



# Trail Blazer

October / November 2003



## The Friendly Giant

the world's largest high-grade uranium milling operation, complete with a sophisticated infrastructure that provides every comfort for the 340 people who not only work, but live and play here.

This is a place that NRT drivers know well. A visit to the Key Lake mill site sheds light on one of the reasons that our operators enjoy driving north. From the gatehouse, to the warehouse, to the mill operation to the administration offices, there pervades a friendly, industrious atmosphere; people comfortable in their space, enjoying their work and happy to welcome visitors into their world.

On an early fall morning, a group of people stand around chatting and laughing at Westwind's Saskatoon terminal, waiting to board the 46-passenger Hawker Siddeley 748 Turbo Prop that will fly them north for another week of their week-in/ week-out schedule. On board newspapers, coffee, juice, treats and sweets abound and in what seems like a very short time the plane is landing on a long, packed gravel runway, taxiing up to the Key Lake terminal. I go with the flow and board a bus that takes me to the camp.

A mining industry that fits comfortably into the north

Key Lake is another world. In the far reaches of the north, 570 kilometers north of Saskatoon by air, nestled in the wild splendour of lakes and forest land, is



*NRT company driver Harold Brand*

**CGH**  
C. Gibson Holdings

**WCL**  
Woodland Cree Logging

**NRT**  
Northern Resource Trucking

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Of course everyone else knows where they're going and, almost immediately, so do I. Housing Supervisor Celina Holmgrew, the camp's warm and friendly house mother, checks her list and finds me a room that I can borrow from a 'week-out' woman. The personal touches in the room make me feel like a house guest. Besides finding rooms for guests, Celina runs a soup-to-nuts lobby store and generally keeps everything running smoothly. Clustered around the huge lobby, with its many comfortable sofa groupings where people gather to chat, is a huge dining room, a pool room, a sports bar that's open from 8 to 10 p.m. each evening, with a five-drink limit, racquet ball and squash courts, a great gym with cardio and weight room and a sauna and spa in the women's locker room that is a lovely sanctuary. Corridors and stairs to the men's and women's floors branch off in every direction, each with its own comfy living room, bathroom and laundry room. When the day is done, it's everything you need under one big roof.

"I've been here for seven years, though it doesn't seem that long," says Celina. "Time has flown by. I like going home to Meadow Lake for a week, but I look forward to coming back to work. It's like a family here."

And therein lies a tale. Celina grew up in Uranium City, the northern purpose-built mining town, and worked for Eldorado for five years. Her father was a driller with the company. So it was a terrible shock for the family, she says, when the operation closed and their home life in the place they loved also came to an end. On-site camps are the perfect solution, she says. You always have a home to go to.

And so exists a home from home that, although Cameco expects to mine here for at least the next 30 years with closure a long way off, offers the best of two worlds.

Settled in, I call Mill Manager Wyatt Buck and Carol Romano turns up within five minutes to drive me over to the administration building next to the mill. The day is in full swing and has been so since around 6 that morning. Office hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., a 12-hour day that everyone seems quite happy with.

Here I meet Supervisor of Employee Relations Gavin Rans, the man in charge of



*Gavin Rans, the man in charge of keeping everyone happy.*

keeping everyone happy, productive and meeting their full potential. Besides making sure that the everyday comforts of camp life are met, overseeing site security and workplace safety, dealing with human resources issues, monitoring flights and timecards, Gavin also facilitates a value-added work experience for employees.

"This year, we've placed a special emphasis on training and have hired a female northerner to provide our Workplace Education Program," says Gavin. "Employees can upgrade for work advancement or just for their own personal benefit. It's a great resource and has been very well received. For every hour of their own time that people devote to the program, we match it with one hour of work time they can spend on study."

The program has 98 part-time students, with attendance in the high 70% range. Sixty one per cent of students are northerners, he says.

"We also have a strong apprenticeship initiative," says Gavin. "The majority of those opportunities go to our northern employees so that they can learn a trade and gain journeyman status. Cameco pays all the fees - tuition and books."

There are presently seven apprentices in training; six in industrial mechanics, one a machinist. One electrician got his ticket earlier this year, he says.

"We find that prescreening potential apprentices with aptitude tests and providing

workplace education maximizes the chances of success. We also have an orientation process for new apprentices where they job shadow a journeyman. This way they understand exactly what the job entails and know if they want to do it," says Gavin.

"I find people are generally happy here," says Gavin. "They enjoy their work. And I can't think of too many companies that pay as well or have the benefits that we do. Then there's our PIE (Providing Incentives for Employees) bonus program, based on group performance and targets. That helps keep everyone happy



*Delphine Crawford, keeping admin. running smoothly.*

and motivated."

Happy and motivated would definitely describe Office Supervisor Delphine Crawford. In between her many administrative duties, including the supervision of a sizeable clerical staff, she introduces me to everyone else I want to talk to and gets me kitted out in safety gear for a trip around the mill.

"My work descriptions tends to be quite flexible," says Delphine, laughing. "Because we're so remote here, we just do whatever needs to be done."

Delphine has been with the company since 1982; first in purchasing in Saskatoon and at the mine site for the past 14 years. "I started out from a temp office and this was my first and only position. I stayed," she says. "The people are great. Why would I go anywhere else?"

