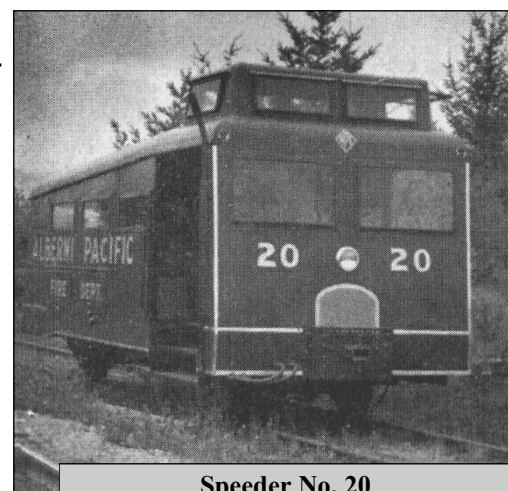
Bainbridge was 12 miles (20 km.) from 'Camp One". Chauncey, Dad and ... – a third person was needed and there was no one else around - so I became the third member of the Crew. Dad collected two barrels of diesel and Chauncey – a bottle of

"Seagrams VO". The diesel was to help start the fire in the "No. 9"; the "VO" was to start the

fire in Chauncey. Ready, we set off in the "No. 20" speeder, rattling down the tracks through the snowy bush.



Chauncey Jorgenson, in his speeder
(Photos from "Sawlogs & Steel Rails")



Speeder No. 20
Built in the APL Shops, under the direction of Chauncey & Harrison (Sr.)

"SPOT NEWS"

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At Bainbridge, there was the big "Shay" in the siding, cold and black against the snow. Time was of the essence. We had to get heat to the loci and fast. Dad brought the speeder as close as possible then, they pumped the diesel into the loci's fuel tank, to dilute the "Bunker C" oil so that it would flow. At minus temperatures, "Bunker C" was like sludge.

Next, they were using sticks to make torches of diesel-soaked rags under various pipes and fittings to warm them, to let the fuel and water flow. They had to get some fire going in the fire box. Some cotton waste, a bucket of diesel then Chauncey lit an oily rag and threw it through the fire door. There was a satisfying 'Whooomp!' Chauncey took a pull at his bottle.

He kept an eye in the firebox, nursing the fire slowly into a steady roar while occasionally taking a nip from his bottle. Once the fire was established and fuel was flowing, Chauncey told me to watch the sight glass and to tell him if it dropped too low. Didn't want the thing to blow up! He tended to the fire while checking and preparing all of the valves and gauges in the cab.

It took several hours that cold day to raise the 220 pounds of steam needed to make the big 'Shay' operational. Chauncey kept checking the fire and the water, while the needle in the steam gauge slowly crept up. The "V.O." level crept down. It was late afternoon before we were ready to head out down the grade of the interchange to rejoin the logging railway, which actually ran under the "E&N" grade at "the Loop", just East of Bainbridge. Darkness was falling by the time we had steam up.

Dad and Chauncey conferred. Dad would take the speeder home while I stayed with Chauncey in the "Nine Spot". "OK, kid. You're driving." said Chauncey, "I'll tell you what to do." He was going to fire the loci, keeping an eye on the water level.... and me. This was the more important job in the circumstances.

First, he had to line the switch to move the loci from the siding onto the interchange track. He stepped out of the cab and promptly disappeared into a deep snowbank! Digging himself out,



"WINTER OF 1951"

These two photos were taken in December, 1951—just before the shutdown mentioned in this story. Above is the "No. 4" - a 90-ton "Pacific Coast Shay". (*Anybody know the Crew?*) (*right*) The "No. 4" was "Double-heading" through the heavy snow with a second locomotive, which is not identified.

Photos courtesy of the AV Museum
PN 20242 and PN 20244



with a few choice words, he found the switch, lined it and climbed back up into the cab. "OK kid, let's go.", he said.



Chauncey helped me pull the "Johnson Bar" back into reverse and we eased the throttle open. Clouds of steam hissed up from the pistons. We were moving and I was in the Engineer's seat! In a minute, we were down at the switch onto the APL grade. I remember Chauncey telling me, as we approached the switch, "You gotta slow right down." I moved the "Johnson Bar" right down and backed off on the throttle, just crawling over the switch, and then we could start rolling again, heading for home.

