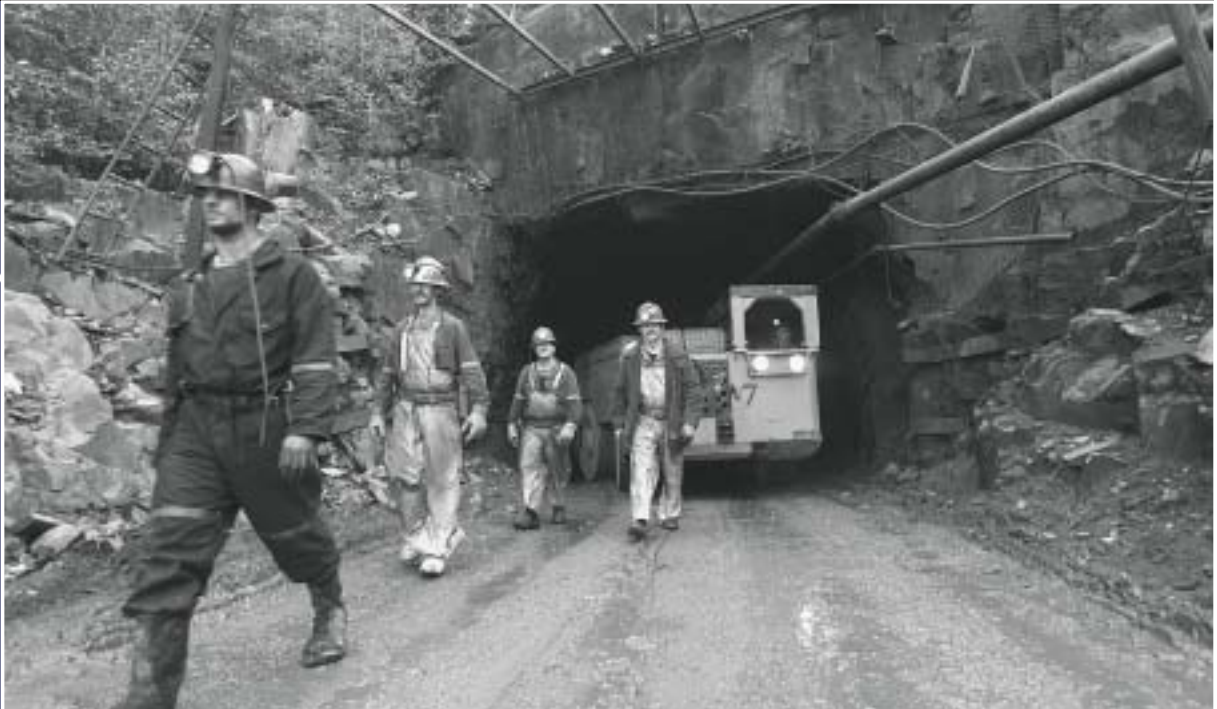




Trail Blazer

March/April 2004



Over Ice And Under Ground

A roller coaster ride into the Seabee gold mine

It's the stuff that adventures are made of. At the end of an ice road is a treasure trove where prospectors searched for gold and found it.

This venture into the wild that began in 1991, above the water and beneath the earth, rivals those of legendary heroes, so that today we can marvel at the tenacity and invention of our own people here in Saskatchewan.

As one travels north, mile upon mile, the vastness and isolation of this land almost mocks attempts at human intervention.

But, undaunted, the geologists of Claude Resources Inc. and their predecessors examined tens of thousands of acres until they found evidence of gold in the far reaches of the north, 125 Km northeast of La Ronge by air; inaccessible by road. They staked claim to a large package of land and began drilling, blasting and hauling thousands of tons of rock. And so came into being, the Seabee mine, with the 11,000 acre Currie Rose property waiting in the wings for development and nearby properties undergoing significant exploration.

CGH
C. Gibson Holdings

WCL
Woodland Cree Logging

NRT
Northern Resource Trucking

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



Phil Croustiere moves slowly across the ice road

In the Seabee mine, Centaur Mining Contractors (Claude's Mining Division), mine and mill thousands of tonnes of broken feed stock, extract tens of pounds of concentrate that is stripped and poured into bullion - one ounce at a time.

As all wise men know, there's no swift way to a pot of gold. But one ounce at a time, Seabee has, to date, produced in excess of 620,000 ounces of gold from its high-grade, narrow vein underground operation.

The Seabee mine is our destination as we set out across the 66 kilometer ice road from the lodge at Brabant Lake, 172 Km from La Ronge. I am travelling with NRT company driver Phil Croustiere aboard a truck hauling propane, weighing 36,500 kilograms. As we move slowly across the ice, at a steady 26 KPH, one can hear the gentle crackle of ice responding to the pressure and settling back into place.

"It sounds like pouring milk on a bowl of Rice Krispies," says Phil. "Snap, crackle and pop." And that's a perfect description. "There's close to four feet of ice under us, so we're O.K.," he assures me.

Stretching before us is the vast whiteness of the frozen lake, with a path hewn out for us to follow. Without sunglasses, the sun's reflection on the ice is blinding. This is pure beauty. It takes your breath away.

"It's a slice of heaven," agrees Phil. "At night, I often turn down the radio and it's so quiet and so beautiful. I feel very privileged to be a part of this."

On we go, moving through the emptiness. The reason we have to go so slowly, says Phil, is that, all the way across the lake, we

are making a wave under the ice and we can't get in front of that wave. An ice road is not fixed like pavement. It is flexible and ever changing and has to be respected and understood.

Suddenly, in the middle of nowhere land, we pass a little cabin on an island. It seems so alone, so different than when seen from a boat in the summertime, under hot, sunny skies.

This is a land of contrasts. "I don't know how to express how cold it got this winter," says Phil, laughing. "Let's just say really cold. We had air lines just snapping and then you have to lay under there and fix them. When it's that cold, it's hard to keep things working properly. But it's part of the job, you try to stay warm and carry on. I had to add a little air line anti freeze and hammer frozen brakes. The snow gets in, the oil and grease get solid and it's hard to move. During that really cold snap, the mines needed even more propane, so we just kept going, doing as much as we could legally do. I'd drive my hours and sleep, drive my hours and sleep. Back and forth. That's the job and that's O.K."

As we near the shore of the first portage, Phil slows to 1 KPH, obeying the markers, the wave dissipates and he is able to move onto terra firma without a ripple. Were he to approach too quickly, the wave would crash against the land, break up the ice and plunge the rig into the water. But that is not a concern. "All you need to know are the rules and keep them," he says.

The edge of the portage is rough. On land, we round a corner and, Phil 'gives it', gearing up, going from 1Km to 40Km in seconds. Bumping up the rocky incline, over the raw land, on the narrow path cut through the trees, to the top of the famous Copper Hill portage, it feels much faster. Phil is totally cool and collected. On the descent Phil gears down, using his engine as a brake. Using the brakes polishes the ice and makes it slippery, he explains, as he eases the huge rig down the other side of Copper Hill. I am impressed. This is brilliant driving. This is a 10% grade or more; in laymen's terms, very steep! Until you're on this ride, you don't really know how skilled our driver's are.

"The propane tank has no baffles, so when you begin an ascent like this, all the liquid goes to the back and you lose traction on the tractor tires. So you give it. It's strictly momentum that gets you up," explains Phil.

Though it seems as though we're the only ones around for miles and miles, the ice road is, in fact a fairly busy thoroughfare. Two Km back there's a driver carrying diesel, a truck ahead carries steel pipe and ahead of him, there's a load of explosives, all wending their way to the mine and keeping in touch with each other as they go. Everything the Seabee mine needs is transported across the ice road during the



Nearing the shore of the first portage

three months of safe ice-road travel. Through radio contact, drivers can make sure that they follow far enough behind each other. On the ice road, drivers coming in and going out can meet and pass safely, moving far apart to the edges of the road and slowing right down to 10 KPH. On the narrow portages, they can't meet or pass, so every driver reports his location, the portage number and when he's inbound and outbound.

