

# SPOT NEWS

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**Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society**

**Issue 43**



**February 2010**

"Santa Train" Dec. 5, 2009  
Enr. John Land



Photo: D. Hooper

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: February 16, 7:30 p.m., at  
Echo Centre.**

**Guest Speaker:** Richard Mackie, author of Mountain Timber (Comox Logging)

**Reminder:** Membership Renewals at the AGM.

# ALBERNI PACIFIC RAILWAY NEWS

Winter is 'R&R' time for the APR and equipment, after the last event of the year, the annual "Santa Run". We carried a record 1200 happy passengers on December 5.

Maintenance of the 'No. 7' has been the priority, ever since summer excursions to McLean Mill began ten years ago so, the 1954 ALCO "RS-3" (No. 8427) diesel has received little attention, even though it has been used much more in the past three years for the BCIT Conductor courses.

The RS-3 'died' the last day of the most recent Conductor Training course in mid-November. It refused to move when Engineer Rollie Hurst went to take the train home to Port Alberni from the McLean Mill. The following day, the town was treated to the unusual sight of the steam loci hauling the ailing diesel back home to the Roundhouse, where Sterling Stump led the effort to diagnose, then cure the problem.

Don Wigen found the electrical schematics on the 'Net and Sterling & Co. methodically tracked down the problem, which turned out to be in the 'motor generator', above the main engine. (This unit supplies the AC to the amplydne for the creation of fields for the main generator and the traction motors.)

One of the four brushes had broken off and the commutator also needed to be cleaned and turned. Anker Electric did the job and finally, on January 23, the RS-3 fired up and was taken for a test run in the railyard. Members said that 'She has not sounded that good for years!'

This is a great relief to the I.H.S. as the diesel allows us to continue to be a training facility for BCIT. It is thus a revenue generator which the Society can ill afford to lose. Thanks and kudos to Sterling and the crew for restoring the RS-3!

Shortly after 'No. 7' rescued her sister loci, mechanic Dan Gledhill and Rollie began the scheduled maintenance on the steamer. New brasses for the left-side driver are being made and will be machined at Alberni Engineering.

Maintenance continues on the 'Alberni Sub'. We had hoped to be able to fetch 4 boxcars from Nanaimo for use during Conductor Training. The mid-November rains brought down trees during the last BCIT course, for added realism. In December, volunteers replaced a rail smashed by a falling fir above Cameron Lake .



**Santa & Helpers**  
(below) Diesel Doctor, Sterling  
Photos: D. Hooper



**BCIT Conductor Training—November**  
Enr. R. Hurst, I.H.S. members I. McIntyre,  
K. Rutherford  
—just before the RS-3 'died'.

(below) "No. 7" leaving McLean Mill in the evening rain, pulling the crippled "RS-3".



Crew lifts replacement rail onto car at Loon Lake. Note 'Hi-railer' behind.



Replacement rail rolled into place  
Note fallen tree trunk beside track

### RESTORATION of a circa 1920 'WHITE' truck

Freddy Myers of Campbell River, long-time trucker and collector of old trucks, retired last year and had to clear his property. He offered two 'White' truck frames, the motor, a trailer and some new(!) solid rubber tires to the I.H.S. What a scoop!

The "White" is from the period 1916-20, when the first trucks appeared in West Coast logging. Several members cleaned up the best frame. Les Stevens lifted the motor,

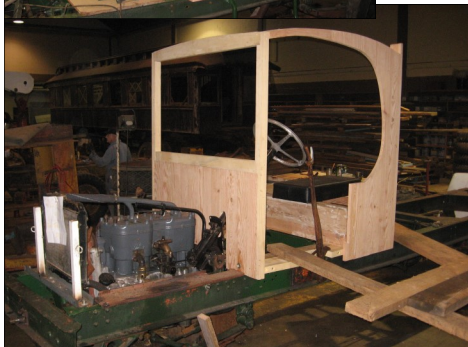


(left) With the engine now mounted, Les eyeballs the frame before welding new brackets on. (Note Vic holding the brackets)

(below) John & Les Stevens with the steering wheel, before its restoration.

got it running, painted it and set it into the good frame. We are looking for the proper 'White' radiator.

