

# COVID TIMES aka "Spot News"

WESTERN VANCOUVER ISLAND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE SOCIETY

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Issue 76



December 2020



*Photo: D. Hooper*

JACK JAMES and members of the "J.J. Logging" Crew at the Spar Tree & Heel boom (l. to r. Ted Maurice, Tony Super, Bob Dingsdale, Bert Simpson, Jack James, Rod Clark.

*Photos: D. Hooper*



## Jack James December 3, 1931– November 1, 2020

“Well, let me tell you a little story about that...” Jack was well-known for his inexhaustible supply of stories from his life in the BC woods. He told his last story on November 1st but the stories will live on after him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jack was awarded a Life Membership in the Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society for his contributions to the preservation and presentation of the logging history of the Alberni Valley, particularly for his role in inspiring, then creating and operating the “Old-time Steam Logging” demonstration at the McLean Mill National Historic Site.

Even in retirement, Jack maintained his passion for logging. It had been his life for fifty years and the “Old-time Logging” project allowed him to share this passion with thousands of visitors over the past 12 years. The “J.J. Logging” Crew also got to work and learn with one of the legends of West Coast logging.... and be entertained with endless stories at the same time!



2008—New Donkey Sled

The Logging Project began in 2007, when I.H.S. volunteers cleared and levelled a spot on the Mill site to build a new ‘donkey sled’. The old sled was rotting out underneath the 1929 “Washington Iron Works” steam yarding donkey, just like the ones that Jack had cut his teeth on, 65 years earlier. In 2008, the Crew set to work on the new sled, under Jack’s direction.

When the donkey was safely manoeuvred onto the new Sled, Jack said, “That fir there will make a good Spar Tree. Let’s rig it up so that people can see how steam donkeys actually yarded in the logs.” So, that was the 2009 project. Which led to the 2010 project of building a Heel-boom to show how the logs were then loaded, and a “Loading pot” - to power it.

And “voila`!” - the “Old-time Logging Show” was born! Jack and the Crew presented twice-weekly summer shows from 2011 to 2016 and weekly shows the next two years. The Show was on ‘shutdown’ this ‘Covid’ year, the year of Jack’s passing.

### Some of Jack’s story (and stories)

*(With acknowledgements to Joe Stanhope, Donna James, Ron Dick, Doug Harrison and others for stories & insights. More stories as recounted by Jack to the “J.J. Logging” Crew. Ed.)*



2009 Rigging the Spar Tree  
Aaron Thom is the Rigger.

Jack grew up fast, joining the work force as a Logger at the age of 14.

At the time, he was living with his family in a logging camp, “Camp A”, newly-carved out of the forest at Anutz Lake, in the Nimpkish Valley on northern Vancouver Island. He had just got himself expelled from school.

The James family had arrived there from Saskatchewan in 1942. His Dad, Roy James, had arrived at Anutz Lake the year before, to run a new sawmill that cut the lumber, timbers and ties needed by the logging company. World War II was on and there was a huge demand for wood. James Sr. had been offered twice the money to run the mill than he had been getting for the same job in Saskatchewan so, that is why Jack never became a ‘stubble-jumper’.

There were too few children in camp for the Government to send in a teacher so, Jack and his brothers were “free range”



2010—“J.J. Logging” -Ready to Log!  
Steam Donkey, Spar Tree, Heel Boom....  
and Jack James.

for a year or more. There were no 'playgrounds' or organized activities for them. "We had to make our own fun." said Jack. In fact, Anutz Lake was an "Active Logging" site.

At 11 years, Jack was the oldest and the natural leader of the children. They all hung out together. One of the first things that he organized was a 'high-lead' logging 'show'.

He and his brothers found a "BB winch" and put it on a sled. Next, they rigged a 20-foot alder as the 'spar tree'. Then, they logged all of the alders in the 'setting', with some kids as 'chokermen' and another one 'chasing'. They hand-cranked the logs in. They added a 'heel boom' for loading. The Superintendent came to check on their 'setting'. When a Camp Foreman complained about the 'green' chokermen that he had been given, the "Super" told him to "Send the 'greenhorns' to Jack; he'll train them!"

