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COVER—Pete Kuhlhoff



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Shows How Legends Are Born on the Logging Rivers!



MCBRIDE'S LONG RIDE

By CLAY PERRY

HE WAS so clumsy, this big Johnny McBride, that he could not be trusted to swing an axe or pull on a cross-cut saw for fear he would whack some other lumberjack's head off or yank one into the crack in a tree. Bill Hailey, the boss, shook his grizzled head over this raw recruit who had been shipped up to the spruce, hemlock and pine job on the Swango River, along with a motley crew of rivermen, to help sweep down the drive, twenty miles to Swango Falls.

"He jest don't know his own stren'th or where to put it," growled the veteran woods

foreman. "But I know where I'll put him. In the grubshanty gang to tote lunches to the drive crews. He'll be awful keerful of food, he gobbles so much of it. C'm 'ere, Paul Bunyan!"

He roared at McBride, who was leaning against a corner of the bunkshanty, picking his teeth with a sliver after eating like two men at sunrise breakfast.

Three hours later Johnny was trudging sullenly down the river trail with an enormous canvas knapsack on his back, weighted down with a mid-morning lunch for a dozen men who would be as hungry as wolves when it reached them. They ate five meals

a day in Hailey's crews, for he had learned in years of logging that men would work from dawn to dark without complaining—much—if they had plenty of good grub inside of them.

Packed neatly in that smoke-stained knapsack were sandwiches with thick slabs of roast pork bathed in mustard in them; dozens of doughnuts, pickles, ginger-snaps, and two gallon canisters of strong coffee, swathed in flannel to keep it hot. These comforting receptacles pressed warmly against McBride's mackinawed back as he stumbled along in his calked shoes, tripping on roots, getting his calks stuck in bits of bark and chips, bumping against a low branch or a leaning sapling, now and then, but making headway despite his clumsiness.

He had been admonished to make time, so as to catch the west side drive crew at Rocky Bend before 10 o'clock, but he didn't need this admonishment, because he would not eat again until he got there and there were a half-dozen extra sandwiches earmarked for his own in the sack, and a plethora of sinkers and cookies. He carried a short-handled pike-pole in one hand. He had picked it up at the smithy to be used as an aid to locomotion on this hike of six miles down the dark stream.

"Paul Bunyan, eh, he calls me!" he muttered to himself through his red whiskers. "Makin' fun—but I bet I c'ud show old Paul Bunyan a trick or two, meself."

He jabbed the sharp-tipped pike at a log that was lodged in a small backwater under the cut bank. He missed, with his first jab, and almost tumbled headlong into the ice cold water, but grabbed at a bent birch which clung to the earth above the pool and saved himself and the grub pile.

His next stab at the hemlock went true and he shoved it out into the current. It swerved and turned end for end, bobbed up and down, rolled this way and that—but not clear over.

"By golly, I think I'll take me a ride on that piece of timber," Johnny decided. "She don't birl over. Got a big hump on one side."

He managed to retrieve the huge hemlock, a log a dozen feet long and almost three feet through, and by a miracle of awkward concentration and sheer luck, got aboard, with his pike-pole to help him keep balance, his

calks to cling to the tough bark, and with his knees bent and himself ready to sit down a-straddle if the log rolled too much. He was no expert at riding a log but he fancied himself to be a natural birler, and this was an easy way to make five or six miles down the swift stream. He would get there in due time, perhaps a bit early and dig into that grubsack for himself.

IT WAS early spring and the snow-water still whitened the black water with fluffs of foam, here and there. Logs were dribbling down from the tail of the drive and soon Johnny had a chance to thrust his pike-point into another large and lazy hemlock so that he had better balance and safety. He began chanting a woods ballad in a voice that was terribly off-key but powerful and hearty. It was one of those sad sack songs about a river-hog being drowned when he went out to break up a jam on a rock.

He had just got to the 'stenth verse where the hero was being buried under rolling logs and smothered in deep water when a sudden gust of wet wind came whirling up-river and snatched his cut-brimmed hat almost off. In a wild swing of one arm to recover the hat Johnny came near going in, himself. It cut short his grand opera performance, and he had to concentrate on keeping the two legs close together and himself on top of one. The wind got stronger. With it came a drizzle of cold rain which increased rapidly in volume.

