

The Westend Weekly

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Mill Quarter Century Club goes way, way, way back



Ray Coran, Freddie Beck and Ray Taylor re-connect at the Quarter Century Club dinner.



Three brothers, Gerald, Ernie and Gary Cousineau worked at the Mill for a combined total of 106 years.



Bill Spuzak worked as a Millwright for 43 years.

By: Teresa Hazel

What is the Mill Quarter Century Club? The name says it all. It's a club for employees who have reached twenty-five years of service. Although there will be no new names added to the group after this year, about ninety of those who have achieved it came out to celebrate and reminisce last Thursday at the Fort Frances Legion.

The Mill's Quarter Century Club goes back to the 1940's and 50's when the paper mill was known as the Fort Frances Pulp and Paper Mill and the Ontario/Minnesota Pulp and Paper Mill. It went on to take on many other names over the years, including Boise Cascade, Boise Cascade Canada,

Rainy River Forest Products, Stone Consolidated, Abitibi Consolidated, Abitibi Bowater and lastly, Resolute Forest Products, which will be the name that resonates mostly with its closure.

In 2008, when Abitibi filed for bankruptcy, the Quarter Century Club was idled due to cutbacks. After five years, a group of guys spearheaded by Bill Morrison Sr. came together to re-establish the event last year and continue to recognize long service employees of the mill.

The committee who organized this year's dinner included Al Smith, Ed Haglund, Robert Schulz, Al Bedard, Ed Bogacki, Rudy Gustafson, Gordon Bell and Don Dick-



Friends for life, Roy Legarrie (left) is the oldest Veteran in the Quarter Century Club and is joined by long-time friend and co-worker Allan Robertson.



Jim Avis and Dennis Allen have a chat before dinner is served.

son. They acknowledged the new members inducted this year although reported that none were in attendance and added that the majority of them have left to other areas to seek employment.

Freddie Beck who worked in payroll for 38 years from 1958 to 1996 came up to acknowledge the deceased members of the group from the last year and asked for a moment of silence in memory of Irwin Morphet, Doug Boyd, Charlie Spritt, Leo Tremblay, Bruce Lowes, Tom Kenney, Joe Olynyk, Dave Chambers, Glen Westover, James Perrault, Hubert Medhurst and Tony Weir.

For those who were there, much joking and laughing could be heard around the room as people re-connected with former co-workers.

For Ray Taylor who worked at the mill for 35 years, retiring as the Kraft Mill Office Manager in 1994, the Quarter Century Club brings back a lot of memories.

"I used to bartend at the dinners before I was eligible", he said, adding that he wears his dad's 25-year ring that was given to his dad for his 25 years of service at the Mando

mill in International Falls.

Ray Coran joined Taylor at the dinner. He worked on the paper machines for thirty three years from 1951 to 1984.

"It was a good experience. I brought up four kids", said the grateful employee. "I enjoyed it. I can't complain". He did however feel for those who were experiencing the closure of the mill.

"I didn't like to see the mill go down but I knew the time was coming".

Bill Spuzak worked as a millwright for forty three and a half years from 1944 to 1988. He's had a long retirement.

"Aren't I lucky", he smiled, adding that he is married to Marie and has three kids. He was born and raised in Fort Frances and spent his entire career here. He is one of the oldest members of the club at 88 and a half.

"I love it, just love it", he said of the dinner. "Getting together with the guys and meeting up with all the guys I used to work with".

Another old timer, Roy Legarrie is the oldest Veteran in the club at 88 and a quarter. After serving in the Army during World War II, Legarrie started his employment in the mill in 1945 where he worked as a powerhouse operator until 1987.

"I've had a lot of years of retirement", he said, adding that he also served as President of the Union for nineteen years.

He recalled being electrocuted in 1953.

"I was dead. They worked on me for twenty minutes to bring me back", acknowledging his friend and coworker, Allan Robertson who is sitting beside him as one of the guys who helped save him.

"It was quite an experience", said Robertson who also remembered the age of employees back in the early 40's.

"A lot of people quit school in grade eight to start working", he noted.

For many employees, it is a family affair. For instance, three Cousineau brothers, Gary, Ernie and Gerald were there celebrating their long-time



Dave Gustafson discusses his future career in Hinton, Alberta with Larry Angus



Bill Morrison Sr. extends appreciation to Doug MacDonald for his look back at the Pulp and Paper industry in Fort Frances.

service.

When I asked Gary what he did in the mill, his two brothers answer in jest, "He slept". (Put in Ernie Cousineau's distinct laugh here.)

Gary worked in the Powerhouse for 35 years from 1970 to 2005; Ernie worked as a papermaker for 38 years from 1975 to 2013; and Gerald was also a papermaker for 33 years from 1981 until taking a buyout in January of this year.