As we near the second portage Phil speaks quietly into the radio, "#2 inbound", and we're off on another crazy ride, Phil totally in control.

'Inbound' on a narrow portage, cut through the trees



On we go, slowly over the ice, on this three-hour journey, creeping onto land, hurtling over portages and creeping back onto the ice. The first few of the 11 portages are fairly lengthy and steep, others are just the length of two trucks. All are different, with their own characteristics. This terrain is rock, surrounded by water, 3000 feet above sea level. All the lakes are at different levels, so that we climb up many of the portages and arrive at a lake on top of the hill, cross that onto another portage, then make a little turn onto another lake. There can be a 30 to 40 foot difference in height between lakes.

Just as we're coming up the hill and onto lake #6, a half ton comes into view. As it draws nearer, we recognize the driver. It's Lloyd Driedger, NRT's Safety and Compliance Manager, one of the management team who patrol the ice road, checking the condition of the ice and helping drivers put chains on or free up frozen brakes. "They take turns to patrol and monitor the ice road and they're always there for us," says Phil.

That's another major asset in working with NRT, he says. You know you are safe on this road. Long before the first semi drives its load onto the ice, the road has been prepared and tested for ice thickness and stability. The safety team has made three or four cuts with a chain saw, every half a kilometer along the entire 66Km route, measuring the thickness of the ice. Throughout the three months that it is solid and driveable, crews groom and smooth it and the safety team keeps a watchful eye for any change. Safety is NRT's number one priority and, therefore, there has never been an incident on this road of a semi going through the ice.

It's getting dusk and we're nearing our destination. The evening light is magical. There's a grader up ahead, an ethereal form, smoothing the ice, sending up a billow of snow, a silhouette on the skyline.

"I haven't been this happy trucking for years," says Phil, who joined NRT in October last year. "For 25 years, I trucked long haul into the U.S. - Detroit, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston and Dallas, all the big ones. The traffic was a nightmare. I'll take 55 below any day," he says, smiling. "It's a



Phil unloads at Currie Rose

holiday working in the north. It's a different kind of traffic. You're meeting all your friends, the drivers. They know what they're doing and it makes for a comfortable ride. To me, NRT is a great place to work. I've never worked for an outfit like this. Breakfast meetings, Christmas parties, letting us know what's going on. I've never had that. And the safety standards are right up to snuff. You're not forced to do anything unsafe. You'd be pretty hard pressed to find another company like this one."

"And at the mines I've received more thank yous than I've ever had and it's a good feeling. You don't mind working hard if you're appreciated. At Seabee, they treat us like gold. If you're late for dinner, they put a meal on the stove to keep warm, with your name on it. The food is incredible. It's amazing - all laid on and no charge. I really appreciate that. We all do. The camp is simple. The dining room is the TV room and that's where everyone congregates. It's like a big family," says Phil.

"My wife Wendy has noticed the change in me since I joined NRT. 'You come home happy from trucking these days,' she said. And I do. And I'm just a day away from home, instead of a week away."

Home for Phil and Wendy is a little farm 30 miles south of Moose Jaw in the Blue Hills, where they breed Aberdeen Angus cattle. Wendy takes care of the cows and the home front while Phil's on the road. "You've got to have an understanding wife when you have a profession like this," says Phil. "We have a good relationship."

We reach the last portage, #12, on which the Seabee gold mine is situated. The lighted mill looms huge in the darkness. We take a trail to the right of the mill. "I'll be putting this load of propane into the tank at Currie Rose," says Phil. "There's a huge engine there that runs a fan that blows heated air down into the mine. A lot of propane goes into running that."

It takes 45 minutes to unload. Then it's time to unwind. Hospitality is waiting in the warm, friendly kitchen of the Seabee mine. Miners relax after a hard day's work, drivers laugh and chat over dinner, totally at home. With a benevolent smile, Camp Manager, Manny Sobreira, presides over all, making sure that his people are comfortable and well fed. It's a time of respite for miners and drivers before they begin the tough work cycle all over again.

I return, that evening, to Brabant Lodge in the NRT half ton with Glen Ertell and Dave McIlmoyl. Young Tim Mansuy, NRT Warehouse Supervisor, is aboard the amazing semi ride back with Phil. Returning empty, the truck and solid steel tanks still weigh a hefty 20,000 kilograms and must travel the ice road at a modest 35KPH.

Tomorrow promises the next big adventure; a return to Seabee with Dave, Glen and Tim for a trip down the gold mine, one third of a mile beneath the earth.

It's another beautiful, sun drenched day in the north. Over the ice we go once more to meet with the Seabee Mine Manager. The maps and diagrams on his office walls show the extent of the mining and exploration project.

In 2003, when the company successfully identified and developed high-grade reserves below the 400 metre level, he tells us, they extended the Seabee mine shaft to 650 metres, facilitating shaft conveyance of ore and waste to surface from new development

Camp Manager Manny (centre) creates a home from home.





Return to Seabee for the next day's adventure!

between 500 and 800 metre levels. The mill, designed to handle 800 tonnes of ore per day, is now working to maximum capacity and is expected to produce about 55,000 ounces of gold in 2004.

All indications are, he says, that the Seabee mine will continue to operate successfully for the foreseeable future; very likely about 9 to 10 years at current rates. Alongside its 675,000 tonnes of reserves, there is an additional 2 million tonnes of resources showing significant potential. Claude controls a large package surrounding the Seabee mine and exploration is ongoing and showing favourable results.

The underground operations are serviced by both a shaft and a ramp. While ore travels up the shaft to surface on skips, men and trucks use portal access. So it is in a small Toyota Land Cruiser that we enter the narrow portal hewn into the hillside, are met with total darkness, and descend into the bowels of the earth.

The lights of our vehicle seem swallowed up in the dense blackness. Soon we stop before a door that covers the tunnel opening. A pull on a rubber hose and the door swings open, allowing us to enter. Another pull on a similar hose and, with a puff of air, the door swings closed behind us. The tunnel, hewn through the rock, corkscrews down and around, seemingly forever.

As we round corners, passing different levels, the cruiser headlights shine momentarily on large arrows pointing to the escape shaft. Sadly, not all mines around the world share the safety concerns that Seabee demonstrates, says our guide. In the remote eventuality that there is a fire underground,

There are 30 men on a shift, with only the nearest visible in the darkness



the men can move quickly away from the main shaft, where the fire would be concentrated, towards a fresh air shaft, equipped with ladders where they can swiftly climb to the surface, going into fresh air. There are also fire-proof refuges throughout the mine area, equipped with foam, water and food, where men can wait out a fire. Every care has been taken.

We reach a depth of 650 metres beneath the earth, on our spiraling, rocky road, and spot helmet lights and the dim outline of large machinery and men at work.

We park and walk. The floor of the mine is wet and strewn with loose rock. With flashlights directed groundwards to light our path, we pick our way through pitch darkness to the rock face where the men are working. We shine our lights on the wall of the carved out tunnel. And there it is. The glimmer of gold. This is something most people only hear of. We are looking at the real McCoy. Detonators are set for a blast. This is where it all happens. Cool Dave and cucumber Glen are impressed! I gave up on cool a long time ago.

There are 30 men on a shift, including mechanics, but the mine seems strangely unpopulated, with only the nearest visible in the darkness. The men we meet as we walk about seem relaxed yet focused. There's a good atmosphere down here; people sharing another world that is totally different and far away from the one above.

The system adopted in this type of mine is to start at the bottom and work up, leaving a safe 50 metres of solid ground between levels. Exhausted underground chambers are used to deposit waste as they go. It's a slow and careful process that values both its product and the manpower that mines it.