It seems a common story. "People do come and stay," she says. "Cameco is a people-oriented company. Benefits and wages are excellent. And where else can you work for a week and get seven days off? And while you're here your meals are made, your dishes washed, your bed made, your room dusted. Everything's laid on. When you get home, it's reality check time. What do you mean supper's not on the table?" she says laughing. "The food is so great here," she adds. I can vouch for that. "And there's so much entertainment that if you're bored up here it's your own fault. You form friendships and bonds with other people. There's a real comfort level. If I didn't like it, I wouldn't have been here this long. Cameco looks after you."

Cameco also looks after the environment and safety is a top priority, she says. One of the most demanding and important tasks that Delphine has undertaken of late is the supervision of document control in Key Lake's initiative to seek ISO 14001 registration. "There was a lot of information to gather, but we're very proud of the fact that Key Lake and McArthur River now have an internationally recognized standard for environmental management systems."

In January 2003, the Key Lake and McArthur River operations were registered to the ISO 14001 standard.

Mill Training Foreman Don Neimor meets ISO 14001 standards in his area of operation with an environmental safety check list that every operator picks up at the gate house. It's a date-stamped controlled document that lists in detail definite, deliberate processes for loading and unloading. All are numbered for all products for audit, he says. "This is an excellent system, especially for operators carrying caustic loads," he says. "The auditors have had a lot of good comments about Cameco's record keeping."

In every area of operation, Cameco provides rigorous health, safety and environmental protection practices for its workers. In 2000, Key Lake and McArthur River received the John T. Ryan award for having the best safety record in Canadian metal mines.

Cameco's Safety Training Officer, Kimm

Barker appreciates that NRT places the same emphasis on safety. "There's a very good relationship between Key Lake and NRT," says Kimm. "I find Lloyd (Driedger, NRT Safety and Compliance Manager) to be very professional, caring and passionate about what he's doing and he deals with any concerns in a very timely way. He also sends me a monthly report on anything that happens. That's nice to get. And he comes here often. It's good to have a person like that. In fact, if something is done better on another site, he can suggest we look at that. It's a very positive team approach to safety."

NRT drivers are on site for a relatively short time and during that time they are a team, says Kimm. They know their tasks on site and it is Cameco's duty to see that those tasks are carried out safely. The Key Lake staff make the drivers' safety a priority and the drivers can be counted on to observe the highest safety standards. It's a good team.

"It's very important for drivers to understand the importance of policies and procedures on site," says Kimm. "For example, there are designated areas to park rigs, depending on whether they are contaminated or not. That hasn't been a problem here. Lloyd takes care of every safety detail and new drivers also learn from the veteran drivers they run with."

"I don't hear many complaints. Everything runs pretty smoothly," he says, smiling.

All-knowing, all-seeing Warehouse Supervisor Fred Misiwich is the man closest to the loading and unloading action. He interacts with NRT drivers on a daily basis.

"I've got no complaints. They're a good group of fellows. We have a good deal of jocular, we insult their trucks and everyone gets on well. And they know their job," says Fred. "They're always on time. It's quite the cluster here in the morning. And they are patient."

There's no doubt that it's easier to be patient when the Key Lake warehouse is one of the best places to get held up. "We always bring food over from the cafeteria for the drivers; omelets, bacon, bread. I think they like it when we're slow. There's always coffee and toast here for them and they can have a shower and just relax for a while," says Fred.

"It's more than a good working relationship," he says, "It's more of a family really. There's work going on and fun with it and everything falls into place quite well. Of course unforeseen things happen, but we take it in stride. At 7 a.m. it's a full house of 'junk and steel', but the people who come up here have been here many times and they know the procedure. They come in with their paperwork and they know where to put it. They're professionals through and through."

Fred also has high praise for the NRT dispatch team. "Ralph, Chevy, Robin and Larry are great guys. We call and want stuff, or we don't want stuff. No Problem. We say slow down, keep the driver an extra day. Whatever we need to happen, happens. At the whole dispatch end of it, they're a dependable bunch. Everything is always delivered on time. If we have a panic situation, they'll push a driver through the hoops and get it here."



*All-knowing, all-seeing Warehouse Supervisor Fred Misiwich.*

"Cameco as a whole is a second home to a large number of people. The drivers are accepted in another manner than just dropping freight. There's a camaraderie. Lots of times drivers walk out of here laughing and just shaking their heads. I've been here for 20 years, unloading everything and I've seen it all."

One of the things that Fred really appreciates is that young drivers are not afraid to ask for help. "When there's loose freight, they're not

afraid to ask for help to chain it down. From the point of view of the supervisor, I want them to ask. Better to be safe than sorry. They ask and that's really appreciated because I've got 110 years of experience. That's part of the safety aspect," says Fred. "I find even seasoned drivers will appreciate me telling them about a different way to do something."

"As a veteran in this business, it's good to see the level of safety that NRT maintains.

Wheels, brakes etcetera; all NRT trucks are in top notch condition. It's good to see trucks that come up here to this wild country with that level of safety. I've only ever seen trivial stuff like a broken air hose or a flat tire. Good trucks, good drivers. They carry everything from carrots and peas to propane and acids and I haven't seen any incidents, in all the help I've given, that are the driver's fault. It's always been road conditions and then it's all in God's hands."

