



Mark Duke and friend Scott Peterson just returned home from British Columbia. The two had planned to work the whole summer as tree planters, but things didn't quite work out. (Herald photo)

Chance of a lifetime ends with nightmare of troubles

By GARRY J. MURDOCK
The Herald

"It was the chance of a lifetime," says Mark Duke, 19, of McIntyre Crescent, "because the work is what drew us out there. I don't know when I'm going to have the opportunity to head out west again."

Mark was talking about his recent trip to Prince George, British Columbia with friend Scott Peterson.

When the two packed up and headed west on July 2nd, both had verbally-confirmed jobs as tree planters for Seneca Silviculture Limited. The result is now, five weeks later, both have returned home, broke and disappointed.

Mark and Scott left Georgetown in Mark's then recently purchased 1971 Chevrolet Van. Due to a breakdown, they arrived in Prince George on July 10th, a day later than planned.

They called the company when they got there, only to discover there was currently no tree planting work available.

"It had been raining (before we got there)," Scott said. "The area

was soaked so everything (the schedule) got pushed back."

The company then lined up a job for the two called "burning" which is simply burning the excess brush. After having spent \$700.00 in supplies and gas to get to B.C., Mark and Scott agreed to do the job that was supposed to start in a couple of days. They were invited to stay at the owner's cabin free of charge in the meantime.

The owner's cabin, according to Duke, was "in the middle of nowhere at the end of a treacherous dirt road. The cabin had no electricity, no running water, no telephone. And also no food. We were out there for a week-and-a-half." The time was spent with seven other people, all in the same predicament. The job of "burning" never materialized.

Mark and Scott were finally promised work on July 20. They were to leave for Fort St. James, west of Prince George, to plant trees.

Instead, another group of planters was sent.

Mark and Scott, after another two days delay, were sent to Frol St. John, right on the Alberta/B.C. border, 260 miles south of the Nor-

thwest Territories.

Again there was another day-and-a-half delay because the trees hadn't arrived. The camp had only one bathroom and two rusty showers that only worked part of the time due to a water shortage. Camp costs, which are \$19.00 a day for food and allotted sleeping space (Mark and Scott slept in the van) were then increased \$3.00.

Finally, after two weeks of waiting, the two started working. Originally promised between 15¢-20¢ a tree they planted, they were soon told they would be paid 31¢ a tree.

Scott and Mark thought with the increase in salary the two might be able to make-up for lost time. Mark said that the tree planting land is made up of "swamp, 40 million flies, mosquitos, grasshoppers and grass up to your chin."

The schedule was a 10-hour work day with lunches provided. Lunches consisted of a couple of sandwiches, fruit, cookies and a drink.

Scott and Mark were making about \$37.00 a day. Camp rental (including food costs) amounted to \$22.00 a day. Equipment rentals, such as shovels, cost about \$5.00 a day. After deductions, the two were making about \$10.00 a day, which amounted to about a dollar an hour.

Mark realized he wasn't going to make the money he needed to attend his first year of university in the fall.

After discussing leaving with Scott, it wasn't until their second day on the job when at lunch one tree planter said, "You don't get good at this for about a month," that they decided to pack it up and head home. A month was all that was left of their summer.

"I'm disappointed," says Scott, "but it's not the company's fault... It would have been nice if we had a guarantee of work regardless of the weather (nothing was ever signed) but it wasn't worth our while to stay."

Although Scott has no plans to attend school in September, Mark is working two part-time jobs trying to make up for lost time. Unfortunately, their little adventure to British Columbia cost then \$700.00 in cash and \$800.00 was charged to credit. Overall, the two of them made twenty dollars each.

"It was fun," Scott said, "but it wasn't too profitable."

"I would have loved to have stayed," Mark said. "I'm really disappointed because the money I was earning was going to University. Considering I spent more than I made by far, I'm really going to have to hustle to make that difference."

Report provides advice to Ontario colleges

Vision 2000: Quality and Opportunity, a major report recommending changes and new directions for Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, was released by Colleges and Universities Minister Sean Conway.

Prepared under the direction of the Ontario Council of Regents, the report provides advice to the government on the province's 23 colleges.

"This analysis of the role of community colleges in Ontario will help ensure colleges continue to play a vital role in meeting the educational and training needs of communities throughout Ontario," Mr. Conway said. "I appreciate the efforts of those who participated in the drafting of this report, which I'm sure will now generate lively discussion within the broader educational community."

