

LOGGERS FLOPPED MORE THAN ONE TRUCK WHILE ON THE JOB

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Well, it was bound to happen sooner or later and it did with my article on log truck drivers. I goofed when I reported that Art Baker and Frank Ritz Jr. lost their trucks to the bank after a hard winter. It did not happen and I apologize to Frank's and Art's families.

It's an ill wind, however that doesn't blow some good and I did get some new insights on log truckers in general. Please bear with me for one more episode on the subject.

Frank assured me that it was very hard to make a living at it in the early days. As he put it, "It was hard to make any money, but it did put food on the table."

Most drivers were paid by the amount of logs or pulp delivered to the mill, so they were constantly pushing their trucks to the limit.

The old bridge at McKeever had an overhead structure much like the one on Route 28 in Forestport. The cross members on either end were so low it was impossible to clear them with a full load.

Frank and many others would pull up to the bridge and pass the top of the first two tiers back on the rear tier, pull up to the rear tier and transfer the top of that to the front.

The whole process was repeated again at the other end of the bridge. They were able to carry one half cord more pulp by operating in this manner.

One driver would park his truck under the loader and sleep most of the night so he would be the first one loaded in the morning. With luck, it was possible to haul an extra load some days.

Frank agreed that a real log trucker had flopped a few trucks. On one bad stretch of road that was breaking up in the spring, he put one over three times before hitting the main haul.

Bob Pashley was riding with Frank when he had two close calls. One was at Burdicks Crossing near Grieg, when they rounded a turn in a snowstorm and a car was

coming at them on their side of the road. Frank took the right shoulder and the truck lay over on the snow bank with the snow barely keeping it from going all the way.

Another time they were heading back into the job on a steep woods road when the truck started to spin out and head back down the hill.

Bob had the door open ready to jump when Frank reached across, grabbed him by the belt and pulled him back into the cab. He was able to throw the truck in reverse and bring it under control at the same time.

Frank was driving for Oliver Scouten and had to be pulled uphill to the landing with a cable on the loader and let down the same way. Finally, Oliver suggested that Frank try it without the cable to go back down the hill. Frank wanted no part of it until Oliver said he would ride down with him. It was Oliver's truck so Frank figured if he was willing to ride with him he would give it a try.

They started down the hill , Oliver bailed out of the truck and Frank was on his own. There was a right turn at the bottom of the hill and Frank put it this way: "You might just as well have not turned the wheel at all.

The truck and Frank ended up out in the brush none the worse for wear.

It is a tough life and takes a special breed of man, but they know they stand in a class by themselves. You don't need to be told or try it to know it's true!