

## **MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH – 133<sup>rd</sup> Edition – October 23, 2005**

Created by Sherron Jones [sherronjones@shaw.ca](mailto:sherronjones@shaw.ca)

To use an e-mail address from the MocTel, replace the \* with @.



Kusawa Lake - Sept 25, 2005

Photo courtesy Kelly White (& Nigel Stubbins) [p.place@northwestel.net](http://p.place@northwestel.net) (In Whitehorse)

### **GOUT**

By Gus Barrett [sourdoughs2@shaw.ca](mailto:sourdoughs2@shaw.ca) (In Qualicum)

I was wakened early by the rain,  
And realized that I'm in pain,  
Turning to my wife, I said,  
"Good Lord, I can't get out of bed."  
I gingerly removed the sheet,  
To inspect my burning feet.  
To my surprise I found the right  
Had greatly grown in size that night.

My toes, which always seemed so tiny,  
Were puffy, swollen, red and shiny.  
'Twas tender, sore, and aching so  
From ankle to the tip of toe.  
Each movement causes fierce new throbbing

Bad enough to leave me sobbing  
On close inspection I've no doubt,  
This morning I've come down with gout.

I rise, with suffering and bitchin'  
And limp off out into the kitchen,  
Then stub my toe while reaching up  
To fetch my hanging coffee cup.  
I lift my foot 'til pain subsides,  
Then, moving slow, with careful strides,  
To find my chair and not get out,  
'Til time and care erase this gout.

For ten long days I'm situated,  
In my chair, foot elevated.  
Hoping, thus to cure my ills,  
With loving care and many pills.  
Day after day I sit and read,  
Moving only when I need.  
Out, and quickly back again,  
Leaning heavily on my cane.

When friends come round to socialize,  
They see the teardrops in my eyes,  
To my chagrin they point and laugh,  
When I greet them, leaning on my staff.  
It's strange that folks, who otherwise,  
Would shake your hand and sympathize,  
Still think there's something funny 'bout,  
A friend who has come down with gout.

© 2005 Gus Barrett



**Old Log Church – Whitehorse – Sept 2005**

Photo courtesy Doug Bell [dougbell\\*yknet.ca](mailto:dougbell*yknet.ca) (In Whitehorse)



**Caterpillar – Holt – Model 30 – 2 ton**

**Note the buffalo robe and fur hat supplied for use by passengers.**

Photo courtesy Les Somerton (Ernie Somerton photo)

## **The Lefebvre Sawmill in West Mayo**

By Henry Breaden [hjbreaden@shaw.ca](mailto:hjbreaden@shaw.ca) (In Nanaimo)

The Lefebvre (pronounced Lefave) Mill in Mayo was jointly owned by Fred Lefebvre and Eugene Binet who owned the Chateau Mayo Hotel. Having lost the original log built hotel to fire, within 24 hours the ashes were cleared and a new frame building started. This is the building that I remember over my growing years. Eugene Binet was the businessman, and Fred Lefebvre was the one with the sawmill skills.

The mill itself was situated at the west end of First Avenue and built in the form of a “T”. The base of the “T” was smaller, facing west and contained the boiler that was fuelled by slabs which produced the steam for the steam engine that drove the mill. The top of the T faced north and south, and contained the main mill. On the south end was the Stewart River where the log booms were rafted in. The rafts came from upriver, and in those days rafts were controlled by sweeps that were huge oars at each end of the raft. Coming down the river the rafts were kept mid stream using the sweeps, and during landing the sweeps were used to bring it to shore and where they were tied up.

The men employed would be a Fireman at the boiler, a man at the slipway hauling up the logs, a Sawyer who handled the carriage and the cutting, a man on the carriage that with

levers moved the log from the Sawyer's signals. These two men worked as a team, and the man on the carriage knew what the sawyer needed. Another man at the cut-off saw and another man or two moving the lumber to the outside lumber piles on the north side.

On the south end was the slipway made of smaller logs where the logs were pulled up into the mill deck. There was a smaller donkey steam engine that powered a winch cable that had a ring and about 5 chains with hooks at the end that were used to attach the individual logs for hauling up. If the logs were large, only 3 were attached, or smaller logs 5. Pete Darling was usually on the log haul-up and attaching the logs from the boom. You must all be aware of booms, but it was an outer frame of logs chained together, and the middle filled symmetrically with logs. As the booms were long it was made in sections. At the end of each section was a cross log chained to prevent the boom from spreading. Several full booms would be used in a summer. When the boom was empty the chains on the outer logs were removed and the logs pulled up for sawing. The chains went back up river to form another boom. So that the mill always had one boom ahead, several booms would be in the process of building on the booming grounds. To form the outer frame, the end of each log was drilled with a 2 inch auger. A chain was passed through each hole to tie the outer logs together.

After the logs having been winched up to the mill deck, they were rolled with a pee-vee or canthook, (terms not in use today) onto the mill carriage and dogged down. A pee-vee was about 6 feet long with a wooden handle, a spike on the lower end and an arm with a hook for rolling logs. The difference in a canthook was that it did not have a spike at the lower end. When the log was rolled onto the carriage, the carriage man lowered a crosspiece with a downward spike to dig into the log and keep it steady. There were two of these on the carriage to grasp each end of the log. The carriage was controlled by the Sawyer forward and back, who in the early 30s was Charlie Mathne. When the first outer cut was made it was a slab with bark that travelled down the mill on rollers to the cut-off saw. They were cut to four foot lengths for firing the boiler and dry piled. The log may be squared before final cutting of the lumber, but this is where the skill of the Sawyer determined what would be done. As the log was rolled onto the carriage, the sawyer knew exactly how he was going to cut. If the log was squared, the height would be even two inches, so that as each board was cut off it was either one or two inch in thickness and an even two inch in width such as 4 inch, 6 inch, 8 inch, 10 inch and sometimes 12 inch.

The heart of the mill was that big saw that the carriage pushed those logs through. I would judge it to be about a five or six foot diameter with teeth that were usually filed by the Sawyer right after shutdown or before start-up. The individual teeth were removable with a special wrench with two pins, and when worn down the teeth could be replaced by rolling the old one out and a new one in. I always stayed well away from that saw, for on occasion it would throw a tooth that went up through the corrugated sheet metal roof near the speed of a bullet. The metal might slow it down a bit, but who knows where it went? And I was not about to find out!

