

# LOG TRUCKER

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 1

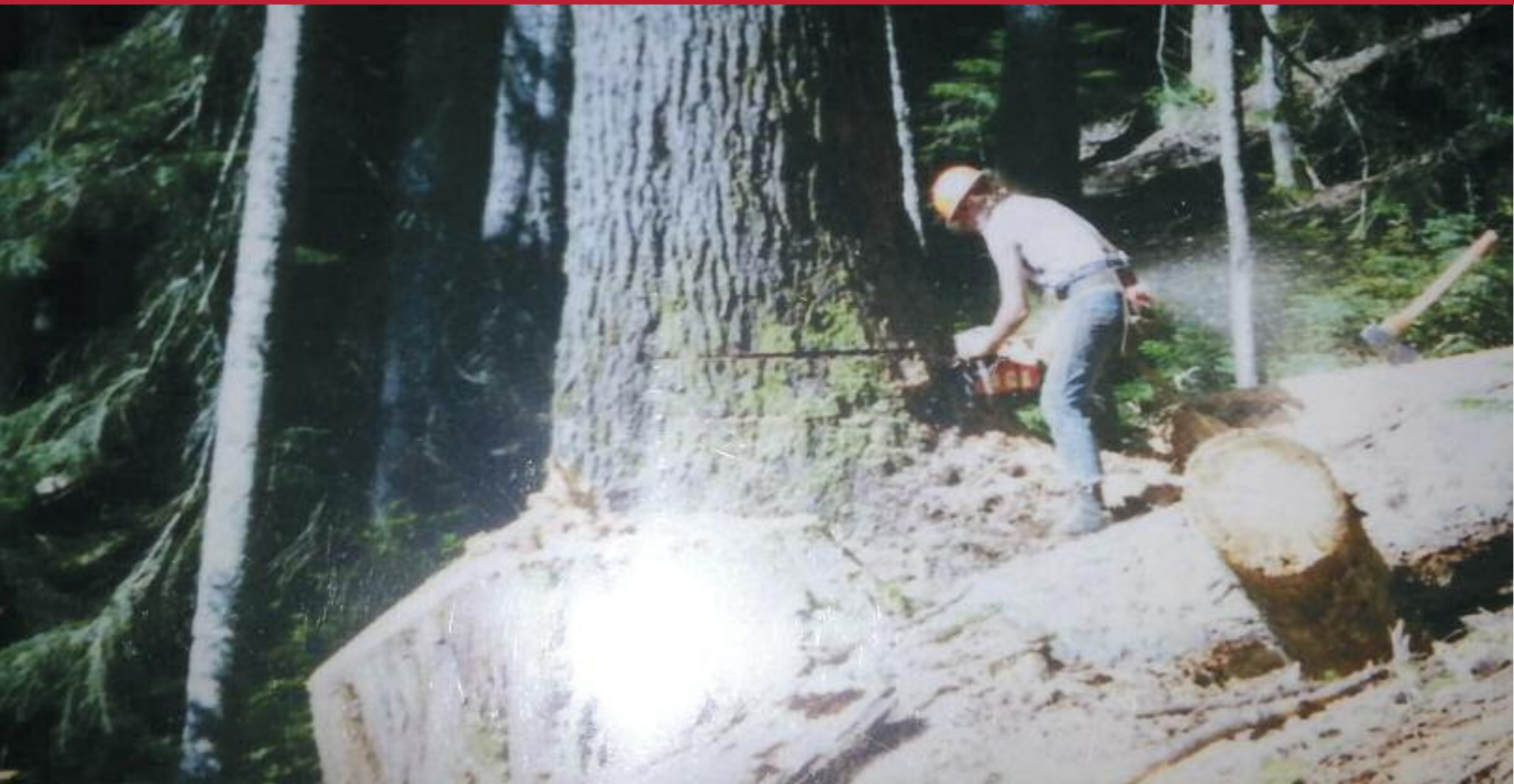
