



SPOT NEWS

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Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society

Issue 49



February 2012

Have you paid your 2012

'Logging Speeders' Pp. 6-7
by Ray Barron



Restored 'C.L. & R' (Comox Logging) speeder returns to the rails. Feb. 5, 2012
I.H.S. members K. Hunter (l.), G. Murton and G. Blake welcome the completed project.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING February 28 at 7:30 p.m. Echo Center
Guest Speaker: Robert Turner - "E & N RR"

Train Crew poses for Centennial
Photo. Enr. G. Williamson
Photo: H. Thomson



ALBERNI PACIFIC RAILWAY

On December 4, the **Centennial** of the arrival of the first passenger train to Port Alberni was commemorated. The crew of the 'Santa Train' did an extra run for dignitaries and other guests interested in celebrating a "Heritage Moment". Students from Eighth Avenue Elementary made and held the birthday banner for the event. A good



CUTTING THE ANNIVERSARY CAKE
Mayor McRae performs one of his last official duties.

number of people dressed in period costume, really adding atmosphere to the occasion. A reception followed in the old 'railway hotel' across the street—the Somass.

Santa Train

The annual Christmas trains were run Dec. 3-4. This was the second time that we have run two

days—Saturday, then Sunday morning. Virtually every run was 'Sold Out' and many members helped with the decoration beforehand and operation on 'train days to make it another resounding success.

B.C.I.T. Courses continue

Four more Conductor Training courses have been hosted on the A.P.R. since last October, making a total of nine in the past twelve months. This has taken a big time commitment from the members, four of whom must be there every day of a course. Irv MacIntyre and Rollie Hurst were there every day and the "RS-3" has seen heavy use.

Hosting these courses was our biggest source of revenue this past year. This has made up for the loss of funding from the Gaming Branch...this year. BCIT has made it known that it wants the APR to have a second locomotive in service for training by October so, work has begun on the "No. 11" - a former yard diesel from the Paper Mill, in pieces for years.

"Number 7" Maintenance

The old 'Baldwin' is getting her annual winter check-up. Dan and Rod Gledhill are pulling a tube from the boiler in this photo and reinforcing the smoke-box.



8th Avenue children with banner



Santa (K. Rutherford) and the Elves.
Photos: D. Hooper

January BCIT class at McLean Mill



Upgrading boxcar
Rollie Hurst (l.) and Dan Gledhill work on the boxcar to be used in BCIT Conductor training, bringing it up to modern standards.

OPENING THE 'ALBERNI SUBDIVISION' of the E & N RAILWAY

- by Frank Holm

The Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway was the western outpost of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The CPR bought the E&N Railway in 1905. The railway was minimally profitable at the time but it came with 1.4 million acres of prime timberland, mineral rights and scenic values.

In 1906, survey parties lined the grades to Parksville, Alberni and Courtenay. By 1908, the line was cleared to Parksville. By 1910, the rails had reached Cameron Lake. The CPR wanted the grade on the east side of the lake, to give an easier gradient to the Alberni Summit so, the highway was moved to the other shore.

Many farmers got work on the construction crews, cutting ties and hiring their horses for the clearing and grading. West of the Summit, supplies came by the CPR's coastal boat serving the West Coast, the "S.S. Tees". Eventually, heavy equipment such as a steam shovel and a locomotive were brought in by sea, too.

After the clearing and grading, the



Track-laying crew near Third Avenue AVM PN0154



AVM PNI4785

rock-blasting and bridge-building (trestle) crews went to work, followed by the telegraph line and station construction crews. (The CPR had standard designs for their whole system.) Contractors and subcontractors abounded in the Alberni Valley. Sawmills were built at Bainbridge and Loon Lake to cut timbers for trestles. New businesses were popping up, especially at "New Alberni" (around the Train Station.) The first hospital in the district was built at Loon Lake to treat workers injured on the construction.

"Alberni" Station in 1914—"MEETING THE TRAIN"
Just off Lathom Rd. The horse was still king of the road in Alberni Valley. Note the carriage from the Arlington Hotel picking up passengers and their bags from the train.