The steam engine that drove the blade was powered by steam from the boiler. It was a simple locomotive type boiler that was fired with 4-foot slabs dried in a pile. Water for the boiler was pumped from the river. There was a simple single cylinder steam engine that turned a shaft with about a 4-foot diameter flat pulley, six inches wide. A six-inch wide leather belt went from there to a smaller pulley on the saw shaft to increase the saw speed to actually make the saw whistle. Next to the large pulley was another smaller one with a four or five inch belt that drove the overhead line shaft. The line shaft powered the cut-off saw and the planer. As the steam engine worked it had a ball type governor with flyweights that were balanced against two springs, very simple for those times, but most effective. It was vertical at the top of the engine in the open where the spinning flyweights could be seen. As the speed increased above a set speed, the ball flyweights would fly outwards and cut back on the admitted steam to the engine. When the speed dropped slightly below the setting the flyweights would come inwards and admit more steam to the engine. So every time a log started through the main saw blade, you could hear the engine start to pick up. And of course at the end of the cut the governor cut back the steam to the engine.

The sawdust from the saw went downwards into a hopper that fed a simple link chain driven conveyer. Along the link chain were cross-pieces that took the sawdust up the conveyer through a fitted long box. The top end of the conveyer would be about 20 feet above ground and spilled the sawdust into a pile. The sawdust pile was on the river side of the boiler room, and a favourite for many kids to play in when the mill was shut down. We would jump from the top of the conveyer into the sawdust pile that was nice and warm. In the course of play we would have sawdust inside our clothes and in pockets, so we always had to strip when we went home before coming in the house.

As insulation like fibreglass was unknown, many frame building walls were filled by sawdust and acted as an insulator. It was free, so with a horse and wagon just load up and take it home. Walls were built with tar paper inside the outer lumber and building paper under the inside lumber layer. Sawdust was poured in the framing 4 inch cavity that made an insulated wall. It actually saved the mill the expense of spreading the sawdust so that it did not clog the conveyer. We kids too helped the mill, for while playing we spread the sawdust outwards and clear of the conveyer.

While we enjoyed playing in the sawdust pile, there was no such thing as liability by the mill. That foolishness was reserved for today where most people don't accept personal responsibility for their actions. A mill could not allow kids to play anywhere near today for fear of being sued because some little dear scratched themselves. If we tore off a bit of skin, we went home where mom would put some iodine on it that stung; a bandage and we were off again. No such a thing as a bunch of whining for we knew it was our own fault. That was an age of personal responsibility.

There was not an edger in this mill, and usually the first cut after the slab would be a board with some bark on the edges. These were set aside and when enough to work they were put on the carriage and those edges sawed off. Even here was not a loss as the edgings were used to separate the layers of lumber in the outside piles so that air could

circulate and dry the lumber. The rough lumber from the saw would travel along the rollers to the cut-off saw where they were cut to length whether 12 foot, 14 foot or 16 foot. A special order may be logs over 20 feet that were trimmed to 20 foot lumber. Usually Louis Cantin (pronounced Contow) took care of the cut-off saw and finished rough lumber. Sizes were in full inches, and could be 4 inch, 6 inch, 8 inch, 10 inch or 12 inch from large logs. Thickness was either one inch or two inch, so for building a 2 X 4 was full size and not skinned down like today as 1-1/2 inch x 3-1/2 inch.

As a point of interest I visited a mill not that far out of Port Alberni. It had a double carriage and could cut lumber to 58 feet. Although it was long ago shut down it had the record for British Columbia. Now it is a Provincial Heritage site and renovated, and still holds the record of lumber length in the province. It was possible because of the diameter of logs available in B.C. and the length to cut the lumber. As a single saw would not reach through the log, there was an upper and lower saw. These days, band saws are used exclusively. The special long lengths could be used in fishing boat building so the length did not have to be spliced.

Other men of Mayo working in the mill would move the lumber to the lumber piles using a two wheeled wagon with a frame to support the green lumber. At each end of the frame were legs that folded down to hold the wagon level while loading or unloading. There were two of these wagons. In the yard the lumber was piled according to size and edgings placed between each layer. So the weight of the lumber above kept the lower layers from twisting while they dried. There were wooden sidewalks from the mill to the rows of lumber piles for the wagons to run on. As the lumber was sold and taken away the edgings were thrown aside, and this was my material for my projects in the front yard. I bet there were many laughs at this kid who always had projects going. You will likely remember the airplane I built that never got off the ground!

In the northwest corner was the planer that had cutters spinning top, bottom, left and right. Ahead of the cutters was a ribbed live roller that pushed the lumber through. While planing, another piece was pushed to follow the first one and keep the stream going. It depended on what type of lumber was being planed, for it could be straight planed lumber. Shiplap had a bead on each side so that the boards overlapped sealing the joint. Flooring had a double bead on one side and single on the other. It could be laid by nailing the single bead with finishing nails at an angle and a setting punch used to set the nail. So that the nails did not show on the finished floor. Usually a rough floor was put down first and the flooring nailed to it. Another type was siding that was usually six inch. One side had a bead half way through, and the other side curved to reduce the outer edge to half way. When putting it on it was started at the bottom with the curved lip up. The next plank would overlap the first to form a weather seal and shed rain. Today, the old Binet home that is used for tourism has that particular type of siding. Depending on what was needed, the cutters were changed to form the finished product. Planing and sawing was not done at the same time, so the sawyer would oversee the planing. The planer chips went into a different pile, and sometimes used by residents for wall insulation.

The finished planed lumber was taken across the road and allowed to dry in a dry shed that was open at the front. As much lumber that was in the yard or dry shed it was never touched, for even in the open it showed the quality of the honesty of the Mayo residents. As a kid when I first started building, I asked Fred Lefebvre if I could have some of those edgings. He gave me permission to use as much as I needed along with twisted lumber. As each project was completed and I got bored with it, usually it was short pieces that ended up as kindling for our cook stove. Then I would haul in some more edgings for my next project.