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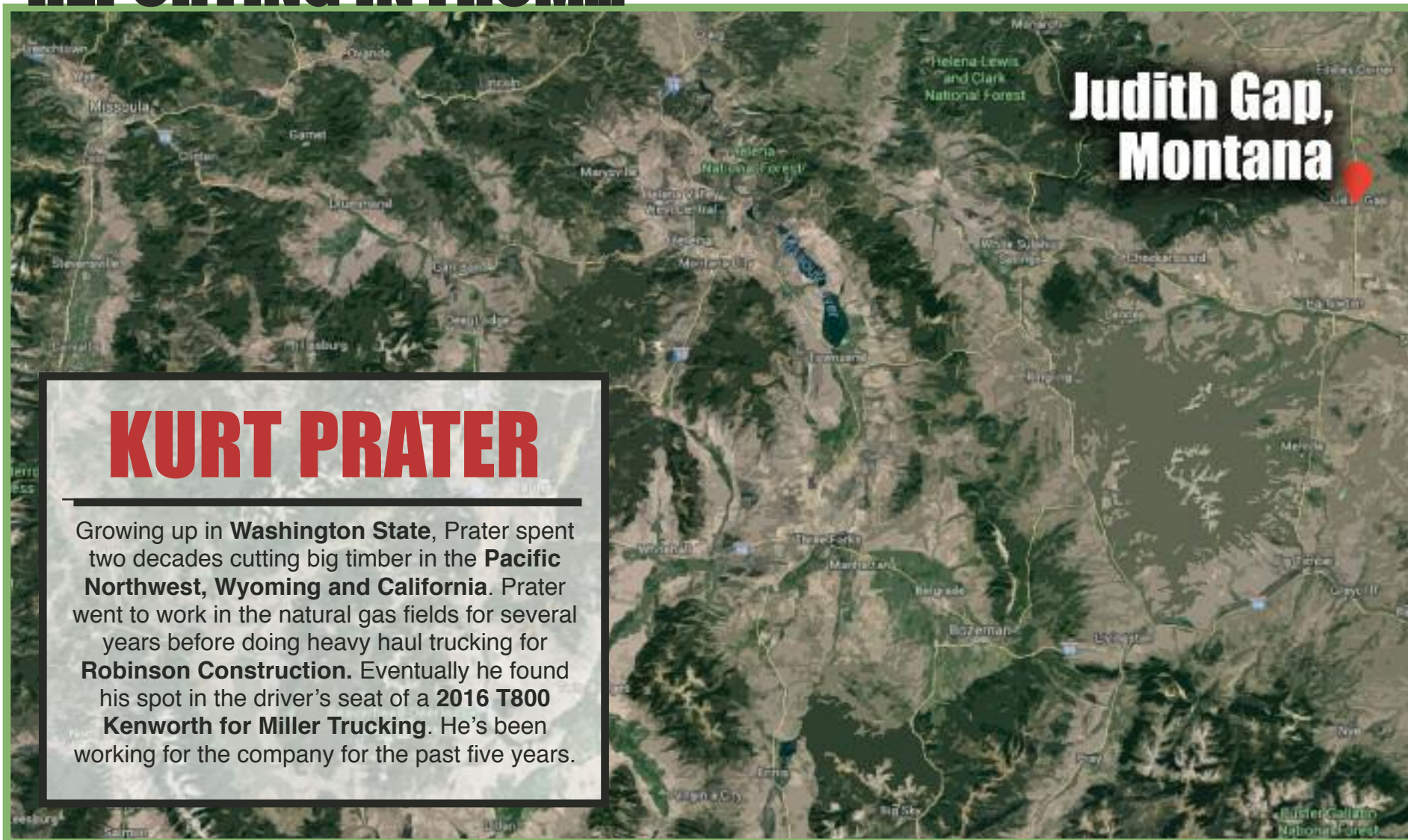


