

## TALES OF LOGGING TRUCKERS 12/12/95

I have covered many aspects of the logging industry to date. Log truck drivers were another aspect brought into focus during a lively discussion at Walt's Diner last Friday.

As usual I was sitting quietly, enjoying my coffee when Walt proceeded to chide me about the time he ran me off the Camp 9 Road. He was on his way back to the landing for another load of logs, pedal to the metal and there was only one path left for me.

He was bearing down pretty hard so I was forced to bite back. My retort was that if I were ever in need of a brain transplant I would want one from a log truck driver. I would want one that had never been used.

I hasten to add I was not serious, as I do admire anyone who can negotiate most woods roads with an unwieldy load of logs.

Many of the truckers I know have put at least one over on its side with little damage to vehicle or driver. When you're navigating narrow unimproved ice snow-covered woods roads with grades that would make a skier shudder, stuff happens! I was quick to point out that Walt had never qualified in that category so it was obvious he could not really call himself a log truck driver.

I was talking with Phil Delong at Gil Martin's daughter's wedding about the subject just last week. I asked Phil if he remembered the time his lunch box fell off the seat and he reached for it, ran in the ditch and flopped it. He told me that was nothing; he has flipped the one he is driving now three times. Phil is what I call a real driver.

I was driving into a job one day and came upon Dennis Thibado calmly greasing his truck. The road had given way on one side and his tractor trailer with a full load of hemlock was on its side. I mentioned it to a driver at Brandreth the other day and he told me he had the same experience. They both said it's an easy way to grease the truck but a hard way to get it there.

It's easy to see just from what I have said up to this point that it is one of the most expensive trucking operations in the world. It's a hard way to make a living.

Jack Foster Sr. once asked me if I knew why they had the two big mirrors on each side of the cab on the log trucks? He said it was so you could watch yourself starve to death. He remembered years ago when a number of young fellas in Old Forge had their own trucks. His brother-in-law Frank Ritz Jr., Art Baker and several others would buy a new truck each fall at the start of the season. They would work like mad all winter hauling the spring breakup loose from their trucks to the bank. Like all other forms of logging, trucking is a hard, demanding occupation and my hat's off to those that do it.

I have another story about a log truck driver that is chilling to say the least. To be continued.