Les and Dave Tranfield rebuilt the broken steering wheel. John Reeves offered to build the cab and there was much debate over the design and much poring over old photos. John decided to build a "C" cab. The project is now well under way, as is shown in the photos. We are trying to figure how to get new tires onto the old rims. Does anybody know? Please call if you do.



Photos are in clockwise order, from the upper left.  
 (upper left) George Rogers cleans bare truck frame.  
 (right - two photos) John & Tony Super put the front of the cab into place.  
 (mid-left) Cab as of late January, 2010  
 (lower left) John has the back of the cab in place.  
 Photos: D. Hooper

John Reeves was trained as a cabinet maker as a young man but spent much of his life as a building contractor. Now, he has a chance to again exercise his original training.



(left) Tony Super making truck noises, tests out the cab.

## Trucking Lives in the Alberni Valley

Two brothers from an old Alberni Valley logging family spent their lives driving trucks in the forest industry. Ed Spencer began driving just when the big logging operations were converting from rail hauling to trucks and Alex, shortly after. By the 1940s, the easy access timber in the valley bottoms was mostly gone so companies began to log the mountain slopes and side valleys. Rail hauling on steep grades, even using the geared 'Shay' locomotives, was dangerous, expensive and time-consuming. Trucking was the solution.

Trucks had been used for log-hauling since the 1920s but only by the 'gyppos' - the small contractors. In that period, trucks were small, under-powered and had notoriously unreliable brakes. (That is why many of the early trucks never had doors—easy exit!) Trucks could not yet deliver timber to the mills in sufficient volume nor with the reliability of the logging railroads.



Ed Spencer with 1940 Warford Ford belonging to K.D. Robinson Trucking.-hauling at Sayward.

By the 1940s, however, truck manufacturers had made great technical strides. Local builders such as 'Hayes' of Vancouver, had made continual improvements and innovations such as water-cooled brakes to respond to the demands of West Coast loggers so, by the time the rail logging companies were looking for something better, the new trucks were there ready.

Ed Spencer began his driving career in 1946, right at this time of change. Ed had been taught to drive by a local trucker named Chuck Smith, before he (Ed) joined the Army near the end of the Second War.

When Ed went out at Corfield's Garage, Chuck simply asked him, 'Want to

One day was hanging

Chuck began with five pieces of advice: 1. "Always start by checking the oil and fuel, the brakes. Do some greasing";

2. "Come down a hill in the same gear you went up, maybe

one lower;" 3. "Don't swerve for potholes;" 4. "If the truck starts to run away, make up your mind fast to get out, (Jump down close to the truck and roll away.) otherwise, there's no point;" 5. "There's nothing worse than a driver who can't back up with the trailer down." Ed observed that he only had to use #4 one time and that 'It worked.'

Ed learned on a 1940 Ford 3-ton single axle with a double axle trailer. Chuck made Ed back up for ten city blocks, including going around corners, in the neighbourhood north of Johnston Road. He had to practice until he could negotiate his way around the course, without stopping. Alex noted that there was somewhat less traffic around Alberni in those days!

After that, Ed picked up odd jobs around Alberni. Here is a driving story from that time: In the 1940s, there was a log dump into Kitsuksis Creek at the present site of the Royal Canadian Legion (Br. 169) and another one off Victoria Quay. There was no Clutesi Haven Marina and no breakwater. There was a row of pilings and a boomstick across the mouth of the Creek to keep the logs from floating away down the Somass River.

One of Ed's first jobs was casual employment by McLelland Contracting (piledriving, etc.) as 'boom-man' at the Kitsuksis log dump. You could only dump at high tide so, you only worked when the tide was in.

A fellow named Basil Walker, who had a sawmill and did some logging out Beaver Creek, had picked up a contract to supply pilings down to the waterfront so, he was having them hauled to town, to the 'dump'. Chuck Smith had the job of delivering the pilings.

