

Slyter

Wayne Slyter was born in 1919 and grew up on a farm in Rimbey, Alberta about 50 miles northwest of Red Deer. His father, Wes had logged in Winfield, another 35 miles north, during the winters and was an expert with horses. He introduced Wayne to the woods and to horses and inspired him with his work and his stories of horse drawn trains of sleighs loaded with logs and skidded in ice ruts down to the mill.

At the age of 20, Wayne was called up and went off to Europe for over five years in the Canadian Army with the 13 th Field Regiment. He was at the Normandy beach on D-Day in a Sherman Tank. Going through Holland, he was shot in the leg, transported out to Ghent and back to England to a military hospital. When he was healed, he returned to his outfit and finished the war with them in Germany.

Back in Canada after the war, Wayne began logging first in Winfield, Alberta. His parents were working for Justin Mccarthy and living in his camp in Joe Rich in March of 1948, when his father died. A woman by the name of Brown was cooking for the camp, but was not aware that she was a typhoid carrier. She infected milk which Wesley Slyter drank. He died of typhoid in Kelowna before the doctors were sure of his diagnosis. Wayne came out for the funeral and never left. His mother, Lena also stayed in Kelowna until her death in 1963.

Wayne married Delphina Lanfranco and together they raised a family. For a while they lived in a cabin on what is now Lindahl's property. She died in 1965. Later, Wayne married Janet, his present wife.

When Wayne arrived in Kelowna, he was a 26 year old, medium-sized, red-blond headed, wiry young man who during the war had learned how to look after himself and work with other men. He liked people and he liked horses. Justin Mccarthy had a logging camp just down hill from where Philpott Road now joins Highway 33 and Wayne began work there with a bay team that belonged to "Shorty McClelland". There was lots of work in the woods and many of the workers were inexperienced. He remembers working with a novice Englishman they called "Upside-down Thompson". He "didn't know one end of a horse from the other". He put a horse collar on upside-down and wondered why the horse didn't work.

Occasionally, he worked with 'Red' McCulloch, a son of the engineer who had designed the Kettle Valley Railway. 'Red' built two donkey engines which he mounted on the backs of large trucks and

used to skid and lift logs. The trees were felled with crosscut saws, limbed and cut to length and then Wayne and other skidders dragged the logs out to the landings with their teams. There the logs were loaded onto trucks and taken down the Joe Rich gravel road to Rutland Saw Mill which stood where Mara Lumber is now situated in Rutland. A French Canadian fellow owned the mill and sold it to John Olinger. The trucks were loaded with a cable from a pulley on an A frame. The truck backed under the A frame, the team pulling on the cable lifted the log and then backed up to lower the log onto the truck. The cable was then detached from the log and at this point Wayne's helpers often let the cable go. It would race back through the pulley and fall to the ground. Wayne would then have to climb the A frame with a line and haul the cable back through the pulley before he could lift the next log with his team. It was a big waste of time and energy. It happened frequently enough so that he threatened to quit, but of course never did.

Logging was always dangerous. Once Wayne was working in the bush when another skidder riding his large draught horse with its harness still on with a singletree attached rushed down the mountain to find him. He told Wayne that Clark, a driver who had been loading his truck on a side hill landing, had been crushed by a log. Wayne and the other skidder rushed up and found Clark under a large log which had rolled down on top of him. He was dead.

The loggers were a close group of men. There was Dick Wigglesworth, a good skidder, but a man with a temper and a large vocabulary of shouted curse words which he continuously used on his horses. He got the job done, but he was sometimes pretty hard on his horses. There were Gerald "Leather cock" Brooks and his brother, Glenn, the High brothers and sometimes their dad, Ivan and Norm Prosser, Clarence Favel, a native logger, Jimmy Lind, who got the first tandem axle truck in this area, Larry Layden with his hippy long hair, Gordy Niel, who was electrocuted when he felled a tree across a power line, Ray Nichols, Oley Larson, Reg Stubbs and many others. They sometimes worked together, but even when they were working in different camps, each usually knew where the others were logging.