The next project was to build a tent-house for the summer, complete with a stove for cooking. They would light the fire and spend the night. But, one day, little brother Ken drank the kerosene and had to be 'medevac-ed' to the nearest hospital - Alert Bay—six hours away. James Sr. had already lost a child back in Saskatchewan and was beside himself.

"So, what to do now?" Jack decided that they would play 'boom-man' on the creek between Anutz Lake and Nimpkish Lake. This meant a rowboat-ride to ferry the other kids across. Brother Bob fell off a log. A kid yelled, "Bob's drowning!" James Sr. heard this and ran, then swam across to pull his son out of the water. End of "Boom-man" project. By this time, Dad got young Jack a job as a 'flunky' in the Cookhouse, to try to keep him out of trouble, but it did not last, after Jack's encounter with a bear in the early morning.

Betty-Jean Hansen also grew up at Anutz Lake. That first year, they lived in a boxcar, until a house was built. Her schooling was by "Correspondence", supervised by her Mom, and she did from Grade Two to Five in this manner, in under two years.

When another family with children moved into Camp the next year, a one-room school was opened. Jack was the oldest pupil but placed at "Grade 3", behind Betty-Jean. Classes were held from Monday to Friday so, the kids were only free to roam after school and on weekends. After a year of freedom, Jack found it very hard to concentrate on school. His mind was outside. Logging operations were taking place right near the school and Jack was watching and listening to the steam whistle signals from the donkeys. One day, he was not minding the teacher - "The Whistle Punk had just blown the wrong signal and I knew it!" The teacher, noticing his inattention, gave him a clip on the ear. Jack's instant response was to smack her back. "Oh-oh!"

And that was the end of Jack's educational career and the beginning of his life as a West Coast logger. Betty-Jean was there in the classroom and she remembers the incident like yesterday.

It was Wartime and age. Jack already knew more immediately to work on a log- ed from "Spark Chaser" to Crew. He was always up for one after that.

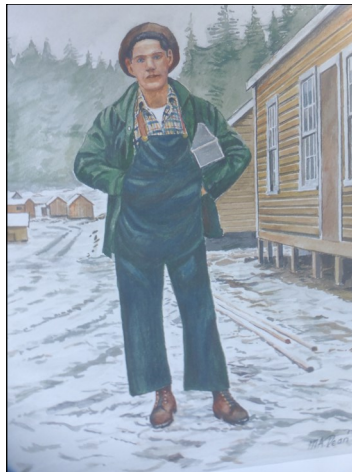
### "Work Hard; Play Hard".

In those days, logging with longer winter and summer, the economy and the War, there were half a dozen big River on the North Island,

Like other young single accumulate a big stake, then ver to "blow her in", before more.

Jack told of one of his town for Christmas shutdown. Jack had put by an extra \$500 back to Vancouver on the flush.

In the 1940's, "going took a Speeder down to Camp boat down the Lake to Camp "L", where you had to catch another Speeder down to "the Beach" at Englewood. There you waited for the "Union Steamship" boat to Vancouver.



### "First Day at Work"

Jack in "tin pants" & jacket at Anutz Lake. He was 14. This painting by Michael Dean is from a photo taken that day.

there was an extreme labour short- than any 'greenhorn' and was put ging crew. He was soon promot- "Whistle punk", onto the Rigging the next challenge, and the next

was more seasonal than it is now, mer shutdowns. After the Second Forest industry were booming. logging 'shows' beyond Campbell each with hundreds of employees. men working in camp, Jack would head to the bright lights of Vancou- heading back to camp to earn some

first trips from the Nimpkish to As well as his accumulated pay, to give to his Mom, who had moved death of her husband. Jack was

outside" was a big production. You "N" dock, where you caught a Crew

Christmas shutdown meant that hundreds of men were on the move from Camp to the coast. It was quite a rowdy crowd gathered in Englewood before the ship finally showed up. A Poker game was proposed. Several Fallers produced some whiskey and the game was on. "Here, Jackie. You can't just watch. You're in." said one Faller from Anutz Lake. (This was before he had established himself and got the nickname "Jessie", as in "Jessie James.") A bit nervous, "Jackie" joined in... and started winning..... big. By the time the boat showed up, Jack was up more than \$1500. The Big time and the bright lights beckoned.