Chauncey kept up running instructions to me, all the while sipping on the last of the "VO" and looking after his job. It started to snow and the snow flakes danced in the beam of the headlight. It was a magical night. For a little boy, this was a huge thrill that I'll never forget. I guess that's why I like to paint steam locomotives. It gets in your blood."

& & & & & &

WINTER TALES FROM "CAMERON DIVISION"

Jack James moved from Saskatchewan to a logging camp in the Nimpkish Valley in 1942. It was in January that they made the trip by train from Edmonton. It was 60 below when the train left Alberta and he just could not believe the temperature in Vancouver. They took the old "Cassiar" up to Englewood and proceeded by speeder and boat to the Camp at Anutz Lake. Jack could not believe his eyes when he saw his Dad next day in the sawmill, working in his shirt-sleeves!

The preceding introduction is simply to give a sense of perspective when one is talking about "Winter" on Vancouver Island.

Jack moved to the Alberni Valley in 1965, in the decade of the Big Snows. He was sent by "Macmillan-Bloedel" (MB) from Powell River to work in the new "Cameron Logging Division" east of town. The next winters saw 10+ feet of snow each year but, it was the record-breaking winter of 1968-69 that provided the setting for the following stories.

"SNOW LOGGING"

"It started to snow heavily in December (1968) and the General Foreman told me, "Go take your holidays." [Jack had not used any of his holidays that year.] The snow continued to fall, until more than 7 feet (215 cm) had fallen by the end of the month so, the woods remained shut down.

The next month – January – there was even more snow – 7-1/2 feet (225 cm) – followed by another 3 feet (90 cm) in February. The woods remained closed.

"It was a cold, sunny day. I was sitting in my easy chair by the window, enjoying the sunshine, when the phone rang. It was the Woods Foreman. - "What're you doin'?", he asked. "Laying in the sun." I answered. "Get your butt out here. We need logs".

After three months of logging shutdown, the sawmills - "APD" and the "Somass" Mill, the Plywood Plant and the "Alpulp" Mill were running out of logs. The booming grounds had been emptied and mill closures loomed.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked. "You figure it out." was the response.

The "Cameron Division" crews had been logging at the top of the "Hump", near Highway 4, and hauling the logs down "Cameron Main" to the Dump at China Creek. The Division had been started up with new "Madill" steel spars for yarding and had three of the first 'Grapple Yarders" - all the latest equipment. But the machines lay buried deep in the snow, as were all of the logging roads. And the felled and bucked timber was invisible, hidden deep under the snow drifts.

The first thing was to plow the roads, to get to the settings. "Cats", graders—we used everything we had. We hired trucks to sand the roads, and there was a "D-6" "Cat" to provide an extra pull on the steeper grade up from the Main line. Alec Falconer was one of the contractors. "

"The Brand-New Truck" (a story within the story)

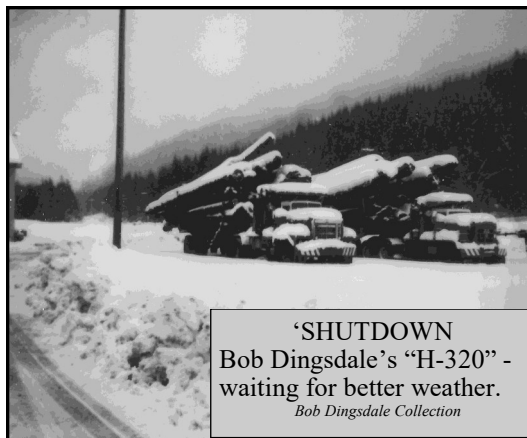
Alec Falconer was a well-known and respected trucking Contractor at Cameron and Franklin River logging operations. He was a quiet, calm man; never known to get riled up or swear, which was unusual in those days in the logging community.

Ed Spencer recounted a story that when Alec's son, Jim was breaking in on a new dump truck, Jim accidentally hit the wrong button and the box suddenly dropped. The tailgate slammed, crushing one of his Dad's fingers. And all Alec said was, "My my my!"