"I've called Ralph and said, "Don't blame the driver if he's sitting in the ditch with a load of concrete. You look at the whole situation. There's a false shoulder on the road left by a grader, but the driver hasn't tipped the truck and he hasn't lost the load. You're dealing with a person in a ditch who went in at 3 miles an hour. You haven't got a disaster, thank God. There are enough accidents in the south. Just look at NRT's driving record and you'll find very few incidents and those there are, are not serious, just coffee shop talk," says Fred.

"NRT drivers are a great bunch of guys with a great job," says Fred. "Hauling into the north, they have the benefit of doing a 12-hour trip from Saskatoon, so that within every 24-hour period they have time to socialize with with their families. That's far superior to hauling into Vancouver and California and being gone for a week or ten days at a time," he says.

Add to that the fact that breakfast and a few laughs are waiting when they arrive, and NRT drivers do indeed have it pretty good.

Mid-afternoon NRT company driver Harold



*Andy Hay, at the nerve centre of the operation ...*



*Harold Brand arrives on site with a load of sulfur.*



*...transfers Harold's load to the Powerhouse.*

Brand arrives on site with a load of sulfur.

Powerhouse operator Andy Hay attaches hoses and begins the transfer, steam heating the sulfur to produce the required viscosity to pump it. This is the nerve centre of the operation. The mill requires about 150 tons of sulfur a day, most of which is used in the leach process, says Andy. The Powerhouse runs like clockwork on a computer system. "We set it up to run at the level we want it and then keep a close eye on the monitoring device," he explains. Colourful tank graphics show all temperatures and levels.

My guide through the Key Lake Powerhouse is Utilities Foreman Gus Hudon. This immense and powerful operation, he tells me, also has the capability to provide power for the entire site should a summer lightening storm put out the SaskPower line. Between the time that Environment Canada predicts a possible strike and the moment that the site could experience a power outage, the Power station has taken over, prepared for business as usual, says Gus.

A tour of the mill with Metallurgist Allen Gardiner proves most interesting. A detailed account of the milling process would fill pages, so a thumbnail sketch must suffice. I like Allen's short version of the process. "We mix Key Lake mud with McArthur slurry and make U3O8. For a metallurgist like me, it couldn't be better; it's billion dollar play dough," he says, smiling.

Allen is another Cameco professional who joined the company right out of university and has stayed. Twelve years at Key Lake have obviously not dimmed his enthusiasm for his job. Certainly, at every stage of operations, environmental and personnel safety are top priority, he says. Cameco people are well cared for.

The milling process at Key Lake is designed to produce uranium oxide (U3O8) from the ore. This is the product that is processed to provide power for a world market. Ammonium sulphate fertilizer is produced as a byproduct. Effluent is treated until it reaches a level that renders it releasable.

There are six main steps in the process: grinding to break the rocks into sand; leaching to



*Gus Hudon, my guide through the Key Lake Powerhouse.*



*Metallurgist Allen Gardiner, happy with his billion dollar play dough.*

dissolve the uranium; washing to separate the uranium solution from the waste solids; solvent extraction to produce a purified uranium solution; yellow cake precipitation to recover the U3O8 as a solid and pack it into drums; and crystallization to remove ammonia as ammonium sulphate crystals for use as fertilizer. The waste from the washing and solvent extraction stages is pumped to a bulk neutralization plant for treatment.

Each step is essentially housed in a separate plant. These are intimately linked with each other in that solutions and slurries flow back and forth between them. All of the processing, except for the final product drying, is carried out in a liquid form, transported by pumping the solutions through pipelines. The size and power of this equipment is awe inspiring. Anyone who works in this plant doesn't need an aerobic workout at the gym. The steep iron stairs that wind their way to the ceiling and catwalks that weave their way throughout the mill, facilitate constant monitoring. There is also a control room housing a sophisticated computerized system.

Cameco is very committed to environmentally safe operations, says Allen. In all areas of the mill operation there is a complete air exchange every 3 to 4 hours. Every operator wears a TDL badge that monitors exposure to radiation. "In the 12 years that I have been working here, I haven't reached even a quarter of the safe limit of gamma rays for one year," he says. A walk through a large room lined from floor to ceiling with labeled plastic sample bottles, demonstrates the level of environmental care. "We take effluent samples every six hours for testing," says Allen.

A drive around the mine site shows a host of small trees and natural grassland flourishing in areas no longer in use, landscaped and revegetated to return them, as much as possible, to their original state.

Altogether, this is a place that both Cameco and Mill Manager Wyatt Buck can be justly proud of. Wyatt feels the same is true for the people of NRT.

"I was with Cameco when NRT came into being," he says. "I remember our conversion to this new company. It was a struggle in the



*Key Lake, a place that both Cameco and Mill Manager Wyatt Buck can be justly proud of.*

beginning, but lots of guys, especially Roger (Olyowsky), were instrumental in making it a success. Over time, there's been a transformation from just hauling for a mining group to becoming an important business entity. Dave (McIlmoyl) and Rick (Reynolds) can take credit for that. At first our approach was 'Let's make sure NRT gets going.' Today, it's a company on its own feet, running as a successful business. They've become our trucker of choice."