On the boat, play resumed. Jack settled down to watch the action but the Fallers said, "Jackie, you won our money. You're buying the whiskey..... and you're in." By the time the boat reached Vancouver, Jack had lost all of the money that he had won, plus most of his 'stake'. It was a somewhat subdued Jack that showed up at his Mom's the next day.

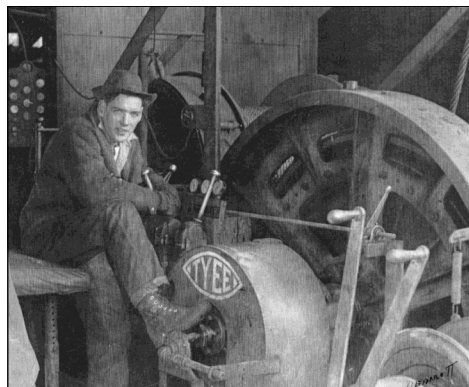
Jack expanded his logging skills rapidly with 'CANFOR', seizing every opportunity to learn more. The industry was switching from Steam to Diesel and Gas power and Jack eagerly 'rode the wave". By the age of 17, he was operating a big "Tyee" Yarder with the assurance of a veteran. [See photo above. *Courtesy of D. James*]

As the "CANFOR" operations in the Nimpkish were relatively new, Jack realized that his opportunities to advance higher were limited so, he started taking jobs in different logging 'shows'. He did several months at a remote "CANFOR" camp at the head of Harrison Lake, where he got to learn and try out some new skills, like high-rigging.

He ended up on the Sunshine Coast, based out of Powell River, becoming a "High Rigger" – the elite of the logging trade in the days of "high-lead" logging with Spar Trees. Jack used to say that he got the job when his good friend, Stan Botterill, fell out of the tree that he was rigging. He went to see Stan in the Hospital at Powell River and, as per the rough humour of the woods, he opened the visit with, "Haw-haw, Stan. I got your job."

Forty years later, Stan finally returned the favour. Jack, now retired, was cleaning the house gutters when he fell off the ladder and broke his collar bone. Stan came by to visit his old friend and finished cleaning the gutters. Coming into the house, he said, "Haw-haw, Jack. I got your job!"

It was while he was still working in the Nimpkish that he met his wife of 68 years, Donna. "I first met Jack on a blind date for my a couple of times, he That was the beginning of "He was a high rigger at the time but couldn't get up on the first attempt. While ell River, he raised one of the ever seen and yes, it came I let them lay there for him to from work. Well, didn't he put guy lines on it, he probably in a turn of logs! It was the these years, the one in our is still in use."



one of these trips to town. He friend, but after double-dating asked me to go out with him. our life-long journey together." ger at the time but couldn't get up on the first attempt. While ell River, he raised one of the ever seen and yes, it came I let them lay there for him to from work. Well, didn't he put guy lines on it, he probably in a turn of logs! It was the these years, the one in our is still in use."

Jack logged on the "Sunshine Coast" for around fifteen years, latterly at the "Stillwater Division" of "Macmillan, Bloedel & Powell River" Company. He had a firmly-established reputation in the industry for his practical knowledge and experience. He could 'get logs'.

Comfortable in his abilities, he could talk to anyone, high or low, in the forest industry. He considered Dave Turner, an M&B" Vice-President (Logging) a friend and Jack maintained his friendships. The telephone was invented for people like him!

Jack was a "people person", blessed with an extraordinary memory for the men that he met and worked with. Friend and work colleague, Joe Stanhope, observed that "Jack saw the good in people; he stuck up for his guys and they knew it." Joe became a Personnel Manager for "M&B" but he said that "Jack knew everybody's name better than I did." There was a photo in his basement den of a crew having lunch around a fire. Seventy years later, Jack could name every man in the group, including personal details such as accidents, subsequent camps where they worked together, etc. It is no surprise that men liked working on Jack's crew (s). As Gordie Erickson said, "You didn't work for Jack; you worked with him." Twenty years after his retirement, old loggers responded to the call when Jack asked them to help out with the "Old-time logging Demonstration" at the McLean Mill.