Our ascent to the surface proves to be an adventure in itself; a roller coaster ride that



In a small Toyota Land Cruiser we enter the narrow portal hewn into the hillside



Dave and Glen at the rock face

Disney World would be hard pressed to rival. Packed into the Land Cruiser once more, we go up - a lot faster than we came down. Gearing up, gearing down, hurtling upwards on the corkscrew route, round and round, the walls of the rock tunnel flashing by, very fast and very close. Our driver is a master at the wheel. I think he's done this before!

Back through the door with the rubber hose pull and we are soon bursting into sunlight. What a ride!

Nothing at the mine site can quite match the mine trip, but the mill is impressive.

Tonnes of ore pass non-stop through giant crushers, tumble in drums along with heavy 3" metal balls to grind the ore into powder, go through a leaching, washing and extraction process to separate tonnes of waste from a few ounces of gold. This precious ore is fed down into a hot pot boiling at 1800 degrees Centigrade and out pours the gold to form a brick the size of a small loaf of bread. It isn't pure gold yet, but it's getting closer. And the joke



Thousands of tonnes of broken feed stock is processed to produce one ounce of gold

around the mine is, "If you can take it, freshly poured and hot, you can keep it." It's not something a mere mortal could quietly make off with. You'd probably need to have a titanium arm, says Glen.

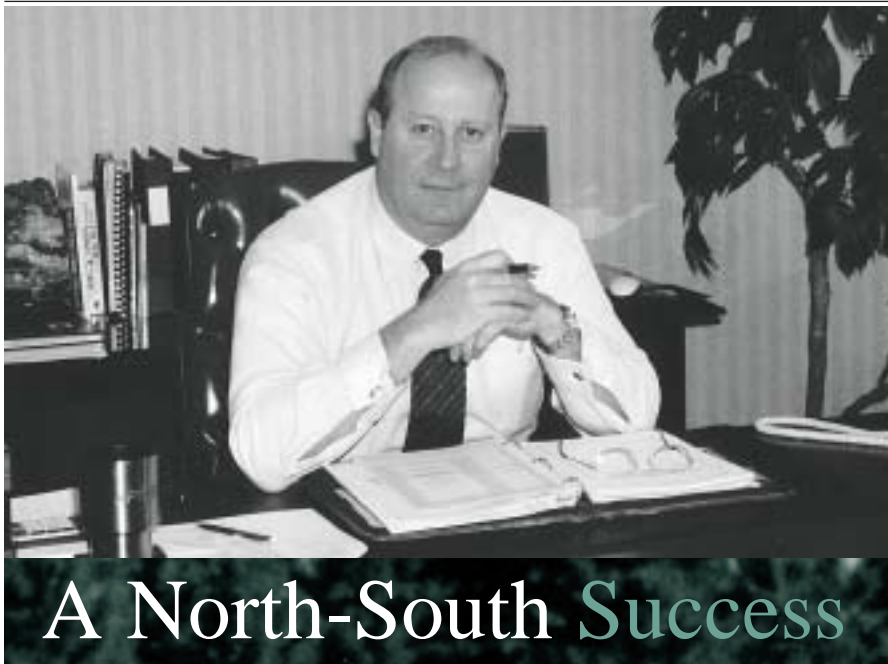
These oversize bars, containing trace

minerals are transported to Ontario, weighed in, assayed to determine the amount of impurity, purified and poured into gold bars; still arguably the most solid form of

currency in our, at times, less than stable world economy.

There is indeed gold in them thar hills. In the far reaches of Northern Saskatchewan,

Claude Resources and NRT work together, in perfect harmony, keeping the wheels of industry turning in the north; a team effort that's worth its weight in gold. □



A North-South Success

All-round Benefits for Mine and Manpower

“To date, Seabee has provided around 1500 man years of employment, yet all of this activity has taken place in an area that, relative to the vast expanse of Saskatchewan’s north, is no bigger than a postage stamp,” says Neil McMillan, President and Chief Executive Officer of Claude Resources Inc. Mining in the north, he says, leaves such a small footprint, while providing jobs and economic activity that are so desperately needed.

Given the calibre of manpower Claude Resources has found in the north, it has been possible, says Neil, to conduct business to the highest standards, while creating industry that cares for the land and its people.

“The quality is there,” says Neil, “We have been quite dependent on the Lac La Ronge Indian Band for key employees and have a high number of people from throughout Northern Saskatchewan. Some of our longest

serving employees are, in fact, Aboriginal.”

“There’s a fine history of business development in the Band’s Kitsaki Development Corporation,” he says. “Dave McIlmoyl had done a lot of good work with the Band in creating a number of successful business ventures. I had got to know Ray McKay when he was Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs and had a lot of respect for his public policy. That was before he succeeded Dave as CEO of Kitsaki, so I already had a positive view of his work. He was very good at what he did in government and continues to be so in private enterprise. Also, I have always been most impressed with Chief Cook. So we wanted to hire people from the Band. That has worked well. We have hired some excellent people throughout the north which is to our mutual benefit. We are dependent on each other for success, so this is a wonderful situation.”

Neil McMillan, President and Chief Executive Officer of Claude Resources Inc.

“On the trucking side, it was an easy choice to turn to NRT when Siemen’s Transport was sold,” says Neil. “Siemen’s had done excellent work for us, but it is gratifying when you can employ a northern company for a major service like this. Again I must give credit to Chief Cook and Dave McIlmoyl for their work in putting together the NRT Partnership.”

“The work that NRT does during the winter months on the ice road is a lifeline for the Seabee mine,” says Neil. “NRT is an absolutely critical partner of ours. It’s a big deal. NRT hauls close to 300 loads over that 66Km ice road every winter. We’re highly dependent on them and very happy with our relationship.”

“And we never have to worry about safety issues,” he says. “They are continually testing the road; cutting and measuring the thickness of the ice along the whole 66Km route. It’s fascinating when you step back and look at that road; that you’re really travelling with around 80,000 lbs on 34 to 40 inches of ice, with a 100 feet of water under you. You’re travelling on a membrane. That’s got to be well done. And it is. NRT makes sure it’s safe and that the equipment is good. And the drivers are good because they’re northerners.”

“You know, in 2001 and the beginning of 2002, we went through some times that were the worst for the gold business, but we could always count on NRT for service and reliability. I say, every day you go home without a problem, it’s a good day. And I’m not aware of ever having a problem with NRT,” he says smiling. “It’s a very symbiotic relationship.” □



NRT Company Driver Don Bilinski on the ice road with Tim Mansuy on board



Putting In Ice Time

Drivers work round the clock

Phil Croustiere is just one of the team of NRT drivers that, every season, transport about 1.2 million litres of propane to Seabee and about 2 million litres of fuel. Add to that the other commodities they carry - groceries, reagents, chemicals, equipment, building products, pipe, sheet metal, oil and lubricants - and it takes a total of 300 crossings, about half of those carrying diesel fuel and propane. If super B loads are used, drivers unhook at the beginning of the ice road and take the trailers over one at a time.

“I think we provide Seabee with an excellent service,” says NRT Operations Manager Glen Ertell. “We offer a full package. We can haul everything. So they don’t have to have different carriers. And we look after little things. If there are products they need at short notice, out of province, we’ll arrange to get that shipment to Saskatoon with another carrier, reload and take it to the mine.”

“We’ve been Seabee’s preferred carrier for a number of years and enjoy working with them. They’re fun to deal with,” says Glen, smiling. “It’s quite demanding when they need all the supplies all of a sudden. But we manage. And it fits nicely into our work

schedule to do their work at this time of the year.”

Beginning around the second week in January and finishing towards the end of March (when the portages begin getting soft) this is a short and very busy season.

We met several of these skilled and dedicated drivers on the road to Seabee, carrying diesel fuel from C. Gibson’s Holdings Ltd. in La Ronge, propane from Superior Propane in Richardson, just outside Regina, lumber from La Ronge, lime from Alberta and cement from Saskatoon.