As you can see that the mill was self sustaining and nothing wasted. The slabs fed the boiler, edgings used in the lumber piles and sawdust used by residents for insulation. The lumber was not that expensive to buy, and many homes in Mayo still have lumber from those days.

First, our next door neighbour to the west, Charlie Mathne passed away who was the sawyer. Bill Forbes who lived across from us was the next sawyer and there till Fred Lefebvre had gone to his reward. Bill went to the Elsa mine as a Millwright, and Frank Cantin, (Contow) took over the mill. Here was quite a change, for instead of steam he used his RD4 Cat with a power take off on the back for sawing wood to power the mill. For years Frank had cut stove wood in Mayo with a green gasoline driven Cletrac Cat that had a pulley on the front. He then bought a new RD4 cat with a power take off and pulley on the back. So we lost something there when we did not hear the 12 o'clock steam whistle for lunch. It was something that we always had during the summer, and us kids to get home or be in trouble with mom who was waiting lunch.

These are fond memories for me with the sound of the mill, and the puffing of the steam engine, the whine of the saw along with the 12 o'clock whistle. When I was around the mill or in the boat at the boom I guess the crew kept track of me that I didn't get into trouble. It is nice to recall all those old-timers who had such an influence along with so many old-timers of Mayo in forming the person that I became today. I feel fortunate in growing up in the small town of Mayo where everyone watched out for the welfare of each other. I feel sad that today the attitude is, "Me First", in the cities, and have lost that comfortable feeling of growing up in a small town where everyone counted.

Henry Breaden [hjbreaden@shaw.ca](mailto:hjbreaden@shaw.ca) (In Nanaimo)

Here is a map that Harvey sent to Karren and myself, and I have placed the two sawmills, Fred Lefebvre and Ed Kimbel. It looks like there is nothing left at the old Kimbel mill, and the big bay where Ed used to have the purse boom at the mill is all silted in and a sand bar. That is what happens after 60 years of a river not being disturbed. The peninsula across from Mayo is getting mighty skinny, and my prediction is that when it is gone that Mayo will silt in like Devil's Elbow that Harvey would remember well. The Aerial photo is a bit skewed, so notice the directional arrow at the bottom for north. The Kimbel mill would be east of Mayo.

Henry.

Map of Mayo and Area 1996



The Mayo area, Yukon Territory .....Parts of aerial photographs A28299-161 and A28299-221 © 1996 Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, reproduced from the collection of the National Air Photo Library with permission of Natural Resources Canada.

Hi Harvey and Karren,

Try: <http://www.yukonheritage.com/publications-mayo.pdf> for a walking tour of Mayo. I have written Gold and Galena as there are a few errors in it, but for the most part it is

good. I finished the Lefebvre Mill and Sherron has it, and in it I mentioned the siding on the Binet Home now used for tourism came from the Lefebvre planer. As a matter of fact, the whole house lumber as Eugene Binet was in partnership with Fred Lefebvre. (Lefave) French. Meanwhile Norman Hartnell wrote the Kimbel mill where he worked in the 30s. His mother, Lou was married to Ed Kimbel in the 30s. Lou came to Mayo to cook, and she and her sister Violet had a restaurant in Centre St. and Second where the Doll House was later. Violet married Archie Currie, a former Mountie, and when they lived in Keno had a daughter, Joan. In the 70s I tracked Joan down in Vancouver and we visited. They used to be at our house for house parties along with Tony Besner, Bob Sheardown, Alf Burian and others!

Harvey, I got into your stuff and printed the Mayo Arial map for a good reason. I was able to mark the location of both the Lefebvre and Kimbel mills on it. I have yet to scan it for Sherron, as she could likely use it with both stories. Do you happen to have a photo of the mill in town that originally was Lefebvre? I guess Harry Ewing likely had it when you were there, and Sherron is looking for photos of both. Cheers,

Henry Breaden [hjbreaden\\*shaw.ca](mailto:hjbreaden*shaw.ca) (In Nanaimo)

### **SS Tutshi at Carcross – circa 1938 - 1940**



Steamer Tutshi at Carcross – Gordon Yardley far right.  
Photo forwarded by Joyce Yardley and discovered by Irena Yardley.  
Note young RCMP member left of Gordon.

Joyce, here is that photo I mentioned to you a while back. What do you think?  
Could that be a young Gordon when he worked as a deckhand on the Tutshi? (Lower right)

I showed Ted and he thinks it definitely could be.

The stance, the hair, the facial structure, the facial expression... it all seems to fit.  
Let me know what you think.

IrenaYardley



Sherron, I'm so excited! My ex daughter-in-law, Irena, who keeps in touch regularly and lives in Florida, came across two items that I was thrilled to receive. One a list of the electors of Carcross in 1940, which was only two years before my late husband Gordon Yardley and I moved there, so I knew all the people on the list!! And the other was a picture of Gordon himself when he worked on the Tutshi. I didn't have any pictures of him on the boat so that was gratefully received ...he's the one standing at the far right of the picture. Must have been taken sometime between 1938 and 1940, I think. I don't know how she manages to find all this info, but she's quite amazing.

I'm forwarding her letter to you with the attachments. Hope you can use them.

Luv Joyce Yardley [joyceyardley@dataspan.ca](mailto:joyceyardley@dataspan.ca) (In Nanaimo)

[www.dataspan.ca](http://www.dataspan.ca) (*The Electors list for Carcross 1940 will be in the next edition.*)

## COMMENTS FROM MYRNA BUTTERWORTH

Yes, Joann Graham is correct, Roy and Ilmi Butterworth are Lorraine's Aunt and Uncle and spent quite a few years at Brooks Brook. We visited there a few times as Les and Roy liked to hunt and fish together when they could.

Tich Watson also touched our lives as he was a good friend of the Butterworth Family. He visited the Yukon many times and always came to Dawson where he spent a few years while in the RCMP, patrolling in the Dawson and 60 mile areas walking and using dogteam in the wintertime. He was a grand old man and will be missed especially in the Vancouver Yukoners Circle.