## FROM CUTTING TO DRIVING

*Kurt Prater spent decades cutting and now he's on the road*



# REPORTING IN FROM...



## Judith Gap, Montana

### KURT PRATER

Growing up in **Washington State**, Prater spent two decades cutting big timber in the **Pacific Northwest, Wyoming and California**. Prater went to work in the natural gas fields for several years before doing heavy haul trucking for **Robinson Construction**. Eventually he found his spot in the driver's seat of a **2016 T800 Kenworth for Miller Trucking**. He's been working for the company for the past five years.

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### IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE FRONT: Kurt Prater calls a 2016 T800 Kenworth for Miller Trucking his home office these days. He spent two decades cutting out in the Pacific Northwest. See "CUTTING AND SHIFTING" starting on Page 4

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4. CUTTING AND SHIFTING  
KURT PRATER. by Brandon Hansen

19. ADVERTISERS INDEX  
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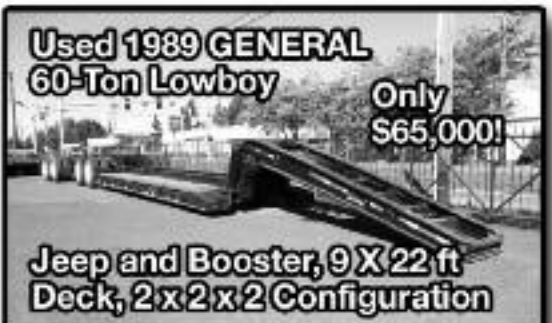
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# CUTTING AND SHIFTING



## THE BIG RED ONE

Kurt Prater drives a 2016 T800 Kenworth with a self loader for Miller Trucking out of Judith Gap, Montana.

*Kurt Prater has spent years as a cutter and now drives a self loader for Miller Trucking*

**Story by Brandon Hansen**

**Photos by Kurt Prater**

*For Loggers World*

**K**urt Prater is a cutter at heart and a truck driver by trade.

The timber industry vet currently hauls for Miller Trucking out of Judith Gap, Montana but knows a thing or two about getting a log on his trailer. Prater began cutting in the 1970s when a friend began a timber faller business.

Growing up in Washington State, Prater spent two decades cutting big timber in the Pacific Northwest, Wyoming and California. Back before the spotted owl tied up a lot of timber in the area, Prater said he remembers the

## KURT PRATER - JUDITH GAP, MONTANA

- Kurt Prater began cutting in the 1970s when a friend began a timber faller business.
- Prater grew up in Washington State and spent two decades cutting in the Pacific Northwest, Wyoming and California.
- Prater spent years in the natural gas fields and doing heavy haul trucking.

big trees that made logging an impressive sight to see while logging in Washington and Oregon.

Along with that, he said that doing some cutting for a Utah ski resort resulted in him seeing some of the limbiest timber he'd ever seen.

Prater started in the 1970s, back when guys had to do the cutting with a chainsaw instead of a machine. There was no processors to speak of, so a guy with a Stihl and a bar was the way to get a log ready for hauling.

"You'd have to have some-

body fall it and then another person buck it," Prater said. "That kind of work keeps you in pretty good physical condition"

While a tree that doesn't always behave like it should provides some danger for the faller, Prater said cutting crews he was part of always had a lot of pride working on the steep ground they seemed to tackle. The was an old joke that said if a cutter isn't running for his life, he isn't working hard enough - but safety was never a laughing matter for Kurt.

"There's a danger factor and you've got to be very aware," he said. "Getting a little more

(Continued on Page 8)