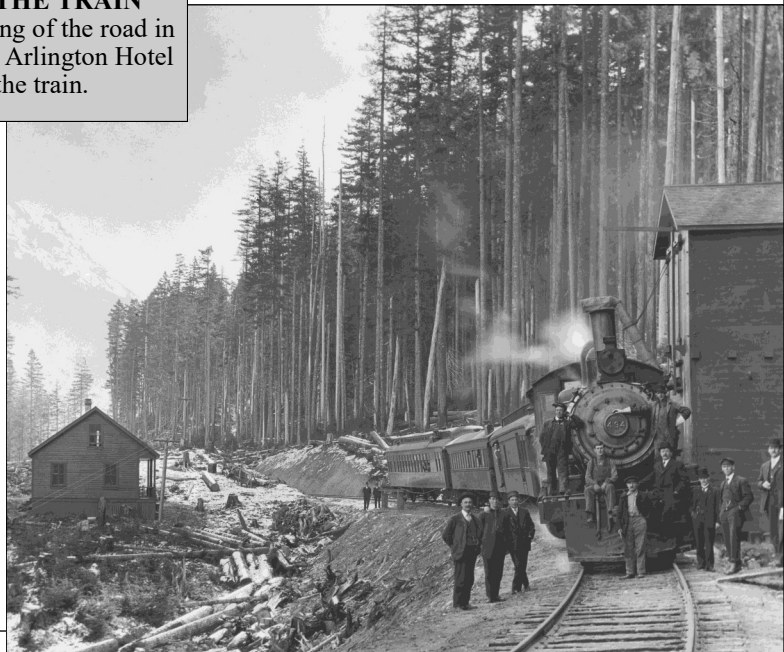
Most injuries were related to blasting accidents. (cont. p.8)

FIRST TRAIN TO LEAVE ALBERNI

December 21, 1911

This water tower stop called "Apenes" was near the Alberni Summit. (Note Mt. Arrowsmith in the background. The tower footings and a water pipe are still there. Some bricks from the remains of the chimney of the Sectionman's house remain among the trees.

Photo: AVM PN 00558



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Each year since the Mill and Steam Train opened, more than a decade ago, the I.H.S. has continued to grow. The growth takes two forms:

1. **Physical Growth:** In the past eight years, we have added a large Heritage Center (formerly the old Arena), a rail crew bunkhouse, four lowbeds of surplus railway maintenance of way equipment, two new whistle stops along the tracks, an annual Truck Show, an operating Steam Donkey exhibit, and increased lumber production for cash and in-kind projects.
2. **An Increased Demand for Specialized Services:** Often, this involves the APR. Examples are Cruise Ship Charters, special Holiday Runs, Railfan Photo runs and private reunions, weddings and anniversaries.

The impact of the Physical Growth is mainly the need for money to maintain and upgrade structures and equipment. Examples are the mandatory \$30,000 Electrical Upgrade at the H.C., the need for an exterior paint job on the same building, a Roundhouse roof replacement and new crown brass bushings for the No. 7 locomotive.

The impact of Increased Demand for specialized services is mainly the need for more volunteers. Specialized Services clients seldom want a simple train ride. They want Mill and Steam Donkey demonstrations, staged photo ops, robberies and well-presented, good quality catered food.

To help our chances of survival, about five years ago, the I.H.S. signed a contract with BCIT to provide the Practicum Experience for their Railway Conductor Training course. While this does provide some much-needed funds, it is another draw on our limited pool of volunteers. When a BCIT practicum runs concurrently with our regular scheduled APR runs, the result is that operating personnel are spread very thin. To give an idea of the manpower required, the APR spent 45 days on the rails with BCIT in 2011. At four APR crew per day, this is 180 man days.

An interesting irony to this flurry of new activity is that many of the things we were well-known for before growth took hold remain our staple commodities.— the restoration and operation of large industrial artifacts, interesting parade vehicles, cutting and other demonstrations at the Mill and scheduled APR runs. These traditional activities are often not a big part of our need for money and volunteers. They are frequently staffed by people experienced in operations, restorations, maintenance and well-versed in the fine art of scrounging the parts they need. Some projects cost little more than shop supplies, fuel and some coffee.

Notwithstanding growth and the accompanying need for more money and volunteers, the I.H.S. is a well-functioning, productive organization but, human energy is a finite and precious commodity in any organization. Most organization's well-being can be judged by the sum of energy available for the purpose or product. So far, the I.H.S. has avoided the destructive pitfalls that see large amounts of energy wasted on dissension and differences of opinion. These things can destroy an organization.

Our objective is to keep moving ahead. We will address our growth challenges and keep the I.H.S. functioning effectively. Our mission remains twofold:

1. To continue to make the Alberni Valley a tourist destination by providing unique and interesting experiences to bring alive our forest industrial heritage
2. To provide future generations with an accurate, educational glimpse of the forest industry resources and equipment that built B.C.

