

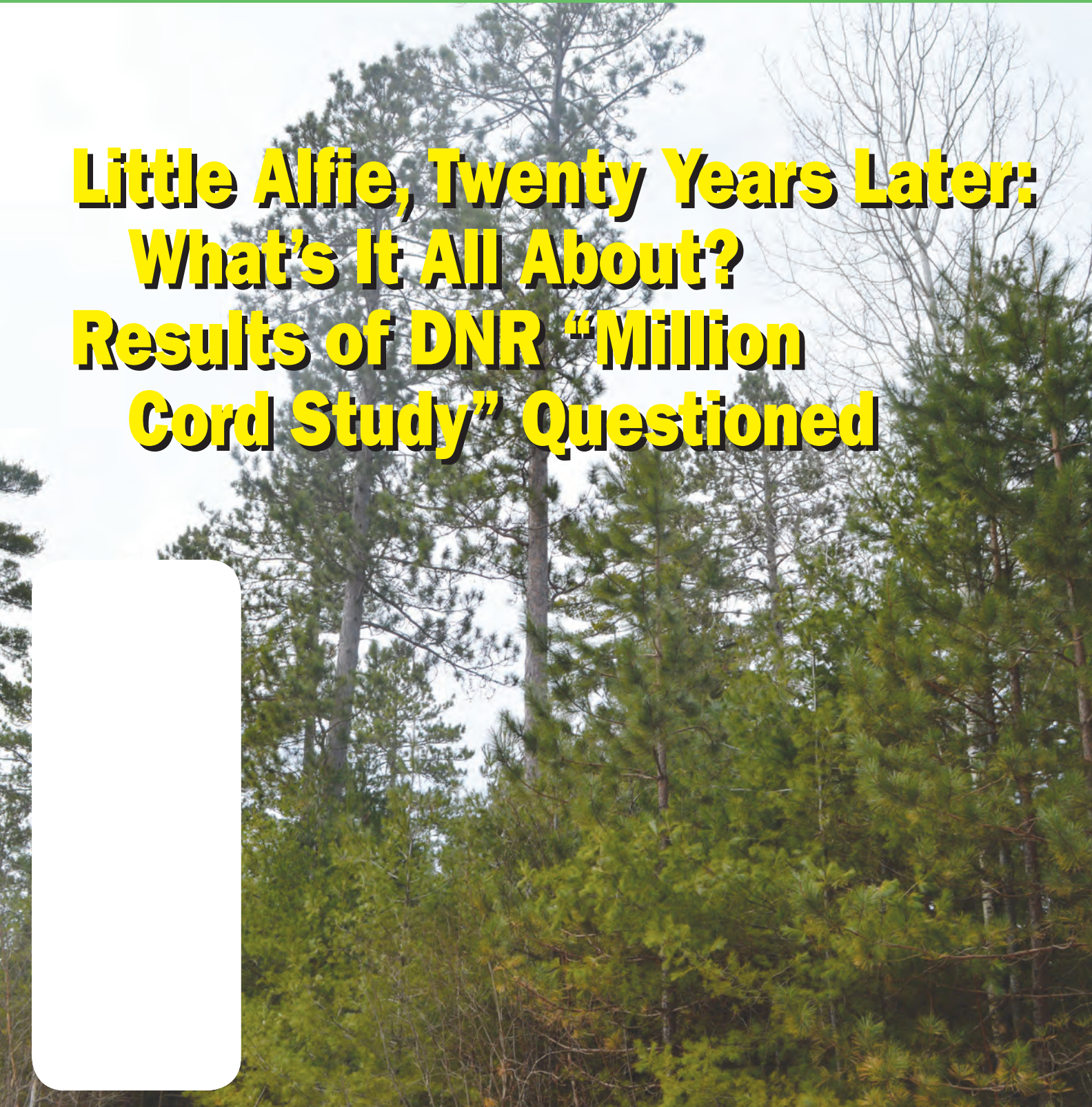
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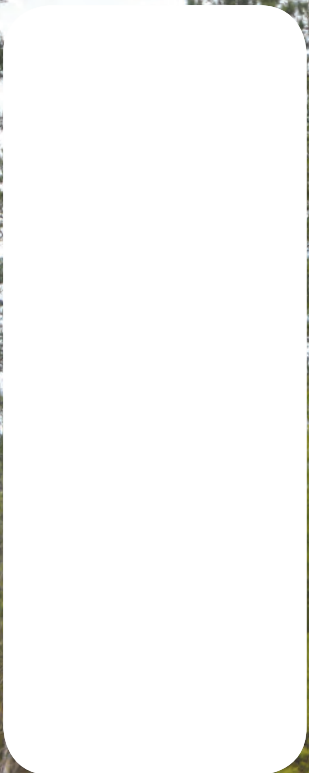
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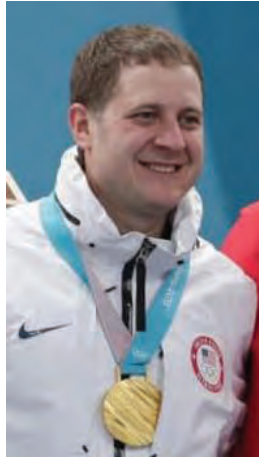
Little Alfie, Twenty Years Later: What's It All About? Results of DNR "Million Cord Study" Questioned