Dennis Allen and Jim Avis were seen chatting. Allen recalls starting at the mill during the winter storm of March 1966 and retired 38 years later in 2005.

Avis was a "late bloomer" at the mill. "I've been slinging wood for years", he laughed about his employment in the woodyard at the mill from 1988 until... "I'm still there. I will officially retire this year after 26 years", explained Avis, adding that he also wears a quarter century ring from the Mando mill that was given to him by his uncle. "After he passed away, the family gave it to me because I worked at the mill".

Dave Gustafson joined the quarter century club last year after working as a papermaker since 1981. Due to the closure of the mill, he will be moving on to Hinton, Alberta this month to assume a new job as Pulp Supervisor. He was getting tips for his new job from Larry Angus who worked as the Pulp Mill Superintendent in the Kraft Mill for 36 years from 1962 until 1998.

Generations of family also worked at the mill over the years. Ernie Brunetta Sr. worked in the personnel department from 1945 until 1986. "He hired me", noted Bill Morrison Sr., and those in the crowd could be heard saying, "He hired most of the guys here".

Brunetta was there with his sons, Dale Brunetta who worked as a pipefitter from 1976 and will officially retire in July of this year; and Ernie

Brunetta Jr. who started in the mill as a papermaker in 1985 and was released this past March. "I'm looking for work", he said.

In contrast to the Retired Nurses Dinner where there were 60-some women and one man, at this event, there are 90-some men and one woman. Bev Angus worked in the Finishing and Shipping department for 37 years from 1965 until 2002.

"It's nice to see the guys", she said. "There were a lot of years there weren't women. The guys were good to me. I had a really good working career", she smiled fondly.

She was joined at her table by Len Hill who worked as a Swiper on the paper machines for 33 years from 1971 until 2005.

"It's been a good life. I enjoyed it. I feel bad it went downhill", he said of the paper industry.

Don Angus was also there. He worked in paper production for 40 years from 1958 to 1998.

"It's nice to see and get reacquainted with the people you spent so many hours with. It's been a good ride".

Doug MacDonald was welcomed as the guest speaker at the dinner and shared his historical research on the Pulp and Paper industry in Fort Frances that he prepared as part of his thesis to complete his honours history degree from Lakehead University.

"It's a bittersweet time", he said to the crowd.

"Tonight, I would like to discuss the early life of our mill and how it came to be the economic heart of Fort Frances".

He also explained that in the study of history it is important to "look a little further back than 100 years" when looking at why we have a mill complex in Fort Frances. "Although it is not obvious today, Fort Frances is a river town", he said. "The earliest European interest in the area was because of the east-

Continued on page 3

Photographers' showcase



An unusual sight. Mama bear with four cubs. You can just see a little of the fourth cub up the tree peaking around from the other side. The photographer wanted to remain anonymous so that people wouldn't come looking for the bears.



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Moos by Kim Jo Bliss

Well once again – I am going to complain about our weather! Why is it that we seem to only have extremes here in Rainy River; extremely cold, extremely hot, extremely WET! I personally have no complaints about the hot part; I absolutely loved last week. I am not so in love with anything about the amount of rain we have had. When I woke up today it looked like I was living on a small island – there is water in places that I haven't seen water before. I was booked for a Farm Tour this week (Tuesday) but there is no way we can pull it off. You need a full wet suit just to get around the farm yard now. I was saying all weekend, "the tour itself is nothing it's the preparation for it and when the weather doesn't cooperate it is hard to prepare!" I did cut some grass around the puddles and it was so long and heavy that it should have been baled up!

I debated on moving and letting my cows out over the weekend because I would have liked to see a bit more growth on the pastures but today with everything being so flooded out I am certainly glad I did it. I can honestly say I

think my cows are even happier I did it. The sheep were not impressed with their yard returning to a sloppy mess but they have access to drier areas but they don't seem to like pouring rain and like to huddle up in their small shelters. My Great Uncle use to say that "if sheep are grazing in the rain it meant it was going to rain all day but if they took shelter it meant that the rain would end soon!" I was finally able to feed grain to my steers wearing my flip flop sandals but now I am back to very tall rubber boots.

It was a welcome sight to see some of our plots emerging from the ground last week. The warm weather allowed for a pretty quick germination. Now this wet week won't be so great for them and you have to worry about seed rotting in the ground. I am certainly crossing fingers not only for my plots but all the farm seed that was planted last week. This is very expensive and the last thing you need is a bunch of seed rotting in the field. So let's all cross our fingers for good weather.