Chuck had left the empty truck at the dump at the end of the previous day. Next morning, Ed showed up at the appointed time, with the rising tide. No Chuck. An hour later, Basil came storming up to the dump. He saw the empty truck. "What's going on?," he yelled. What could Ed say?



SPROAT LAKE DIVISION DRIVERS—1967  
Ed Spencer, standing, 2nd from right; Alex, 4th from left.

5 Basil told Ed to take the truck back out Beaver Creek Road for next load. So, Ed did. Returning to Alberni, he had to drive down Victoria Quay, turn left and come back to be able to approach the dump from the proper side. Still no Chuck so, Ed went back for a second load.

This time, crossing the Creek on his return to the log dump, he could see someone standing on the other side, waiting. Who was it?

It was a constable of the B.C. Provincial Police. (No RCMP then.) The constable asked to see Ed's Driver's license. - OK. "How about your Chauffeur's license? Are you 21?" - Oh-oh. "How about the 'Long Load' permit?" - Oh-oh. That was the end of that day's work.

Ed was given a date at Magistrate's Court. (There were still magistrates in those days.) The Magistrate proceeded to reveal to Ed the enormity of his crimes, telling him that he never wanted to see him in his Court again.... and fined him \$5—which Ed said was a big enough sum in those days to 'get your attention'. And those were the only two loads that Ed drove until he came back from the Army.



Alex Spencer (circa 1970) with 1958 "Hayes" HD "H-41" Sproat Lake with V-8 GMC engine.

Alex Spencer, seven years younger, learned to drive from his brother Ed, on a 1942 Ford truck belonging to K.D. Robinson Trucking. (Ed started driving for Robinson after returning from the Army.) Kel Robinson had 5 trucks: "No. 1" was the worst; "No. 5" was the best. Robinson's policy was for the best drivers to drive the worst trucks. Ed had been given the 'No. 2'. Alex practiced until Ed thought he was proficient then, Robinson hired him, too.

Things went smoothly for the first three months. In hindsight, Alex realized that he had not had to drive on any really bad grades up to then. One Saturday, he was told to bring a yarder belonging to 'Honey' Miles down off the Beauforts, back into the Valley. There were no low-beds then; the yarder was just loaded to bring the truck down the old 'Export Road' that comes down from the 'Lookout' to join the Old Nanaimo Highway, where Coombs Country Candy is today.

At the top of the hill, he stopped, got out to open the valve on the water tank to start the cooling water spraying on the brake drums—no such convenience as having the valve in the cab! He was half-way down when the water ran out. He had opened the valve too much! At the railway crossing, the truck started to pick up speed. "Runaway!"

Scotty Richardson, the yarder operator, bailed out of the cab. Bob Miles, who had been riding on the yarder, ready to lift the phone lines over the load at the bottom of the hill, was the next man to bail. (He lost his gold watch while jumping but found it again the next day, when he walked back up the hill to try to figure what had happened.)

Alex rode the truck down and angled right, into the alders, to avoid running onto the highway. He just missed a big stump. He emerged from the wreck badly shaken. The truck was a write-off. The yarder was undamaged but the 'house' (shelter) was destroyed.

Brother Ed came down the hill shortly after and drove right by the scene, not seeing the truck in the alders. He came back when he realized that Alex had not made it to town. He took Alex to the Hospital, where the doctor said, "There's nothing the matter with him."

Alex commented that Kel Robinson told him subsequently that he had intended to keep him, on the principle that "Even good drivers have accidents." The problem was that he (Alex) "got a little smart with him" when Robinson phoned that Sunday evening. Alex opened the conversation with, "Well, I guess I don't have a job." To which Robinson replied, "Well, I guess you don't."

After that experience, Alex was not too sure about truck-driving and worked the next three years pulling rigging for various logging contractors around the Valley.

[to be continued...]

#### Acknowledgements:

to Ed and Alex Spencer for stories and photos.

### PROJECTS & Members at Work

Members are currently working on several other projects at the Industrial Heritage Center, including on the 1882 E&N railway parlour car, "Strathcona".