NRT owner operator Ken Heyer has been travelling the Seabee ice road every winter for four seasons. It’s 27 years since he hauled his first truck load and the majority of those years have been spent on northern roads, so he’s unfazed by challenging terrain and plummeting temperatures.

On the upside, says Ken, there was lots of snow this year and that made the portages smoother. “It filled in the holes. I liked that,” he says.

“I didn’t like the real cold weather, but minus 50 didn’t bother me too much. When

it was really cold the brakes would freeze and you’d get air leaks, but you deal with that. You pretty well have to. But us guys who have worked in the north for years are pretty confident that we can handle most situations,” he says. “Now, too, we are in constant contact with dispatch and we can reach the mine on the radio, so that’s good.

Years ago, when I hauled into Uranium City, there was no satellite. You were really on your own. When you got to the mine you called Saskatoon, and you didn’t have a clue what was happening in between. There’s a lot more security now. “

“Security is a big thing,” he says. “It helps to be working for a good company that makes sure all the rules of road and maintenance are followed. That keeps it safe for everyone. And when we begin the season on the ice road, we know we’re safe because they’re not going to send you out if it’s unsafe. Most years, I’m the first one in with the big truck. When I go out for the first time I’m totally confident that I wouldn’t be there if the road wasn’t good.”

“I like the north,” says Ken, with a wide smile. “You work long hours and when you’re tired you go to bed. We work harder on the ice road runs because we’ve got to get everything in while we can and that’s O.K. with me. I hauled 28 loads this year, two with B trains, so that’s 30 trips across the ice. That’s a lot of going slow, but I’ve got a lot of patience.”

““It’s beautiful up north and that’s what makes the difference,” says Ken. “In summer I stop and catch a fish and fry it on the side of the road. That’s pretty good. Then there’s the Seabee food. That’s really good. They put a plate away for you or you can go to the kitchen and get something for yourself. They make us feel like one of them.”

“Altogether there’s a pretty good crew, on the road and at the mine. It sure makes it nice when you can chat back and forth on the radio as you go.”

Curtis Hubel and John Harding, company



Wayne Grewcock, Manager of C. Gibson Holdings Ltd

spent with my family,” he adds dryly.

“The Seabee run is a challenging and busy one, but it’s interesting work,” says John. “So many people are scared to do it and you can’t take that away from them. You have to be comfortable with the fact that you’re travelling over ice on a lake. If you don’t feel comfortable, don’t do it. That’s the big thing. I wouldn’t do it if it worried me.”

“When the ice is as good as it’s been this year, I tell people, it’s the most relaxing trip you can have. You just set the cruise control and go. The portages have been great too with lots of snow.”

Ice is unpredictable, says John. That is why it is so important to know that you are working for a company that is constantly

say, the road is good and set for the season.”

“It’s interesting work. I always want to get started at Seabee and I’m glad to get finished,” says John. “I don’t get much of a family life during those two months. I pulled my last two loads to Seabee last week. Now I’m back on my regular run to Key Lake and McArthur River.”

A regular run for John is a five-day-week, with weekends off to spend with his family; wife, Michelle, daughter Mekka, 16 and son Reagan, 13. “That’s the way I like it,” he says. “If the mines need us to go weekends, we go, but that’s an exception. I’m an early riser and I get going soon after 6 each day. When people ask me where I’m going, I say I’m going home, because that’s what’s at the end of every trip; home and family.”

John cares about families; his and everyone else’s. That’s why he appreciates the safety standards of NRT and Gibson’s that make the road a safer place. “If I’m driving too fast on an icy gravel road and I come over a hill and all of a sudden there’s someone at the bottom and I’m trying to slow down, I can turn into a big red toboggan,” he says. “They wouldn’t stand a chance. You’ve got to have rules.”

“This is the only job I’ve had,” says John. “I’ve been with Gibson’s 16 years in July. People tell me if you can drive in the north, you can drive anywhere. Well, we’re trained for it. I think too many drivers go to work without enough training. This is a go-go industry and demand for drivers is high. People are sacrificing people and equipment to get loads there and that’s not good. I appreciate what we’ve got. I do like it. We’re trained to go steady and drive well. If you think what you’re earning driving by the hour it’s not great, but you just take a look at your cheque at the end of the month and you’re happy. So far it’s been a good life for me and my family.”

Curtis Hubel, the other half of the ‘Gibson Twin’ duo, has been driving for 20 years; the first five hauling in the north, the next five running into the lower 48 States and, since then, back in the north. He has been a Gibson driver for 10 years, and this is his third season on the Seabee ice road.



NRT Owner Operator Ken Heyer, heading for Seabee with a load of lumber



drivers who run together on the winter road, hauling diesel for C. Gibson Holdings Ltd. (NRT’s bulk fuel division) have honed on-the-road-conversation to a fine art.

“They call us the Gibson Twins,” says John. “We talk all the way to the mine and it passes the time. We get along really well. There’s always something to talk about. And in a few days, when we’ve talked about it all, we can start all over again with a different point of view. I’ve spent more time with Curtis in the past two months than I’ve

monitoring the condition and safety of the ice road, he says.

“Remember Kelly Lake? There are lots of currents in that lake. It has to be closely watched. And #2 lake, the little one off Copper Hill; when it gets warm, water pours out of a nearby spring and can come right onto the road and affect the ice. That has to be monitored. Things happen. You can’t just



Gibson Driver John Harding, outbound on a portage and approaching the ice road

“There’s no question I like the north better. I’d never go on the highway again. If I had to I would quit,” says Curtis emphatically. “The north is home. That pretty much describes it. Of course there are good days and bad days like anywhere else, but you’re never more than 6 to 8 hours from home. When I was away for days at a time, I always dreaded calling home in case I’d hear that I was needed and I couldn’t be there. There’s a real sense of being alone in that. And there’s another thing. I never lock my doors when I’m in the north. You can go to bed at night and sleep! I’d lock my doors when I walked around the truck in California. You have to.”

“It’s good to have seen it from both sides. Sometimes people don’t know how good they’ve got it. I’ve worked in an office, I’ve worked in the States and done different things. I know it’s good here and that’s why I’m here now and staying here.”

“A big plus is the guys we run with. They’re a lot of fun and that makes the job go a lot



faster. Of all the places I’ve worked, these guys are the best. But don’t tell them that or you’ll have to put wide-load signs on the backs of their heads. By the way, did you know Phil Croustiere was an instructor at SIAST in Prince Albert? When I first saw him up at Seabee I knew I knew him from somewhere and then it fell into place. He

was my driving instructor 20 years ago.” This company does have good drivers!

“Then of course there’s the food at the Seabee mine,” says Curtis. “It’s amazing! They really go out of their way to provide great meals, and they make us feel so welcome. Now that the Seabee season’s over, I’ve got to start doing some exercises to get the extra weight off,” he says laughing.

Though Curtis travels the Seabee road in tandem, he does a lot of winter driving alone. “It’s not that bad, even in the coldest weather,” he says, “It’s all common sense. You’ve got to be equipped for every eventuality in case you break down. I carry enough food that I could survive for a day or two. I carry an axe so I could chop some wood and I’ve got lots of barbecue starter on board,” he says, laughing. “It hasn’t ever happened, but I’m prepared.”

“I’m home every second night. I live in La Ronge, so I could be home every night, but I don’t leave really early. I have a new baby and I like to help around the house a bit before I go. When I was hauling south, I’d leave Saturday and I was lucky if I got home by Friday. Then I’d load again on Saturday and do it all over again. I love driving, but I love driving in the north. Here I’ve got it all.” □



Gibson Driver Curtis Hubel, some minutes later, following at a safe distance

Happy To Be Here



Accounts Payable Clerk Donna Bartholomew

When people think of Northern Resource Trucking, the obvious image that leaps to mind is that of its drivers, plying the roads of Saskatchewan's north. But, alongside our highway heroes are the those working away in the background, helping to keep the

wheels of business turning.