Myrna Butterworth [myrnab\\*northwestel.net](http://myrnab*northwestel.net) (In Dawson)



Woodland Caribou Bulls – Takhini Hot Springs Road – Near Whitehorse – August 2005  
Photo courtesy Ron Hiltz [ronmarg\\*ns.sympatico.ca](http://ronmarg*ns.sympatico.ca) (In Berwick NS)

## CARIBOU IN WHITEHORSE AREA

The photograph of the two animals is of woodland caribou bulls on the Yukon Wildlife Preserve on the Takhini Hot Springs Road northwest of Whitehorse by about 15 miles, which many Moc Tel readers will know better as the Nowlans' Game Farm. The Yukon government bought the facility from Danny and Uli Nowlan a couple of years ago when they wanted to retire and it is now run under contract to the Department of Environment by the Yukon Wildlife Preserve Operating Society, a registered charity. The Preserve has a website, [www.yukonwildlife.ca](http://www.yukonwildlife.ca) that your readers may want to visit. The Preserve has

representative groups of ten species of large northern mammals on its 750 acres: Dall sheep, Stone sheep, Fannin sheep, Rocky Mountain goats, muskoxen, mule deer, elk, wood bison, moose and caribou. Looking closely at the caribou bull on the right in the photo you can see that it has a set of "double shovels" or equally developed brow tines. This is a relatively rare occurrence amongst caribou bulls, usually only one brow tine develops into a small shovel shape and the other is a single point, as on the bull on the left. The bull on the right grows a set of double shovel antlers every year.

I hope this is helpful.

Let me also take this opportunity to say how much I appreciate your continuing to publish the Moc Tel. Having only lived in the Yukon continuously since 1970 (I first arrived in 1966 and was transferred to Baffin Island in 1968) I do not know many of the contributors or the people in their accounts but I have heard of most of them. I do, however, very much enjoy the stories, poems and photographs. I'll be sending along my \$20.00 contribution shortly.

Regards,  
Bill Klassen [wjk\\*yknet.yk.ca](mailto:wjk*yknet.yk.ca)  
Takhini Hot Springs Road  
nr. Whitehorse

## **ALBERT JOHNSON**

Just a point of interest. I lived in Burnaby for several months. A mechanic or (flight engineer) of Wop May lived next door to where I was staying. I wonder why it was, that Wop got all the glory. I used to drive into Vancouver with Mr. Jacquot.

(Sherron, I don't know of a Gene and his brother, Jacquot.) I know Mr. Jacquot had a son who was diabetic and there was a problem getting his insulin to him, once. I think he was in Ft. Liard, possibly, at the time. Sorry, I can't think of Mr. Jacquot's first name. He was employed by the federal government and worked at the Vancouver airport. He used to drop me off at City Hall in Vancouver. We had a flat tire on the Loughheed Highway, one dark rainy night, enroute home. Scary!

When I lived in Aklavik, I was told who the RCMP thought Albert Johnson was. But, I was told in confidence and figure I still can't say. It wasn't a fugitive from the USA.

I already told you of knowing Carl Gardlund and Knut Lang who were on the manhunt. (Knut operated a trading post in Aklavik and that's where I bought my crossfox for my parka.) Susie Huskey, a native of Aklavik, gave me the book titled "The Mad Trapper," by Rudy Wiebe. The printers were McLelland and Stewart.

I loved the photo taken of your roses.  
Emily Stillwell [eistillwell@hotmail.com](mailto:eistillwell@hotmail.com) (In Regina)

## **YUKON FOUNDATION - CELEBRATING 25 YEARS**

The Yukon Foundation will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a Business After Hours and public Open House at Zola's and Arts Underground in the Hougen's Centre on Nov. 24, 2005.

The Foundation was established in 1980 by 17 individuals who each contributed \$100 to raise and manage funds for the promotion of Yukon based projects and education. The work of the Foundation is legislated by the Yukon Foundation Act.

Yukon Foundation's objectives are to promote educational advancement and scientific or medical research for the enhancement of human knowledge in Yukon, to promote the cultural heritage of the Yukon and to provide support intended to contribute to the mental, cultural and physical well-being of the residents of the Yukon. The Foundation administers assets of just under \$3 million in 80 dedicated and general funds. Donations, bequests, memorials and family endowments have been the main source of capital for Yukon Foundation.

Interest from each dedicated fund is distributed according to the instructions of the contributor.

Since 1980 the Foundation has distributed close to \$1 million to over 1000 Yukon students and projects. The first funds distributed by the Foundation, in 1983, were for art acquisitions for The Friends of the Gallery, capital funding for The Child Development Centre and assistance for publishing the Council of Yukon Indians book, 'Part of the Land: Part of the Water.'

In 2005, the Foundation provided \$71,000 to 13 projects, including the Whitehorse Community Choir, Keno Mining Museum and Freedom Trails Riding Association, and 87 students pursuing post-secondary education.

The anniversary celebration will be held in partnership with Roche Firth Financial Services Limited, a financial services company that has been involved with designing charitable giving programs for individuals and corporations for 20 years.

All Yukoners and former Yukoners are welcome. Celebration starts at 5 p.m. If you can't attend, but wish to send greetings or congratulations, send them to myself at :

[john.firth@clarica.com](mailto:john.firth@clarica.com)

Any e-mails we receive from you will be posted at the celebration.

John Firth  
chair  
Yukon Foundation

## CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Would like to mention that there are a number of our MocTel group who have published books or produced CD's – some of you may wish to order one for someone from Christmas. To name a few that I have gathered over the life of the MocTel.

