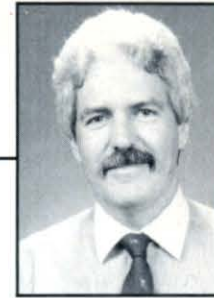


# Wood Tick Trail

By David (DK) Knight



Editor

(NOTE: The Great Northwest Log Haul, mentioned here last month, deserves additional space, given its phenomenal success: 303 log trucks stretching for upwards of 12-15 miles and bearing about a million bd. ft. of cargo. Below are edited remarks of Keith Olson, Executive Director, Montana Logging Assn., as taken from the May issue of *Montana Logger*).

Those of us involved in the timber industry are accustomed to the sight of log trucks. After all, they daily roll down state and federal highways, across county roads and over the streets of our timber-dependent communities.

Though we seldom discuss it, log trucks are the ambassadors of the timber industry. They are what the public can identify with because it sees them on an everyday basis.

On Friday the 13th of May, 1988, in Darby, Mont., our ambassadors were ever-so-proud. In this case pride was spelled C-O-N-V-O-Y!

Log trucks rolled into Darby 303 strong. North from Eureka and Libby . . . west from Washington and Idaho . . . east from White Sulphur Springs and Livingston . . . and from every timber community in-between.

From Missoula to Darby, The Great Northwest Log Haul stole your breath, left goose bumps on your body, swelled your tears, tugged at your emotions and lit your face with pride.

Damn the issues. The Great Northwest Log Haul was an event by itself—an event that solidly implanted itself in the timber history of the inland region.

## What If?

It all started so simply. It was Tuesday evening, the 26th of April. In Eureka, 1,000 citizens gathered—there are only 1,100 in the town—to form the North Lincoln County Coalition. Citizens of Eureka, and other northwest Montana communities, were upset about a federal appeals court decision (from California—where else?) that blocked 130 to 150MMBF of timber sales planned in the nearby Yaak River Valley.

A comment was made that if local timber-dependent communities weren't careful, Eureka might suffer the same fate as Darby, a community 250 miles south that had a sawmill recently close because of a lack of logs.

Sometime during the evening, Mike Mrgich, a local log hauler, wondered aloud if Eureka should consider hauling a few loads of logs to Darby. After all, that's what farmers did with hay when drought-stricken counterparts were short of feed a couple of years ago. The concept began to grow on the community. At their first formal planning session supporters thought they might be able to put together a convoy of 40 loads.

Meanwhile, in Libby, that community geared up for a rally. On Wednesday, the 4th of May, U.S. Senators Max Baucus and John Melcher would arrive to discuss with concerned citizens from across Montana such issues as timber sale appeals, wilderness legislation, preservationist litigation, endangered species, etc.

Environmental "gunslingers" were exploiting every conceivable method of disrupting timber supply, and the residents of Libby and Eureka were beginning to sense the negative impact such obstructionism could have on their communities.

When Baucus and Melcher arrived, they were received by a crowd of more than 3,000 involved in Montana's timber industry, people from northern Idaho and western Montana. Concern was mounting. Interest was growing. An industry which historically invested millions of dollars in machinery and equipment—but seldom invested a nickle in community awareness was beginning to realize the future of timber-dependent communities was legitimately threatened.

The senators spoke to the crowd and tried to calm its fears, albeit unsuccessfully. Baucus had provoked the industry's wrath by suggesting to the press that he sensed a shift in public attitude that favored more wilderness. Bruce Vincent, logger and convoy organizer of Libby, suggested that Max should ask those present how they felt. The result: no more wilderness, 3,000±; more wilderness, 0.

To ensure that Max remembered the message when he returned to Washington, Vincent presented him petitions with nearly 15,000 signatures from a public that desires no more wilderness in Montana.

In the days that followed the Libby rally, the concept of hauling logs from Eureka to Darby literally exploded. Communities from throughout western Mon-

tana and northern Idaho volunteered their participation and soon the Great Northwest Log Haul was a full blown reality . . . and a media sensation.