A group with Tom Maher are working on a 1944 6-wheel drive 'International' that was donated by the family of Don Rowe. It was war surplus, as was much equipment used by contractors after the Second War. It was built for the U.S. Marines for use in the war in the South Pacific. That is why it originally had a soft top (sun), winch and all-wheel drive for the sandy beaches and other off-road terrain. It was easily converted into a log hauler in the B.C. woods. Don Rowe last used it as a dump truck.

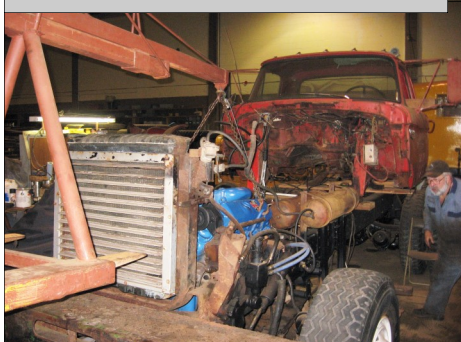
Vic Laughlin's restoration of the 1965 'Mercury' is on hold as he has been getting distracted by too many other projects. (Being a rookie grandpa is another complication!) The 'Mercury' is now diesel-powered, the engine being a transplant from an old Papermill tractor. This means that the engine compartment, mountings, exhaust system, suspension, etc. have been modified. The frame has been reinforced, too.'



1979 "Major Distraction"



Vic Laughlin (l.) and Frank Anderson work on the head of the engine for the '65 'Mercury'. (We regret to say that Frank died suddenly in December. He will be missed.) (below) Engine being lowered into place.



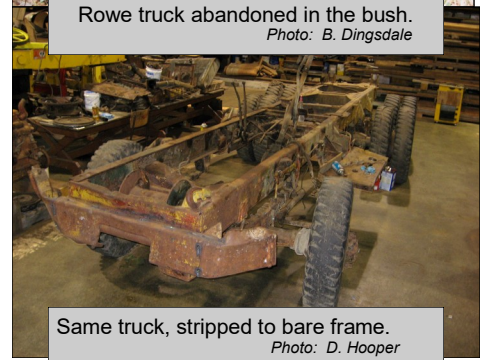
Flail mower for RR right of way maintenance being fabricated from other machines at Soup's shop.

The major 'distraction' recently is the big 1979 'International' C.O.E. tractor, donated by Ben Schievink, former owner of Valley Farm and Garden. It has been getting a thorough going-over as it could be the solution to the Society's dilemma of wearing out the vintage Hayes 'Clipper' or the 'City Jimmy' on hauling expeditions.

Work continues on the TD-14 bulldozer (also from the Rowe family) under the long-range supervision of Lorne Bratt, who has been granted 'sick leave'. We wish him a speedy recovery.



Rowe truck abandoned in the bush. Photo: B. Dingsdale



Same truck, stripped to bare frame. Photo: D. Hooper

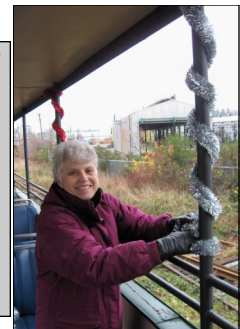


(l.) Irv & Rollie with BCIT Student Conductors.

(r.) Bonnie McIntyre decorating Santa Train.

(below, middle) Soup Campbell & Irv, working on the RS-3.

Photos: D. Hooper



Veronica decorating Santa's loci.

## I.H.S. PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2010

2009 was another exceptional year for the I.H.S. Our Society has two unofficial groups: the Truckers and the Train crew. Last year, we added another group—the 'Loggers'. A unique crew of regular and new volunteers recreated a 1940s era steam logging "show".

It started two years ago at the McLean Mill National Historic Site. The McLean's steam donkey was restored and recertified. The wooden sled the boiler and drums sit on was rebuilt by a crew under the leadership of Jack James, retired logging foreman.

What would a steam donkey be without the spar tree? Jack convinced a high rigger to join the Project. They topped and rigged the tree—something last done at Sproat Lake in 1964. The donkey was re-positioned, lines spooled onto the drums and rigging run out into the setting. Early last summer, they actually started logging with the steam donkey for the first time in the Alberni Valley in over 40 years!