"NRT's safety record is impeccable. That was always top priority for Roger," says Wyatt. "NRT's values line up really closely with Cameco's. I know McIlmoyl understands exactly what we're after and responds to that."

Over the years, says Wyatt, Cameco people have got to know the drivers well. "They're a good bunch of guys. At the time we brought McArthur River mine on line, NRT knew we wanted to do the slurry haul from McArthur to Key Lake ourselves. NRT supplied the drivers and expertise for one year, knowing we'd hire our own drivers, probably theirs," says Wyatt with a wide smile. "How good a working relationship is that? And we did. Those drivers have retained the same values that NRT instilled in them and we've been very happy with them. They're doing a great job."

"And I know personally from way back when I worked in purchasing that we used NRT's dispatch system at Christmas to get stuff to the mine. How nice it was. They'd get stuff picked up. They were so obliging. We were all on a first name basis."

"In the early days, Roger was really helpful. He knew how things should be unloaded. He helped us with lime unloading at Rabbit Lake to gain a quicker turnaround, which was a win/win for both sides."

"Dave understands northern issues," says Wyatt. "I enjoyed working on the contract with him. I'm very proud of that. It's simple, straightforward and covers everything. It's a good contract."

Good contracts are built on solid foundations. What Cameco and NRT have built over the past 17-years is a history of trust and shared values. What began with a mining industry with a will to employ and train northern people has blossomed into a mutually rewarding, open and honest business relationship.

And alongside that professionalism exists the friendship and caring that can be seen, every day, at the Key Lake mill; the recognition and regard that make our drivers want to go the extra mile. □



*Workers chat happily, waiting to board the flight home.*



*A work week finished and now a week off. It doesn't get better than that!*



## A Relationship of Trust

Rabbit Lake Mine Manager reflects on a success story

“Having NRT provide a service we can count on is critical to us. It’s a lifeline. It almost goes without saying,” says David Neuburger, Manager of Cameco Corporation’s remote Rabbit Lake Mine site, situated 700 kilometers north of Saskatoon. “If we are short of a reagent, we are always able to count on NRT to rush it to us. Fuel, reagents, supplies, our food here at camp; all and everything we need is supplied through NRT in an efficient, safe and timely fashion.”

A lifeline you can count on. It’s as simple as that. But that’s not the end of the story.

Good relationships are built on mutual regard and that has been a major strength of the

mining industry in Saskatchewan’s north; regard for the people and the land.

From the beginning, Cameco Corporation appreciated the mutual benefits of a strong northern work force. It has worked diligently to make that a reality and has been rewarded with a loyalty, says David, that today has an employee turnover only slightly above zero. A happy work force is a stable one and one the industry can count on.

With its will to employ and train northern people, Cameco Corporation was also, in 1986, instrumental in the formation of the Northern Resource Trucking (NRT) Partnership, which today embraces First

Nations and Metis communities throughout the north, creating the strongest business alliance among Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. This too is a loyal work force built on respect and appreciation.

Rabbit Lake, says David, is the second largest uranium milling operation in the world, with a capacity of more than 12 million pounds of U3O8. It is also the oldest facility in the province with yellow cake production dating back to 1975. “We have, over that time, steadily built and increased employment from the north so that today 54 per cent of our work force are northern residents, 30 per cent of those from the Athabasca Basin region,” he says.

Approximately 200 Cameco employees and more than 150 long-term contractors, including NRT operators, are employed by the Rabbit Lake operation.

But building and maintaining a northern work force has not been without challenges. Though Cameco has a comprehensive training program and offers continuing education to its people, potential employees need to have a minimum entry level education. This has been a challenge in the past and one that still exists to some extent today, says David. But over time, there has been a growing recognition of the need for education and a strong work ethic.

“The northern people we have trained have embraced the trades and have demonstrated a will to succeed in the workplace. They recognize that they are partners in a contract that has an expectation of a certain level of knowledge and skill and that, in return, they receive a good income,” he says.

“In the beginning there was a tremendous turnover,” says David. “But we don’t have that problem now. I don’t believe it’s a generational thing. The elders are telling young people ‘If a company gives you a chance, don’t blow it.’ And they aren’t. We’re getting good employees and we’re able to keep them because of that. They’re good! I’m personally very proud of that fact. At Rabbit Lake we have an excellent team.”

“Many of the positions within industry are becoming more technical and northerners are rising to that challenge. We are getting more northern technicians coming to us as time

goes by," he adds. "We are also starting to get a few professionals from the north and that is what we like to see. All things being equal, we choose our people from the north. We believe there should be an expectation that northern people are given first opportunity to fill jobs in the north."

However, says David, a further challenge for Cameco is the level of expectation. Though the mining industry is still, by far, the largest employer in the north and contributes much to the northern economy, the company cannot singlehandedly meet employment needs in the north, especially given the low rate of turnover.

Though it cannot do the impossible, Cameco does go far beyond the call of duty for it's

people. And the work force responds in kind. When the Rabbit Lake mill was temporarily shut down, from July 2001 to July 2002, a combination of job sharing, a supplementary unemployment benefit plan, and the dedication of employees resulted in almost 100 per cent retention. At the end of the downturn, everyone still had a job and the company still had its highly experienced work force.