For close to seven years Donna Bartholomew has been a steady, dependable hand on the books, first taking care of Driver Pay and these days handling Accounts Payable.

"Actually, we don't always stick strictly to job descriptions," she says. "If Shawna's away, I'll do Driver Pay. If Marianne is overloaded with other duties, I'll help out with Billing. Joan is on maternity leave right now, so Shawna and I are handling Reception between us. It works really well and Robert didn't have to hire another person to fill in."

It's this kind of flexibility and good natured approach to the job that makes NRT a happy place to work.

"I enjoy the people I work with," says Donna. "We have fun. Of course everyone has their moments, but for people who work so closely together, we all get along pretty well. I think it's the team work. Everybody has their job and does it well. I answer to Robert and I can go and talk to him about

everything. Dave is a down-to-earth person and likes to have fun. Everybody works hard, but we have a good time doing it. That's the key. Everyone wants to come to work in the morning."

"Overall, this is a good place for me. I'm the kind of person who needs to keep busy and there's always something to do. And Management is good at giving recognition. We always get a thank you and we do appreciate it."

When work is done, there's nothing Donna likes more than spending time with her 4-year-old grand daughter, Keeley. "We're good pals," she says, smiling. "It's so lovely to watch her grow up."

"I was a very young mum and there were a lot of things I didn't have a chance to do when my kids were little. Now that my two daughters are grown up, I've started to do stuff I've never tried," says Donna, with obvious pleasure. "Wendy encouraged me to get a Civic Pass for the Field House and I'm working out. I'm bowling with five or six girl friends and we're having a blast. I don't make plans. If a friend calls and suggests a movie or a hockey game, I'm there."

Meanwhile, she says, she doesn't have to worry about where her next paycheck is coming from. "I have a great job and it's secure." □

Mission: Happy Drivers



*Payroll Clerk
Shawna Merriman*

Shawna Merriman is a take-charge young woman who ably handles a demanding job, two children, a dog and a stray cat named Princess. Shawna is another member of the 'back room team' who contributes much to the smooth running of NRT.

A happy driver, one could safely say, is one who is paid on time and correctly and this is Shawna's job. When drivers hand their way bills into Dispatch they are passed on to Payroll where Shawna figures out the miles travelled, enters all pertinent data in the

computer and passes it on to Calgary where the cheques are drawn up and sent out.

But, like all jobs, it's not as simple as that. "It's a big responsibility and an important part of administrative duties. You've got to have the bills done on time and, in busy times, if that means coming in at night, then that's what you do. And you've got to get it right or they're not happy drivers," says Shawna with feeling. "So if drivers have questions about their pay, it's important to talk about it. They've got to be satisfied that it's all been worked out properly, and I understand that," she says. "If I don't have the answers, I know I can ask Robert, my Supervisor. Lots of the drivers call me to say 'good job' and the odd one takes me out for

lunch. That's nice. Altogether, there's a really good feeling here. We're like family now. I get along with the drivers and I know how to take them."

"I didn't always know how to deal with people," says Shawna. "It's something I've learned on the job. I was the receptionist for a little while when I first started at NRT and that's where I learned how to handle people."

These days, Shawna is doing double duty, back on that familiar reception desk while Joan is away on maternity leave. "Donna and I are sharing the reception job and we still get all our own work done. We just take it with us to the front and get on with it between answering the phones," she says, matter-of-factly.

"You know, when I started here, I didn't think I would still be here five years later and totally settled in. I was going to go to school. I always wanted to be a cop. But this is a good place to work. There's a lot of job security. NRT looks after people. You work hard from Monday to Friday and on the weekend you can go away. My ten-year-old son, Reno is a goalie with the Saskatoon Knights and we're always off to tournaments all over the Province. His whole life is hockey," says Shawna, laughing. "He wants to be a star. And he's pretty good. He's made it to Atom Tier 1 and was asked to play backup on the Pee wee team, with kids one year older."

"My other son Bryce is 4, so that's next year's job. But it may not be hockey. He likes to sing, so maybe it'll be music lessons. He's really good at singing along with AC/DC," she says laughing. He sings O Canada and he 'sits on guard for thee'. During the Christmas season he was singing about Santa knowing if you'd been 'snotty or nice'. Well, that's about right," says Shawna.

"There's always laughter in our house and there's never a dull moment. I've brought the kids up alone, with the help of mum and dad in Martensville, and I love being a mom. This is a good place to work as a single parent," says Shawna. □

Grace Under Fire

The dispatch team - a group of true professionals

It's a high stress job. The phone rings non-stop, the demands are constant. Dispatch could be a tense and unhappy place to work, fraught with the fall-out of frayed nerves. But in the NRT control room, one discovers an atmosphere that is busy, efficient and amazingly relaxed. Juggling 30 tasks in as many minutes, there's still the time and inclination for some good natured banter.

There's good reason for this high-powered activity. The job is a complex one; keeping trucks on the move while maximizing payload; making sure the right truck is with the right trailer, with the right driver; keeping track of equipment availability; knowing what the trailer last contained; making sure it has been cleaned; taking care of customers' needs and meeting load delivery demands.

Traffic supervisors also have to be familiar with all government regulations - weights

and measures, gross vehicle weights, transportation of hazardous goods.

And dispatching is not just a matter of getting trips underway as fast and efficiently as possible. Most importantly of all, it's the job of the traffic supervisor to put drivers on the road safely. At all times, it's the number one priority. That means doing a daily check on hours of service and equipment maintenance and watching every driver who comes to the window for signs of fatigue or worry.

Once on the road, the driver is still in the care of dispatch, connected by a mobile satellite dispatch system that relays messages back and forth between dispatch computers and computer screens installed in each truck.

Clarence, the birthday boy comes home to a treat!



Ralph, working away!



Happy Drivers
Clarence Brandt
and Ron Milligan



Larry, looking studios!



Robin stocks up for a hard afternoon's work!



Chevy at the window with Cam Grewcock (Wayne's son)

The system will constantly track the trucks when they are running and, if a situation arises, dispatch can have a truck rerouted by sending the driver a message. Should a driver be in distress, he just has to hit a panic button and dispatch know immediately where he is and can decide what kind of action is required.

"These guys get paid to work 160 hours a month, but they regularly put in more time than that. They don't get paid overtime. They just do what it takes to get the job done," says Operations Manager Glen Ertell. "These are good folks to count on."

"The drivers, both company and owner-operators, don't get to see the complexity of what makes a day tick in dispatch. The traffic supervisor spends 60 to 70% of the day on the phone and has to fit everything else in between, including reams of paperwork," says Glen. "It's always a shuffle to make sure everything gets done. One phone call can change how half of your day is. Almost every time he picks up a phone, it's a challenge - disgruntled shippers, tourists, pedestrians, motorists, happy shippers, everyone you can imagine, he has to deal with. Even a call that's nothing out of the norm, is just one more thing he has to deal with. Also, there are times when dispatch has to operate a fork lift, sometimes show how to tie down a deck load of freight and, at other times, go and load and unload trailers. It's not easy," says Glen, with feeling. "And like all jobs, everyone who is not having to do it sees only part of the picture."

So what's the magic behind the dispatch team's equanimity under pressure? Certainly it's the strong and able personalities of NRT's four traffic supervisors. But NRT V.P. Dave McIlmoyl chose to take that strength and build on it. Recently, members of the dispatch team, along with Glen and Dave, took a management training workshop with Rael Kalley of Strategic Pathways, who has been working, with great success, with Trimac branches throughout North America.

The dispatch team, Ralph Settee, Robin Dalshaug, Len Chevrier (Chevy) and Larry Powling, all agreed it was a useful and enlightening experience.