## The Convoy

The logistics of a convoy from the north, converging with convoys from the west and the east near Missoula, were frightening. Law enforcement and highway officials needed to be informed. Volunteers needed to be assembled, staging areas designated, support vehicles lined up, air and ground communications established, emergency services provided for—nothing could be left to chance.

Momentum grew to 100 Montana trucks. Then from Idaho came another 50. And Washington? Perhaps Oregon and California! No one knew for sure.

Then came Friday the 13th. The convoy headed south from Eureka at 8 a.m. Trucks joined at Whitefish; more at Kalispell; still more at Ravalli.

It was happening. It was scary. It was great!

Community to community, the convoy continued its southern journey. Every community participated with additional trucks and/or a receptive crowd. It rained, even poured, but the crowd was not dismayed.

When the convoy from the north arrived at Missoula, the convoys from the east and west were staged at Buckhouse Bridge on Missoula's south side. What a

(Continued on page 40)

# Wood Tick Trail

(Continued from page 6)

sight! Tom Sherry's crew (I'm trying not to use names because hundreds of people deserve credit, but Tom Sherry's name cannot be kept out of this story) did a masterful job.

With Mike Mrgich in the lead, the convoy from the north roared toward Darby. The trip itself defied description. From start to finish, thousands of people in dozens of communities lined the route to observe and cheer the haul. Nobody can appreciate how spectacular or how well organized this event was. Even as you watched it unfold you shook your head in wonderous amazement.

As the convoy left Missoula, it was on time. That in itself is amazing because early reports had the convoy an hour late out of Polson.

Event planners had predicted a 4 p.m. arrival in Darby, and, sure enough, at 4 p.m. the lead truck pulled into Darby. (Someone tried to sabotage the event by pouring roofing tacks at the yard entrance but most of these were whisked away.) For the next hour and 10 minutes 303 log trucks rolled into the empty lumber yard at Darby Lumber, Inc. A couple of thousand people lined the highway to cheer each and every truck. Helicopters filmed from above. Every major television network covered a portion of the rally, as did a host of radio stations and newspapers.

In a little over two weeks, the Great Northwest Log Haul went from a con-

cept to the pages of history books. A proud chapter, indeed.

---

## Community Pride

---

The rest of the story took many directions. Montana log haulers greeted Idaho log haulers they hadn't seen since tug-o-war days. Hoyt Axton, filming a movie in Hamilton, had joined the convoy there and sang for the crowd (a thousand or so) in Darby. There was food galore as the community threw a "Darby-que." A few speeches followed. Some log-haulers elected to unload that evening and head for home. Others spent the night at homes provided by local citizens. That evening the local watering holes did a brisk business. It was not just another Friday night in Darby, Mont.

I won't attempt to name any of the key players; not even Jim Hurst in Eureka, Bruce Vincent in Libby; and especially not Jack Buell in St. Maries, Id.

Individual names are unimportant. It took communities to pull-off the Great Northwest Log Haul. It will take communities to keep the momentum going in the timbered Northwest. It is no coincidence that every community ends in the word *unity*.

Today, we are an indus-tree with renewed PRIDE!

As the convoy becomes a proud memory, we must remember that timber community pride is as renewable as is the timber resource harvest. ■

education and opportunities following graduation. The full-color illustrated publication will help not only young people considering a forestry career, but teachers, guidance counselors and youth-group leaders as well.

For bulk orders of 10 or more, send 40¢ per copy to SAF, 5400 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814 or AFA, Box 2000, Washington, DC 20013.

## Seed Company Buys Earle Nursery

International Forest Seed Co. has acquired T.W. Earle Nursery from Continental Forest Investments. The nursery, located in Statesboro, Ga., has an annual capacity of 35 million seedlings that are produced and sold for reforestation.

The acquisition will increase International's 1988 seedling production to 65 million. The company produces containerized and bareroot seedlings for reforestation and Christmas tree growers throughout the Southeastern U.S.

## Glatfelter Receives National Safety Honor

The Glatfelter Pulp Wood Co., Spring Grove, Pa., was recognized by the National Safety Council for completing 1987 without an OSHA recordable injury or a lost time injury. Glatfelter is a subsidiary of P. H. Glatfelter Co. and has forestry and logging operations in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia.