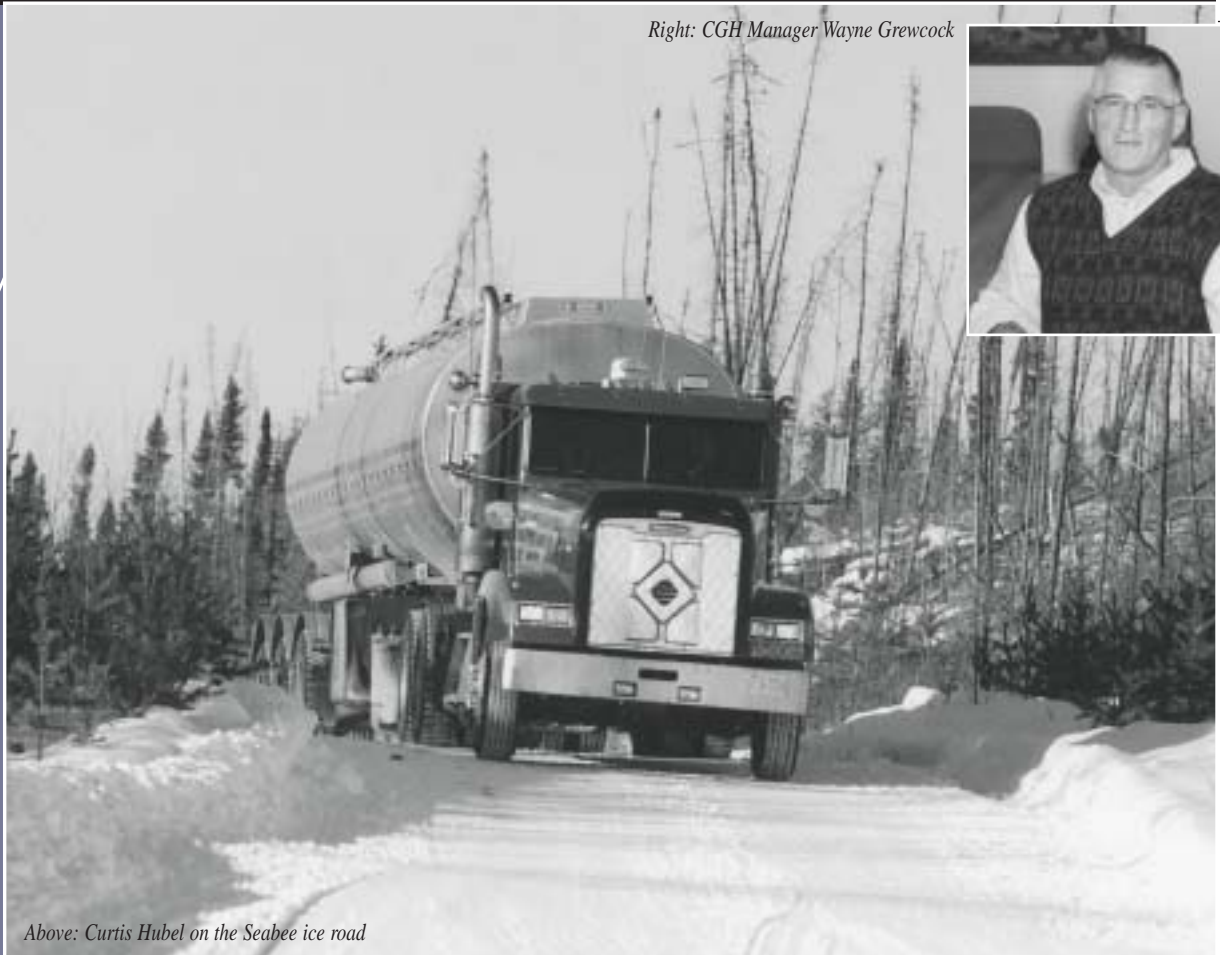




# Trail Blazer

October/November 2004

Right: CGH Manager Wayne Grewcock



Above: Curtis Hubel on the Seabee ice road

## The Little Company That Could

### C. Gibson Holdings holds fast to the interests of a northern company

This is a tale of a small, northern trucking and fuel operation with a big heart. It's also the story of a company with a big job to do; one on which mining giants and private individuals alike can

depend for heat and light throughout Saskatchewan's north.

In a time of tumult and uncertainty, La Ronge's C.Gibson Holdings Ltd. (CGH) stood firm, looked to the interests of the community and carved out a deal with



2945 Millar Avenue  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 6P6  
Phone (306) 933 3010  
Facsimile (306) 242 3156

Imperial Oil that assured a future for its northern employees. Today, CGH continues to serve the north, delivering fuel to its clients in the timely fashion they have come to count on.

“If we hadn’t stuck together, we wouldn’t be here today,” says Office Manager Wendy Weatherbee, who has been at the hub of CGH for more than 12 years.

With tenacity and resolve, the small company reasoned with the big company and the big company listened. It is to the credit of all that this David and Goliath tale ends happily with no casualties.

This is where it all began.

When, in 1999, NRT purchased CGH from Curtis Gibson (founded by Curtis Gibson’s family), Wayne Grewcock, a northerner with 40 years experience in the industry, had been the manager for one year, bridging the transition between owners. He came to a company that held a contract with Imperial Oil to be both agent and carrier for its fuel in the north, handling both trucking and sales. Most of the time, says Wayne, Imperial Oil has its own designated carrier. In this case, Gibson’s had it all.

But a system that had created a good number of jobs and financial security for several northern families was, it seemed, soon to change. Two years ago, Imperial Oil devised a new plan called ‘Vision’ that the company put in place right across Canada.

Though it was a plan that could be implemented in larger communities with barely an economic ripple, it was one which would have had serious effects on the economy of the small, remote community of La Ronge.

