

LOGGER BRUCE MARTIN SURVIVED PORT LEYDEN BRIDGE COLLAPSED 12/19/95

As promised, here is a tale of another log truck driver that is chilling to say the least.

This is a story about Bruce Martin, a long-time acquaintance and experienced logger. Bruce started working in the woods when he was 13. His father was a combination farmer and logger in Croghan. There were 16 children in Bruce's family; eight girls and eight boys. Six of the boys are loggers and it was a natural step for Bruce to follow suit.

Our story starts on November 13, 1985. Bruce was trucking logs with his brother Mahlon's new GMC tri-ax truck.

The route took him across the bridge over the Black River in Port Leyden.

It was his 120th trip, but for some unexplained reason, Bruce was filled with apprehension and trepidation. He soon had reason for his uneasiness.

The front of the truck rolled easily across the bridge onto the middle abutment. Suddenly, the bridge behind him let go with a horrendous roar. Bridge and truck plunged backward dragging the cab off the abutment and downward to the cold swirling waters 20 feet below.

There was no time to react. Stunned, Bruce could only hang on to the steering wheel, bracing himself for the inevitable. With a tremendous roar the windshield was blown out and the cab was immediately inundated with water and fuel oil. In total darkness he found himself pressing his face against the roof of the cab, trying to take advantage of the three or four inches of air trapped there.

Swallowing both water and fuel oil he realized he had to get out and to the surface. Groping his way to the windshield, he worked his way out and up through to the surface 30 feet above. Surfacing, he quickly swam against the current to the nearest shore.

As he pulled himself up onto the bank, cold and shock set in and Bruce was unable to stand. Help was there almost immediately and he was quickly whisked off to the hospital. He was treated for the fuel oil he had swallowed. After a couple of hours of

recuperation, Bruce was pressing to go home.

Bruce was well equipped to survive such an ordeal. He is one of the most rugged individuals I have ever met. Anyone who puts the chains on and off his truck all winter in a tee shirt has to be tough! When I first heard about the accident and the circumstances, I was not surprised he survived.

The Martins have always had a strong and abiding faith in the Lord and Bruce gives credit for the outcome to that faith.

The next time you cross that bridge, think of Bruce and what might have happened if the bridge had given way with a loaded school bus. Perhaps the Lord does work in mysterious ways.