**See "Prater"**

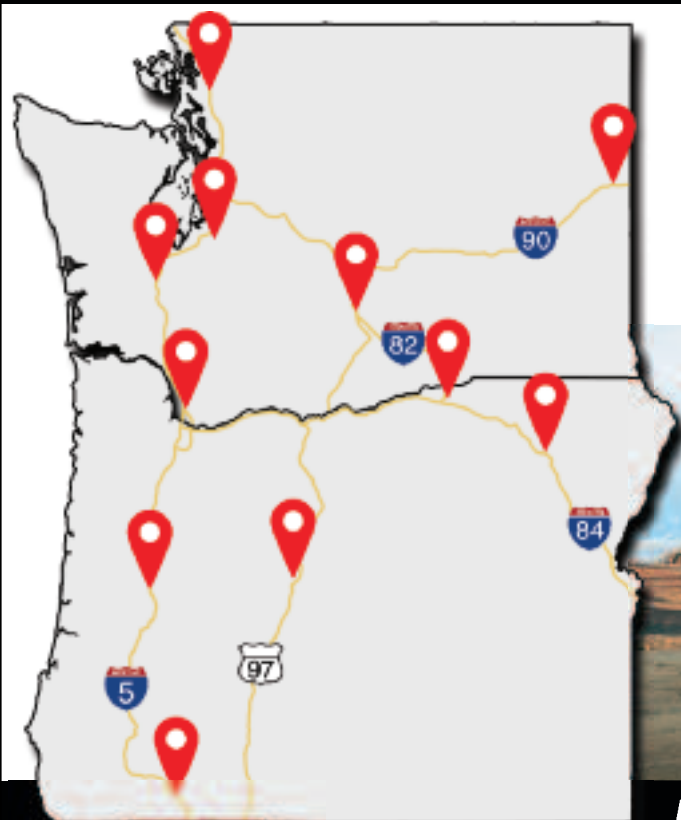


**IN THE LOADER SEAT**

Kurt Prater loads up poles with his truck's self loader. When it came to learning how to drive truck, Prater learned from Pace Biorn and said a lot of things were common sense things and there was a bit of self-teaching going on as well. "The biggest adjustment was the amount of travel and not getting sleepy," Prater said. He would go back to haul for natural gas companies for almost a decade in Montana before eventually finding his spot in the driver's seat of a 2016 T800 Kenworth for Miller Trucking. He's been working for the company for the past five years.



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### LIFE AS A CUTTER

Prater started in the 1970s, back when guys had to do the cutting with a chainsaw instead of a machine. There were no processors to speak of, so a guy with a Stihl and a bar was the way to get a log ready for hauling. "You'd have to have somebody fall it and then another person buck it," Prater said. "That kind of work keeps you in pretty good physical condition"



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### LINED UP

Prater spent many years hauling for natural gas companies for almost a decade in Montana before eventually finding his spot in the driver's seat of a 2016 T800 Kenworth for Miller Trucking. He's been working for the company for the past five years. Log truck company owner Tony Miller keeps his fleet of trucks running from Montana, and Prater said there's no better boss. "He's really good and he runs good equipment and everybody keeps it clean" Prater said. "They're all good people and they spoiled me with this new truck."

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## Prater

(Continued from Page 4)

production isn't forward losing your life."

Prater cut in western Washington and down in Oregon in areas like Rosenberg. He also cut around Mt. St. Helens before and after the volcano decided to erupt in the middle of prime timberland.

Prater learned about cutting alongside Dean Robinson, Wayne Burkey, Leon Evans and Bob Thayer picking up on things like working on steep ground and not crossing up timber.

When work couldn't keep him going in Wyoming, Prater went to work in the natural gas fields for several years before doing heavy haul trucking for Robinson Construction.

