

AN UNSUNG HERO

...cuz he paid attention

On July 12, 2017, professional log hauler, 64 year-old Mike Stickney, left the landing at 3am, with a load of logs destined for a mill in the Flathead valley. Ahead of him was 54 miles of gravel haul road and too many blind corners and curves to count.

He left early in an attempt to beat the "very" heavy summer recreational traffic that this route is not designed to accommodate.

He leaves early so that he might make 3 trips to the F.H. Stoltze mill in Columbia Falls.

He leaves early because Montana summer mornings are special... and cuz he might get back to his camper in time for a little fly fishing in the nearby South Fork of the Flathead River.

Late afternoon on this same July 12th day, Mike is headed back to load his truck that will then sit overnight on the landing... when he is flagged down at "8 mile" by 2 young women. Mike thought they were going to complain about the dust or the noise or the truck traffic. Instead, they frantically told him their father was having a stroke and would he please call 911... which he immediately did.

After Mike made the call, he jumped out of his truck to "assess the situation and survey the scene." It appeared to him that the father was having a heart attack. Mike ran to his truck, got his trauma kit, removed the CPR mask and ran back and began CPR on the father.

Afterwards, Mike said, "It just kicked in—all those years of safety training just fell into place. All those nice spring days, sitting in a first aid class, thinking of other things I could be doing and asking myself, 'Why am I here?' All of those thoughts vanished and the training just kicked in."

Mike would also say that he had no idea how long it took for the EMT crew to arrive. "I felt a tap on my arm and a female voice said 'I'll take over.'" Relieved, Mike said "the scene" had become very busy with rescue and ambulance folks... so, he picked up his CPR mask, walked back to his truck and proceeded on up the remaining 46 dusty, curvy miles of gravel haul road to the log landing.

Loaded and ready for the next early morning trip, he set the brakes on his 96 Peterbilt, turned the key to off, got in his pickup, drove down the road a few miles, pulled out his fly rod and fished for a long while. On the way back to his pickup, Mike said he stopped and picked some Huckleberries... capping off what was a very full—and very unusual—day for a log hauler.

The father was taken by ground ambulance to Kalispell Regional Hospital... and as far as we know (privacy concerns) is alive and well... perhaps because Mike J. Stickney—who has been hauling logs and machinery in the forests of Northwest Montana for 40 plus years—paid attention during those repetitive, but necessary, safety training workshops conducted by the Montana Logging Association every breakup.

[Ken Swanstrom is the owner of Skookum Logging and is a past-president of the MLA]