

**REMEMBERING NORM VILLIERE, A FIRST-CLASS WOODS
WORKER
11/21/95**

Old Forge has had its share of first-class woods workers. It also experienced its share of sorrow and tragedy as a result of accidents in the woods.

Felling the trees contributed to many of the fatal accidents connected with logging. Norman Villiere was only one of at least three area people that I knew who suffered such a fate. At the time he was killed Norm was living in Utah.

Norm did not die because of lack of experience. He was one of the most capable men around with a chainsaw, a man who was proud of his ability to put out a high rate of production.

I remember him telling me how he cut off his little toe with the saw and never felt it. He was bucking a big spruce and leaned over the tree to make the cut, not realizing his foot was under the saw tip. His first clue was when he noticed his sock was wet and soggy. Looking at his foot he saw the cut in his boot. It scared the hell out of him to take his boot off and look.

Norman was a well-known skier and lover of winter sports, with one exception – he hated snowmobiles with a passion. It was this dislike that ultimately prompted his move to Utah.

On one occasion he achieved a certain measure of revenge for the lost sleep because of late night bar hoppers.

One Sunday morning, he got up at 5 a.m., parked his truck outside of the Forge Motel and tuned up his old XP100 Homelite saw.

He was a flamboyant, colorful character much like his dad, Reg. His snappy repartee entertained one and all usually at one of the local diners. Upon hearing me addressed as "Honey" by my wife, he quipped, "If that's honey, I am selling my bees."

His sense of humor carried over to his guiding activities; his hunting parties were always interesting.

While making a deer drive near the Club line, Norm came across a fresh track that could only be attributed to a poacher. To warn the interloper of possible capture, he started to call out, "Watch out L.L. Bean!"

He was famous for lighting stackers. A stacker (to the uninitiated) is a tall hollow dead stub. A fire is started in the butt and with the right draft, the resultant fire is impressive; it is done only while snow is present.

A stacker he started on the Green Lake flat turned into a forest fire two days later when the snow melted. The guides knew how it started.

While he was crossing the Moose River on the ferry rope to retrieve a boat, his Uncle Leo shook him off into the river. Mr. Hunter, whose party they were guiding, was a little perturbed about interrupting the hunt while Norm dried his clothes in the camp.

Story has it that Norm shot a buck near West Pond and said the buck made it over onto the League Club before expiring. Neil Barker, preserve manager, and Jim Axtell, state game protector, arrive on the scene. The deer is seized, charges of trespass are pending and Barker and Axtell start for the South Shore Road with the deer. Father Reg, unencumbered by the deer, heads for Little Moose. Sam Earl, Club official and Reg's employer, assures him there will be no charges. Deer is returned to Norm and Jim Axtell remarks that they earned at least one hindquarter for dragging it out of the woods. In typical fashion, Reg replied in no uncertain terms, "Your part is back in the woods – the asshole!"