In a few minutes his mackinaw was soggy and dripping, water was trickling down between his shoulder-blades as the rain struck the stiff top of the knapsack and was deflected into Johnny's collar. His narrow-brimmed hat leaked and let cold water into his long, red hair. His bristling beard was like a mop, his hands numb, and his eyes bleared by the driving rain that began to have biting qualities as the cold air turned raindrops into wet snowflakes.

Johnny strained his smarting eyes for a chance to get ashore and take shelter. There didn't seem to be much promise of shelter. The woods had all been "bushed" along the steep shores, every last tree of pulp-wood size cut down and rolled in, leaving a barren stretch of sticky, slippery slopes with only stumps and brush left; here and there a pile of branches which might give shelter to a

rabbit but no comfortably spreading evergreens under which a man might crawl.

However, Johnny made for shore, and after much effort, using his pike alternately as a paddle and a shoving pole, maneuvered his two-log raft into a cove and scrambled off, getting wet only to the knees in the river. The grubsack was now seemingly twice as heavy as when he started from camp, rain-soaked, the shoulder-straps cutting into McBride's neck muscles as they shrunk and tightened. He staggered along through the stumps and brush, slipping in the wet clay, until he saw, at some distance up a slickly cleared hill, a huge hollow log that seemed to be looking at him with its one wide-open black eye.

"She's a long-butt, by golly," he told himself, proud of his lately acquired lumber-jack language. "She's a big ol' cork pine long-butt that the timber crew left."

They had been cutting both for lumber and pulp here.

A LONG-BUTT, in the lexicon of the logging woods is the butt of a tree that is hollow from rottenness of the core. Such a length is sawed off at a little distance above where the hollow ends, and left where it lies, as not fit to send down with the drive. This one was perched on the hillside with its open end downhill, but propped up sufficiently so that it was not too steeply slanted to prevent a man crawling in—and the hole was big enough for even Johnny McBride's two hundred and fifteen pounds of manhood. He had to take his knapsack off, however, and at first considered leaving it outside. That precious grub must not be subjected to further soaking, however, so he shoved the soggy bundle in ahead of him and wiggled himself into the dry interior.

Just before Johnny immured himself in this fortunate shelter he heard a wild yell from downstream.

"Give 'er snoos, boys! Heave-o; heave-o!"

It was the rusty voice of the crew boss, down at Rocky Bend. He was urging the river-rats to break up a jam. A jam was always forming at Rocky Bend, which was why a big crew had been stationed there as the drive dribbled on down. Johnny was glad to hear the shouting. It meant he had come almost six miles on his errand and he judged it was not yet more than nine o'clock.

He could lie comfortably in his hollow log and get warm and partly dry before he had to crawl out into the sleeting storm again and tote the grub on down.

He found himself, at first, in almost complete darkness, as his big body took up most of the room in his cylindrical hut, but as his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, he saw a ray of light coming through a round hole in the top of the log-butt.

"She's even got a leetle winder in her," he chuckled; then he sighed and laid his head against the grubsack, pressed his wet cheek against the warmth of a canister of coffee, and fell sound asleep.

As he slumbered Johnny had a dream; it was one that was mixed up with a tall tale which Boss Hailey had told about Paul Bunyan. It came to life in Johnny's subconsciousness.

"They's a lot of people lay claim to knowin' where Paul Bunyan was borned," the tale began. "Some say it was in Maine, some claim it was in Michigan; others swear it was in Minnesota, but the truth is—an' this is a true story begod—he was borned up in Canady, on the Miramichi, where the first big loggin' jobs in Americay begun. He was borned of a Irish mother an' a Canuck father, both of 'em giants themselves. He was an Irish-Canuck, which is a combination nobody can beat for a loggin' man."