The all-candidate meeting hosted by the Rainy River Federation of Agriculture fell

on a great weather night which meant not many farmers were able to attend. It was a great chance to meet with our local candidates and get to hear their views on some local and as well bigger issues.

Hats off to the Emo Walleye Tournament committee and fisherman. Since Maddie celebrated her 8th birthday on Friday we met at the Tournament for supper, and after fencing all day (yes, in the rain) on Saturday we decided to go and watch weigh ins, plus I was thinking I might be lucky and win the side-by-side. I wasn't so lucky, but Ted Halverson was and I was very happy for him! As well congratulations to Ralph and Bill for winning the tournament and all the other anglers for participating. They had extreme weather themselves – hot 1st day, wet the 2nd. I think the committee was feeling a bit down about the tournament with fewer anglers and less disposable income for people – but let's hope for better days ahead! It is important to support community events, we all should stop and think about how much time and hard work people put into things like this! Thanks to all who put their time and effort into this one!

PASSINGS

Audrey Meunier



It is with great sadness that the family of Audrey Meunier announces her passing on Monday, May 26, 2014.

She was born on August 12, 1936 in Fort Frances, ON to Wilfred and Audrey Locking. She married the love of her life, Mike Meunier on April 30, 1955 and enjoyed 59 years together. Audrey was very active in her community and spent many years with 4H, Women's Institute, Legion Auxiliary, the Community Choir, United Church Women's League, as well as helping out at the schools and for many, many local fundrais-

ers.

Mom didn't work out of the house but her family was her job, she would clean it up and we would go right to the garage to help Dad. Later as her children got older she worked from home for Artic Enterprises, sewing face masks and then went to work at Riverview School until she retired.

Mostly Mom enjoyed spending time at the cabin, especially in August when the whole family got together for summer vacation. Mom loved the lake but every time she got in the boat it would rain or the

wind would come up.

She will be greatly missed by her husband Mike; children Rhonda and Brian Lange; Diane and Dwight Moen, Sharon Selman, Roger Meunier and Lawrence and Claudette Meunier; grandchildren Mark and Aaron Lange, Christopher Lange, Travis Moen, Kyle Selman, Danielle Meunier, Ashley and Drew Seeger, Brady Meunier, Pascal and Mary Fortier, Stephane Fortier; great grandchildren Tanner Lange, Dylan Lange and Melody Fortier; brother Robert (Bob) and Vivian Locking; sisters Dixie Badiuk and Myrna and Larry Armstrong and their families.

Audrey was predeceased by her parents.

A memorial service was held on Friday, May 30, 2014 at 11 a.m. at the United Church in Rainy River, Ontario. Reverend Frances Flook officiated with interment in the Forest Lawn Cemetery.

The honorary pallbearers were her grandchildren.

An Honour Guard was provided by the Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxillary.

If friends so desire in memorial donations may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society.

Online condolences may be made in care of www.rainyriverfuneralhome.ca

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Rainy River Basin Conditions Notice

International Falls, MN, Fort Frances, ON—Rainfall over the past week brought more than 2 in (50 mm) or rainfall to most of the Rainy River drainage basin, with many areas receiving higher amounts, up to 5 in (125 mm). Normal basin rainfall for the

first week of June is about 1 in (25 mm). The rainfall occurred just after the tributary flows from the late, but strong, snowmelt had begun to decline. This has resulted in very high inflow conditions throughout the basin.

Dams at both Namakan Lake

and Rainy Lake are operated to maintain the lake levels within an operating band, called the Rule Curve, specified by the International Joint Commission. The level of Namakan Lake is 18 cm (7 in) above the Upper Rule Curve (URC). The dams at the outlet to Namakan Lake have been fully opened since May 16th.

Further upstream, particularly heavy rainfall near the Vermilion River has led to the level at Crane Lake rising by over 40 cm (16 in) since May 30th. Inflow to the Namakan chain of lakes is approximately 20 per cent higher than the outflow capacity of the dam.

Rainy Lake also rose above its URC, on May 29th, and is now 14 cm (6 in) above the URC. Rainy Lake level has risen by 19 cm (8 in) over the past 7 days.

At Fort Frances-International Falls, the dam on the Rainy River has flow passing through all turbines and 13 of the 15 sluice gates. This configuration allows the dam to pass the flow at the rate received from the outlet of Rainy Lake. As the lake level rises, the rate of flow from the outlet of Rainy Lake increases. The last two gates will be opened as necessary to ensure maximum outflow from the dam.

Both Rainy Lake and Namakan Lake will continue to rise in the near term, and their ultimate peak levels will depend on the amount of rainfall received over the next few weeks.