*This is simply a list of some of the items I have collected, and enjoyed, from folks in the MocTel group. - Sherron*

Dan Bereza – [danbereza@shaw.ca](mailto:danbereza@shaw.ca) - has a new book out this year – Big Dipper Route  
Gus Barrett – [sourdoughs2@shaw.ca](mailto:sourdoughs2@shaw.ca) - has a new book of poems new out this year– Poetry and Other Nonsense  
Joyce Yardley - [joyceyardley@dataspan.ca](mailto:joyceyardley@dataspan.ca) - has two Crazy Cooks and Gold Miners, and Yukon Riverboat Days.  
Al Oster – [alosteryukon@jetstream.net](mailto:alosteryukon@jetstream.net) – (CD's) Yukon Ballads, & Call of Alaska  
Hank Karr – [hkarr@northwestel.net](mailto:hkarr@northwestel.net) - (CD's) Where Do You Go AFTER YUKON, Paddlewheeler, Through the Years  
Les McLaughlin – [leslorn@rogers.com](mailto:leslorn@rogers.com) (CD's) The Songs of Robert Service, Yukon Nuggets, The Robert Service Story, & Colorful Characters of the Klondike.

I'd like to add a few to the list:

Kluane National Park & Reserve of Canada Management Plan - by Parks Canada  
Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields 1896 – 1898 - by William B. Haskell  
Yukon Memories A Mounties Story - by Jack “Tich” Watson & Gray Campbell  
Donna Clayson [ytdogteam@telus.net](mailto:ytdogteam@telus.net) (In Ardrossan AB)



This picture was taken by my daughter Lorraine Butterworth, on the **Dempster Highway** on **September 5th 2005**. - Myrna Butterworth [myrnab@northwestel.net](mailto:myrnab@northwestel.net) (In Dawson)

## Comments from Kathie Wedge

Interesting story from J. Graham in Haines Junction about the storm on the Dempster. My brother **Mike [Warville]** was on the road crew and heard the distress call on the radio. He awoke Tommy Taylor and off to the rescue they went. I also saved a copy of the Readers Digest with this story.

Kathie Wedge [kawedge@hotmail.com](mailto:kawedge@hotmail.com) (In Whitehorse)

## Reader's Digest story from Joann Graham

*Joann Graham was kind enough to fax the story down for us via her friend Enid Tait. Joann's son **Jim [Graham]** is also in the story. – Sherron*

*I have chosen to publish this article which was not noted as copyright and have given full credit to the writer and publisher. It is my hope that someone reading this almost 23 years after it was originally published and almost 26 years after the incident happened, may have knowledge to help someone else survive if ever a similar incident were to occur. Pack emergency supplies! – Sherron*

### From Reader's Digest – January 1983

An article a day of enduring significance, in condensed permanent booklet form

It's 30 below and the winds are blowing hard.  
With help almost 250 Kilometres away,  
Five men stranded on Canada's loneliest highway  
Huddle in an unheated truck

### **Blizzard On the Dempster !** By Andy Turnbull

On the morning of December 20, 1979, two Yukon Highway men left Eagle Plains Grader Station and drove north along the Dempster Highway – foreman **Gerry Grenon**, 33, in a pickup truck and **Ivan Harrison**, 42, in a Kenworth tractor-trailer. At km 450 of the 756-kilometre Dempster, which links Dawson, Y.T., and Inuvik, N.W.T., they started to build a detour around a snow-filled rock cut. The temperature was -30 degrees, and snow whipped by 50-km/h winds made visibility poor.

About 1:30 p.m. the storm worsened, obliterating all tracks. Grenon and Harrison started groping their way home, Grenon in the lead. He bogged down in a massive drift. By the time Harrison caught up, the pickup's engine had died and snow was blowing into the

cab, chilling Grenon to the bone. Then Harrison got stuck. Grenon and Harrison were trapped on Canada's loneliest road, 43 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle and 78 kilometres from Eagle Plains. It was 3 p.m.

Some 131 kilometres to the south, grader operator **Jim Graham**, 21, heard Grenon's radio call for help. "Okay, Gerry," Graham replied, "but André [**Tremblay's**] stuck around km 288 with the plow and I'm almost there. I'll go for you when I get him out." Even under good conditions, it would take Graham five hours. Grenon and Harrison might be marooned until midnight.

Now came the voice of André Tremblay, 47: "I've got an hour's work here after Jim pulls me out. Then I'll give you a hand." Tremblay's truck is less powerful than Graham's grader, but much faster. Tremblay could reach Grenon and Harrison a good hour ahead of Graham – if he could get through.

"Thanks," Grenon said, "but make it fast. It's real bad here." There was no radio in the Kenworth, but no heat in the pickup. "We'll wait in the Kenworth," said Grenon.

The wind almost tore the door off the pickup as Grenon got out and staggered through the darkness to climb into the big truck. Harrison brought out a sandwich left from his lunch and gave half to Grenon. As they ate, the engine stalled, refusing to restart. Now both men were shivering.

Grenon emptied a first-aid box. Into it he put the wrappings from Harrison's lunch and some paper he found on the floor, and set them alight. The small fire gave a flicker of warmth, but died quickly. Now Harrison crumpled the truck's log into his lunch box. Under the seat he found a can of motor oil, another of ether. He poured both over the paper, then struck a match. His fire flared, then died into a tiny, smoky flame that lasted only a few minutes. It was now about 6 p.m.

"It'll be five or six hours before Jim or André gets here," said Grenon, a hint of fear in his voice. "We won't last that long without heat. What about the crew-cab?" Harrison nodded. Grenon fought his way back through the blizzard to the pickup and called his wife.

On a two-way radio in their apartment in the Eagle Plains Lodge, **Susan Grenon** had heard her husband's first call for help and was standing by. "See if John Green can come up with the crew-cab," said Gerry. "And send some dry boots."

**John Green**, 31, the Eagle Plains mechanic, had never driven very far north of Eagle Plains. But he fuelled the crew-cab pickup and loaded gasoline, sandwiches, thermoses of coffee and soup, and cans of fruit juice. He traveled about 35 kilometres before stopping in front of a snow drift too big to break through. André came on the radio: He was near Eagle Plains and would stop only to refuel. Green settled back, with a sandwich and coffee, to wait. It was 7 p.m.

Tremblay reached him an hour later, well ahead of Jim Graham and the grader. He took a run at the drift that had stopped Green, only to have his plow lose power as he backed out for a second try. The gas line was frozen. Green fixed it with antifreeze, but both vehicles had to wait another hour before the grader arrived. Graham burst through at full throttle. They were about 40 kilometres from Grenon and Harrison.