"In them days they used to use a *wanigan* to fetch up supplies to the woods camps and for a floatin' grub-shack as well, on the drive. It was a tough battle to git that raft with its long shanty up the stream. They had to pole 'er along with long, stout tamarack poles but sometimes they would come to some rapids they couldn't push 'er through, so they had a wench on'er—no, I don't mean a woman, I mean a wench with a cable onto it, fastened to the front deck, like a capstan onto a ship. They would anchor the *wanigan* and carry the end of the cable up to hitch it to a stump or a tree and up anchor and wind up the wench and pull the *wanigan* ahead. Even that was tough work, so they had a pawl on the wench that could be kicked into the ratchet wheel and the pawl would hold the *wanigan* fast. The jacks got to usin' the pawl when they got tired and to talkin' about it. They'd say:

"Kick in the pawl; he'll hold 'er. The pawl will hold anything."

"Now, when the Canucks begun to come down into the States to go loggin', in Maine and New Hampshire and Vermont, they begun to hear this talk from the Yankees and they'd grin and say:

"Sure, Paul, he hol' onto anythin', for sure. Dat's our Paul Bun-yan, from de Miramichi. W'y, dat Paul Bun-yan, he one tam t'row a beeg rope aroun' a ten million feet log drive an' he hol' it back for a week w'ile dey wait for headwater."

"This is a true story, I say! Hum! Paul Bunyan, he was the strongest man that ever lived—but he's dead now. They say, though, that sometime he'll come back, and that *he'll be borned over out of a big hollow tree.*"

Something caused Johnny McBride in his long-butt hut to come half awake, out of this dream. It was a vague, uncomfortable feeling, as if the earth was moving under him. There had been a constant, muffled drumming sound on the long-butt, as the sleet changed to hail, a typical spring kick-back to winter in the Swango country in April. But now there was also a slow, grinding sound and some curious movement. Johnny opened his eyes and looked down along his six-foot three inches of manhood and saw the river rushing uphill. That was what it looked like, in the short glimpse that he got of the outside world, a river rising like a geyser and carrying a lot of logs up with it.

JOHNNY'S hair seemed to stand on end and lift his hat off. He wasn't quite sure whether he was awake and seeing things in actuality, or still asleep and having a nightmare—or a daymare. He struggled to slide out of the long-butt—and that instant something slammed into the open end of it, and struck against the soles of his shoes so hard that the calks stuck into it and his feet stung as if they were burning.

This served to bring McBride wide awake—but in almost total darkness again. He reached up a long arm and stuck a finger up through the knothole in the top of the log. His finger went through into the air, it went through a half-frozen layer of snow and hail, and let in a little more light, but not enough for Johnny to see what had whacked into the open end of the long-butt and *bastinadoed* him.

But he could feel—and *he could feel him-*

self moving downward. It seemed as if he was plunging downhill at sixty miles an hour. Well, he was moving pretty fast. What had happened makes a story that is told in the bunkhouses and camps all over the Great Lakes logging country and down in the wilds of West (begod) Virginia.

Rain and sleet and hail had undermined that long-butt as Johnny lay in it asleep. It had greased the greasy clay hillside as thoroughly as lumberjacks grease the skids on a rollway or bullchain trough. Johnny was taking a fast ride—and as the long-butt slid like chain lightning down that hillside, it struck a "joker" with its open end.

A joker is a wedge-shaped piece of timber that has been cut out of a log to remove an imperfection in the timber. In this case the wedge was almost perfectly round and just the size to make a fine cork to plug up the open end of that white pine long-butt. That is how Johnny McBride got corked in, with his calks, which lumberjacks call "corks," sticking into the cork joker—and no joke was that whatever. Not to Johnny McBride.

FOUR days later the mill crew at the saw-mill where the timber logs and the pulp logs were separated as they came in together with the drive on the Swango River, rolled a huge white pine log onto the carriage which shuttled back and forth and shoved logs against the whirling steel teeth of the great circular saw.

"By the holy old Mackinaw, this here's a awful heavy piece of timber for cork pine!" shouted one of the sawyer's two assistants, as they rolled the great log onto the carriage—and missed seeing the knothole. "She rolls almost like she was alive, but she's hefty, somehow. Must be water-soaked."