"We restarted the mill that had been moth balled for one year with almost no difficulty. We're very proud of that," says David. "Moving forward, we started 2002 with less than three years mine life, with an expected shutdown in 2004. Exploring and drilling indicated that there are other reserves that

could extend the mine life to 2005. But we still face a disconnect until the mining and milling of Cigar Lake can begin in 2006. There's a big focus on looking for more ore to shrink that gap so that it isn't more than a year downtime, which we know, from recent experience, we can handle. That's the future looking forward and, working together, we can protect the jobs of our workers and our contractors."

And that is the whole story. Successful relationships are built on mutual regard and the Cameco team of management, work force and contractors, it seems, have that in abundance. □



*A proud Lloyd Driedger (second from left) with milestone award winners (L to R) Les Driedger, Greg Nesbitt and Ron Magee. On the job driving safely, and unable to attend: John Harding, Donald Bilinski, Barry Gidluck, Greg Kruger and Ronald Milligan.*

## Our Highway Heroes

### NRT Drivers Get Well-deserved Recognition

As always, the NRT fleet figured prominently in the lineup of safe drivers whose achievements were celebrated at the Saskatchewan Professional Drivers' Safety Council (SPDSC) and The Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board's (WCB) 61st Annual Safe Driving Awards Banquet, held June 21st at the Delta Regina Hotel.

From young drivers to veterans, our record spoke for itself. NRT operators are among the safest in the industry, showing a genuine concern for the safety and well-being of them-

selves and all those they share the roads with.

Dinner invitations and special recognition went to Saskatchewan operators reaching the milestone years of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 45 years of incident-free driving. Among those were NRT fifteen-year recipients John Harding and Ronald Magee and NRT five-year recipients Donald Bilinski, Leslie Driedger, Barry Gidluck, Greg Kruger, Ronald Milligan and Gregory Nesbitt.

For every year of incident-free driving,

SPDSC awards a safe driving pin. This year, congratulations go also to one year recipients, Donavon Atkinson, Walter McKenzie and Ryan Mihilewicz; two year recipients, Tim Frook, Cameron Grewcock, Gerard Hannotte and Don Sanderson; three year recipients, Robin Stomp and Troy Webb; four year recipients, Ben Campbell, Larry Smith and Chris Thurber; six year recipients, Jamie Harbicht and Mort Harbicht; seven year recipients, Larry Balon, David Campbell, Leo Gaudet, Robert Kustaski, Larry Powling, Elie Roy, Leo Voz; eight year recipients, Robert Giroux, Harvey Moosehunter, Ed Schappert, Ben Wald; nine year recipients, Curtis Hubel, Lawrence Joannette, twelve year recipients, Allen Lamontagne and Dwight Twigge; thirteen year recipient, Merv Stacey; fourteen year recipients, Andy Lamontagne and Ross Wilson; fifteen year recipient, John Harding; sixteen year recipients, Leslie Beuckert, Kelvin Kitzul, George Magee and Rick Sproull; eighteen year recipients, Lloyd Larocque and Phil Macala.

And right up there, among this splendid lineup is Lawrence Matchee with twenty three years of incident-free driving.

“It was a great evening and a great party. This is quite a highlight in our year,” says



A first-time award for safety from the Worker's Compensation Board.

Lloyd Driedger, NRT Safety and Compliance Manager.

This year's event was, in fact, a particularly red-letter one for NRT. A first-time award for safety from the Workers' Compensation Board went to Northern Resource Trucking for its high safety standards and low percentage of claims compared to the industry average. The beautiful cut crystal glass truck that will symbolize this annual award was presented to a very happy Lloyd who, as we know, is a bear for safety.

Further accolades came our way when NRT was profiled in a “WorkSafe Saskatchewan” ad campaign, a joint initiative of the WCB and Saskatchewan Labour. The ad says it all and the entire NRT fleet can be justly proud. □



NRT, the 'poster company' for WorkSafe Saskatchewan.



NRT trainees Brian Linklater (4th from left) Tyson Carriere (5th from left) and Jerrin Herman (far right).

## Up and Coming

### This Year's trainees well on the way to success

The good news continues. This year's trainees, Brian Linklater, Tyson Carriere and Jerrin Herman, who trained with Northlands College earlier this year, gained their 1A licenses with flying colours.

Alongside the most able tuition of Northland's Stu Mayotte, trainees also benefit from the instruction of John Carlson, a veteran trucker in La Ronge who sets aside two weeks each year to prep the students for their written

exams. Evidently it's a winning combination.

The graduation banquet was a little different this year. Dispensing with speeches and formality, NRT threw a family party for the graduates. Parents, grandparents, partners, spouses, children and friends got together with the graduates and their instructors at the La Ronge Motor Inn and had a wonderful time.

“There were over 50 friends and relatives there,” says Lloyd Driedger, NRT Safety and

Compliance Manager, coordinator of the training program. “It really felt like a family celebration. Jerrin's grandmother said grace. It was really heart warming.”