“Due to our unique circumstances, we were exempt from the plan until the fall of 2002,” says Wayne. “But on July 3 of that year, we met with Imperial Oil people from Toronto to find out what the changes would mean. We had understood that we would have some input into the way in which things would go forward, but what we found was a new system written in stone, telling us how to operate our business from that day forward. Imperial Oil took out our aviation



*At the hub of CGH - Office Manager Wendy Weatherbee*



*CGH driver Trevor Dumont, doing the job he loves*



*A 6 a.m. start from Saskatoon for John Harding*

fuels, took out our card lock and our barrel-filling capacity. Until then, we had been able to fill drums with diesel to go to the bush camps,” he explains.

The new agreement stated that CGH would remain as agent to Imperial Oil and would be paid a certain amount to deliver that service. From October 31, 2002, CGH would no longer be the hired carrier for the La Ronge agency. That business would go to a southern company that was the sole carrier for all Imperial Oil fuel.

“We said, ‘We can’t afford to do this. We need to be here, keep our people and continue to serve the northern community’,” says Wayne.

The northern community agreed. Cameco Corporation, Cogema Resources and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band’s Kitsaki Management Limited Partnership put their heft behind CGH. Wayne, NRT V.P. Dave McIlmoyle, Kitsaki’s Al Solheim, Kitsaki CEO Ray McKay, Cameco’s Ken Johnson and Cogema’s Brian Reilly worked together and, by January, CGH was once again the official carrier for Imperial Oil, hauling from Saskatoon, Regina and Edmonton into La Ronge; but not before CGH had jumped through many hoops and proved that, though they’d done the job for a decade, they were equipped to be successful carriers.

“I had come to a business that was very strong and very well structured. That made all the difference,” says Wayne.

“The bottom line is that we took on a huge corporation and they didn’t walk over us. We did some serious talking. We had to fight but, in the end, they looked after us. Now we are in the best position we can be in. The good old days are long gone, but the last year has been reasonably stress free and we are making money,” says Wayne, ever the pragmatist.

“It was an important victory,” he adds. “My job was not on the line. I could have said, ‘What does it matter to me?’, but it does. I was looking at families to feed and northerners who needed jobs.”

So those northern drivers, John Harding, Curtis Hubel, Dean Oscienny and Trevor Dumont, continue to work, doing the job they love in the place they want to be. Besides hauling fuel, CGH also co-ordinates all the freight out of La Ronge for the Seabee gold mine, as well some of the freight for NRT going further north, primarily to Seabee.

Today, CGH has two major contracts servicing the uranium mines and, for the last 3 or 4 years, has hauled to the Seabee gold mine, across the ice road.

“The Seabee haul is time-restricted -

accessible for as little as six weeks to two months, between January and March - whatever nature allows. Then our guys work beyond the call of duty for a few months," says Wayne. "There's a small window of opportunity to haul fuel into the gold mine, while the ice road is good, and our drivers give it their all. We haul a whack of fuel, as well as freight."

The company also looks after local business, sharing that with two other bulk stations in the northern community.

"From home heating to major mines, we provide service day and night and we do a damn good job of pleasing everyone most of the time," says Wayne. "We are a community and we look after our own."

For the mines, CGH prides itself on providing exceptional service. "On a daily basis, we get fuel levels from each of the mines. They give us the minimum and maximum levels they want to keep for inventory and we supply accordingly," says Wayne. "When there's a disruption in power and the mines have to switch to generators, the consumption of fuel goes up dramatically. We are prepared for that."

"This is a tough business," he says, "If there's road construction en route, an 8 hour trip can take 12 hours. The refineries can have problems, making it difficult to stay on schedule. We always do everything that is humanly possible to get our loads there and on time. And if someone needs fuel in a hurry, we'll go the extra mile to get it there."

"What it comes down to," says Wayne, "is a relationship of trust between us and our customers. They know that everyone at CGH, from the office staff to the drivers, care and are committed. We know that we can count on them to work with us, so that we can give them the very best service."

"We're proud of what we do. We try our utmost to do the best, safest, on-time job every time. Our drivers, Curtis, John, Dean and Trevor, are good guys," says Wayne. "Wendy and I work closely together and she is very knowledgeable. We talk over a lot of



*On the road again*

things and as long as her answer is what I want to hear, that's good," says Wayne. "I'm kidding," he says, laughing. "Wendy is great with customers and drivers. When I go away, she looks after everything. When she's gone, I do her job. We keep up and work together. Yeah, she and I work together real good."

Wendy agrees, "I spend more time with Wayne than I do with my family," she says, laughing. "The drivers are in and out, and this office is their touchstone. It's home base and I'm their lifeline. If they have problems on the road, I'll send out whatever they need. We work as a team. We all get along very well and, together, do whatever we have to do to satisfy our customers, because that's the bottom line. If you don't have a happy customer, you haven't got anything. And you have to be dependable. Without fuel, the results can be devastating. That's why we've had the business of the mining

companies for so long. Imperial Oil provides an excellent product at a good price and we provide excellent service."

"A company is only as good as the people who work there and we have the best," says Wayne. "There are lots of tough days, but if people feel valued, morale is high no matter what. Our people like coming to work. We all go to work for two reasons; we want to be happy when we get there and we need a pay cheque. We know we have to work for a certain number of years, so if we enjoy doing it, it doesn't get better than that."

"We treat our guys well and it shows," he says. "It's more than an employer, employee relationship. When push comes to shove, there's not one person here I couldn't count on. It's a small company, a tight knit group; it's a family. We do a good job and we get the job done." □



*Maurice McCaig, Director of Trimac Transportation Services, discusses the logging industry with WCL consultant Rod Sexsmith*

## A Chip Off The Old Block

Woodland Cree Logging - a company that parent NRT can be proud of

The long, dry, hot, sunny weather that our Province's logging industry has come to count on was not forthcoming this season. It has been a rainy summer in Saskatchewan. The logging roads are inches deep in mud that challenges negotiation. The cutting areas are awash with small lakes.

But at Woodland Cree Logging (WCL) the work goes on and, moreover, production is not only hitting target, but exceeding it. This is an experienced, skilled workforce that our fledgling company of just three years is



*Above and right: John Hearty operates the processor with consummate skill*

fortunate to have. Weather permitting, up to 30 loads of logs are trucked, each day, to Wapawekka Lumber, the Weyerhaeuser Pulp Mill at Prince Albert, the Weyerhaeuser Saw Mill at Big River and the Weyerhaeuser Plywood Plant at Hudson Bay.