4 In 1965, "M&B" was opening up a new logging division in the Cameron Valley, near Port



Alberni. Jack was offered the job of "Woods Foreman".

Jack had been rigging wooden spars at 'Stillwater' but "M&B" went modern when they set up the new Logging Division at Cameron – they brought in new trucks and brand-new "Madill" steel spars from Nanaimo. Back in Powell River, Dave Turner had told him, "Jack, I'm getting you out of those trees. It's too dangerous." Jack was sceptical but, he never shied away from the new technology. He wanted to stay on top of the logging game.

Logging and the forest industry were changing fast in the Sixties. The era of the "Characters" – the hard-working, hard-living, tough old-time loggers that had worked their way to the top was fast coming to an end. The UBC Forestry school was graduating more and more Engineers and Managers. That was the route to the future in the logging business.

Jack, with his vast experience, could hold his own but, the possibilities of promotion past "Woods Foreman" were now unlikely in the world of modern logging. As Jack used to say, "I never made it past Grade Five."

The new "Madills" were shipped to Port Alberni by rail and it was Jack's job to get them out to camp, through a residential neighbourhood, from the downtown Port Alberni Railyard. They were big, heavy tracked machines that would have destroyed the City streets. Jack had to get them up the hill to Anderson Avenue and onto the Franklin River road – without destroying the pavement, without dragging down the Hydro and telephone lines, without disrupting City traffic too much.

This was a challenge for Jack. To save the pavement, he had a crew placing tires under the tracks as the machine moved up the hill – it was a nice 'Iron Man' exercise, lifting, rolling and flipping the big tires. A crew member was on top of the machine, to lift the wires as they advanced. The route? – up Bruce street hill to Anderson.

It was quite a had to repeat it eight spars were shipped Nanaimo to Port Al-

Jack liked chal- Big Snow in 1969, at the Port Alberni and deep snows nev- were no log booms been home, relaxing it easy when the high, "James. Get

Problem was, was still buried deep with the machines. machines located and the 'bear paw' snow- where in BC. He or- phoned up the crews. They were shocked when Jack handed out snowshoes and shovels. "We're loggers.", they protested.

But, it became quite a game, finding the logs. It was like 'fishing' for the logs, under likely-looking hummocks of snow, using grapples to punch through the crust, and digging in likely spots. Joe Stanhope remembers helicopters being brought in to blow the snow off the branches so that trees could be felled, but leaving high stumps. Jack had a bet going with a Mill Manager in town that he would deliver 50 loads to the Beach by the end of the week. The stakes were a case of whiskey. Jack won. And the Crews bought in on the challenge and it became like a game, instead of the cold, miserable, tedious, frustrating work that it was.

Ron Dick wonders if he is the only logger to be fired and hired the same day at Franklin? He had just been fired from Franklin River for some infraction and was headed back to town, walking, when Jack drove up in his pickup. He asked Ron, "What're you doing, kid?" "Got fired." "Well, do you want to work afternoon shift at Cameron?" Ron started on Monday.

He remembers that Jack showed him how to tie his laces with one hand but, more important, Jack broke him in on the rigging, working on "back spars" for a "Sparmatic" tower. Ron joined the "J.J. Logging" crew when they had to raise their second Spar tree in 2014.



"J.J. Logging" Crew—"Storytime" with Jack.

performance and they lences. In the year of the there was a log shortage er let up and finally, there left in the Inlet. Jack had by his wood stove, taking word came down from on logs!"

the 'felled and bucked' under the snow, along Roads had to be cleared; dug out. Jack ordered all shoes he could find, any- dered shovels. Then, he

performance and they lences. In the year of the there was a log shortage er let up and finally, there left in the Inlet. Jack had by his wood stove, taking word came down from on logs!"