Off to a good start, Brian, Tyson and Jerrin have continued to excel,” says Lloyd. “They have demonstrated a very good attitude. They are taking the initiative to train and excel and have already shown that they have seriously adopted this as their career choice,” he says.

NRT is most fortunate to now have on staff SGI-certified driving instructor Tim Hyrenk.

Also much appreciated is the invaluable training assistance of veteran operators Walter McKenzie and Dave Campbell with whom the trainees travel and learn, in a hands-on fashion, everything they need to know.

“When needed, other NRT drivers have been willing to help in the training program. We sure have a good bunch of guys,” says Lloyd.

Given an opportunity for the best training in the industry, these trainees have every advantage. And Lloyd believes they will run with it. “I expect nothing but good things. I think that they're going to be great drivers,” he says. □



There's always more to someone else's job than meets the eye. Wendy discovered just how much when she started studying for her Class 1A Learners License.

As Executive Assistant to V.P. Dave McIlmoyl, Wendy Featherstone has, in the four years she has worked on the NRT team, gained a broad knowledge of the trucking industry. This year she decided to expand that knowledge base to encompass some practical experience.

"It was really on a \$5 bet with (owner operator) Lawrence Joannette," she says laughing. "That was a big motivating factor. I had a reputation riding on this."

Well, she's won the bet. She has also gained, she says, a real understanding of just how much our drivers have to know and the responsibility they assume each day on the road.

Before a driver even cranks the motor of a semi, he or she has to pass a comprehensive 'written test' (now in multiple-choice format on SGI computers).

"Of course you have to know the rules of the road as they apply to a heavy-weight vehicle," says Wendy. "But there is so much more besides. You have to show that you can conduct a perfect circle check, which is a good indication of a driver's knowledge of vehicle safety requirements, and which every driver must do before setting out on a trip. You have know who is responsible for what on the road, such as load security. The driver is responsible for weight distribution of cargo and securing loads to prevent shifting or loss. All major repairs are done by the shop, but a driver has to know how to service and maintain the truck, be able to trouble shoot problems on the road and do minor repairs. Then there's information on dangerous goods and how to transport them safely."

"Air brake endorsement is a separate and specific test," says Wendy, "It makes sense when you consider that it's the most important part of the safety check. You need to be able to stop."

"As well as knowing how to operate the air brake system, drivers have to have know the basic components of an air brake system and the inside workings of those components in play; for example, which reserve tanks feed front and rear brakes and how spring lock brakes work in case of air brake failure. When a driver has this working knowledge, problems can be spotted and remedied more readily," she says. Wendy's into this!

"This is something I've wanted to do for a while," she says. "When I go to Career Symposiums in the north, I tell girls that they can be truck drivers. And it's easy to say. But if they ask if I'm a truck driver, I have to say 'no'. However, I do want to be able to say, 'If I can do it, so can you'. I want to be able to encourage those choices in a very positive way."

The next step for Wendy will be the three point step up into the truck to learn basic truck handling, progressive shifting, hookup, setting brakes and valves, city driving, backing and yard work. She will also become acquainted with NRT's loading and unloading procedures, the paperwork and the billing system.

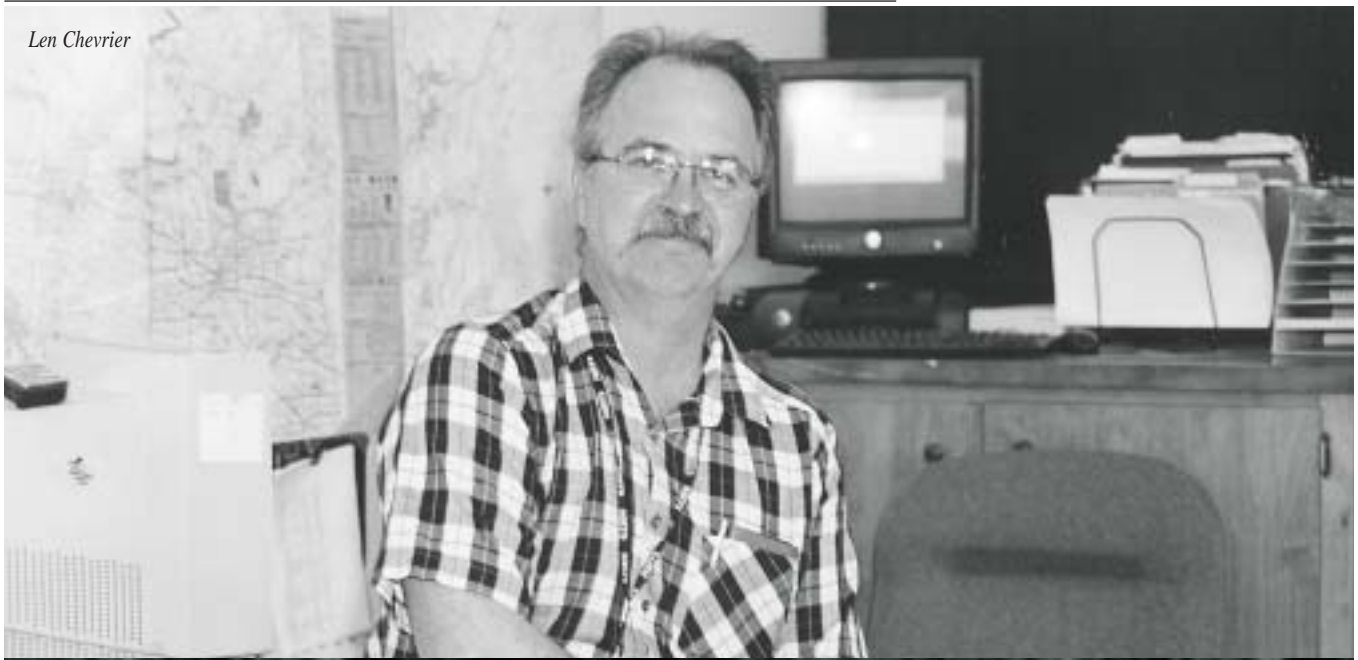
"Lloyd (Driedger) has already taken me out and we did vehicle checks. He showed me shifting. Clarence (Bryant) took me out and we spent a morning hooking, unhooking, doing circle checks, pinning and unpinning. Lloyd and Clarence are so patient," she says. "And all of the drivers have been really great and pretty encouraging. Tim (Hyrenk) has offered to help me get in the truck and so I'll have the best training."