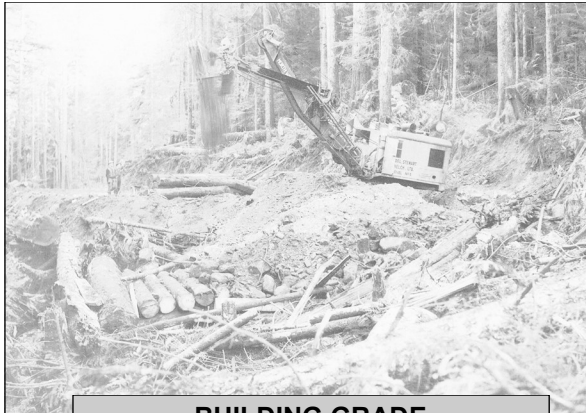
- Gary Murton, President I.H.S.

SCENES FROM RAIL LOGGING DAYS AT FRANKLIN RIVER CAMP

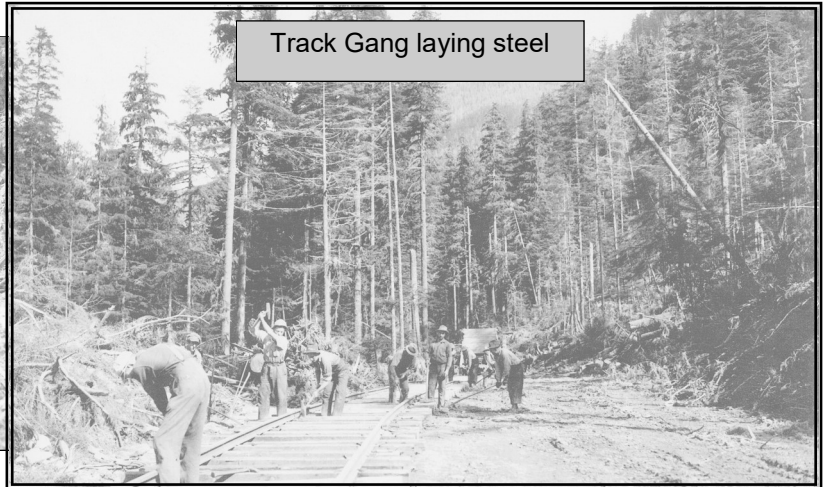
-Photos from the Collection of Don Watt, former resident of Camp "B"

The Franklin River logging camp was organized as a rail logging "show" in the mid-1930's by "Bloedel, Stewart & Welch" - one of the first big integrated forestry companies of that time. The camp was opened to supply logs to the new "Somass" sawmill in Port Alberni. "B.S.&W." already had rail logging camps at Great Central Lake, as well as a sawmill.

Once the Franklin River camp went into operation, there was an ongoing program to extend track into new cutblocks and "lift the rail" from recently-logged sites. Men, equipment and materiel were constantly on the move.



BUILDING GRADE
"Northwest" shovel puts in a culvert.



Track Gang laying steel

A

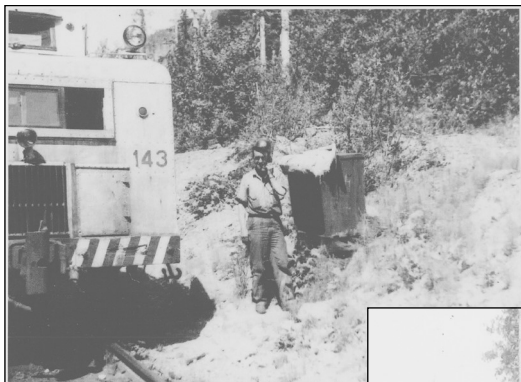
large proportion of the workforce at the camp was linked to the rail operations. Not only were there the obvious jobs of Engineers, Firemen, brakemen, and hostlers. There was a big 'supporting cast' - the blacksmiths and mechanics in the shop, the Grade crew, the Track Gang and 'speedermen' who ran these utility vehicles. Coordinating the whole operation in this era before and radios was the Dispatcher. He kept track of where every locomotive, train and speeder was by having the crews phone in from various key check points on the system.

Speeder Accident

Riding in a speeder was not for the faint of heart as they bucked, lurched and swayed along the often rough tracks, particularly on the earliest open-sided models. There were occasional accidents.