With Tremblay and Green at his heels, Graham smashed through two more big drifts. But then they too began to feel the effects of the storm. Losing sight of the road in the swirling snow, the three men drove looking through the side windows. Snow blew into the cabs and the roof of the crew-cab buckled as though someone were walking on it.

But they made it. About 1 a.m. Tremblay cut a swath up the side of the drift that had stopped Grenon and Harrison, and Green brought the crew-cab close to the stalled Kenworth. As Grenon and Harrison climbed into the crew-cab, Green noticed their clothes were coated with ice.

Inching the crew-cab back and forth to turn it on the narrow road, Green had to hold the gas pedal almost to the floor just to keep the engine running. He was facing south again when Tremblay called by radio from a few metres away. The plow truck had quit. Slowly, Green backed to where Tremblay, now on foot, held on to the side of his truck. Tremblay made a lunge for the crew-cab's tailgate and barely managed to grab it before the wind swept his feet out from under him.

Several hundred metres to the south, Graham waited in the grader to lead them back to Eagle Plains. The crew-cab had almost reached him when a gust of wind forced it into the ditch. Now, suddenly, everything depended on the grader – but Graham could not see to back up.

“John,” Graham said into the microphone, “can you see me?” Four men in the crew-cab peered into the storm. Green reached for the radio. “No, Jim, we can't.”

Tremblay opened a door of the crew-cab and cautiously put a foot on the road, blown free of snow by the wind. “It's better here,” he said. “I think I can go up and lead him.” Going down on his hands and knees, Tremblay scrambled over to the grader.

Once there, he walked in the lee of the grader and guided Graham back to the crew-cab. Supporting each other against the wind, Tremblay and Graham attached a tow chain, and the grader hauled the crew-cab out of the ditch. They were headed for home again.

But in less than 200 metres the grader ground to a stop, its engine dead. Graham had to pile in with the others. Now all five Eagle Plains men were in the crew-cab as it crawled through the blinding snow.

Running at full choke with the throttle almost wide open – just to keep the crew-cab moving – they were using up gas. They could not go far without refuelling from the jerrycans Green had brought.

Green passed a plastic bottle of gas-line antifreeze out to Tremblay and Graham, and they struggled back to the tank on the upwind side of the vehicle. Tremblay reached into the back for a can of gas while Graham unscrewed the cap from the bottle of antifreeze.

With the scream of a banshee, the wind sucked antifreeze out of the bottle and sprayed it in every direction. Graham and Tremblay watched in amazement as sparks flew from the side of the vehicle, caused by wind-driven gravel from the roadbed. They could take no chance on refuelling if it risked setting fire to the gas and destroying the crew-cab, their only hope of survival. Grenon reached for the microphone and called again for help. It was about 2 a.m.

The Eagle Plains Lodge is the only permanent habitation on the north Yukon stretch of the Dempster Highway. **Jack McNevin**, 41, manager of the gas station there, took Grenon's call and said he would try a rescue with the grader station's big 23-tonne snow blower. He got sandwiches and coffee from the lodge, packed a sleeping bag and put a torch, fuelled by a propane bottle, into the big vehicle.

Grenon's reports had been cheerful, but he'd been unable to disguise his worry. McNevin was the last hope of help from Eagle Plains. And now the engine of the crew-cab had stalled, leaving the five men freezing in a dark, windy hell.

Built to work in the worst of storms, McNevin's snow blower should have been able to reach the trapped men in two hours. But an hour out from the lodge it ground to a stop. McNevin radioed Green, the mechanic. Guessing the brakes were frozen, Green suggested thawing them with the torch.

McNevin lit the torch, then set it to warm the brakes. After more than an hour, the blower still would not move. Now six vehicles were immobilized on the Dempster. McNevin alone was safe and reasonably comfortable – he had his sleeping bag and was in a cab heated by the big diesel engines of the snow blower.

Twenty-seven kilometres to the north, the wind shrieked and roared around the stalled crew-cab, rocking it, rattling the doors, blowing in snow that piled up on the dash, the floor and the men themselves.

Green – behind the steering wheel – thawed the frozen sandwiches inside his parka and ate slowly, trying to get the others to eat. Beside him sat Harrison, resisting all attempts to make him speak or move. Green kept nudging him lest he go to sleep.

Tremblay nursed a fire in Harrison's lunch bucket. He was using paper, upholstery – anything that would soak up gasoline and support a flame. Grenon and Graham faced each other in the back seat, boots off, feet pushed up into each other's armpits. At least their feet were warm. But both men shivered.

With McNevin and the big snow blower out of action, the marooned men's only hope was the four-man Ogilvie River Grader Station 246 kilometres south. Grenon could not reach Ogilvie on his radio but Susan took up the call. "Ogilvie, this is Eagle ..."

Ogilvie had listened to Eagle all day. Now, at 3 a.m., grader operator **Mike Warville** heard Susan's call and wakened foreman **Tommy Taylor**. Taylor went quickly into action, sending Warville and operator **Martin Farr** ahead in graders while he followed in a plow loaded with fuel and spare parts.

Twice they had to break through snowdrifts and it was 10 a.m. when the convoy pulled into Eagle Plains to refuel. They were still 78 kilometres from the five stranded men.

But now, at last, the storm was easing. Climbing out of the crew-cab, Green saw Graham's grader not 200 metres away. He walked over to it and returned with some rags to start new fires in the lunch box and the first-aid kit. Then Green made his way to the plow to get Tremblay's torch. Now, with heat in the crew-cab, all five men could see a glimmer of hope. But could Taylor and his men get there in time?

Further south, the wind had also died some when Taylor, forging ahead in the plow, reached McNevin. Both could hear air hissing from the front of the blower: not *frozen* brakes, but brakes *locked* because of a broken brake line! Taylor quickly fixed the line and, as he climbed into the snow blower, he told McNevin to follow the plow.

The grader nearly caught up with Taylor a couple of times when the big Sicard slowed to chew through drifts, but they were far behind when at 2:20 p.m. it finally stopped beside the crew-cab. As Taylor radioed the graders to turn back, the five stranded men climbed in with him. There was no jubilation. The five, all but immobilized by cold and exhaustion, could only huddle over the coffee Taylor had brought.