"I like to set goals for myself and have a different focus every year. This is my Year of Adventure," says Wendy with a wide smile. "And I'm going to go all the way."

"Robin (Dalshaug in dispatch) has the books and he's going to do it too," she adds.

That sounds like a challenge. Place your bets at the front desk. □

Len Chevrier



## Nice Guy at the Hub

Just about this time last year, Len Chevrier, known to his friends as Chevy, settled in to become an important member of the NRT dispatch team.

With a background as owner operator, Human Resources person and company owner, Chevy has worked, one way or another, in the trucking industry since 1976.

"Anything a person does is of value. It adds to one's life experience and knowing how to approach new challenges," says Chevy. NRT, he says, has certainly been interesting and challenging route to follow.

"Yes, I like it here," he says, with that infectious smile. "The way I see it, this is a company in a bubble. It's very separate from the rest of the North American trucking industry. It's an exclusive company and altogether different from what I am accustomed to."

"The first thing I noticed was the increase in GVW (gross vehicle weight). NRT hauls very large loads that require exceptionally skilled drivers, especially when you consider the roads they drive on. The north was another first for me. I know just about every highway

south, east and west, all the way down into the U.S, like the back of my hand. But I had no experience of the north, with its gravel roads, ice roads and portages. Then there was the wide variety of commodities we haul. Most trucking companies specialize. NRT hauls everything the mines need, from food to fuel to chemicals. When I came here you could ask me anything about a cabbage or a Boc Chow and I knew how to handle it. But sulfuric acid? Wow, that was a real learning curve," he says, laughing. "I found out how much I didn't know."

Being the humble guy he is, Chevy won't tell you this, but he's a quick study. In the fast paced world of a traffic controller, you have to know it all, on the spot. And Chevy's there!

"Coming to NRT also introduced me to a much more complex computer system," he says, "To have that network and connection gave me a whole new vision I never had. At all times, we know where everyone is, where they're going, when they're expected to be there and what they're hauling. We've got the ability to keep track of everything."

"Given the terrain and the weight the drivers have to cope with, including some really

steep inclines, we have to be diligent in tracking them. And we can be. It's quite amazing. I find that whole electronic side of the business so interesting," he says.

"And," adds Chevy, "when you want to take any extra training in, for example, computer programs or human relations, NRT is right behind you and more than happy to give it. All round, this is a very supportive company."

So what does Chevy do when he's not controlling powerful trucks and equipment? Well, he's controlling a powerful motorcycle.

"I'm a recycled teenager," he says, with a grin. "I like riding around on my Harley."

Since Harley has just celebrated its 100th anniversary, Chevy can safely lay claim to being a comparative teenager of the biking world. And each summer, his teenage spirit soars as he (often with his wife Raye), responds to the allure of the open road and new adventures.

Work or play, Chevy's ahead of the pack, positioned to say, in biker parlance, "Suck my dust." □



*Jack Greening with his wife Alice*

## Driving Without Impairment

It is praise indeed when a man who spent 40 plus years in driver education and related traffic safety work commends NRT drivers on their safety standards and courtesy on the road.

Now retired and enjoying the peace and beauty of the family-owned Land of the Loon Resort at Anglin Lake, Jack Greening frequently shares Highway 2 with our drivers, and never ceases to be impressed with the care and consideration our operators afford other travellers on the road.

In this issue Jack shares some thoughts and observations gleaned from a lifetime of experience.

The term “driving while impaired” immediately conjures up images of alcohol and drug abuse. While this is a major safety concern, NRT’s excellent safety record suggests that there are stringent zero-tolerance rules in place and that there is a high level of responsibility among drivers that minimizes this danger.

However, there are more subtle forms of impairment, unrelated to substance abuse, that can be just as deadly. These are the ones

I would like to talk about, because they have their roots in the stresses and strains of our normal day to day existence as human beings.

In the early 1960s, the U.S. Federal Government funded a research project that clearly analyzed and defined the Driving Task. In subsequent years, the validity of the study’s findings have been confirmed and form a solid basis for driver training, testing and accident investigation.