There are many logs still waiting to be picked up in the Whitefish area, because muddy roads have cut off access. However, Weyerhaeuser is planning to bring in a forwarder. This big, six-wheeled vehicle, which looks like a mechanical praying mantis, practically pussyfoots over the ground. It has the wide tires with low inflation capability needed to operate in these wet conditions with least impact. The forwarder will pick up the wood on the stump, stack it on its bunks and take it from the cut block to the road. A Butt-N-Top Track Loader will load the truck at the landing stage. Meanwhile, work continues on stands still waiting to be cut.

Today, Maurice McCaig, Director of Trimac Transportation Services - transportation giant and NRT partner, - is visiting the WCL camp, accompanied by NRT V.P. Dave McIlmoyl.

“That operator is a joy to watch,” says Maurice, as John Hearty works the controls so that the massive processor head grabs a huge, felled tree with certainty and precision, feeds it through its processing head and, within a matter of seconds, has turned a tree into a clean, limbless, cut-to-length log of predetermined length. The computer in the processor is very precise, so uniformity is assured. Tree after tree moves from its shaggy heap into an orderly pile of logs. The slash is left in the woods. It certainly is an impressive sight.

Leased from sub-contractor Selder Bay Contracting Ltd., the processor is the most recent piece of equipment put to work in the field.

“The processor has the added facility to cut to length and WCL receives more revenue per tonne for producing a more finished product,” says WCL Manager Ron Dale. “So, in time, we will likely replace all our delimiters with processors, if Weyerhaeuser continues to require cut to length lumber.”



*Feller buncher operator Eric Christianson talks with Maurice McCaig. Behind them are (l to r) WCL Manager Ron Dale and WCL Field Operations Supervisor Hank Gondek*



*David St. Denis negotiates the site with skidder, dragging trees to where they will be delimbed and stacked*



*Maurice receives praise, from Weyerhaeuser Team Leader Michelle Young, for a correct and safe mount and dismount.*

As the touring group moves through the cut, it witnesses the equally skilled Eric Christianson operating the feller buncher and David St. Denis negotiating the site with the skidder, dragging trees to where they will be delimbed and stacked.

Efficiency is the key to good management and WCL is not only building an impressive equipment line-up but has the ability, on site, to do much of the repair work.

“Engines, transmissions, large hydraulic cylinders and things like that go out to be repaired,” says Ron, “but we can do most of the other repairs here; welding, fabricating, oil changes and routine services. We make and change our own hoses.”

The ‘Maintenance Shop’ is two trailers, side by side; the grey one for parts and the white one for repairs. It works! “We try to keep downtime to a minimum,” says Ron.

Consultant Rod Sexsmith, an engineer with much experience in the forestry industry, is lending his expertise to WCL’s financial planning and budgets. Having been, at the time of his retirement, the manager of a major lumber company, Rod is obviously a valuable man to have on board.

Alongside efficiency and skill, safety is very much at the forefront of this operation. Built on the standards of parent company NRT and grandfather Trimac, WCL is finding itself held up by Weyerhaeuser as something of a model in safety amongst contractors.

Much of this success can be attributed to a management style that values the individual and engenders an environment of mutual regard.

“We have a good nucleus of people and a very stable workforce of 16 or 17 workers,” says WCL Field Operations Supervisor, Hank Gondek. “I don’t see my role as supervisory as much as one of offering direction. I’m a team leader. Our people are well trained. They know the safety regulations. I tell them that this is their area and I let them use their initiative. I find that works well. I always try to use their ideas. I’ll say, ‘Damn right. This is good.’ And we always stress safety. You can’t do that enough. Lead Hand Randy Johnson helps with that. Every time we have tailgate meetings, we remind people to be vigilant about safety and guard against complacency. We want to be known as a no-infraction contractor and we work hard at that.”

Happily, Weyerhaeuser FMA Co-ordinator

Digger Pond, Team Leader Michelle Young and Contract Administrator Kerry McIntyre share this belief in a team approach to safety. Rather than taking only a reactive, punitive approach to safety infractions, they believe in pro-actively encouraging adherence to safety, offering incentives and recognizing the difference between flagrant carelessness and an act of small forgetfulness. A kind reminder, they have found, is often a more effective deterrent against repeat small infractions than handing out a written warning.

“We have got to build confidence among our contractors, so that they know that we are there to talk about and promote safety; not to merely audit and punish, but to build a safety culture that we are all a part of,” says Michelle.

“Our people have to believe that accidents are preventable, as they do in a sawmill I visited recently in New Berm, North Carolina,” says Digger. “They are stacking by hand and they have gone 265 days without so much as a sliver. That is because safety is a belief and a way of life that they have bought into. We too, must be truly focussed on safety and convey that ethos to the people we work with,” he says.

Illustrating one of her incentive initiatives, Michelle presents Maurice with a very nice Weyerhaeuser Forestlands pen that displays a different safety message each time it is clicked open and closed - ‘Don’t Take Shortcuts’, ‘Safety Is Your Responsibility’, ‘RADAR’, ‘Accidents Destroy Families’, ‘Safe From The Start’, and ‘Nothing We Do Is Worth Getting Hurt For’. Good reminders! Maurice receives his pen when Dave points out that Maurice had executed a perfect three-point dismount as he got down from the feller buncher. Though the rest of the touring party had not done anything quite so noteworthy, they get pens too.

Alongside a shared philosophy on safety, Weyerhaeuser and WCL embrace an environmentally sound approach to logging.

“Weyerhaeuser has an excellent replanting program for white spruce and pine. The hardwoods, of course, grow like weeds and naturally regenerate. The hardwood provides

shade protection for the softwood saplings. Diversity is maintained,” says Ron. “Weyerhaeuser also has a policy that requires us to leave stands for wildlife and single trees for nesting. As well as looking a lot better than clear-cut, it does work in maintaining the wildlife habitat. Ask Hank about his bear and the operators about the wolves that stand on the log piles. And we often see deer with their babies. There are



*Rod Sexsmith, NRT V.P. Dave McIlmoyl, Ron Dale, Maurice McCaig and Hank Gondek*



*Limber at work*

still birds everywhere,” he says, with obvious pleasure.