Sometimes they relaxed together, often with a beer or something stronger. Wayne remembers when a group of them got into a batch of home brew beer he was making with a recipe he had gotten from Mary Weddell. It had only been brewing for six days, when Stuart Weddell suggested that they try a little. It tasted good so he, Stuart and a friend by the name of Cleveland got the whole crock, ladled it into cups and drank it sediment and all. When it was gone, Wayne crawled home to where he and his wife were then living in a cabin with a barn on the property where Lindahls now live. His wife was not impressed especially when he was sick and couldn't get out of bed the next day. Another time, he bought a case of 'Lemon Heart Rum' for Christmas, but when the weather turned bad and their

pickup was late, he Ivan Prosser and a few others got into the rum. They went back to the bush still drinking, but when some of them couldn't stand up, the few who hadn't been into the booze quit and left to return the next day when everyone was sober. On another occasion, Clarence Favel couldn't start his old Dodge car up Grouse Creek. He asked for a pull to get started. One of the men who had been drinking went out and hooked onto him. When the drunk fellow started pulling, he never stopped until he got all the way to Rutland, and Clarence's car never did start.

From that camp, Justin Mccarthy moved his camp up to Buck Creek on the northwest side of the Mission Creek valley on what is now the downhill side of Three Forks Road. They logged out of this camp for a long time. Bud Bubar and his wife Pat (Weddell) Bubar were also there when their son, Cyril was a baby. Wayne remembers that there was a women cooking for the camp who had a cat. The cat had just had kittens when Ivan Prosser showed up one day in a logging truck with his Black Labrador Dog sitting beside him. The dog ran into the cookhouse and was snooping around when he was attacked by the mother cat. The dog left the country right out through the screen door with the cat riding on his back firmly attached by her claws.

From the Buck Creek camp, Wayne moved over to a camp at Foolhen. Finally, he started his own logging operation at Grouse Creek on the south side of the Mission Creek Valley across from Bald Range and the present Saura place. For a month or so, they camped out there and then built a permanent camp. They trucked the logs down hill, across the creek and up to the present Highway 33. For years, he managed his crew there. He and the Petches became partners in what they called 'S & P Logging'. They logged Mildred Wardlaw's Property beside McCulloch Lake. She was living alone with her animals. One day when he was visiting with her, he noticed three pots on the stove; one for her, one for the dogs and one for the cats. He asked her if she ever got the pots mixed up and she replied, "Sometimes".

When Wayne retired, he bought and built a home on property right across the Mission Creek valley from where he had worked so long. Quite naturally, he called his place the Grouse Creek Ranch, the property which Hanu Saura now has. Also quite naturally he bought horses. Two of these were a beautiful red roan team of big Belgians just 18 months old and full of energy. Wayne had a steep switch back road down through his property to Mission Creek where the old road crossed the creek.

One day he harnessed the team to his rubber tired democrat wagon and with his dog on the seat beside him set off to drive the team down to the creek. When they got onto the steep part of the hill the horses were upset by the wagon pushing forward against their legs and so went faster. They were soon out of control. The wagon shaft broke. The wagon then lost normal steering and pushed

harder against the horses. They responded with even more speed. Wayne knew a sharp corner was coming up and that the horses wouldn't make it so he bailed out on the uphill side. He landed on a pile of rocks and the empty democrat went over his legs. The horses, the democrat and the dog still on the seat disappeared around the corner.

Wayne climbed, black and blue, back up the road to his house and drove his four-wheel drive pickup down where he'd been. The horses had made it around the corner, but the democrat had rolled over down the bank. One of the horses had shed all its harness. The other had some harness and broken equipment still attached. The democrat had come apart. The wheels and chassis were in one place. In another was the upper part of the democrat with the seat attached and the dog sitting on it. He had a look on his face that seemed to say, "What the hell is going on here".