It was 6 p.m. when they reached the lodge. Grenon and his men had been up and working – or marooned – for about 36 hours. They ate, showered and went to bed. Their ordeal was over.

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*Winter winds often blow with almost incredible force on the Dempster. Even heavy transports are sometimes swept off the road. But after the December 1979 incident, government vehicles at Eagle Plains were modified to enable them to keep going through the worst of blowing snow. Engine compartments, open at the bottom, are now shielded with canvas sheet.*

*A snow tractor stands by at the lodge, fully fuelled and supplied for rescue missions. All traffic is advised to check at the lodge for weather and road reports, and the highway is closed several times most winters. The grim experience of the Eagle Plains crew is being used to ensure the safety of all who travel Canada's loneliest road.*

## READING YUKON BOOK

I know that you have many Yukon books, but do you have "Timeless Trails of the Yukon"? It is written by Delores Cline Brown who married Louis Brown of the Mayo area. It can be found in Google, but easier at:

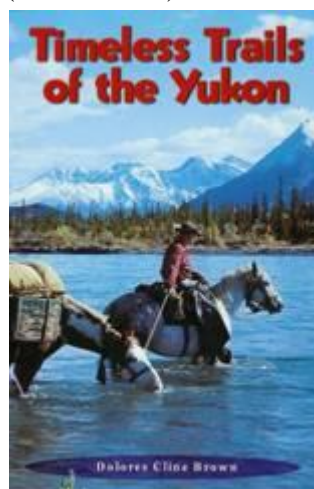
<http://www.hancockhouse.com/products/timtra.htm> . A Forward that is found in the book is in: <http://www.hancockhouse.com/products/pdfs/TimTraSyn.pdf> .

I have known Louis Brown since he came into Mayo in 1934, a very quiet man but a lot underneath that you never see. In those early years he brought in a Motor Toboggan to run his trap line. It was open, more like a toboggan with skis and a track running in the back middle of it. About three feet wide and was driven by a V2 Harley Davidson motorcycle engine used in the Harley 45. He built a trail toboggan for it to haul his needs, and it was faster than a team and less taking care of. It had to be the forerunner of the Skidoo.

I knew that Louis married, but never had the pleasure of meeting Delores. In the past we have read Jeanne Harbottle's stories of when at Ross River they had Highland cattle, and they sold a herd to Louis and Delores. It shows up in this book, and as about 1967 at 17 mile below Mayo where they had their spread I ran across one of them with my camper. I asked Alice what she thought and she had no opinion, was it a buffalo? No, the shoulders were not high enough in comparison to the rump. We did eventually hear that Louis had Highland Cattle that solved the problem. I just finished the book last evening and found it very enjoyable.

It is a real enjoyable book, and by the writing of both Delores and Louis it gives you an insight that you never get looking from the outside. You begin to understand the deeper thoughts that ran in his mind other than trapping and outfitting, and the same for Delores. According to the book Louis must have passed on in 1987, a loss to Yukon of a man who knew complete Northern Freedom.

Henry Breaden [hjbreaden@shaw.ca](mailto:hjbreaden@shaw.ca) (In Nanaimo)



## RIVER OF TEARS

The story of Bruce Stuart's ordeal that his mother, Vivian, sent (river of tears) in was so touching it certainly brought tears to my eyes! Thanks to her for sharing the story with us. I'm so glad it had such a happy ending, due to the "Miracle of Life." Certainly makes one appreciative of the kindness of strangers.

Joyce Yardley [joyceyardley@dataspan.ca](mailto:joyceyardley@dataspan.ca) (In Nanaimo)



### Feeding time for the Grizzlies on Chilkoot River

Haines Alaska – Oct 9, 2005 weekend.

Photo courtesy Kelly White (& Nigel Stubbins) [p.place\\*northwestel.net](http://p.place*northwestel.net) (In Whitehorse)

### Memory of fishing on the Chilkoot River

I was fishing down from the campground and thought I saw a horse lying down on the other side of the stream. But when he looked up with that monstrous head and ears I was happy he was on the other side. I moved up to the campground to fish and there were two fellows in a canoe anchored near the other side fishing Dolly Varden. That grizzly came up over a 6 foot boom timber on the other side, and did he ever look huge. The fellows in the canoe did not even bother about their anchor, but were making white water getting out of there and back out into the lake.

Henry Breaden

## **DO YOU HAVE ANY OLD PHOTOS FOR THIS PROJECT**

We as **seniors of Haines Junction** have a project going with **old pictures from Haines Junction and the north highway**. We've managed to fill a couple of albums with fantastic pictures of this area. We've received them from the Elders (first nations) and non first nations. We are always looking for more pictures of this area. We actually have a picture of the first school here in 1949 along with the teachers and pictures of the students. We are still looking for a picture of what we call the pink school which came after the original one; it was situated near the RCMP residence. Maybe someone reading the MocTel has one.

Joann Graham [jograham@ykn.net](mailto:jograham@ykn.net) (In Haines Junction)

## **HELPFUL TIP FROM HENRY BREADEN**

Have you ever had your e-mail and Internet open in a shrunk mode, it is frustrating but simple to remedy. With the shrunk page on your screen, hold the page with the blue title bar at the top and move it up to the top with your left mouse key. Go to the left of the page and when you see the double arrow, hook on and pull it open to the left of the screen. Now do the same with the right side and the bottom and you have set the default opening to full screen both on your mail and Internet. I have had this happen, and it is frustrating as there is no help in the toolbars at the top.