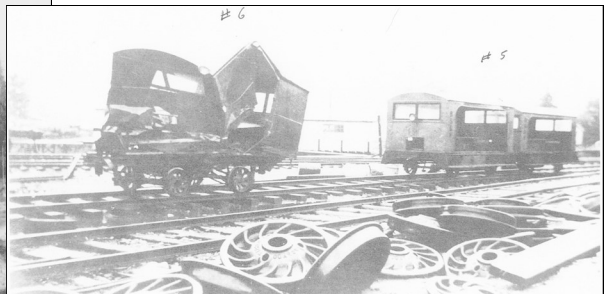
In 1938, a speeder was carrying school children back to Camp "A" when a wood car at Camp "B" ran away, following them down the track. The operator, Grant Munro, saw the car overtaking them. He managed to throw the children to safety before the impact but was killed himself. The

smashed speeder is seen below, with two open-sided models. (The roofs are 9-feet above the grade.)



PHONING DISPATCHER
Speeder operator phones to the Dispatcher for clearance to continue down the track.

(r.) **SPEEDER #143**
Late in the rail era, regulations changed again and speeders carried TWO headlights, to distinguish them from locomotives.



SPEEDERS in the RAIL LOGGING ERA by Ray Barron

In the early days of rail logging, getting the loggers to the cutting areas was neither safe nor comfortable. The loggers often rode to work on the empty log cars and rode back to camp on top of the loaded logs.

It was following an accident on the Bainbridge Lumber Company rail operations about 1925 that the B.C. Industrial Railway Inspection Branch brought in regulations banning the transportation of loggers on the log cars and on open railcars.

A company locomotive was pushing a string of "disconnect trucks" out to the logging site with the logging crew seated in front. The "trucks" became un-coupled from the loci and ran away, finally piling up in a swamp. Two men were killed and several injured. Such fatalities were common in that era.



'Albarn Pacific' "Two-Spot" heading out to the woods in the early 1920's with the logging crew riding the log cars in front of the loci. *AVM PN 01 452*

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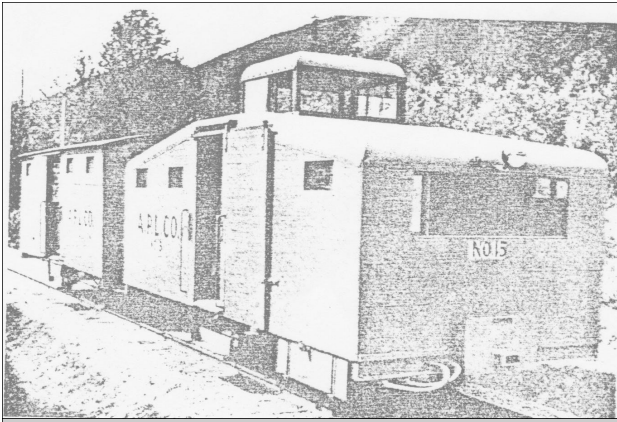
In response to the new regulations, small 6-man and 8-man speeders were put into service. They were open with a bench on each side. They were none too safe on a rough track but safer than before. To the left is an ad for a small "Casey Jones" speeder from the "West Coast Lumberman" in 1937. Note that they built much bigger speeders, too, by then. As they were near the end of their timber limits, the Bainbridge Lumber Co. closed down rather than buy the equipment demanded by the new regulations.

In the 1930's, closed cars came into use. They were more comfortable and kept the men out of the weather, especially in winter. They held from 30 to 60 men, with bench seats down the length of the car on both sides. A speeder might even tow a trailer to transport more passengers.

Some "crew cars", as the Rail Department called them, were home-built in the shops of the larger rail-logging camps. Others were bought from rail car builders like Gibson Manufacturing and Skagit from Seattle, Washington or "Hayes",



(r.) **SPEEDER—1920's-style**
Rail Crew on a speeder at Camp 2 of the "Albarn Pacific Lumber Company" in 1924. In the cab of the "Shay" locomotive is Fireman Harold Haines, later the Dispatcher for the rail operations of APL "Camp One" at Somers Road. That rail grade is now the "Log Train Trail" in the Albarn Valley.