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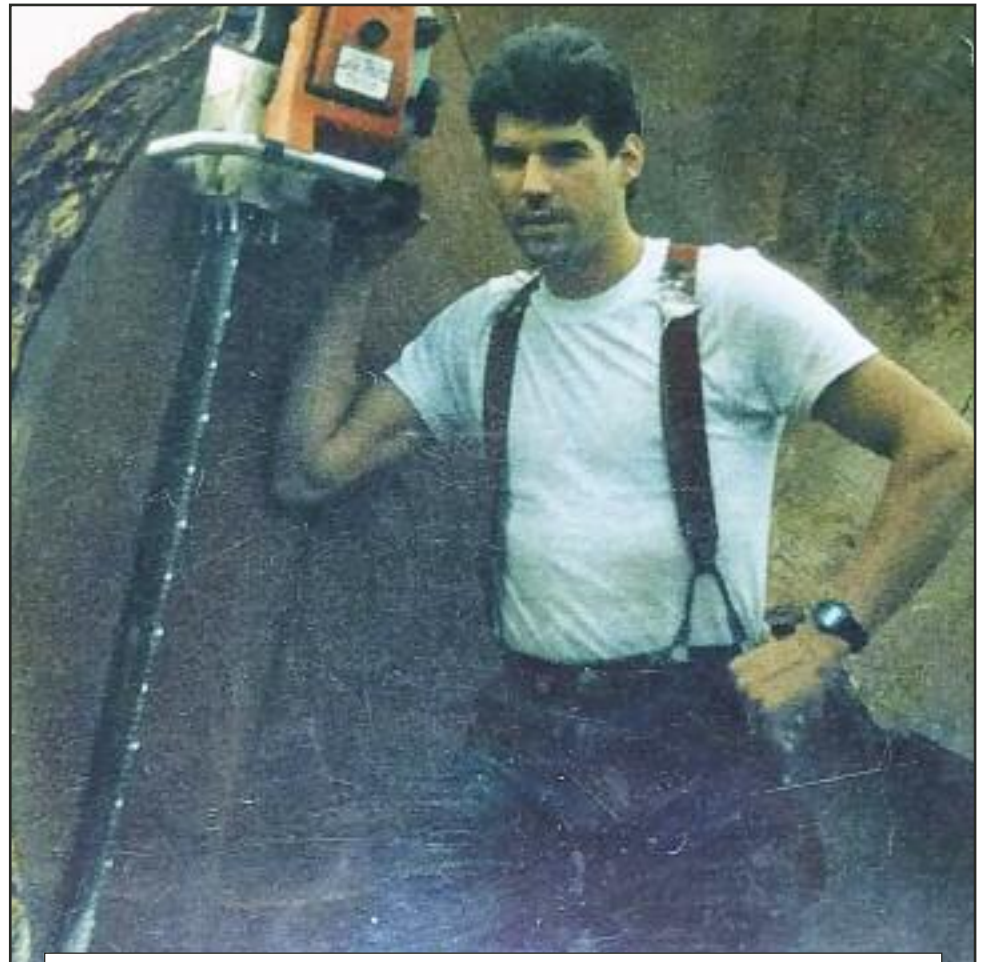
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A good chunk of his hauling are poles, which can go up to 110 feet. They become really in demand when extreme weather damages power poles in other state. Because of this he has hauled poles to North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska,

(Continued on Page 13)  
See "Prater"



### DEAN ROBINSON

Dean Robinson helped show Prater the ropes of cutting in the 1970s. Prater and Robinson spent many years cutting. He was killed but is still remembered fondly.

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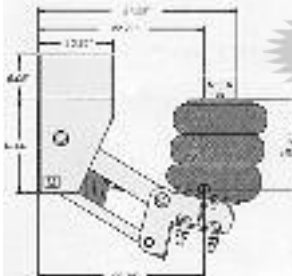
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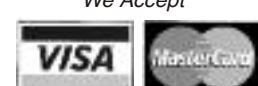


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### PARKED FOR NOW...

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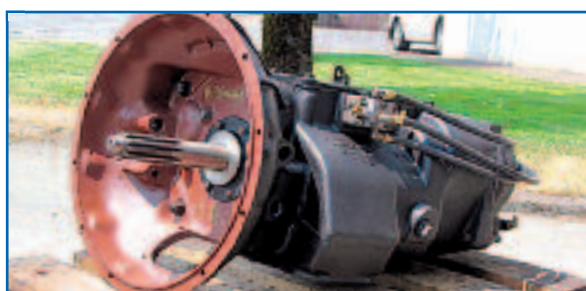
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### ALL STACKED UP

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## LOADING THINGS UP

Prater spends a good chunk of his time hauling poles, which can go up to 110 feet. They become really in demand when extreme weather damages power poles in other state. Because of this he has hauled poles to North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Oregon, Nebraska and Wyoming.



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## Prater

(Continued from Page 8)

Colorado, Oregon, Nebraska and Wyoming.

Montana, itself, isn't a small state by any stretch of the imagination.

"We do a lot driving and can end up going 700 miles or 10 hours driving and then head back for another load," Prater said.

One difficult part is the midwest weather which can sometimes throw heavy snow on the roads, requiring changes.

"It was a bit spooky at first with the sliding," Prater said. "We'll get down to 30-40 below around here but we haven't had much of that for the last several years."

Montana's a bit more flat, at least on the east side, providing a bit different scenery than the mountainous Timberlands that his hometown of

Enumclaw usually provided.