Henry Breaden [hjbreaden@shaw.ca](mailto:hjbreaden@shaw.ca) (In Nanaimo)

*Henry's reference to 'e-mail and Internet' is equivalent to your Outlook Express program and your Internet Explorer program. You may even find the reduced size can be corrected by using the tool in the upper right hand corner of the window which allows you to minimize, maximize or close the window.*

*You can also increase or decrease two sides at once if you point to the corner of the window until the double arrow appears and then clicking down on the left mouse key and holding while you drag the corner in or out as you wish. This only works when the window is less than full size.*

*You can also move a window around on your screen by pointing to the top bar and clicking down your left mouse key, holding it down and dragging the window where ever you wish it to be. This only works when the window is less than full size. – Sherron*

## **JIM FORDYCE**

*Oct. 20, 2005 - I was in to work this afternoon and to my surprise in came Jim Fordyce and his daughter Marlee Larson. Jim lost his wife Stevie recently so I had the honor or*

*doing up a design for a headstone for Grey Mountain Cemetery which Jim will pick up on his way back north.*

*I called my husband Bill at his office and he came over for a visit. He had worked with Jim at Yukon Motors about 1969-1970. I had worked with Marlee at City Hall. – Sherron Jones*

## **REMOVED FROM THE LIST**

*Have lost contact with Kathy due to her computer dying.*

AYLWIN, Ken & Kathy [kkaylwin@telus.net](mailto:kkaylwin@telus.net) (In Mayo, Whitehorse, Haines Junction)  
(250) 546-9794 Armstrong

## **NEW ADDITIONS**

I'd love to receive the Moccasin Telegraph.

Thanks.

Irena Yardley [msyardley@comcast.net](mailto:msyardley@comcast.net) (In Florida)

I don't think I'll have time to submit a bio this week. We are preparing for the hurricane of the century coming at us right now and need to formulate emergency plans. Things will be better next week after this monster has gone by. It's predicted to be come straight for us. (I live in Sarasota). I have girlfriends from New Orleans arriving tomorrow who were evacuated by their employers from Louisiana to Tampa after Hurricane Katrina and the hotels they're at are right on the Bay and they need to get further inland. And just to make matters worse, my mother is here visiting from Canada and is panic-stricken and I have to see if I can change her flight before Friday and get her back to Canada.

Sorry for the delay.

It's been a heck of a hurricane season. Pray for us!

Irena.

We are long time Yukoners who have moved outside and have recently heard of the wonderful stories and news that you email around. We would like to be put on that list and find out and possibly contribute some old time news as well.

Could you let me know how we go about this.

Allen and Daughter Sharon Sowden in Yukon from the late 40's to the early 70's

[sharsowd@telus.net](mailto:sharsowd@telus.net)

Thanks for the prompt response Sherron. Yes Dad and I were in Summerland for the picnic this year.

Dad lived in downtown Whitehorse and eventually we moved out to Arctic Tire just south of the shortcut into Whitehorse. I left in 69 after I graduated and went on to College. Dad and Mom stayed until 70 or 71 when they moved to Enderby, then eventually Armstrong, and in the early 90's they moved to Keremeos, where Dad and I live now. Mom Died in January 1992, and I now share the house with Dad, as we are both on our own and it is nice to have someone with similar interests.

Dad worked for various outfits including the American army to help build the Alaska Hiway, and then he went up to Whitehorse in the late 40's. In Whitehorse, I know he worked for BYN, Whitepass, Arctic Tire, Firehall, and a few more early on. This should give you a good start though.

Whitehorse was the only place we ever lived except for on the Alaska Hiway. Yes we are interested in the 2005 issues, and Rusty Reid originally told me about this, and we are also very interested in past issues as well, I am going to print them off for Dad to read, as he thoroughly enjoys them, just as I do, and I know he has many stories he can add as well.

Again thanks for responding so quickly, as I know Dad will be happy to start reading.  
Sharon Sowden

Hi Sherron,

I was talking to Pat King today. He and I were in the RCMP stationed in the Yukon in the '60's. I was at Watson Lake, Teslin, Carmacks and Whitehorse. My wife and I were married in 1965 and our first home was in Whitehorse. Our eldest daughter was born in Whitehorse.

Anyway, Pat and I talked about "the old days in the Yukon", (among other things), and he suggested I write to you and get on the list to "The Moccasin Telegraph".

What's it all about? And will you put me on your mailing list?

Thanks,

Jim & Frona Scott  
[jrhscott@bigfoot.com](mailto:jrhscott@bigfoot.com)  
Brentwood Bay, BC

Talked to Marlee to day at work and she gave her address to be added back on to the Moccasin Telegraph. – Sherron

LARSON, Marlee (FORDYCE) [midnightmarno@shaw.ca](mailto:midnightmarno@shaw.ca) (Born & raised in Yukon) Kamloops

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

*Life is a gamble - so roll the dice: Your wealth is where your friends are.*

## RECIPE OF THE WEEK

I don't know how many people may already have this recipe, but it's a nice light dessert for serving after a heavy meal. I've made it many times myself when entertaining & everyone has loved it. It's not for coconut haters, though.

Joan M. White [jomar31@shaw.ca](mailto:jomar31@shaw.ca) (In Victoria)

### NO BAKE COCONUT CAKE

2 tbs flour  
1 envelope gelatin  
1/2 cup cold water  
4 egg yolks, beaten  
2 tsps white sugar  
1/4 tsp salt  
2 cups milk  
4 egg whites  
1 - 10 inch angel food cake  
1 cup fine grated coconut  
1/2 pint whipping cream  
2 tbs white sugar  
1/2 of a 1oz square unsweetened chocolate - grated

### DAY BEFORE SERVING

To make the custard: Soften gelatin in cold water. Combine salt, egg yolks, sugar & flour- stir till smooth.

Gradually add milk - cook over low heat, stirring constantly until it coats a spoon.

Add softened gelatin & add to hot mix. Refrigerate till cool - 1 to 2 hours.

Beat egg whites - fold into cooled custard. Tear cake into pieces - use to cover bottom of 9X13 pan.

Pour over 1/2 the custard. Sprinkle with 1/2 the coconut, then another layer of cake & custard.

Whip cream with sugar & spread over top of cake. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup coconut & refrigerate overnight.

Before serving, cover with last 1/4 cup coconut & grated chocolate.

## SIGN UP TO RECEIVE THE MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

If you have received this copy of the Moccasin Telegraph from a friend and wish to sign up to receive future editions yourself, the criteria is that you **are or were a Yukoner**. The goal of this project is to provide an opportunity for folks to reconnect.

– Sherron Jones [sherronjones@shaw.ca](mailto:sherronjones@shaw.ca)

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