(above) 50-man **"Gibson" speeder** with trailer for another 50 men, in service at Alberni-Pacific Lumber. Six-cylinder engine with 4-speeds forward and reverse. [from July 1938 "The Timberman"] The car had air brakes. The operator sat in the cupola for greater visibility.
 (right) **A.P.L. "Camp One" Fire Speeder** This car was built in the APL shops to carry fire-fighting equipment or 60 men, as well as a 560-gallon water tank and pump. It was powered by a "Mercury" V-8 and painted bright red!

Hamilton Bridge and Westminster Iron Works in Vancouver, B.C. A lot of the cars were shipped to Canada in an incomplete state because of the taxes and import duties at the time.

The shop-built cars were assembled with frames and running gear from companies like "Pacific Car" and Gibson Manufacturing—both in Seattle. Sheet steel and angle-iron framing were used to construct the bodies. By the 1940's, the Railway Inspection Branch was insisting on all-metal construction of rail cars, for even better passenger safety.

Three "home-made" speeders were designed and built in the Franklin River shops. By the 1940's, speeders had become more and more sophisticated, comfortable (?) and even specialized. A

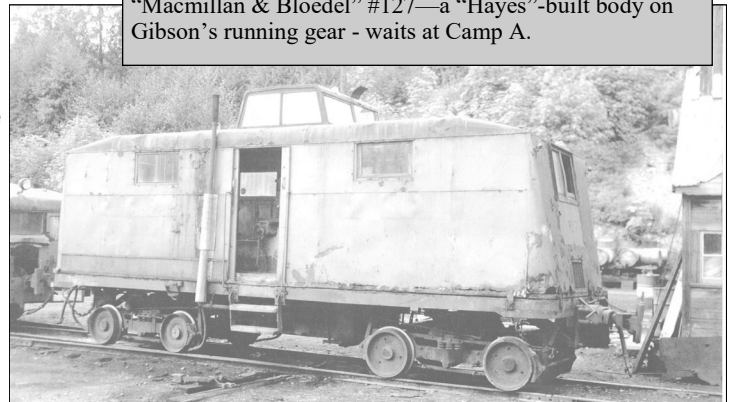


speeder for fighting forest fires was built by "Alberni Pacific Logging" in 1948. Robert Swanson, later the Chief Inspector of Railroads for B.C., fabricated stream-lined speeders for Victoria Lumber & Manufacturing's logging railway in the company shops at Chemainus.

By the final years of rail logging, the speeder had become what the pickup truck became in the next era of logging—the utility vehicle. Not only a "bus" or 'crummy" taking crews out into the woods, Franklin River speeders made weekly trips to "Camp A" so that the women could catch the boat to Port Alberni for shopping. School children rode the speeder. The section crews used speeders to transport tools and materiel. A speeder pulling a trailer, perhaps with a barrel of fuel or firewood, was a common sight. Company "brass" and visitors from the city arrived by speeder. They were a essential part of that whole logging period.

Most speeders were parked sixty years ago, when the big forest companies converted to truck logging. Along with the steam "Shay" and "Baldwin" locomotives, most speeders were abandoned or scrapped. Four still operate at "Western Forest's" rail operation in the Nimpkish. The Duncan Forest Discovery Centre operates a replica and I.H.S. volunteers have just put the "Speeder 102" of the Comox Logging & Railway Co. (Ladysmith) back on the rails after a lengthy restoration. A rusted relic from Franklin River Logging still awaits attention in the Port Alberni City Works Yard.

On the "Scrap Line" 1958 at Franklin River Camp "Macmillan & Bloedel" #127—a "Hayes"-built body on Gibson's running gear - waits at Camp A.



Ray Barron, retired Victoria fireman, is a railroad historian, with a special interest in speeders. He has spent much time in old Archives, tramping old rail grades, locating remains and relics from the "old days". He writes articles for the "Timber Times" magazine. *Photos are from Ray's Collection*

OPENING OF THE ALBERNI SUBDIVISION (cont. from p. 3)

From Bainbridge to the harbour at Port Alberni, the firm of ‘Carmichael & Moorhead’ - the 100-year old “Carmoor Block” on lower Argyle, opposite the Station—contracted all of the construction while also selling properties in the townsite and Beaver Creek. The older settlement at Alberni was miffed at being bypassed when the terminus was built at the upstart town of “Port Alberni”. All they got was a tiny station, not even a siding! The CPR wanted a deep-sea port and a wharf and warehouse to link with their coastal service.

The first passenger train reached Port Alberni on December 20, 1911. The townsfolk welcomed the train with flags and steam whistles. The fastest mode of transportation of the age had finally reached the Alberni Valley! The official “First Train” was welcomed with a fancier ceremony on

April 6 of 1912.