Ontario Hydro provides grants to intervenor groups

Intervenor groups participating in an examination of Ontario Hydro's proposals for meeting the province's future energy needs have been granted \$1.7 million by a panel of the Environmental Assessment Board. The 26 groups will use the grants, paid by Ontario Hydro, to help determine how much money they will require to prepare briefs for the examination of Hydro's proposals contained in the Demand/Supply Plan.

Applications for intervenor funding totalled \$15 million. A coalition of ten groups, including Greenpeace and Energy Probe, received \$349,300, the largest single allocation. Native groups received a total of \$600,000. The environmental assessment hearings into Hydro's proposals begin Jan. 7, 1991.

ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION

During June, Ontario Hydro supplied 10.7 million megawatt-hours of electricity to its customers, compared to 10.6 million megawatt-hours during the same period in 1989. The 20-minute June peak was 19,999 megawatts, compared to a peak of 20,075 megawatts during the same period in 1989.

Ontario Hydro purchased 1.4 million megawatt-hours of electricity from other utilities during June 1990. The purchases cost a total of \$48.7 million. There were no export sales to other markets during June.

Among the 40 proposed initiatives, the report recommends:

- that college programs be restructured to focus on the development of generic skills and to include a broader range of academic subjects;

- that system-wide curriculum standards and accreditation of programs be reviewed by a proposed College Standards Accreditation Council;

- that colleges encourage accessibility among under-represented groups by creating preparatory courses such as expanded English-as-a-second language programs and special life-skills training programs and by providing technical aids and services for people with disabilities;

- that colleges become more accessible to adult learners by providing more flexible scheduling of both adult and part-time programming and by establishing a more equitable method of accrediting previous experience; and

- that a proposed co-ordinating body be created to improve and strengthen linkages between colleges and universities and to encourage combined joint college-university studies.

"In this era of life-long learning, it is crucial that our colleges continue to provide flexible educational and training programs not only for those students continuing their education but also for those Ontarians who are returning to education to upgrade their skills and knowledge," Mr. Conway said. "The recommendations contained in this report build upon many of the initiatives currently underway throughout this province."

The Vision 2000 review, which began in 1988, is the culmination of a broadly-based process involving representatives of colleges, the communities they serve, the private sector and other educators.

"Vision 2000 is about quality, opportunity and partnerships," said Charles Pascal, chair of the Council of Regents. "This collaborative project has reinforced the process of partnership development and the final report recommends an agenda for renewing the colleges' future and reaffirming their credibility as important forces for social and economic development in Ontario."

Educators and other interested parties are being invited to review the report and submit comments to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' College Affairs Branch by November 30, 1990.

Consumers urged to use caution

Shoppers looking for a fair deal at fairsgrounds, exhibitions or consumer shows should do some research before buying big-ticket items, experts advise. "Our Consumer Services Bureau get a lot of complaints from people who have signed contracts to buy expensive services or goods at annual fairs and shows," says Carolyn Lentz of the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR).

"Of course, there are also many satisfied customers out there we never hear from. Just don't stumble into a house-of-consumer-horrors through lack of caution."

Salespeople hawking their wares are as much a part of the carnival tradition as merry-go-rounds and, at many fairs today, the sales booths cover as much ground as the midway.

Consumer shows are geared almost entirely toward promotion and sales. Consumer-oriented exhibits such as homes, garden and hobby shows attract hundreds of thousands of people, year-round throughout Ontario.

According to Lentz, many people use these events as opportunities to see a whole range of products under one roof. And that, she says, is a smart way to comparison shop. "If you go to a show with the intention of comparison shopping and getting to know the products or services that are available, I'd say

you're making the best use of the event. But, unless you know what prices are like in the regular marketplace and you're really sure about what you want, be cautious of buying on the spot."

Show specials, one-day-only deals, and the pressure to buy while you're there, are all factors that may push people into purchases they may later regret, says Lentz, consumer education coordinator for MCCR.

Once a purchase agreement is signed, it can rarely be cancelled. In some situations - depending on how the sale was made, the type of event and the way the business itself operates - a two-day cooling-off period may apply. "But", Lentz says, "it would be better simply not to buy the item in the first place if you have any doubts."

As well as comparison shopping and guarding against pressure sales tactics, consumers making major purchases should ask about warranties, guarantees and repair-shop locations before they buy. The lifetime guarantee offered on a new fridge isn't worth the paper it's written on if the business can't be found when repairs are needed.

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