As competent drivers, we are likely not consciously aware that we are repetitiously performing the four phases of the Driving Task. Nevertheless, we are constantly IDENTIFYING, PREDICTING, DECIDING and EXECUTING as we move our vehicles through time and space.

Taking time to think about these four elements enables us to see that while the skill with which we physically operate our vehicle is vital (Execution - eye/hand/leg coordination), the ongoing reasoning process is equally important ( Identifying, predicting and deciding). The fact that these elements are constantly in play is evidenced in NRT’s fine safety record and this is what makes sharing the road with your units such an easy and enjoyable experience.

With a clear understanding of the fact that every time we put our rigs in gear we are launching a constant repetition of Identifying, Predicting, Deciding and Executing (IPDE) that will continue until we turn off the ignition and swing down from the cab, we alert our conscious and subconscious minds to the importance of vigilance. We are on the alert for anything that may impair the effectiveness of these processes.

Probably the most common is fatigue - being just down right tired! Fatigue is a subtle enemy that creeps up on us with no fanfare and quietly impairs our responses.

Eye strain, caused perhaps by sitting in a boat with bright sun reflecting off the water or travelling too many miles with sun flickering through the trees, robs us of the edge. The eyes work hard to compensate, but will they spot the unexpected fast enough?

Life is full of distractions large and small; from the physical pain of a toothache or headache to the worry over family matters to the loss of a loved one. In repose, they can come crowding in and distract from the vital task of constant and concise mastery of the Identification, Prediction and Decision process. And, sadly, it is generally the

breakdown in the IPD part of the process that triggers the head-on collision or the rollover, rather than a lack of good muscular control leading to inadequate pressure on the accelerator.

How then can we manage our lives to enable us to, every time, climb into the cab ready and able to meet the IPDE challenge for another safe trip?

Lifestyle is a major factor. Every person, especially every rig operator, deserves a happy, understanding and supportive family. Communication is a powerful tool; an

everyday, simple and pleasant path to family unity. As an important member of an excellent company, NRT drivers can enjoy a good self image, gratitude for life's blessings and thankfulness for a job that exposes them to the beauty and joy of nature, sunsets, sunrises and the changing weather and seasons.

Deciding to pull over and sleep or turn down a trip if you are not physically and/or mentally ready for the challenge is a strength not a weakness. To make the right choice rather than being trapped in a mangled cab in a ditch and wishing that you had is wisdom beyond value.

These are some of the thoughts and wishes for you in the prayers that go up from the old couple in that blue 1996 Dodge Caravan when they flash their lights and wave at you when we meet between the Anglin Lake turn-off and Prince Albert or Saskatoon; prayers for another safe and successful trip and our sincere thanks for being such comfortable, considerate and safe folk to share the road with.

Take care and may God bless you with many more safe and happy miles. ☐



Dale Fehr - August 20, 1955 - June 25, 2003

On June 15, 1998, a pleasant, unassuming man with a warm smile joined the NRT family and, from day one, became an integral part of the company's dispatch team.

In the years that followed, drivers came to count on the calm, efficient professionalism of Dale Fehr. The job of a traffic supervisor is an exacting and complex one and Dale handled each day with equanimity and good humour; maximizing payload, making sure

the right truck was with the right trailer and the right driver, keeping tabs on equipment availability, knowing what each trailer last contained, making sure trailers had been cleaned, taking care of customer's needs and meeting load delivery demands. He knew the laws of the land. Knowledge of weights and measures, gross vehicle weights and transportation of hazardous goods were his stock in trade.

But, above all, Dale was there for the drivers, to put them on the road safely. He recognized that, alongside speed and efficiency, the wellbeing of the operator is vital. He developed relationships that enabled him to readily notice signs of fatigue or concern. If

there were problems on the road he sorted them out and minimized driver stress. A memorial plaque, placed by the owner operators on the wall of the Driver's Room, is testament to their regard for him. It reads, "Dale Fehr - A Friend we could count on."

When work was done, Dale was ready to play. An avid member of the NRT Huff and Puffs, he had a better batting average than most. Playing on the NRT Old and Tired hockey team he could hold his own. And, like everyone else, he was there for the fun of hanging out after the game.

On any team, Dale was a great guy to have on your side. One of a kind, he will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by all of us at NRT. ☐



Dale, Terry and Glen put drivers on the road safely.



Dale, far left, with his Huff and Puff team mates.

## Birthday Greetings

**June:** Larry Balon, David Campbell, James Harbicht, Lawrence Joannette, Greg Kruger, Larry Smith, Marianne Thomas.

**July:** Buddy Forrest, Larry Foy, John Harding, Dean Oscienny, Clint Roeddecke.

**August:** Donovan Atkinson, Roy Bird, Allan Campbell, Glen Ertell, Tim Hrenyk, Randy Johnson, George Magee, Shawna Merriman, Randy Nelson, August Sanderson.

**September:** Donna Bartholomew, Ron Dale, Lloyd Larocque, Walter McKenzie, Steven Smith

**October:** Wendy Featherstone, Alexander Forrest, Ken Heyer, Gregory Nesbitt, Elie Roy, Joan Sanderson, Donald Seegerts, Wendy Weatherbee, Len Zinovich.