"Whad'ye say?" screeched the head sawyer, scowling along the bumpy surface of the pine.

He couldn't hear much except the words . . . "*alive . . . hefty . . .*" and he was always to remember those two words.

He pulled a lever and the dogs bit into the bark of the log, and he pulled another and the carriage moved forward, slowly, carefully aiming the butt of the log at the singing cylinder of the great saw. Those steel teeth bit into the wood like a knife into cheese and a thick slab began to be re-

moved from the roundness, leaving a square cut side of nice white timber. It wasn't much water-soaked, after all.

The long bark-covered slab came off and onto the rollers and fell off into the pit where waste was being dumped. The sawyer brought the log carriage back, with a rider whose duty it was to work the "nigger," a powerful, sharp-pointed arm of steel that was jabbed into the log and turned it, almost like a giant human hand.

Another jerk of a lever and the carriage moved forward again.

"Makes a funny sound, that there big cork pine," mumbled the sawyer, his ears tuned to any variation in the song of his saw. Off came another long slab, and still the knothole was not noticed, for it was on the underside of the log.

There was a big bulge where the knothole was and one of the crew made the remark that "she must of been a easy rider; she wouldn't roll over at all, just as if she had a keel like a boat."

"Zooom-*whew-zeep!*" sang the saw as it tore a third slab from the log, and back came the carriage as if hung on hinges that swung like a great horizontal gate.

Over again, a quarter way over, the nigger pulled it—and the carriage started to move for the fourth cut.

The sawyer knitted his already furrowed brow and shook his head as he caught the strangely hollow sound of his saw carving off another slab, screeching through the bulge which, of course, was a knot with its middle fallen out, where once a big branch had grown.

As the long strip came off and clattered onto the rollers and went smacking down into the waste pit, and the now squared timber was turned a quarter way over, the knothole was clearly revealed, on top.

And out of that knothole came a thing that looked like a great big grubworm with a horny head on it—and then it looked different, as it was moved, frantically, with a somewhat desperate waving motion.

The sawyer saw it and turned pale. He was not very superstitious but this was something that in all his thirty years of experience with timber he had never seen before. He reached automatically for a lever and stopped the carriage dead.

"Pull that timber off!" he yelled.

His assistants jumped, with their cant-hooks, clamped them, one near each end of the squared hunk of white wood and jerked it toward them.

Both of them nearly fell over backward when that four-foot-thick-squared log came suddenly apart, from end to end, and something that looked like a pop-eyed Santa Claus in lumberjack garb was seen to be lying in one hollow half of the split timber.

It sat up, but it didn't move to get out. With a trembling hand and his own eyes bulging, the boss sawyer shut off the saw.

The Santa Claus even had a pack with him, open and shrunken down of its contents, and a canister with its screw top off between his knees but these familiar objects were not what caused the boss sawyer and his helpers to cry out.

It was because the human being—if it was one—which sat in the half-hollow of the great log which had been about to be carved up into planks, *had white whiskers and pure white hair.*

He sat there as if paralyzed, unable to move his feet. It was because his steel calks were still stuck in the joker and the joker was still stuck in the half log, because the wood had swelled during its four days in the river and tightened the cork.

The boss sawyer, being closest to this apparition, began to clear his wobbling vision. The face beneath that shock of snow-white hair was young and recognizable.

"Why—why, be Jasper, it's the mighty McBride!" he croaked. "How in the name of God did ye git to be in thar, McBride?"

The answer came in a tremulous voice from the young face with the white beard:

"I'm Paul Bunyan, borned out of a holler tree, like he said."

"Begod, I think ye're Rip Van Winkle woken up arter twenty years of sleep," mumbled the sawyer.

But McBride really believed that it was true he was Paul Bunyan born again and he never got over it. Everyone humored him because they thought he had a right to think so after his long ride in a long-butt in the drive and his miraculous escape from being sliced to ribbons by a big circular saw. Besides, it gave Swango Falls a name for itself as "The Home of Paul Bunyan, Reborn."