Port Alberni became a “City” in March of 1912 while Alberni was incorporated a bit later. Soon afterwards, the “Canadian Pacific Lumber Company” sent out the first shipment of Alberni Valley lumber on the CPR. In August of 1912, the brand-new “Two



FIRST RAIL LOGGING IN ALBERNI VALLEY—the 1912 “Shay” “2-Spot” with first load of logs, Aug. 1912.
AVM PN 00562

Spot” began hauling logs to the new sawmill. This was the start of the rail logging era.

The arrival of the CPR signalled the beginning of a 65-year period of prosperity in the Alberni Valley, based on the forest resource.

There was one more extension to the E&N in the Valley, when the CPR laid track to the sawmill at Great Central Lake, in 1925.

This was the point the furthest west in Canada served by the CPR. This line lasted to 1952, when that mill was closed.

The E&N served Port Alberni for 88 years, until 1999, when the CPR sold the line to “Rail America”, a ‘short-line’ operator. The line lasted two more years, till December, 2001, when the decision of the Paper Mill to do all shipping by truck ended the profitability of the railway.

Nowadays, the ‘Alberni Pacific’ tourist steam railway runs the only trains on this once busy and prosperous line.



First shipment of lumber by rail from Alberni sawmills 1912
AVM PN 00560

“SPOT NEWS”

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TRUCKING NEWS

The Industrial Heritage Centre continues to be a hive of activity, with the lights on there six days a week while members work on various projects. The restoration of the 1928 ‘Chevrolet’ fire truck—the City’s first—continues to progress. Colder temperatures have hampered the painting and finishing of the wood work—and there is a lot of wood, in both the frame and the body!



1928 “Chevrolet” Fire Truck

(l.) Frame complete; (r.) progress continues on the body.

The cab of the 1944 “International” Army/log truck, donated by the Don Rowe family, has now been reassembled after bodywork and painting. The fenders have since been painted, too. The winch is now remounted as well.

Don Watts (left) has been or-



Before & After

Cab of 1944 “International” “Rowe” truck



ganizing one of the “Parts” rooms for the last month. In November, a firewood bee was held, earning more than \$800 for the I.H.S.

The biggest recent project at the IHC was moving the big Speeder out and moving the McLean “Buda” loci in for restoration. [See next page.] It was an “All hands on deck” effort and very efficiently done.

On a sadder note, the I.H.S. said “Good-bye” to long-time member, Bert MacIntosh, on February 4. Members attended his memorial and Bert Simpson said a few words on our behalf. The family asked

that the “Railroad Mack” be brought to the site, as Bert used to enjoy driving it in the parades. [below] The “Mack” attracted a lot of interest. [See photo, (l.)]



Firewood Bee

Hank Bakken moved the logs with the “Barko” loader. Dave Tranfield (l.) and Tony Super saw; Jack James operates a hammer.

Photos; D. Hooper



"SPEEDER OUT, "BUDA" IN"

On January 29, a lot of planning and preparation by Les Stevens paid off. The "Comox Logging" speeder, under restoration for the past five years at the I.H.C., was moved out and put on the tracks; the McLean "Buda" locomotive was loaded and transported up to the I.H.C on the 'backhaul'. The job was finished in time for lunch.

Rudi of "Alberni Towing" provided their tilt-deck truck to winch the speeder out of the old Arena. The speeder was unloaded onto the rails at the crossing at the North end of the railyard. The operation went very smoothly.

The "Buda", which had earlier been hauled to town by the 'RS-3', was then pushed into position on the same crossing for loading onto the 'tilt-deck'. At 14 tons, this was more of a challenge than the speeder.



The "Barko" log loader had been brought to the site, just for that eventuality. It was used to get the "Buda" past the "tipping point". [See photo below]

Once it was loaded, the little loci was hauled to the Industrial Heritage Centre, where it is now undergoing restoration. The engine was running within 24 hours -Vic and



"Buda" leaving the railroad while the speeder begins a test run to the Station, its first run on rails in more than 30 years. (below) "Buda" in the Industrial Heritage Center..



Les quickly figured out the correct firing order—and the transmission is getting worked on. When the mechanical work is complete, the "Buda" will be painted before it goes back to the McLean Mill for display.

Next winter should see this important artifact under the shelter of the newly-repaired 'Locomotive Shed' so that the current restoration will last for years to come.

