

Mostly about People

By Wally Traling



Big Cat In The Woods

Pescadero — Up at 6:30 this slate grey morning; drove 10 miles north of Boulder Creek and spiraled down into a forested valley, already echoing to the high virile whine of the Santa Cruz Lumber company's saw mill.

From here, Don Ley, woods superintendent, joggled me 11 miles deeper into the mountains over logging roads to a cleared area where great burly logs are assembled for trucking to the saw mill.

Much of the time we drove on the left side of the road, like the English do. Ley said this is so the heavily loaded logging trucks can have the bank walls to scrape against should their brakes fail.

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At the landing I transferred to a yellow elephantine caterpillar for the last stage of my trip to the logging area.

This is the big cat of the woods, so large that there is a jump seat for two passengers in the cab and so clattery that when the operator shouted his name I thought he said Warren Fines; but it turned out to be Walter Sines of San Jose.

He's a large man of 64 with a shy smile and who wears glasses and has logged off and on since 1915 — 22 of those years on this job.

His unit is called an "arch cat" because of the two-wheeled, arch-shaped vehicle towed behind which supports the logs by cable.

It can pull enough log sections out of the woods in one trip to build you a six-room house.

The turbine-diesel engine is so big that you could put a Volkswagen under the hood; so big that it requires a smaller engine to start it; and so hungry that it can drink 65 gallons of fuel in one work day.

And let me tell you, it took some mighty yelling back and forth to get these statistics.

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Great redwood area, thick as I have ever seen — tall, straight virgin giants, searching for sunlight among the firs and tan oaks. Only the fir and redwood are logged. Last year 13 million board feet of it (80 per cent redwood) was taken from this area.

Riding with Sines is like riding a ponderous roller-coaster; one minute standing on our nose, the next on my back like an astronaut, or swearing we were about to turn over on the side. Even scares Sines sometimes.

An iron frame over the top protects the driver from falling trees which tumble like ten-pins when these monsters seek a route through the woods.

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The men who fell the trees are over the next ridge. Behind them they have left 175-foot redwoods, cut into 15 to 40-foot lengths.

Young men called choke setters have placed cables around the log ends and four or five of these are hooked onto the dozer's arch hook and Sines drags them cozy and tight up to the arch for our trip back.

Sines can manipulate the 20 tons of logs like matchsticks. Power is everywhere, unbelievable power.

We started down with a house worth of timber ram-

ming behind like great pistons and Sines said he has seen some of those logs pass his dozer on a steep downgrade. That would be the signal for me to change jobs.

"You think this might be a boring job," yelled Sines.

No, I didn't think so.

But anyway he yelled, "No, sir, every load takes a little different figuring." At least I think that's what he said, through the roar.

Sines has built up a reputation in the woods that's better than a gold watch to own. They say he can put his rig places that a coyote couldn't wiggle.

The loggers will often stop their work to watch him perform and shake their heads in disbelief.

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As big as these cats are, Sines steers by two small protruding bars that he can work with his gloved little fingers; but there are nine other levers to keep everything going, and he's busy as a helicopter pilot.

These cats aren't built for comfort and if I didn't have a springy bottom a lot of my bones wouldn't be where they were the day before.

I mean that man dances sitting down.

"These guys usually end up with bum kidneys," Red Sinentt, the chopping boss, told me later. "They take a beating every day."

You've got to respect these men of the woods. Their own skill reduces an otherwise dangerous situation to a day of matching wits with the power of nature.

These catskinners, kidneys or no kidneys, are a tough breed. (Tomorrow — fallers and buckers)

Permit Issued For Motel On Riverside

A \$100,000 building permit has been issued for a two-story, 24-unit motel at 330 Riverside avenue. Owners of the new motel are listed as Robert Rittenhouse and William Smith-erum.

Demolition work by Bay City Construction company has started at 330-338 Riverside, 405-411 Third street, and 321 Raymond street in preparation for the new structure.

In all, the city building inspection department issued 20 permits for construction valued at \$144,706 during the week of March 3-9. Only other large permit was for \$25,000, issued to Central Supply company for a new warehouse at 303 Coral street. Other permits included:

Wendell Stolle, \$4200, for an addition at 129 Ross street; Gospodnetich, Cacace and Pinckney, \$2800, for a swimming pool at 204 Second street; Bert Snyder, \$2000, for remodeling at 230 Locust street; Bay City Construction, \$1950, for the demolitions mentioned above on Third street, Raymond street, and Riverside avenue.

A. Vasconcellos, \$1600, a garage at 629 Trevethan avenue; C. Trippi, \$1500, a garage at 510 Seaside street; Wilma Roberts, \$1000, for an addition at 319 Morrissey avenue; William Kelly, \$950, for demolition at 1218-1222 Mission street; Villa del Mar apartments, \$900, new and altered signs at 321 Riverside avenue; Ruth Meredith, \$700, a garage at 507 Pacheco avenue.

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