“NRT has always been a front-runner in safety and environmental initiatives. At WCL, we have adopted those same values and endeavour to lead the way in everything we do,” says Ron. “This year, we have stepped into processing, which has significantly increased our production. CTL (cut to length) has changed how we load logs and how we truck them, which we have done without missing a beat. Our nine-axle truck and trailer can haul any of this lumber.

NRT has one nine-axle, Malenfant Enterprises Ltd., the subcontractor to WCL which loads and delivers the lumber, has one nine-axle King B.”

WCL’s operating structure is an interesting one. On the premise that maximum production can be achieved when everyone is doing what they do best, loading and delivery to the mills has been sub-contracted out to Malenfant, a local father-and-son-run company with 27 years experience in the logging industry. Processing is carried out by Victoria-based sub-contractor Selder Bay Contracting Ltd., using operators from Fort Nelson and Vernon, B.C. Having worked in the difficult conditions of mountainous, unstable terrain, in inclement weather, these men have a skill that has been particularly useful during this rainy summer.

“NRT has taken the highest level of expertise and put it to work in this new partnership, Woodland Cree Logging,” says Ron. “We have endeavoured to create a safe, pleasant and rewarding environment for our people to work in, where each person is recognized and valued.”

As we tour the site, this is evident in a relaxed, yet focussed and industrious workforce.

“Here at WCL we are a team. These people are like family,” says Ron. “We spend more time here together than we do at home. And each person has a unique personality that you relate to as an individual.”

Ron smiles. “All the boys are getting their bonus cheques today,” he says. “That’s not just for production, but for safe production. And it’s been well earned. We’ve hit the levelling point and, even with the wet weather, we’re one week ahead of production projections. All the inventory is there, ready to come out.”

And therein lies the secret to the continuing success of WCL; recognition of a job well done; validation of the individual; provision of a happy, healthy, safe environment where all can succeed and flourish. □

# Doing It Their Way

## Six new owner operators on the NRT fleet

Going into the fall season, we have six new owner operators on the NRT fleet. No strangers to NRT, they are Chris Thurber, Emile Frechette, Troy Webb, Rene Gareau, Gerald Breland and Dale Peacock. All have worked these northern roads for NRT. We offer congratulations and good wishes from everyone at NRT, as they embark on this new venture as independent businessmen.

With his shiny, new truck plated and ready to roll, we talked to Owner Operator Troy Webb.

As Troy sets out on a haul to McClean Lake, it's a working day like any other, but it is also a significant milestone in his career. Today, September 1, he takes his first trip as an owner operator in his brand new Kenworth tractor unit, carrying the NRT logo and colours and, in small script on a side panel, his personal insignia, Troy Wm. Webb Trucking.

Above his name are two others - Garrett and Mitchell; two small words that speak volumes. Troy is a family man, these are his sons, aged nine and seven, and this is what he is working for. Working with NRT means that he can drive north and be home in Saskatoon every other night. His wife Adeana, a Commerce student at the University of Saskatchewan, studying to be a chartered accountant, schedules her classes around



Owner Operator Troy Webb with his shiny new truck, plated and ready to roll

the children's school times. "She's done it all when I've been on the road," says Troy, with obvious admiration.

Troy has been driving, on and off, he says, for 20 years, much of that time hauling fuel for a local Saskatchewan company. But, from the time he first started hauling for NRT, 5 years ago, he knew the north was where he wanted to be. "I like the remoteness," he says. "It's nice to live in a big city and, every day, go up to the wilderness. Every season brings something different. And when you get to the mines, they're happy to see you. It's a friendly environment."

Of course, says Troy, there are challenges to working in a remote area, often in extreme weather conditions. "You've got to be prepared and carry a good supply of tools to limp the truck back home if need be. I'm no mechanic, but I usually get it home," he says wryly. "Maintenance is very important. That helps minimize the risk considerably. But I'm happy driving winters. That 50 below stuff that we had for a week or two last winter was a challenge, but it didn't last too long."

As Troy prepares to set out on his first trip as an owner operator, he reflects on the opportunity that NRT has given him. "This is a nice way to get into my own truck," he says. "NRT provided me an opportunity to go out on my own. You sort of need that break. You can't just go out and buy a truck. You've got to have a job where you can put it to work. And you've got to put time in somewhere, so that the company knows that you are a solid driver."

Troy put his time in working as a driver for Jerome Niekamp for a few months, as an NRT company driver for a year and a half and again as a driver for Les Bueckert. He has earned his stripes and he plans to stay. "I'm signed on for five years for sure," he says smiling. "Actually, I see myself staying here for the foreseeable future, unless I win the 649. Dispatch has come a long way in the last couple of years and that makes life easier. Dave is very approachable and he's there for you. All in all, this is a good company to work for." □



Chris Thurber



Emile Frechette



Rene Gareau



Dale Peacock



Gerald Breland

# Blowing Everybody's Socks Off

NRT trainees prove they are up to the job



Greg Linklater



Leon McKenzie



Bruce Cook



Rocky Roberts

All our trainees have been enthusiastic throughout their training. All have demonstrated a real desire to learn," says NRT Training and Compliance Manager Lloyd Driedger, speaking of this year's trainees, Leon McKenzie, Bruce Cook, Eli (Rocky) Roberts and Greg Linklater

"From the very first day, they pulled away from their small communities and were ready to go. After everything we laid on them that first day, they still came back the next day, ready for more. This job involves an awful lot of rules and regulations and an incredible amount of structure, compared to what these youth have been accustomed to. But they handle it and shine," says Lloyd, with obvious pleasure.

Every year, he says, the trainees become a self-support group. "This year it's really noticeable. I hear them discussing things. When the 1A exam was coming up they were helping each other. They never lost that sense of groupness. That was nice to see. One of the most interesting things I have learned from northern culture is that people tend not to ridicule each other. A mistake is a mistake and they move on. I learn something from them each year."