The Train crew had a very busy year with the #7 steam locomotive again performing flawlessly. The #7 ran 130 times to the McLean Mill and did six more runs in December as 'Santa Train.' We hosted two BCIT Conductor Practica for over 25 students, who happily practiced their skills at making up and moving a train, to and from the McLean Mill.

Last July, our Society hosted a railway tour for a speeder group, based out of California. In preparation, 25 miles of track, from Port Alberni to the large trestle on Cameron Lake, was hand-brushed and cleared by two teams, one of which was from the east side of the Island. On July 5, a cavalcade of 31 speeders made the journey from the Station to Cameron Lake.

Work continues unabated at the Industrial Heritage Center (old Arena) with a very dedicated crew working on many projects. Noteworthy in 2009 was the complete restoration of a 1948 'Lorain' crane donated by Society supporter Dave Walmsley. For almost four months, a crew toiled almost daily on the crane. Late last spring, complete with bright orange paint job, the crane rolled out the big doors of the Heritage Center under its own power. It is now a 'working artifact' out at the McLean Mill, helping with log-loading, for example.

We like to display our restored vintage equipment and even more if we can host an event that showcases the skill of others in restoring their vintage equipment. Last September, we hosted the second annual Antique Truck Show at the McLean Mill. It is an honour to host such a unique show with over 50 rigs attending, from as far away as Washington State.

Mayor McRae and the Port Alberni City Council truly appreciate our restoration efforts and fully support us in our endeavours. I would like to sincerely thank the Mayor and City Councilors for their ongoing support. Thanks also to the staff of the Alberni Valley Museum.

Two components that are critical to our success are the skill and time given by our volunteers and the funding required to finance these projects. Unfortunately, 2010 will be by far the most challenging year in our 27-year history with the loss of our Gaming funding.

Thank you.

Kevin Hunter—President  
Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society





**CURRENT EVENTS:**

**“Pong to Wii”** - an interactive display of 25 years of Video games.  
 Do you dare come to test your skills against your children.. or your grandchildren?  
 Display runs till March 23rd.

**Film Fest:** 7 p.m. at the Paramount Cinema  
 Next shows: Feb. 17 - “The Last Station” (Leo Tolstoy)  
 Mar. 17 - “Cooking with Stella” (comedy)

**Editor’s Notes:**

“Where is “Yeller”, the 1947 McLean “Hayes”?

The most well-known truck in the Industrial Collection of the AV Museum is currently on display in Nanaimo, publicizing the City and its industrial heritage. It is in the Showroom of “Inland Kenworth” at Northfield Rd. and the Inland Highway.



Financial Woes of the Industrial Heritage Society

It is by now well-known that funding from the Gaming Branch which has sustained the maintenance and restoration budget of the I.H.S. will dry up in March of this year. We are controlling expenses seriously while we search for other means to continue our work in the future.

The Society will be applying for a ‘Direct Access Grant’ from the Gaming Branch, for work on Society-owned equipment, but we have been told that the prospects are slim.

Some good news is that **Coastal Community Credit Union** has decided to partner with us as the main Sponsor of the **Antique Truck Show**, to take place this year on Labour Day weekend in **September (4-6)**. As the I.H.S. had covered all expenses of the first two Shows as part of our ‘community involvement’ as per the criteria of Gaming Branch, we are very grateful to Coastal Community Credit Union for their sponsorship of this event that involves participants, not just from the Alberni Valley but from the mid-Island and beyond.

One member proposed another small way to provide some extra money to the I.H.S. coffers while we seek a way through our financial difficulties: if all members got a 2 or 3 year Membership, that would provide an extra \$1500 to \$3000 for next year.

Donors to the I.H.S. through the AV Museum will be given Charitable Donation receipts for income tax.

“It’s a wrap!” Frank & Karen Holm tie down a tarp protecting passenger car for the winter.



**MEMBERSHIP in the WVIIHS**

\$15 / year. Cash or cheque to:  
 Barry Miller,  
 6601 Golden Eagle Way,  
 Nanaimo, B.C. V9V 9B4  
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**‘SPOT NEWS’**

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