"I miss all the timber in Washington but there is a lot of overpopulation," Prater said. "We miss the scenery and my wife and I miss seeing Mt. Rainier."

Still Prater gets to see scenery in the midwest and he'll haul poles about 90 percent of the time and logs the other 10 percent.

"I've gone to Texas after tornadoes with poles as well," Prater said. "There seems to be a big demand after a big weather event happens."

Log truck company owner Tony Miller keeps his fleet of trucks running from Montana, and Prater said there's no better boss.

"He's really good and he runs good equipment and everybody keeps it clean" Prater said. "They're all good people and they spoiled me with this new truck."

Along with hauling, Prater has been married to wife

Theresa for 24 years, and the two have two kids and four grandchildren. Prater said he enjoys hunting and fishing when he has some spare time.

"I like being back in a log truck to go up in the woods where you kind of do you own thing," Prater said. "It's a bit like cutting in that way. It's good work and hard work."

Prater said he liked working with Bob Thayer out of Washington State, rigger Jeff Capone for Greenwater and fellow driver Todd Lapp. Leon

Evans was also a heck of a cutter that Prater worked alongside that has since passed.

While he's not tracking down trees in the bush, Prater continues to be a part of a timber industry, hauling around Montana and as a longtime cutter, he appreciates the opportunity "to do his own thing."



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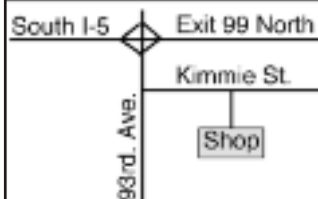
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**READY TO HEAD OUT**

Along with hauling, Prater has been married to wife Theresa for 24 years, and the two have two kids and four grandchildren. Prater said he enjoys hunting and fishing when he has some spare time. "I like being back in a log truck to go up in the woods where you kind of do your own thing," Prater said. "It's a bit like cutting in that way. It's good work and hard work."

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Prater cut in western Washington and down in Oregon in areas like Rosenberg. Prater also cut around Mt. St. Helens before and after the volcano decided to erupt in the middle of prime timberland. Since beginning work for Miller Trucking, he has hauled poles to North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Oregon, Nebraska and Wyoming.



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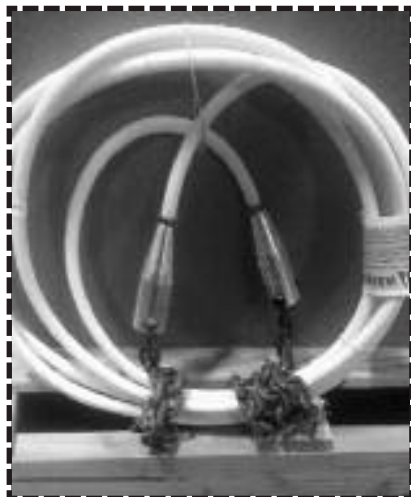
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## LEARNING HOW TO HAUL

When it came to learning how to drive truck, Prater learned from Pace Biorn and said a lot of things were common sense things and there was a bit of self-teaching going on as well. "The biggest adjustment was the amount of travel and not getting sleepy," Prater said.

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Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."





## UP HIGH

While he's not tracking down trees in the brush, Prater continues to be a part of a timber industry, hauling around Montana and as a longtime cutter, he appreciates the opportunity "to do his own thing."



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### FOCUS ON SAFETY

While a tree that doesn't always behave like it should provides some danger for the faller, Prater said cutting crews he was part of always had a lot of pride working on the steep ground they seemed to tackle. The was an old joke that said if a cutter isn't running for his life, he isn't working hard enough - but safety was never a laughing matter for Kurt.

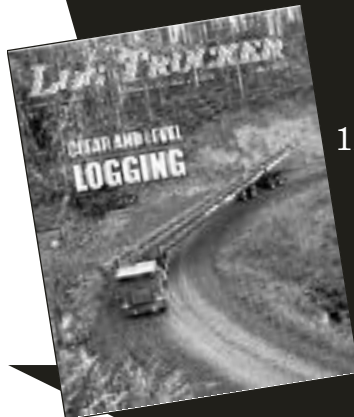
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