"Several excellent trainers have come forward from the ranks of the seasoned

NRT operators and this year's trainees are learning from the best," says Lloyd. "They are travelling with Lloyd LaRocque, Tim Hrenyk and 'Jake' Pocrnic."

"More and more, we are going to dedicated trainers; people who have expressed an interest in training," says Lloyd. "I can discuss training imperatives with my three trainers and ensure a controlled, quality type of training. And these trainers won't just say, 'Watch me'. They'll guide these young drivers through with detailed instruction. That takes patience and an ability to pass along what they know. It's not every knowledgeable person that can teach what they know. Also, not every operator is cut out to be a trainer and share a cab for 48 hours solid," says Lloyd. "Trainers seldom leave the yard without someone with them.

That takes a certain kind of person. And they constantly have to be on double alert. They have to recognize a problem, before the trainee makes the mistake, and be ready to do something. My hat goes off to our trainers. It's a hard job."

But it's also rewarding to watch these young northerners build a career. Often, leased operators have ended up hiring the drivers they have trained, says Lloyd. "If you're looking for a driver who works the way you want them to work, who better than the driver you have trained?" he says.

One thing is sure. Travelling with these men, our trainees will be gathering all the skills they need to become safe, competent professionals, from some of the best operators on the road. □



Trainer "Jake" Pocrnic



Trainer Lloyd LaRocque



Trainer Tim Hrenyk

Training and Compliance Manager Lloyd Driedger.



## Training a New Generation

For Lloyd Driedger, it's more than a job, it's a joy!

“One of the most gratifying aspects of my job with NRT is being able to offer opportunities to the young people of the north. It gives my life a real sense of purpose,” says Training and Compliance Manager Lloyd Driedger.

To this end, Lloyd has initiated a move towards NRT being more involved in the basic training of new, young drivers. “Last year, we put one of our own trainers and a truck to work in the 1A training program,” says Lloyd. “Tim Hrenyk is a certified SGI trainer.”

“One thing we have realized, with experience, is that the more involved we are with our trainees, from the outset, the more influence we have on the type of operators they become. We can make sure that they

learn the skills that we have learned are important to drive in the north,” says Lloyd.

Certainly, says Lloyd, the NRT Training Program has evolved and improved over the years. “We are choosing more wisely; not just on capability, but on attitude. We look for individuals who are most committed to doing something with their lives in this field. They don’t have to be star shifters from the start, but be young people with the potential and commitment to grow. Rather than just taking another course because it’s there, we need youth with a vision of what they can be; a significant citizen in Saskatchewan and their community, doing a significant job. When they get that career thing happening in their minds, they’re on the road to success.”

“This job is always exciting and fun,” says Lloyd. “Someone said to me, recently, ‘You always say this is the best bunch you’ve ever had.’ Well, I always feel that way,” he says, laughing. “And I don’t want to ever lose sight of the uniqueness, potential and importance of the training component of the NRT structure. NRT began with such a strong mandate to train and recruit in the north and I think it’s important that that remains a strong part of what we are.”

Also, says Lloyd, this program is a wonderful link with our partner communities. Peter Mayotte, Director of Northlands College, and Stu Mayotte, Co-ordinator for the 1A course, are always great to work with. For students, beginning in familiar territory at Northlands in La Ronge creates a comfort level, before they have to tackle city driving.

Looking to the future, Lloyd envisions a training program formed through strategic alliance. “I would go to the best training companies and say, ‘I need four trainers and four trucks.’ I would bring in a company to work with our students and we would control the outcome. We would determine what they needed to learn. I think it’s important for students to, first and foremost, learn how to learn. Secondly, we must make our instruction relevant to operating in the north and teach it well.”

“NRT has never backed away from challenges. This company has always been willing to forge new ground. Dave encourages people to develop and grow. He says, ‘If it’s a positive change, why wouldn’t we do it?’ He also has a huge expectation of results and we are all aware of that. Dave has allowed me a lot of freedom and that has enabled me to carve out a position that is challenging and endlessly interesting. And so, I love my job. It’s a privilege for me to come to work and I look forward to working on an enhanced program that will develop our trainees to professional drivers at an even faster rate.”

Changes to date are already showing results. “Once again, these four young guys will blow everybody’s socks off,” says Lloyd. “They’re going to get out there and shine.” □

# Sharing The Load

## NRT AND Trimac - There For Each Other In Busy Times

“We use them in winter, they use us in summer. Last winter, especially during the period of extreme cold, NRT trucks were running round the clock, supplying propane to the mines. It was good to be able to call on some of the Trimac guys to help,” says NRT V.P. Dave McIlmoyl. “Over the summer, when our drivers were less busy, we were able to help Trimac with one of its major contracts, hauling NGL. It’s a system that’s been working well for a few years now. It’s good for owner operators to have those high-priced trucks constantly on the move, and it’s good for both Trimac and NRT to have dependable, safe, professional drivers we can count on,” he says.

What is NGL, I ask. Dave is a fount of knowledge. Most natural gas is processed to separate the heavier hydrocarbon liquids from the natural gas stream, he explains. These heavier liquids are commonly referred to as natural gas liquids (NGLs) and generally have a higher value than the natural gas stream. So the extraction of NGLs from the natural gas stream is performed to enhance the ultimate value of the raw natural gas stream. NGLs are used primarily for the manufacture of plastics, home heating and refinery feed stocks.

This summer, Owner Operators Jamie Harbicht and his driver Tim Frook, Lawrence Joannette, Andy Lamontagne and his driver Ryan Milhilewicz, took to the highways and byways of Alberta to haul NGL for Trimac.