**Ron Dick Sr. with Jack**



**MEMBERSHIP IN THE W.V.I.I.H.S.**  
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**"SPOT NEWS"**

—is published thrice yearly and is one benefit of membership in the I.H.S.... and you are supporting the preservation of industrial heritage on Vancouver Island. Send queries or material to: D. Hooper. E-mail: [dshooper@telus.net](mailto:dshooper@telus.net)



Jack had a drinking problem. He was pulled over for Impaired Driving and lost his license for a year. Instead of firing him, "M&B" hired a driver so that Jack could continue to work as Woods Foreman. "MB" knew his value to the Company.

Jack stopped drinking 28 years ago, when the Doctor told him that he'd better. He never bragged about it or expressed great regrets. He just did it. Several "AA" members have commented on how Jack quietly helped them over some rough spots with their alcoholism.

Jack left 'Macmillan-Bloedel' in the late 1970s and worked as Woods Foreman with Larry Mackenzie at "Mars Contracting" – a logging outfit working down the Alberni Canal.

Jack's passion for logging meant that he worked with Alan Boyko to set up the Logger Sports Association in the Alberni Valley. Logger Sports are now held at the Alberni Valley Fall Fair every September but, back in the 1970s, Jack arranged with MB to clear some ground across the Somass River and he and Boyko created the "Timber Bowl" to hold the Logger Sports. [See photo—right]

Logging mattered to Jack - it's past, the present and its future. He was a man of strong convictions and he did not fear 'ruffling the feathers' of people in authority, even in his own forest industry. He did not like to see the export of raw logs from local forests and he protested. He participated in road-blocks at the top of the "Hump" against logs being trucked out of the Valley while local Mills were shutting down for 'lack of fibre'. He did not fear the consequences. He publicly protested wasteful logging practices when he saw them, to the annoyance of the logging company. He acknowledged that he had taken part in some pretty damaging logging practices 'back in the day' but saw no excuse for resuming them now.



Two Old Loggers 2019

### Retirement?

Jack retired several times. He retired officially from the Industry after 50 years. He retired from the Logging Show after raising the new Spar Tree and then "re-retired" again but, it didn't 'take'. On November 1st, he still had some advice to give on the Heel boom! Jack remained a logger to his dying day.

Re-Retirement? in 2017  
Presentation by Art & Dylan Grieder



### Jack's Girlfriends

Jack always appreciated the ladies in his life. The Logging Crew noticed that Jack, even with failing eyesight, was more aware than they were, when women were approaching the site.

(l.) Jack with his childhood friends, **Gracie** and **Betty-Jean**, from Anutz Lake.

(r.) With **Tin Pants** Theatre Troupe members in 2015.

Photos; D. Hooper



## Work at the APR Roundhouse— Sept.—November

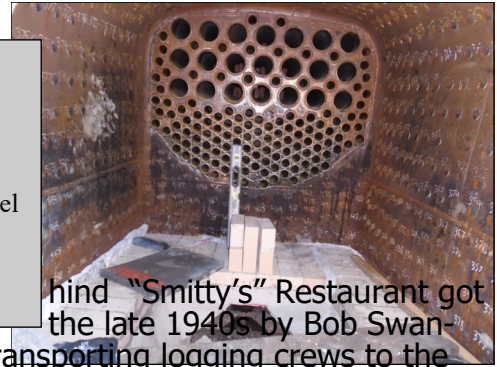
After the summer off, work resumed on the "No. 7" Boiler Project. The Firebox was re-lined with new fire-brick and reconfigured. Diesel fuel will be used instead of Bunker "C".

"Refractory Specialists" Dave Delacry, Doug Stevenson and Cal Callaree came to do this job, as well as to help with insulating the boiler.



(r.) **Locomotive Firebox**  
New firebrick goes in.

(left) **"Mortar Master"**  
mixes mortar for Michael.  
Cal passes mortar to Michael  
Roxburgh, who passed it to  
Dave in the Firebox.



hind "Smitty's" Restaurant got  
the late 1940s by Bob Swan-

The Crew Speeder Trailer be-  
a coat of paint. It was built in  
son & the Shop Crew at the Chemainus Sawmill for transporting logging crews to the  
Copper Canyon Camp, west of Chemainus. It featured the latest technology of the  
day, with folding doors and two headlights, to distinguish it from a locomotive, for  
safety. Ie. It was carrying people; not logs. (below left)

