

## Truckstop Article May/June 2017

**Sunday morning.** Our after-church breakfast was done and I was preparing to head to Canada for the week when the doorbell rang. There on the front porch was a guy that I had never seen before. For sake of discussion, and to protect his identity let's say the guy's name was Loobert.

He saw my log deck and was wondering if he could perhaps purchase some logs from me. Whereas my pile of logs is mostly firewood, I asked if he would like a load of firewood, but he said that he was looking for sawlogs as he had just purchased a brand new State of the Art sawmill and was going to go into the board making business.

Upon further interrogation by myself, (I'm not a Lawyer, but I did portray one once... had something to do with the Herbie Award...) I eventually learned that He had never made a single board ever, nor had he ever been around whilst one was being made, but by Golly it looked fun and he was going to give it a try. Oh goody, I thought to myself, another one of those guys... I had seen these before where a guy buys a sawmill and then tries to make a living making boards.

A few years ago a young guy from Belgrade called searching for a load of sawlogs for his just acquired sawmill. I explained to him that I could probably get him a nice load of Fir but it wouldn't be cheap, although there would be lots of board making potential in the load. The phone went silent when I told him the price, and he requested that I bring him a load of firewood instead, and he would make boards out of his firewood load instead.

Well, there's a reason why that particular log is in the firewood pile. It's because there's darned few boards in it. If there were a bunch it would be in the sawlog pile instead. That guy never did call back for another load...

Anyway, back to Loobert. Darned his luck, it was breakup and there weren't any loads readily available for him to begin his board making adventure. However, I had just finished hauling several loads of Larch Logs from James Stupack's yard and I got to thinking that some of those Larch Logs would be perfect for the beginner Sawmiller to start making boards out of.

Whereas there's an abundance of logs around here that resemble giant green ice cream cones (big on one end, real little on the other...) Stupack's Larch logs looked like culverts. So off to Kalispell Loobert went to purchase a load or two from Mr. Stupack. But that yard is not at all a good place for the novice Sawmiller to hang out in without proper supervision.

There's just too many distractions, what with all the different species of logs to choose from. He must have got a whiff of that special "Aromatic Balsam Fir" that clouded his thinking, cause two days later I delivered Loobert's load of CEDAR he bought from Mr. Stupack. Go figure...

A week later, Loobert called wondering if I would go with him and look at some timber his cousin had and that he was going to log and get me to haul back to where his CEDAR pile was. I told him that he needed a Forester, not a Truck Driver to go look at his cousin's timber. He said that I was close enough and I would do. (So let's quickly review my long list

of "Forester" credentials. Hmm... Let's see... A few of MLA's day long BMP workshops, and I watched a logger take a reading with a Clinometer once...)

Not hardly qualified, but I hadn't had a chance to try out my new GPS with landowner maps installed yet, so off we went to his cousin's place. Anyway, that went poorly... He showed me some real nice patches of perfect Lodgepole sawlogs, that according to my GPS were on Forest Service land. Evidently his cousin's name is Sam...

Now fast forward a month and we get a call from another guy needing some sawlogs hauled to his brand new State of the Art sawmill that he had just purchased because he was going into the board making business. (Lot of that going on these days I guess...) Let's call this guy "Dobbs" for sake of discussion also. I was enroute with his third of four loads when he called me wondering if I knew where these logs were coming from.

Odd question I thought seeing how him and the logger made the deal and all I was doing was delivering them. Then he asked me if these particular loads came from a "Clearcut". I turned into a Forester temporarily and explained to Dobbs that one usually doesn't clearcut fir and he shouldn't worry. But I could tell he was perplexed at the thought that some of his logs might have come from a clearcut.

Then he told me about a guy he hired to run his new sawmill and that this guy would really be a great asset as he was from Georgia where he was in charge of an entire logging operation. Let's call this guy Lynnrd Skynnrd after the name on the Tee Shirt he was wearing the day I delivered the last load to Dobbs's new sawmill.

As I was taking my wrappers off getting ready to unload, Lynnrd came over and started to closely examine one of the logs on my load. He points to the butt end of one of the logs and says "This the top, or the bottom?" "That's the Butt", I explained to Logging Operations Manager Lynnrd, wondering where this was going.

He studied that log a bit longer and said "Where's the rest of it?" "Whaaaaa???" Was about all I could say as Lynnrd accused me of shorting him the bottom twenty feet of that fir tree... It's a good thing that I was nearly out of hours for the week or I would have hauled all four of those loads back to where I got them from. And for free too...

That said, I must close now as I've forgotten what my boat looks like and I need to see if I can even find the darned thing. Oh, and if some guy named Loobert calls wanting some Lodgepole hauled, tell him NO!

That is All. Rich T.