“This is the third year that I’ve been doing summer trucking for Trimac,” says NRT Owner Operator Lawrence Joannette. “When it gets slow here, I’ve headed out to Alberta to haul from the Old Man gas well at Edson to Golden Spike, south of Edmonton. There were four other young NRT fellows working on that job, Jamie, Andy, Ryan and Tim, and

they did a real good job. All we did was work and sleep. Financially, it was good, but I only got one weekend off all this summer. That was a weekend at the lake with Dave (McIlmoyl) up at Churchill with Stan Porter and his boy and my boy. We do that every summer. I could live up there. I could stay there,” says Lawrence, with a faraway look in his eye.

But, when duty calls, Lawrence is on the job.

“Trimac was behind the eight ball and we worked real hard for them,” says Lawrence. “Trimac driver Gerald Breland, who had hauled propane with us last winter, has hauled NGL at the Alberta site for the last five years and he was really good at helping us with what we needed to know. He knows where all the wells are.”

“Basically, we suck from the tanks at the well site and haul it to the pipeline. From



Jamie Harbicht



Ryan Milhilewicz



Andy Lamontagne



Tim Frook

there it gets piped to the refinery.”

Hauling NGL is similar to hauling propane, says Lawrence. “You figure out how much weight you can take on. The tag on the trailer tells you the water capacity. The water capacity times the density of the product determines the maximum capacity of product for trailer size.”

“We pump from huge tanks called bullets. The wells produce at 375 cu ft. a day, pumping round the clock, and we carry about 55 cu ft. to a load. So it took 6 trucks a day to keep it at level. One weekend, three NRT trucks did the job of 6 trucks, working maximum hours every day,” says Lawrence. “We’d stop every second trip at a truck stop to shower. We’d have a few rings of garlic sausage, bread buns, wieners and beans, and go. More often than not, we’d eat on the run. You get tired, but it’s a good tired,” he says.

Dispatch left these professionals pretty much on their own to do the job, says Lawrence. “They’d give us 10 waybills and we’d not talk for a week, other than to call in for unload times. It was interesting - something new to learn.”

“I like to think we were important to Trimac this summer. They probably would have

*When duty calls, Owner Operator Lawrence Joannette is on the job*

made it without us. It's hard to say. But we did make their job easier. There should be a big hand for Andy, Jamie, Tim and Ryan. They worked hard."

"Now I'm back in the bush and happy to be here," he says, smiling. "I go north every day. I've put 583,000k on my truck in two years. That's a lot of miles."

Young NRT Owner Operator Jamie Harbicht

is the next generation of high milers. He too enjoyed the hard work and challenge of the gas well run. "We got on well with Trimac," he says. "There was no dispatch, no standing around waiting. We got our waybills over the phone and then went as hard as we could. Trimac was desperate for help and we were happy to be there. It meant living out of my truck and that was tough, but it was O.K. for a while," says Jamie.

"Now I'm back going north and that's where I like to be. And I'm busy, hauling propane. I've been an owner operator for 8 years now and I'm still enjoying that. I feel pretty lucky," he says.

And NRT is lucky to have Lawrence, Jamie, and an entire fleet of equally skilled and dedicated NRT drivers, for they are this industry's life-blood. □



## Return To The Family

Lauren Crate has come back to work at NRT

Five years after leaving home, Lauren Crate has returned to the NRT family.

From 1995 to 1998, Lauren was our NRT receptionist. In '98, Lauren left to go on maternity leave and spent the following year at home with her young family and newborn baby girl, Payton.

When offered the opportunity, she took a job working for SaskTel, working with northern residents, updating their services. Seeking to widen her horizons, Lauren enrolled in Business Administration at SIAST.

Now, with added experience and knowledge, she has returned to the NRT fold.

"I learned a lot at college," she says. "It really sets you up and gives you the big picture. It

taught me office efficiencies and time management systems. I learned how to do financial statements and handle general office procedure."

"My children are all in school now. Larry is 16, Jeffrey is 10 and Payton is 6. They don't need me at home anymore. I always liked working at NRT, so when I got the opportunity to come back, I jumped at it. It was always challenging, I like the environment and the people around here. This is a family-oriented place. You know, even in the city, NRT maintains its northern atmosphere. People are treated well and that attracts good people to work here."

"I'm not quite sure what my title is," says Lauren, laughing. "I work for Human Resources and Training and Compliance.

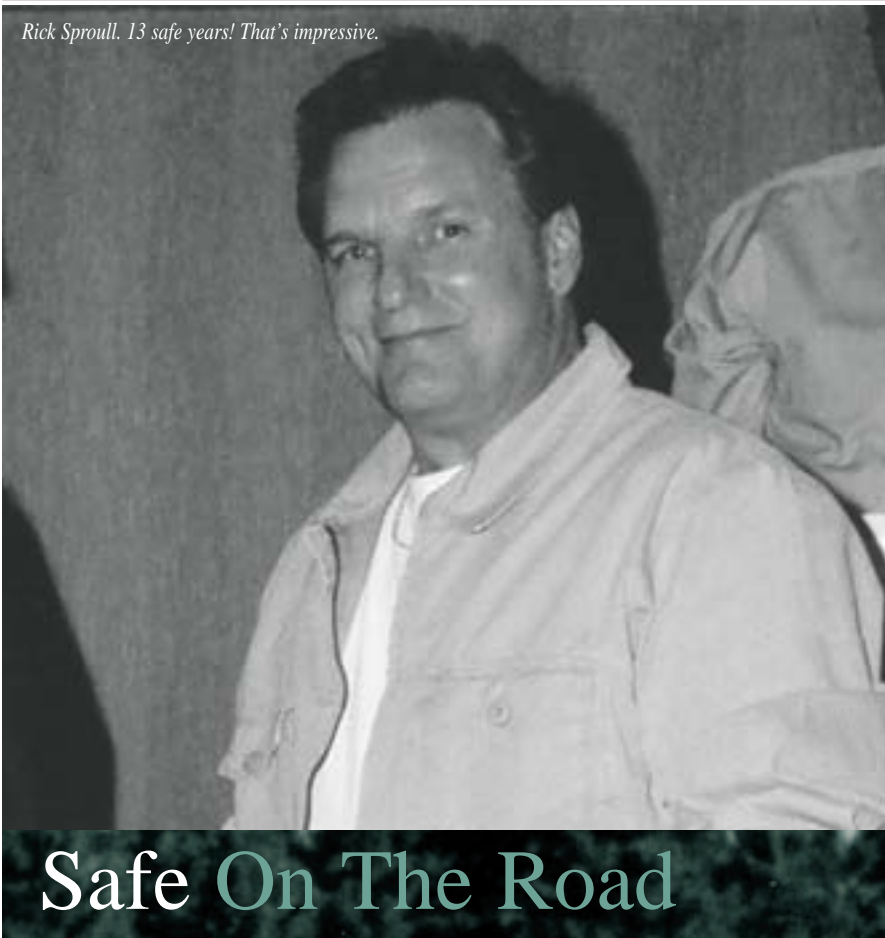
For HR, I keep the driver files updated. For Lloyd (Driedger, Training and Compliance Manager), I enter log sheets and check on hours of service. I've prepared a few WHMIS power point presentations for Lloyd. I put the content - rules and regulations - onto disc and it's ready for Lloyd to work through it with the students. Lloyd has a big job and my help lightens that load. That's it, so far. I will be taking training to do billing and that will be added to my job description," she says with a smile. "I'll get busier and busier." And that's fine with Lauren. "Since I took my business course, I find I can handle a lot more. And I like keeping busy. It makes for a shorter day."