"I learned a lot," says Larry "And it reinforced a lot of the beliefs I have. Things can get pretty intense around here, but it's our job as traffic supervisors to make sure that no-one is leaving disgruntled when they leave here. Drivers have to leave happy and be focused on their work. This was an important thing we talked about. The biggest thing is to have mutual respect between people who work together. If I ask someone to do something, they'll do it. If I demand that someone do something, they'll do it, but not in the right frame of mind. There's a huge difference there."

"Also, the relationship we have with each other in this office is important," says Larry. "Rael helped us understand that if an issue is not dealt with to everyone's satisfaction, the whole system breaks down around it. If you accept a situation that you shouldn't accept, it becomes the standard for you and everyone else."

Rael uses a most effective analogy he calls 'The broken window theory.' If one neighbour has a broken window and doesn't fix it, the next neighbour may look at that and feel there's no point in cutting his grass when next door looks such a mess. The neighbour on the other side may then look at the broken window and uncut grass and think who cares if I park an old wreck on my property; the neighbourhood's already a mess. And together they create their own slum.

All agree that the same theory applies in the work place. A sense of pride is imperative. Those who aspire to high standards in everything they do will take pride in how they treat people. They will afford others the respect they wish to receive. They will strive to deal with issues effectively and with civility.

But what happens when someone acts in a way that is hard to comprehend and conflict ensues? Well, the team learned something about that too. By each answering, on paper, a series of questions, they created personal profiles that shed light on their strengths and weaknesses and their ways of handling issues. It was an excellent jumping off point for discussion.

"It was fun and I learned a lot about myself," says Ralph "It was an education. I realized there were some things I could do

differently. My good points were highlighted as well as some of the things I would have to work on. I think, most important of all, was recognizing that everyone has a different style and we have to be tolerant of each other's way of handling things."

"I'm a pretty skeptical guy, but I found it interesting," says Chevy. "Though it doesn't surprise me that everyone has a different approach. Mind you, I'm probably not a good person to ask. I have a high tolerance level. There's not any knack to it. It's just the way I am," he says, with a wide smile, a typical Chevy, tongue-in-cheek remark. Perhaps we should poll the other dispatch guys to see if Chevy is cool, calm and collected at all times! "But seriously," he adds, "An exercise like this brings to the forefront of your mind things that are important. I can certainly see it's a tool that a person can use. It really was beneficial."

"It was a long day, but I think we all came out feeling we'd learned a lot about ourselves and each other. I think my profile was pretty darn close," says Larry.

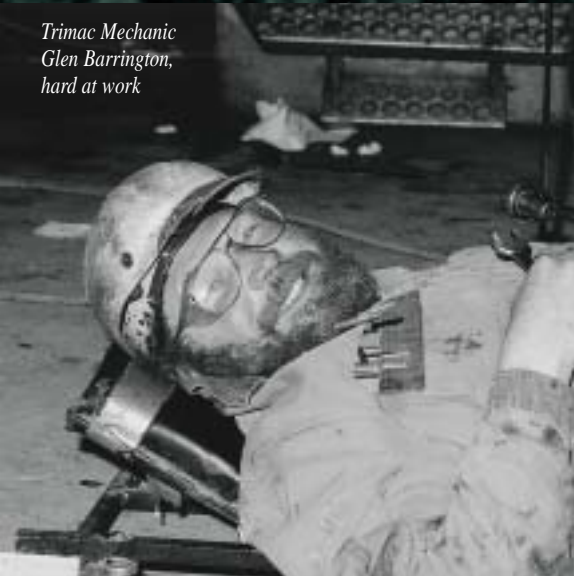
"For a 15 minute questionnaire, it was pretty accurate!" agrees Robin. "It was really good. It helped us better understand the people we are working with and why we do the things we do and others do the things they do."

"Working with Rael, you learn a lot about yourself and how people perceive you," says Glen. "What you find out isn't 'right' or 'wrong'. It just highlights how everyone is different, with different strengths and ways of doing things. I think this program opened up a whole new world of understanding of how we can better relate to each other, both among the dispatch team and with the drivers."

"I'm not saying it's all newfound information," says Glen. "But it casts light on why people react the way they do. Each member of the dispatch team deals with 30 to 40 people a day and every one of those is different. The common aim is to get the job done, but people's perceptions on how to achieve that can be different. Rael provides a really useful tool; a level of understanding that creates a pathway to positive communication and mutual regard." □

NRT Maintenance In Good Hands

*Trimac Mechanic
Glen Barrington,
hard at work*



For the past 16 years, Trimac and NRT have lived happily side by side, sharing expertise and support. The Saskatoon Trimac shop has always carried out the bulk of NRT's unit service and repair, until recently under the guidance of NRT Maintenance Manager, Ron Dale.

With Ron's move, last year, to the management team of NRT's most recent acquisition, Woodland Cree Logging, a new vehicle maintenance plan was devised to create a closer and more collaborative relationship between NRT and the Trimac shop; one that is proving to be most efficient, thorough and cost-effective.

"Trimac has always done most of our work and, in the past, in the interest of expediency, what Trimac couldn't do right away, Ron farmed out to other shops that were equally competent," explains NRT Operations Manager Glen Ertell. "With this new agreement, Trimac does all of our work, taking responsibility for putting NRT first and minimizing downtime."

Trimac has become an integral part of the management process. The Trimac shop, the operations manager and the dispatch team work together in constant contact, making

Trimac and NRT work together to keep quality high and costs low

sure that all work is done in a timely fashion and every unit on the road is safe. It's this one-to-one dialogue with everyone watching the ball that guards against fumbles. Trimac is still required to bid on some jobs that are not in the normal scope of work. This keeps them competitive, says Glen.

"NRT has budgeted a certain amount for repair and maintenance and it is up to Trimac to make sure we are within that," says Glen. "So they track work and costs on a daily basis and, each day, send us a copy of the maintenance revenue report with target and actual. We obviously try to stay within budget and with this system there are no surprises. If a unit requires substantial



L to R Trimac Shop Foreman Russell Doepker, Trimac Branch Manager Doug Laird, and Shop Foreman Brett Cross. Sorry we missed Shop Foreman Warren Fullerton

repairs, it's discussed first, before starting. Of course, safety is always of paramount importance. Regardless of budget, safety items are addressed immediately."

Every four to six weeks, the Trimac/NRT maintenance team gets together for a meeting. "There's a lot of equipment that's older and needing more frequent repair," says Glen. "It's very important to monitor

the value of that and keep an eye on diminishing returns. Once maintenance gets to the point where it's not cost effective, then we're better off to put thought into upgrading specialty equipment. We talk about that and any other issues that need some discussion. It helps keep us on track."

"Altogether, this is a very good scenario," says Glen. "We have a shop right on our doorstep that guarantees us a reasonable price and excellent work and for Trimac it's guaranteed work."

"This a good arrangement for us," agrees Trimac Branch Manager Doug Laird. "And we think we're doing a good job for NRT. Twice each day, we review the board with Dispatch for equipment reports, services and inspections to be done and book them in."

"I work with shop foremen Warren Fullerton, Russell Doepker and Brett Cross to keep tabs on work to be done - routine inspections, DERs (Driver Equipment Reports), services tracked on mileage and planned maintenance," says Sheila Wasmuth, Central Service Coordinator "I also track daily revenue, compile a maintenance report and show everything spent, compared to the budget"

"With one person booking in jobs and keeping tabs on progress and completion, nothing falls through the cracks," says Sheila. "It's a good way to do things. And we follow through really thoroughly too," she says. "When a driver writes up something in the book that needs to be done, he hands it on to Dispatch. who hands it on to the mechanic. The mechanic is responsible for signing off on the job when it is completed and putting it back in the book so that the driver knows that

the work has been done. That's pretty fail safe. To maximize shop utility," says Sheila, "it is imperative that units are booked into the shop by Dispatch so that jobs can be handled in a way that minimizes down time or back-up for the shop."