The Rainy River is currently 2.2 m (7.2 ft) above its median level at this time of year below the Fort Frances- International Falls dam and is 2.7 m (8.9 ft) above the median level at Manitou Rapids. The level and flow at Manitou Rapids is rising quickly due to significant increases in flow from the Big Fork and Little Fork river basins which had some of the heaviest rainfall over the weekend.

The Board suggests that waterfront property owners and users of the system keep themselves updated on basin conditions. Up-to-date information can be found by following the International

Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board's page on the IJC website, www.ijc.org or call 800-661-5922 ex. 3.

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Mill Quarter Century Club goes way back continued from page 1



Organizing committee from l. Rudy Gustafson, Gordon Bell, Ed Bogacki, Don Dickson, Ed Haglund, Robert Schulz, Al Smith and Bill Morrison Sr. Missing from pic. Jean Cameron, Wendell Stevens and Nick Wihnan.



Over 200 years of service from l. in back, Larry Gluehisen (Millwright for 32 years); Brian McCabe (Lead Operator in Finishing Room for 33 years); Lance Gluehisen (Lubrication Engineer a.k.a. Oiler for 37 years); Trevor Oliver (Kraft Mill for 37 years). Seated: Len Gluehisen (Millwright for 40 years) and Brian Gregory (Oiler for 31 years).



Family generations of employees, Ernie Brunetta Sr. (middle) worked at the mill along with his two sons, Dale Brunetta and Ernie Brunetta Jr.



Len Hill, Don Angus and Bev Angus reflect fondly about their careers at the mill.

west orientation of the Rainy River and its important feature of connecting the Great Lakes and Arctic watersheds".

After explorer and fur trader Simon Dawson was contracted to develop a transportation link between what would become Port Arthur (Thunder Bay) and Fort Gary in present day Winnipeg, Fort Frances was a major stop on the Dawson Trail. Alexander Mackenzie then began construction of a canal to allow steamship travel

around Albertan Falls or Koochiching Falls. A change in priorities led to the completion of a rail line, which made the canal obsolete.

"Early logging operations of white, red and Norway pine harvested on Rainy Lake and floated to Kenora for processing into lumber brought a pivotal character to our area", noted MacDonald. "Minnesota industrialist Edward Wellington Backus came with his Minnesota and Ontario

Lumber Company to harvest pine".

Backus also saw the power potential of the Albertan Falls and immediately began to dream of a vast industrial development powered by cheap hydroelectricity. This undertaking required both American and Canadian approval since the Rainy River was an international boundary.

"In what became known as the 1904 hydro agreement, Backus had to make available fifty per cent of the total power for use in Canada, build the Canadian powerhouse on the Canadian side of the river, build an industrial development in Fort Frances and provide cheap hydro to the Town of Fort Frances", explained MacDonald.

The construction of the Ranier Bridge was also part of the agreement.

Years of conflict ensued between the Town of Fort Frances and Backus from 1904 until Backus made good on his promised development of a mill on the Canadian side, which saw a sod turning ceremony on May 24, 1912 and production beginning on May 14, 1914.

"There have been many challenges faced by the mill since its beginning" he noted. "The Town Council and Mill have always had issues over payment of taxes and the price of power".

These disagreements led to expansion of the mill with the addition of Paper Machine #7. After a series of expansions and investments, Backus found himself in financial difficulty in the 1930's. He succumbed to a heart attack in 1934 and his death brought the first era of the pulp and paper industry in Fort Frances to a close.

MacDonald ended his talk with optimism about the future for Fort Frances:

"While we mark the 100th birthday of the mill with the un-

fortunate news that the facility will no longer produce paper, a glimmer of hope still remains. While this generation of equipment may never run again, the reasons why the paper industry thrived in our community for 100 years still exist. The trees still grow in the forest, water still flows down the Rainy River, and the people of Fort Frances stand ready to work hard to make a successful forestry industry in our community".

Door prizes were then given

out with thanks to the businesses that provided them including Canada Safeway, Heron Landing Golf Club, Boston Pizza, Melvin Haukaas, Kitchen Creek Golf and Country Club, Royal Canadian Legion, and North Air Services. Guests were also encouraged to visit the exhibit at the Fort Frances Museum and Cultural Centre, "100 Years of Logging" during the summer and also plan to attend the Speakers Series that will include a talk with former mill manager, Jim

Gartshore. Contact the Museum for further details.

Cheers to all the years of prosperity everyone! Good luck to those who are venturing off to new places and to those who are still contemplating their next steps. Remember the old adage by Alexander Graham Bell, "When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us".

Election Day is June 12th, 2014.

Polls are open from 9 AM to 9 PM ET / 8 AM to 8 PM CT.

To vote in this election, you must be:

- 18 years of age or older on June 12
- a Canadian citizen, and
- a resident of Ontario

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