Has anything changed since '95? "Yes. The company has grown a lot and it seems really well organized. There's a whole new computer system and everything's at your fingertips. That's good. There are now management teams, which seem more focussed when there is a team set up for each department."

"I see myself staying here for quite a while," says Lauren. "I like it here. When I worked here before, I remember Dave's (McIlmoyl, NRT V.P.) name popping up now and again, because he was part of the creation of the NRT partnership, but I'd never met him. He's a very pleasant person and good to work with. He makes people feel valued and he values people's opinions. Robert and Lloyd are also really nice to work for. Already, I feel like an important part of this company."

There's a reason why Lauren values a company with a northern atmosphere. She grew up in Cumberland House. "Everybody's still up there and I go home for visits quite often," she says "There's nowhere quite like the north." □

*Rick Sproull. 13 safe years! That's impressive.*



# Safe On The Road

## Another Year of NRT Excellence

In 2003, NRT drivers proved, once again, that they are some of the most highly skilled and safe operators in the North American transportation industry.

With our drivers on the road 24/7, there is never a perfect time to thank them all in person, present their awards and celebrate their achievements. However, earlier this year, one evening was set aside to bring together those drivers who could attend as well as honour those who couldn't be there.

We also honoured those who have contributed long-time service and commitment to our company.

As every NRT event is, this was a warm and friendly gathering, with a wonderful banquet hosted by the Saskatoon Inn. President Rick Reynolds made a special trip from Calgary to be here. Traffic Supervisor Larry Powling lent extra entertainment to the awards announcements with his ready wit.



*NRT President Rick Reynolds*



*Marianne Thomas, a mainstay of NRT for 15 years*

## Recipients of the 2003 Safety Awards were:

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>One Year</b>         | <i>Stan Porter</i>        |
| <i>Donavon Atkinson</i> | <i>Richard Wilm</i>       |
| <i>Clarence Bryant</i>  | <b>Seven Year</b>         |
| <i>Rene Gareau</i>      | <i>Dave Campbell</i>      |
| <i>Ed Sanderson</i>     | <b>Eight Year</b>         |
| <b>Two Year</b>         | <i>Larry Balon</i>        |
| <i>Cam Grewcock</i>     | <i>Jamie Harbicht</i>     |
| <i>Ken Heyer</i>        | <i>Robert Kustaski</i>    |
| <i>Conrad Lehmond</i>   | <i>Leo Voz</i>            |
| <b>Three Year</b>       | <b>Nine Year</b>          |
| <i>Brad Caisse</i>      | <i>Robert Giroux</i>      |
| <i>Ben Campbell</i>     | <i>Lawrence Joannette</i> |
| <i>Trevor Dumont</i>    | <i>Kelvin Kitzul</i>      |
| <i>Tim Frook</i>        | <i>Andy Lamontagne</i>    |
| <i>Curtis Hubel</i>     | <i>Lawrence Matchee</i>   |
| <i>Larry Smith</i>      | <i>Larry Powling</i>      |
| <i>Troy Webb</i>        | <b>Ten Year</b>           |
| <b>Four Year</b>        | <i>Dwight Twigge</i>      |
| <i>Barry Gidluck</i>    | <b>Eleven Year</b>        |
| <i>John Harding</i>     | <i>Merv Stacey</i>        |
| <i>Chris Thurber</i>    | <i>Ross Wilson</i>        |
| <i>Dale Turner</i>      | <b>Twelve Year</b>        |
| <b>Five Year</b>        | <i>George Magee</i>       |
| <i>Don Bilinski</i>     | <i>Ron Magee</i>          |
| <i>Greg Nesbitt</i>     | <b>Thirteen Year</b>      |
| <i>Jerome Niekamp</i>   | <i>Lloyd LaRocque</i>     |
| <b>Six Year</b>         | <i>Phil Macala</i>        |
| <i>Ron Milligan</i>     | <i>Rick Sproull</i>       |

## Recipients of the Long Service Awards were:

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Five Year</b>       | <b>Ten Year</b>         |
| <i>Glen Ertell</i>     | <i>Robert Cremers</i>   |
| <i>Wayne Grewcock</i>  | <i>Lawrence Matchee</i> |
| <i>Conrad Lehmond</i>  | <i>Larry Powling</i>    |
| <i>Dave McIlmoyl</i>   | <i>Wendy Weatherbee</i> |
| <i>Shawna Merriman</i> | <b>Fifteen Year</b>     |
| <i>Greg Nesbitt</i>    | <i>John Harding</i>     |
| <i>Chris Thurber</i>   | <i>Marianne Thomas</i>  |