Alec had just bought a new dump truck and he brought it out to do the sanding on the snow-packed roads to the logging sites on the "Hump". However, on the steeper grade, the heavily-laden truck lost traction on the icy surface. Jack was there and suggested, "We'll just hook the "D-6" onto you and that will get you up to the top and the grade will be sanded at the same time."

So, the "Cat" operator, Bill Bowlie, hooked onto Alec and started out. But, the "Cat" took off with a sudden jerk and Alec was not ready. The next thing people saw was Alec sitting behind the windshield and the now-exposed motor, while the front of his new truck— bumper, grill, fenders and hood went bouncing up the hill behind the "Cat".

There was dead silence... and then an explosion of words that no one had ever heard before out of Alec. "Was he upset?!!" And then, just as suddenly, the tirade stopped. He dumped the load of sand in the middle of the road, put the truck into gear and drove off home, in his modified truck. He was back the next day, as if nothing had happened.



'SHUTDOWN
Bob Dingsdale's "H-320" -
waiting for better weather.
Bob Dingsdale Collection

"Snow Logging" - (Contd.)

With the roads open and chains on the 'crummies' and other trucks, the logging crews could get back into the woods but, where were the logs? In places, there was still more than ten feet (300 cm) covering the ground.

The fallers said, "No way. We can't even get at the trees. The snow's too deep." Jack's response was to hand out shovels and 'bear paw' snowshoes. "I must have bought out all the snowshoes in Vancouver." Jack chuckled. "The fallers left some pretty high stumps. They had to go back in the summer to clean them up."

At the steel spar settings, the rigging crews had to really dig for logs before setting the chokers to yard them out. Some days, a crew would only manage to get a dozen logs out. The Grapple yarders proved to be the most effective way to 'get logs'. They had just showed up in the logging camps and "Cameron Division" had three of them. Jack remembers the Operators: Henry Nedergard, Horace Babiuk and Frank Bottle. Jack told them to "fish" for the logs through the snow. With their heavy steel grapples, they could punch through the deep snow down to the felled timber. Sometimes, hummocks in the snow gave a clue where to 'fish'. Although they managed to yard out a fair number of logs using this method, they still had to return in the summer to retrieve the rest of the timber still laying in the setting.



Log loading in the snow at Franklin River. J. Falconer photo

"The Bet" (another story within the story)

By the end of the week, the crews were getting the hang of "snow logging". On the Friday afternoon, the Manager, Stu Crawford, called Jack to check on progress. He was catching heat from the Mill Managers in town and said, "They are desperate. Can't you get more logs?" Jack thought a moment and replied, "I can deliver 45 loads to the Dump next week." The Manager said, "I've got a case of whiskey that says you can't do it!" "You're on!" said Jack.

When the crew heard about the bet on Monday, they went to work with a will and Jack was ready. The log trucks all had chains. Everything worked smoothly. At the end of each day, everyone asked, "How many loads today?" and they would try to better the number the next day. By Friday afternoon, Jack had more than his 45 loads in the water.

He observed that it actually cost him more than the case of whiskey that he won, when he shared his winnings with the crew but, "It was worth it and everyone was happy."

And another story was born.

* * * * *

WINTER MEMORIES OF FRANKLIN RIVER CAMP The Big Snow of 1951-52 and other Winter memories

Don Watt grew up at Franklin River Camp "B", moving there as a child in 1943, when housing came open in the "Married Quarters". His Dad had been working there since the 1930's. Don, in his turn, moved back to Camp in 1967, when "Macmillan-Bloedel" re-opened some houses in the Married Quarters. His children grew up in the Camp and the family lived there until 1980. In his retirement, Don has amassed an extensive photo collection on Franklin River.

* * * * *

The week before Christmas of 1951, it started to snow and it never stopped, until there was five feet and more of snow on the ground. The houses, the trees, the mountainsides – everything was buried deep. The Camp was snow-bound—cut-off from the outside world.

There was only the logging railway to "Camp A", at the mouth of Franklin River, where one caught the boat to Port Alberni. But the tracks were buried, impassable.

Jack Bell was Camp Foreman at the time and, he was a man of action. If, as normally happens on the West Coast, snow is followed by the rain, it would be a disaster. Rain on top of the snow would collapse the roofs of the Camp buildings. Bell set men to work shovelling them off, while Dads had to shovel off the houses in the Married Quarters, leaving snow piled up almost to the eaves. Don Watt remembers the children then jumping off the roofs into the snow. And then the howling when a child lost his or her boots, stuck in the deep snow!