That is equally important from NRT's perspective, says Glen. "Dispatch are the guys who know the equipment priorities and will book work in to be done in a way that keeps our fleet on the move."

There is a problem, though, says Sheila, if the driver's report is not clear. The more and detailed information a driver can provide about a problem or defect, the better the mechanic can zero in on the problem and get it fixed. "We really appreciate a clear and detailed report," she says.

Attention to detail in everything is the key.



Trimac Partsman Justin Schaffer

"The transition to maintenance without Ron has been a big learning curve for both dispatch and the the Trimac shop," says Glen. "The dispatch guys have had to assume a lot more responsibility. It has given them a more hands-on approach to what needs to be repaired, the time frame and the costs involved. It's an ideal

situation when it's working well."

"Trimac has come to a good understanding of our needs. Northern mines depend on us and when a propane haul is slated to go, it's got to go - with the work done. No delays. They have learned over the last year that when NRT trucks set off into remote areas there can be absolutely nothing of a safety or mechanical nature left outstanding."

"This shop has all the components to do everything we require," says Glen "We're a pretty demanding customer. We expect a lot and they've shown a real willingness to meet all our demands. That doesn't mean there aren't daily obstacles to overcome but, with communication and planning, these can be reduced to a minimum." □

A Tough Breed



Lawrence Joannette, one of the tough breed

NRT drivers lifeline to the mines in desperately cold weather

This winter, Saskatchewan's north was the coldest place on the planet. The minus 58 degree weather broke records, was the talk of the international media and skyrocketed the demand for propane at all northern mines.

Without missing a beat, NRT operators rose to the challenge and, throughout those frigid months, round the clock, seven days a week, plied their way up and down long, deserted northern roads with the vital cargo.

The high demand for propane put more pressure on the entire driving crew. Everyone worked hard to get the job done.

They did it without fanfare or complaint, accepting it as just another day's work - and another and another. The notable thing

is that for our northern drivers that is the way they see it. They're a tough breed, they love the north and they are undaunted by weather or difficult terrain. They are truly a breed unto themselves.

We want to thank and acknowledge our entire fleet, and especially the men on the propane runs - Lawrence Matchee, Andy Lamontagne, Robin Stomp, Phil Croustiere, Lawrence Joannette, Lyle Clouthier, Greg Kruger, Conrad Borycki, Harold Brand, Emile Frechette, Tim Froom, Jaimie Harbicht, Tom Grimdsdale, Allen Lamontagne, Allen Campbell, Darren Beckett, Merv Stacey, Perry Medynski, Stan Porter, Robert Giroux, Bob Kustaski, The Martens Boys, Don Sanderson, Trevor Dumont, Chris Thurber, Mark Foy, Richard Wilm, Ken Joinson, Dwayne Carriere and

Trimac driver Gerald Breland.

"I've probably walked more miles on northern roads than most people have driven," says Owner Operator Lawrence Joannette, one of that tough breed that has, one way or another, spent his life on northern roads.

From 1973 to 1982, Lawrence worked for the Department of Northern Saskatchewan building the Pinehouse and Key Lake roads. He worked for the government for a further eight years training men in the use of heavy equipment.

"The roads were built and I liked the north, so I got into trucking," he says. And here he is, NRT's gain.

"This has been a busy winter," says Lawrence, with a smile. "During that really cold snap, we were running 24/7, myself and two drivers. We never shut the truck off for two weeks, except to check oil. My truck is only 17 months old and its got 440,000Km on it already."

How does he keep going so hard? "It's called dedication," he says. "I've worked up north all my life and I'm not scared of these roads. If anything happens, I know how to take care of it. Also, I take care of my truck and keep it serviced. Then I have a good driver. I trained Allan Campbell and he's been my driver now for three winters. I got lucky with him. He's a great guy and very dependable. Very dedicated. I can call him and in 45 minutes he's here and going down the road. He's like an old teenager," he says, laughing. "Sleeps all day and works all night."

"It would be interesting to add up all the propane we've hauled this winter. It would be quite a few thousand gallons. And we've done it all quite uneventfully," says Lawrence.

The trick, he says, is to go slow in that 50 below weather and go all the way to the mine without stopping; keep everything moving. They try to run two or three trucks together, so that if someone does have a problem, there's help at hand.

"We're always here for each other. That's the strength of this company. We get along. It's like a family really. Hopefully I can stay here for another 15 years and then retire. Of course we joke around. If 'the Cowboy' didn't give dispatch a hard time they'd think there was something wrong with me."

"The dispatch guys are good to us. And we're good to them. When Robin moved into dispatch, he didn't know anything. He'd never driven a truck. So I took him to the Key Lake mine and showed him the tanks he was monitoring and dispatching reagents to. Then he could actually see how it worked. I think the best way is to show someone how to do something. Robin's a real nice kid to deal with and I was happy to help him. He's learned a lot since he went into the office. He works WITH you. I like that," says Lawrence.

"I like working with people who want to learn. I think that comes from my years training people in Heavy Equipment. Allan Campbell had never done this type of work and never gone north. He was a quick learner."

"This is just a great job," says Lawrence. "I've been up to a mine and they're just about empty. You've got to get there. They're depending on you. That's what I like, the challenge. It's nine hours driving to Key Lake, ten hours to MacArthur, so you've got a good ten hour driving day, about twelve and a half with breaks and checking tires. It's 705 Km to key Lake and the last 350 to 400Km, you're only doing 65 to 70 Km on rough, ice-packed roads. It's slow going and you've got to keep going steady. And when you get there you've got to unload. You want to do that right away before everything freezes up."

As a rule, that works, says Lawrence. "But on a day when it was 58 below and the coldest day on the planet ever, the empty jumper hose that flows into the lead from the pump got so cold that it just broke. I took it out and tried to straighten it out and it broke. That was at Key Lake. Then you just deal with it. Overall though, there's not

much difference between -40 and -55. Cold is cold."

When you get to the mines, there's one thing you can count on. It may be cold outside, but it's warm inside, says Lawrence. "It's great when you get there. They're a good bunch of people and very good to me. I get to Key Lake and there are people there that I've know for 20 years and it's like old-home week. If you need anything at the mine and you treat them right, they're there for you."

"For me, this is the greatest job," says Lawrence. "You're your own boss. You load yourself and unload. When it's cold, I go. When the mines need the product delivered, I do it. They really depend on us. We're their lifeline and that's the challenge for me, to get it there. That's just the way I am. When I start a job, I'll finish it. I blame my dad for that. He taught me how to work. When I was a kid, I had seven cows to milk before school. There was no whining, you just did it. I've worked hard all my life and I can put in long hours. I don't know what I'd do with an 8-hour day."

"All the NRT drivers know how to work hard," says Lawrence. "And they're dedicated, a good team, you can depend on the next guy. Not too many people can do the type of work we're doing. You've got to know what you're doing. It's that simple. And that includes dispatch. They make things work when it's not that easy. I wouldn't want to do their job."

"But don't tell them that," he says, with a grin, "I always let on to Chevy that I'm a grouchy bugger. Never let him know the truth."

But Lawrence's cover is well and truly blown. Ask anyone at NRT and they'll tell you, Lawrence Joannette is one of the best; one of the tough breed that makes this company strong.

"I got up to check the truck at six this morning, the trucks warmed up now and I'm heading north. That's the way my day goes," says Lawrence, with a happy smile. "I've got to roll a lot of miles to pay for my \$150,000 truck." □

I've Seen The World From Both Sides Now



Traffic Supervisor, Larry Powling

Larry Powling may be the newest man on the NRT Traffic Supervisor team, but from day one in dispatch he was no stranger to the drivers. Moreover, Larry came to the job knowing, first hand, the demands and challenges our operators face on the road each day. From 1992 to 2003, he was a member of the NRT fleet, driving for Ross Wilson for two years and an owner-operator for the next nine. In total, Larry has spent 25 years on northern roads.