*George Magee*



*Larry Powling*



*John Harding*



*Greg Nesbitt*



*Robert Cremers*



*Glen Ertell*



*Andy Lamontagne*



*Ross Wilson*



*Dwight Twigge*



*Dave McIlmoyl*



*Wendy Weatherbee*

# New Trucks For Seasoned Drivers

A sizeable fleet upgrade courtesy of NRT's owner operators



*George Magee*



*Jerome Niekamp*



*Bob Kustaski*



*Dwight Twigge*



*Rick Sproull*



*Ross Wilson*



*Jamie Harbicht*

The NRT fleet should be looking particularly snazzy this season as no less than nine owner operators trade in their trucks for the latest and best on the market. Sporting new units will be kings of the road,

Mort Harbicht (sorry, no photo!), Jerome Niekamp, Dwight Twigge, Bob Kustaski, George Magee, Ross Wilson, Jamie Harbicht and Rick Sproull. Happy driving, everyone! Enjoy your well-earned finery. □



Great photo by Company Driver Tom Grimsdale

## Stories From The Road

### Close encounters of a fierce and furry kind

Saskatchewan's north is a vast, wild and breathtakingly beautiful place - a landscape full of silence and a peaceful absence of disturbing noise. This, drivers tell me, is the allure of the north.

But it is not without its drama. While others share the road with traffic, our drivers share the entire environment with an endless array of animals and birds. Deer, moose, black bears, wolves and a variety of other mammals wander through the wilderness, co-existing with eagles, hawks and ravens.

As a rule, each go about their business, taking little notice of the other. But, now and again, it's a little different.

#### HUNGRY BEAR

It was a day like any other for Leo Voz. As usual, he loaded up the food for the McArthur River mine and headed north.

When it came time to unload, he found he had a helper. A bear had hopped up into his trailer. It was a bit of a daunting sight, says Leo but, thinking fast, he got back in his cab and rocked the truck. "As soon as I did that, the bear got scared and ran away," says Leo. End of story. How cool is that?



Leo Voz



Lloyd LaRoque



Ross Wilson

#### LUCKY FOX

Large trucks don't stop on a dime and when a driver gets rolling, he wants to keep going. But that didn't feature in Lloyd LaRoque's reasoning when he spotted a wounded fox on the road.

“The fox had been hit and was in shock. I stopped and picked it up and put it on the front passenger floor,” says Lloyd. “When I got to Saskatoon, I called the University of Saskatchewan Vet College and they were waiting for me. They came out with big gloves on and took it.”

Lloyd is a man of the north. To him, it was the obvious and right thing to do.

## CURIOUS WOLVES

Ross Wilson was having some truck problems, so he stopped at the Geike River camp payphone to call Kenworth. As he was talking on the phone, two great big wolves appeared

and they were between him and his truck.

“There was a white one and a black one. They looked at me. I looked at them, I kept talking on the phone and they kept walking,” says Ross. “I thought it was best to just stay calm and not alarm them. Usually, wolves don’t bother humans or come too close to trucks. I think if they were in a pack and really hungry, it might be a different story, but these two just looked curious. I was a little anxious for a minute there, but not really scared. But I was interested in hanging up the phone real quick.”

“The wolves around Geike River are probably used to people,” says Ross. “The

Highways crew camp there and there are tourist cabins.”

Ross, who has worked in the north for over 20 years, says he’s pretty comfortable with the wildlife. He’s sad to see that there aren’t as many moose as there used to be. There are a lot more hunters coming in now, he says. In his travels, he’s seen a lot of bears. “Bears can go fast and they come out onto the road. I’ve had a few close encounters, but I’ve never hit one,” he says. “It’s always in the back of my mind though, and I’m watching. But, at night, it’s really hard to see them. It’s all part of your life running north,” he says with a smile. □

## Scrapbook



Joan Sanderson

Baby Robyn

We’re happy to have Joan Sanderson back on the front desk, fielding calls, filing, entering waybills, generally helping out and greeting, with a smile, all who come through the NRT door. Joan was certainly missed during her one-year maternity leave, especially by Shawna and Donna, who juggled a rather heavy workload in her absence.

Joan is the proud mother of one-year-old Robyn.



Chad Tucker



Shawna Merriman

## High Achievers!

Hearty congratulations to Chad Tucker for a tremendous achievement! Chad has recently obtained the Bachelor of Accounting Science degree and the CGA designation. Chad is primarily responsible for Woodland Cree Logging’s accounting; Inventory accounting for all NRT divisions; and provides support in the analysis of financial statements for all NRT divisions. Chad reports to

Administration Manager Robert Cremers.

In addition to her present duties, handling Driver Pay, Shawna Merriman has agreed to assume the responsibility that Donna had in Accounts Payable. Efficient, focussed and easy-going, Shawna has taken on the extra workload without missing a beat. Thank you, Shawna. Shawna also reports to Robert, who is always there for his staff.

## Goodbye, Donna



Donna Bartholomew

We were sad to see Donna leave the NRT family in August, but wish her every happiness as she moves to Calgary to be close to her daughter and granddaughter.

With NRT for over seven years, Donna has been a most able Driver Pay Clerk, Accounting Clerk and Billing Assistant. She will be a fine addition to Tac Mobility, in a similar job, in the province next door.



## Has anyone seen this man?

Beloved by many! Lately known as the dotcom ghost, he hasn't been spotted in a truck since May!



Coffee Crowd (l to r) Don Bilinski, Larry Smith and Harold Brand

*Dramatic photo by Owner Operator Ken Heyer of his truck, with a backdrop of the forest fire by Key Lake.*



## Snap it!

Hey, Highway Heroes, we know that each one of you is totally in love with your amazing, beautiful, rugged, dependable, high tech trucks. We agree - each one is a thing of beauty. So snap it and bring us the masterpiece.

Brad Caisse had the idea for an NRT semi showcase. All great shots will have pride of place in Trail Blazer. If your photo is one we want to keep and use for the NRT calendar, Christmas card or other promotional material, you win \$200. Snappers of both the



*If you have a story to tell, let Wendy know and we'll share it in Trail Blazer. If you can get a photo from the safety of your truck, that would be great.*

best overall picture and the runner-up photo will have their trucks-in-action shots or amazing northern vistas enlarged and framed.