*Minnesota Timber
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2018 TPA Annual Meeting Banquet



John Shuster
Guest Speaker

Wednesday, June 13
Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge

Earlier this year, Chisholm native and Duluth resident John Shuster shocked the world, leading Team USA to its first ever Olympic gold medal in Men's Curling. To accomplish this amazing feat, Shuster and his team had to persevere through repeated setbacks and come from behind during the Games to achieve Olympic glory. Now on a nationwide tour to tell his team's story, Shuster returns to the Northland to talk about not only his amazing Gold-medal-winning shot and its aftermath, but also what it takes to become an Olympic champion and succeed in all walks of life.

The Banquet caps a day full of events, including informative presentations at the TPA Annual Meeting, as well as the Golf and Fishing events.

We look forward to seeing you there!

TIMBER BULLETIN

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Duluth, Minnesota

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ON THE COVER

Tall, healthy red and white pine at the Little Alfie site in April, 2018. For more on Little Lafie, Twenty Years Later, please see page 8.

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Most of us at this time are probably enjoying what's left of the breakup. After what I thought was one of the better winters we have had for logging in a number of years, I'm sure looking forward to some downtime (for a short while).

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the TPA Annual Meeting Wednesday, June 13 at Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge. Our guest speaker for the banquet will

President's Column



be John Shuster, who led Team USA to its first ever Olympic Gold Medal in Men's Curling. He will be sharing with us his first-hand account of his Olympic experience in South Korea. It should

be an enlightening and enjoyable presentation.

Let's all continue to make each day a safe day so that we can return home to our family each evening.

David Berthiaume

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Little Alfie was one of the iconic battles over a U.S. Forest Service timber sale in the modern era. Twenty years ago it pitted us, our members and the U.S. Forest Service against environmental groups who wanted to stop this timber sale.

The battle was fought from Forest Road 200 all the way to the Federal Courthouse in Minneapolis and all points in between with lots of media attention in the process.

But, it wasn't just about the Little Alfie timber sale, a rather

Executive Vice President's Column

unremarkable pine thinning in a remote area of the Superior National



Forest. The battle was fought in the context of National Forest timber sale programs being shut down in the Pacific Northwest over the Spotted

Owl and programs being severely curtailed in other parts of the country.

The U.S. Forest Service's timber sale program ultimately dropped from over 11 billion board feet nationally to less than 2 billion board feet. It has since been built back up to 4 billion board feet.

If we had lost the fight over Little Alfie in the Federal courts it would have been open season on the Federal timber sale program in Minnesota and the Lake States.

Ultimately we and the Superior National Forest won the battle. Little Alfie was harvested and the silvicultural prescription that was

applied has yielded a wonderful healthy stand on the site.

