

PROFILES

with JENNIFER BARR



Doug Wood

Cutting down a tree in this day and age is sure to upset a whole lot of people. In fact, more citizens get riled up over tree mutilation than they do over breaking most of the ten commandments.

Up until now large trees in the way of road, street or municipal planning were doomed. Until Big John came on the scene.

Big John is the largest tree mover in Canada recently imported from Arkansas by Acton resident Doug Wood.

A boon to landscapers, subdivision developers, park planners, conservationists and tree lovers everywhere, the machine looks like a high yellow

tulip, opening slowly in the sun to admit the tree of its choice.

Big John can move trees up to 30' high and up to 12" in diameter with a 9,000 pound root ball in one smooth operation that leaves much less root trauma than former methods.

From suit to jeans
Doug Wood, who lives on a 45 acre farm west of Acton in Nassagaweya township is as excited as a kid at Christmas about his new venture.

Last December Doug spent every work day morning barreling down 401 in a three piece suit, his brief case beside him, ready to battle the world as national sales manager for Coult's Hallmark in Toronto. Now he ties his jeans with a piece of halter twine, swings up into the cab of his enormous Ford Diesel 8,000 tandem axle, and shoves a lot of trees around.

It all started when Doug, age 35, decided he needed a change of lifestyle. With the support of wife Carla, and daughters Sharla, 9, Melony, 6 and Taimé Leigh, 2 1/2, he left his executive position of 12 years to venture into business for himself.

He wasn't sure what the world needed at that moment, until he started to inquire about planting some large trees around the Wood's relatively new colonial style family home. Cost and work involved in the operation were prohibitive. Landscapers root prune the tree to be moved and later use five men to dig around the root ball. A crane must be rented to lift the tree while its roots are handpruned in burlap. The tree is crane lifted to a waiting flat bed truck, moved, and the whole process reversed. Tree loss with large trees can be considerable.

One thing led to another, and Doug, never one to do things by halves, found a machine made in the States could move large trees in one operation. Unfortunately such a machine was unavailable in Canada. There is a small model in Toronto which can move small trees, but not the large "Big John".

So Doug, being Doug, bought big Big John and went into business.

A love of nature and trees, in particular, is a the root of Doug's enthusiasm about his new endeavour. He says whenever one of his horses gets out of its paddock and chomps up a little tree, he bleeds. Cutting down trees to make way for prosperity has always distressed him. Now he'll be able to move all the trees he wants.

Natural for landscaping
Naturally, the business, now called Douglas Wood Large Tree Sales Ltd., depends on areas other than saving endangered trees for its livelihood. Judging by the enquiries and business already received Doug knows there's a terrific market in landscaping parks, golf clubs, new homes, and commercial businesses.

"People don't want to wait 20 years for shade trees," he says. He also adds that \$2,000 or \$3,000 worth of trees planted on a residential lot can increase the value of the property by \$5,000 or \$6,000.

Which brings us very neatly to cost. Prices are variable depending on the amount of work to be done in any one area. Doug has a wide assortment of trees available to him right now and one can be placed in a waiting garden for as little as \$500, or less. Trees from a landscaping contractor usually cost more.

Doug will also buy trees that have to be removed. When a swimming pool or addition is going in, trees often have to be cut down at considerable cost to the homeowner. When Doug is called, the tree is saved and the homeowner receives money (up to \$50) instead of paying it out.

What happens when you call Doug to have a tree moved or bring you a new one? Suppose your tree is to be moved. First of all, a deciduous tree would be pruned to accommodate the necessarily reduced root ball it would have in its new home. Coniferous trees can't be pruned as much.

The Big John machine has scoop blades that take a root ball seven feet wide and five feet deep. This allows the fibrous ends of roots - the feeding end - to go with the tree. A chemical spray is used to seal the leaves. The root ball, after digging is soaked in fertilizer solution. The

tree is slowly tilted horizontally along the truck for moving and covered with a tarp. It is transported to its new hole (previously dug by Big John or a backhoe if ground is rocky), fertilizer pellets to feed the tree for a year are spread in the hole and the tree gently lowered into its new environment. Conifers are sprayed to prevent winter kill.

Contrary to popular belief, the kind of soil in its new home doesn't matter, neither does the side planted toward the sun - the tree adapts to its changes. Trees can be moved by this method

from April to December.

Just a little trucking
Doug will be sales and marketing manager for Douglas Wood Large Tree Sales Ltd. while Cliff Britton, a graduate of forestry college and former employee of Mansel Nelis operating large equipment, will be machine operator. At the moment, until Cliff is free, Doug is doing all jobs - and loving it.

Now he and his lifesaving machine are in Acton and revving up to high gear for the amount of work that is already coming their way.



Doug Wood and Big John, large tree mover.



Acton Firefighters were called out to the Frank Heller and Co. on Eastern Ave. Monday afternoon.

\$1,000 damage in Heller's plant fire

About \$1,000 damage resulted from a fire at the Frank Heller and Co. plant on Eastern Ave. Monday afternoon.

Acton Fire Chief Mick Holmes said firefighters were able to extinguish the smouldering bags which collect dust in the plant. The bags are used to collect leather dust. Though there were no vis-

ible flames, according to Mr. Holmes, workers had to be cleared from the building because of the smoke. He estimated the damage at \$1,000.

No sooner had firefighters finished with the Heller's job than they were called to a grass fire at the George Wallace property at RR 4 Rockwood. Mr. Wallace used a half-ton truck to carry

firefighters to the distant spot of the blaze because the ground was too soft to support the fire truck. In addition to the grass, some cedar rails caught fire.

Sunday evening firefighters were called to a chimney fire at the Hanz Winther home at RR 1 Acton. There was no damage, according to Mr. Holmes.

Building business. . . .

(Continued from page 1)
He feels the open winter was an advantage to contractors and says he's busy with alterations and renovations. "It hasn't slackened off yet."

Al Bousfield of Unifal Construction says he's beginning to swing into demolition rather than construction. He likes to restore older homes and re-used material he acquires from taking down buildings.

Although the "do it yourself" craze is on with many homeowners tackling their own renovations, carpenters and contractors are still being called by people unable to do their own.

"I feel sorry for people who can't do it themselves," says Bousfield, even though renovations are his livelihood. "Labor is the only thing they've got left" he adds referring to lack of money in general.

Bousfield feels the country will have to revert to the wasteless society of the 30s and 40s which is why he's reusing construction materials.

"I see no great future for a little while, it's going to be very tight," he summarizes.

Bruce Purcell, a drywall contractor says his business is pretty good be-

cause, although people aren't building, they're trying to fix up what they have.

Most of his jobs have been home improvements and he says he's been busy, "I'm surprised myself."

Fred Kentner of Kent Construction isn't too optimistic about the future. Business is slow right now because spring work hasn't got underway but he says people haven't decided what to do because of high interest rates.

He quotes one farmer not being able to build a much needed and planned barn addition because his milk cheque just wouldn't cover the carrying charges.

Kentner says he's working with a skeleton staff and not re-hiring until he sees how summer business shapes up.

Bruce Buchanan at MacKenzie Buildall, an Acton building supply company, comments his sales are no slower than usual at this time of year. He was surprised to find business up in January. He feels the number of construction jobs in Acton are about the same this year, but people are renovating instead of buying new houses.

"People are finding themselves redoing their basements saying 'we can't afford a new house, so let's make this one as good as possible'."

A-B WOODLAND MARKET

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