"Last August I responded to a posting for this position, came into dispatch and sold my truck. And I'm thoroughly enjoying being here," he says.

"There's a real value to being on the road before coming into dispatch," says Larry. "You are familiar with product handling, mine procedure and what drivers have to contend with on a day to day basis. It's good experience to have."

Larry also had previous experience in dispatch, working in that capacity for Siemens Transport in 1988. "But back then," he says, "things were very different. High gross permits were not in place for the north and we were hauling lighter loads. Now there are a lot more rules and regulations. Stringent compliance wasn't the issue it is today with tach cards and log sheets closely monitored. And in those days everything was

on paper. So the biggest thing for me was learning to work on computer. The guys here in dispatch helped me with that. They are a nice group. Everybody works really well together and it's a good mix of personalities."

It was that comfort level with NRT that prompted Larry to look within the company when he felt it was time for a change. "I've enjoyed a very good relationship with NRT since '92 and I wouldn't have been comfortable selling the truck and going to work for someone else. I see staying here in some capacity until I retire. I know NRT's work ethic and they know mine and we both know we can work very well together. This is a good company."

"Working in dispatch is a big commitment," says Larry. "You're not just worrying about what you're doing, but about what everyone else is doing. This is a high stress job and being able to work as a team is a must. Multi-tasking is the key because you're answering non-stop phone calls, talking to drivers, customers, shippers, receivers, with one line going and two on hold, and simultaneously dealing with drivers at the window, coming in and going out. And when there's equipment failure, an accident or someone ill, everything changes. You've got to be prepared to deal with that and decide in short order what you have to do to make this haul work with one less vehicle or one less man. And deal with it NOW. What's more, it's cold and the busiest time of the year. It's a challenge. But you've got to take a deep breath and present yourself properly to the drivers. You can't be short with someone at the window. We know those guys are doing a tough job and giving it their all and they deserve total respect and appreciation at all times. Besides, it's very important that drivers go out on the road in a good frame of mind. If they're angry and feeling that they haven't been treated in a fair manner, they won't be totally focused on the road and the traffic. Sending drivers out

safely is a traffic supervisor's number one priority and relationship is a big part of that."

"It's very helpful to have been on both sides of the window," says Larry. "I can now see aspects of myself I didn't see before. When I was a driver, waiting for a set of bills and a destination, that's all I was concerned with. I didn't think about the traffic supervisor dealing with several issues at the same time he was trying to get me off on my trip. So I can see how a driver could think we're not concerned about him. But we are. We try to get to everything as soon as possible to make the driver's day as short as possible."

"I look at it as a challenge. It's like lifting weights, it does get easier with repetition. You start building a memory bank of phone numbers, unit numbers and which driver goes with what unit and the like. Then things happen so much quicker."

"I think the key to a smooth-running dispatch is team work and that's what we have in spades. For example, if I need someone to take a load of cement that's on my board, Chevy will look for another truck on his. It will make his day more complicated, but he will do it. We help each other. And we have fun doing it. Chevy is the master of the one-liners, Robin is the practical joker among us. Need I wonder who put the duct tape under my mouse? And Ralph is a real knee slapper when you get him laughing."

"That team support extends to our drivers. They do a lot to make our jobs easier and accept delays with good grace. We do our best to meet their needs and requests. For example, if a driver needs time off to deal with a personal matter when he's slated for a haul, we make it work. If you're there for them, they're there for you. It's a simple as that. It has to go both ways," says Larry.

Happy at work, Larry is also happy at home these days. Although his move into dispatch has meant a reduction in income, it has given him the opportunity to spend more

time with his family. "On my days off, I can meet my wife Anita for lunch. The other day, the kids had a pancake breakfast at school and I was there. It was the first time in my career that I'd had a chance to do that," he says, with a smile. With three daughters, 17, 15 and 12 and a 9-year-old

son, Larry has no shortage of family life to catch up on. "I'm loving every minute of it. They're great kids," he says. "My oldest daughter, Stephanie recently won silver in Tai Quon Do Martial Arts, sparing against Kelly Ham, who represents Team Canada. That means Stephanie will be representing

Canada at the Nationals in May this year," he says proudly.

This year, Larry and Anita celebrate their 20th anniversary. Our congratulations go to both, along with special thanks to Anita for being one of the strong and supportive wives the men in this industry need. □

Keeping all the Balls in the Air



Traffic Supervisor Robin Dalshaug

After one year in university studying Kinesiology, with aspirations to be a physiotherapist, Robin Dalshaug took a year out to work. He found a job in the NRT warehouse, starting August 2001, and joined the NRT family.

It wasn't long before Dave and Glen spotted this bright, likeable young man as a likely candidate for the dispatch team.

"It was getting cold outside, so I thought I'd give it a go," says Robin, with a smile. "I came into the room knowing nothing. I knew how to drive a forklift, I knew three of the drivers and that was it. I didn't even know what Cogema and Cameco were hauling."

But Dave and Glen had made a good call and Robin proved to be a quick study. "It was pretty demanding at first, then it began leveling off and now I'm feeling comfortable in this position," he says. "My job is coordinating with Cameco and Cogema to monitor their reagent levels at the mine sites.

They send us the levels of reagents every day and we see what they've used and know how much we have to bring the levels up with our hauls. Then we co-ordinate with our drivers who are trained to haul specific reagents, to keep the mines supplied. We have a lot of carriers who handle purely freight as well as a good many very experienced, specialized haulers."

So Robin orchestrates a continuous flow of propane, ferric sulphate, chlorate, molten sulphur, anhydrous ammonia, lime (with fertilizer as back haul), cement, fly ash, magnesium oxide and soda ash to the sites.

"You've got to manage a rotation list and I do my best to keep the guys hauling the same commodities. But it can be a bit of a juggling match," says Robin. "On a good day, everything fits the timeframe, but you also have to contend with the unforeseen, spring breakup and summer breakdowns. It's important to stay on top of government regulations and good maintenance."

Dispatch, explains Robin, works hand in hand with the the Trimac shop, which takes care of day to day maintenance. "The shop works one-on-one with us, so there's less room for error. We are in touch every day and this has proved to be an efficient, cost-effective system. When you have two weeks on a board and then time off, you're always dealing with a maintenance hand-off, so you have to keep on top of it. It's a big safety issue."

"Our relationship with the drivers is excellent, which makes my job a lot easier," says Robin, with a smile. "They put up with my screw ups when I was learning. One

driver, Lawrence Joannette, took me under his wing. He took me along on a trip to a mine so that I could see and understand the process better. They're all good guys. They also put up with constant phone interruptions when they're at the window."

"This job is multi-tasking all right! You've got to keep all the balls in the air and that's tough for me, because I like to start a project and finish it. And the hours can be long. Some days I get here at 6.30 in the morning and at 7.30 p.m. I'm still here, and I have to wonder what I'm doing here. But it's fun. There's something new every day. It never gets boring. And it's nice to come to work and know you're going to have a few laughs. This is a great company."

Altogether, there's never a dull moment for Robin. He began playing soccer when he was three and has been an avid player ever since, coaching the VSA Rovers under 16 and playing in a premier team for most of his life, with just a short hiatus while he concentrated on getting the traffic supervisor job under control. He also plays on the NRT ball team, takes an annual snow boarding trip to Fernie and rides his mountain bike to work. This is one fit, action-packed dispatcher!

"Action-packed. That's what I like about the job," says Robin. "You're part of everything that happens here. We're the front line in the management department. It's the hub. Everything circles around dispatch."

One day, says Robin, he will go back to school to become a physiotherapist. But right now, he's happy at the hub. □