Hugh Grist led the repair work on the interior of the "Ed Sharpe" passenger coach,  
replacing rotted woodwork in a wall and the floor. (below right) David Hooper repaint-

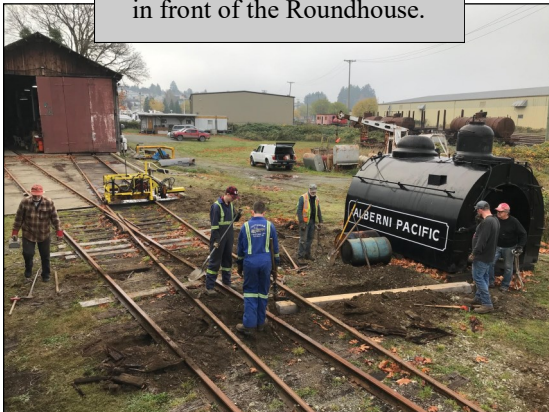
ed the interior of the coach. All of the broken  
windows in the two closed  
coaches have been  
replaced.

### Tie Replacement

In the Fall, work continued  
in the Yard and on the  
Shop lead, often led by  
Richard Spencer.



**Replacing a Switch Tie**  
in front of the Roundhouse.



(below) **"Next Gen" Painters**—October  
Richard (l.) & Jacob Spencer apply some paint  
to the Tie Inserter Machine. Photos: D. Hooper





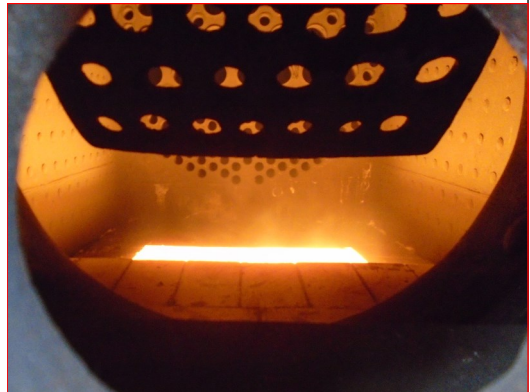
## "No. 7" Boiler Project nears completion



(Left) **Barry Dobrensky** buttons up the Smoke box

(Below): The first fire in the Firebox since July, 2018. The Boiler Inspector came to check out the work.

Late October Steam was slowly raised, by increments, until the boiler reached operating temperature and the Safety Valve popped, at 198 lbs., as it was supposed to. (below left.)



(Below) Unrolling a sheet of fibreglass to cover the boiler.

### Insulating the Boiler

The Boiler Inspector approved the Boiler test, which was very satisfying after two years of work!

Refractory Specialists Dave Delacry, Doug Stevenson & Cal Callaree came to wrap the boiler in fibreglass lagging and then cover it with the sheet cladding. They also insulated the backhead of the boiler, which projects into the Engine cab.

(Below r.) **Insulation complete**  
Ready to fasten the cladding over the insulation.





**NEWS from the INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE CENTRE**

After a quiet "Covid" Spring & Summer, activity picked up at the I.H.C., before stopping again in early December. Work had begun on the "Farquhar" steam traction engine, led by Les Stevens, with the goal of having it re-certified to operate.

Al Mason and Randy Catto were 'creating order out of chaos', building a Display out of the many old tools & artefacts that have been donated over the past fifteen years. Shelves and backing sheets have been used to better show off the display [below] near the East entrance to the building, as well as along the North wall.

Hank Bakken took the model "Challenger" truck home, to install a 3-cylinder engine. Russ McCoy repaired a forklift and Randy repainted it.



1917 "Farquhar" - restored in 2013  
Les Stevens (l.) with Russ McCoy.  
2020—"Farquhar" at the IHC—ready for restoration.



Photos:  
D. Hooper



Society vehicles were out several times. Here, Cliff West & Pete Geddes had the RR "Mack" & the 1928 "Chev" making a fuel stop at the "Co-op" on Beaver Creek Rd. "Alberni Co-op" is one of our Supporters.

**"Soup" Campbell Memorial Cruise**  
With no Fall Fair Parade this year, the I.H.S. & friends held a Cruise in memory of "Soup" Campbell.