Watt Family house in 1951 snow

The railway had to be cleared to re-open access to the outside world. The Camp had no snow plow. Up to then, when it did snow, a couple of ties pushed along the tracks in front of the locomotive were sufficient to clear the snow but, not this time. Jack Bell ended up driving a "D-8" Caterpillar along the 14 miles to the "Beach" (Camp "A") to clear the tracks. This included balancing the big machine on the rails over the trestles along the way!

Now, access was open and, ironically, the Camp could shut down for winter. The single men emptied out of the Bunkhouses, heading for town. After that Big Snow, Jack Bell went looking for a snow plow for the Franklin River railway. He found a rotary plow and brought it back to Camp. He was just itching to test it out.

Bell got his chance later that winter, when another snowstorm blanketed the Camp. He got the 'new' plow hooked onto two big "Shays" and the Crew made a preliminary run from the Shops at one end of the Camp along the edge of the site and beside the Cookhouse.

Unfortunately, in their excitement and fascination with the way the new plow was throwing snow in a great arc away from the tracks, they forgot what direction the snow was flying. They only noticed once they had blown out all of the windows in the Cookhouse and buried the tables in wet snow!

Christmas in Camp

The Rec Hall was the venue for the annual School Christmas Concert—a major social event of the year. Don remembers the Hall as 'huge'. It was cold, as there was no insulation. It had a hardwood floor and was heated by a pot-bellied stove. He remembers that it might take a couple of days of fire in the stove to take the chill off before an event.

The children prepared and practiced for weeks before the big day. Every child had a part in the Concert, whether singing carols, taking part in the Play or skits. Don remembers being on stage, involved in an animated argument with a girl classmate, when the curtain suddenly rose. The audience roared at these two small people arguing, oblivious to the assembled audience.

There was a big Christmas tree and every child was given a present by "Santa". Unofficial "Mayor" of Franklin River, Pat Harris, always took a big part in organizing all of the other mothers in this community event.

In Don's childhood, there were about 55 families in the Married Quarters and "the Company" - "Bloedel Stewart & Welch" - put on a Christmas Dinner for everyone in the Cookhouse, with ham, turkey and all the fixin's. It was "All you can eat", cafeteria-style – a real feast!



Rotary snow plow, pushed by two "Shay" locis, making a second pass by the Cookhouse.

Photos: Don Watt Collection

NEWS from THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE CENTRE



Industrial Heritage Centre—Display Area

The “Truckers” have been busy since Christmas. One group, led by Paul Blake, have been installing improved, energy-efficient lighting for the Display Area. Another group has made rapid strides to complete the restoration/conversion of the former P.A. Fire Department 1940 “International” into a Parade vehicle ready for the 2018 season.

We have hosted a couple of groups in the past month: the “Dads’ Night Out” on Feb. 23 and the Vancouver Island Chapter of the ‘American Truck Historical Society” on March 11.

The small children enjoyed pretending to drive the fire trucks and they all tried out the Soap Box racecar. Members of the “Kinsmen” were in attendance, too, to promote the races down Argyle St. that they will be sponsoring this summer.



(above) Deck on the new Parade truck.



SOAP BOX RACER

John Granneman is ready to launch the next racer down the ramp on “Dads’ Night Out.”

(r. centre) 1947 “Caterpillar D-8”
Russ McCoy fires up the ‘Cat’ before hooking it onto the big “Arch”.



(l.) “Dads’ Night Out”
Hank Bakken came to operate his logging models—a popular activity.

(Below) **Logging Arch** at Mill
“Island Timberlands” donated a giant “arch” to be part of a “Cat Logging Display” beside Smith Road. N. Groves photo



Photos: D. Hooper



Putting the **Crew Speeder trailer** on track
On Feb. 28, a crew using “Kingsley Trucking”s “Volvo” highway tractor, took the Bob Swanson-built trailer down to the Railyard and moved it onto the tracks, with the help of a “K.G. Campbell” crane. Part of the crew were (l. to r.) Randy Catto, Pete Geddes, Paul Blake and Rod Clark. They also moved a Tie Crane that day.