TPA Vice President Ray Higgins has a great story about Little Alfie and the people involved elsewhere in this issue of the *Timber Bulletin*.



The winter that has come to an end. A big thank you to all of our members who kept safety at the top of the priority list as by all reports we had a safe winter logging season.

I know our members are happy to have had something closer to a "normal" winter where we could get into the swamps and where we could work productively without too much extreme cold and snow.

Now if we could get a couple more just like this in the coming years.



As I write this column there is one month to go in this year's state legislative session. There hasn't been a lot of action on forestry issues yet this year. But, there hasn't been much action on most issues.

This is one of those years where there isn't a bill that has to pass and be signed into law in order for state government to keep functioning. With a projected state budget surplus, state government budgets, which were passed last year for the current biennium, fund state government through June 30, 2019.

Now that's not to say that there aren't issues. How or if the state will deal with changes to the state tax system in light of the federal changes that were enacted last year have widespread implications. Capital investments needs are

usually addressed in a bonding bill during these "short" sessions but there was a fairly large bonding bill last year.

So all I can tell you is to stay tuned and rest assured that TPA will be on the job looking after our members' interests at the Capital.



TPA continues to work on the DNR's Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis and the DNR's intent to reduce state timber sales from the current level of 900,000 cords to 870,000 cords annually for the next ten years. The TPA Executive Committee recently sent a lengthy letter that outlines our concerns to Governor Dayton. The letter was also signed by the Board of Directors of Minnesota Forest Industries.

With stumpage prices at uncompetitive levels and continuing to rise we can't afford a reduction in timber availability. We particularly cannot live with the DNR proposed reduction in aspen sales from 400,000 cords to 360,000 cords per year.



I've often said that our members are optimists and that you have to be an optimist to get up in the morning to go to work outside when it's thirty degrees below zero or colder. It's easier to be an optimist on a nice spring day but I know all of us are grateful for the lives, friends and families that we have.

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White pine is flourishing at the site of the controversial Little Alfie Harvest, despite the claims of environmentalists.

Little Alfie, Twenty Years Later: What's It All About?

by Ray Higgins

It's a tale of politics and the rule of law. About stewardship and proper forest management. And it's also about espionage, a guy in a bear suit, and a dog with a colorful name stealing someone's meal.

Even the name of the controversy had a folksy charm to it: Little Alfie. So called because the tract of timber at the center of the issue was near Lake Alf, and a forester at the Superior National Forest advertised

the sale as "Little Alfie."

In the end, there was nothing little about it. For one thing, the pine was nice and long and straight, perfect for the log homes for which sawmiller Tony Vukelich purchased the stumpage. And the controversy was big too, resulting in a logger truck rally in Orr, a sit-in protest by anti-logging environmentalists that lasted for weeks, and a court case against cutting the trees that

TPA had a hand in defending, all of which attracted news media from all over the state waiting to see how it would all play out.

Twenty years later, the tale of the controversy lives on throughout the logging community, particularly in the town of Orr, where Vukelich still lives and where lessons learned haven't been forgotten over the past twenty years.

On a recent afternoon, Vukelich

got together for lunch at the T Pattenn Café in Orr with Tim Olson, who along with his brother Greg, owned the logging company that harvested the Little Alfie site, off the Echo Trail, south of Buyck. Also at lunch was retired Boise forester Dick Olson (no relation to Tim), who also had a front row view of the battle from twenty years before. The trio reminisced about their years in north woods, but particularly about the controversy that came to a head twenty years ago.

"It's a legacy," Tim Olson says. "Everybody came together and rallied and fought it. And Tony did some great things with it."

Vukelich's business was actually four miles north of Orr at Cusson, which a century ago was the site of the main logging camp of the Virginia Rainy Lake Lumber Company, started by the famed Weyerhaeuser family, which of course remains an icon in the timber industry. VRL's sawmill 45 miles to the south in the city of Virginia was the largest sawmill in the world at that time.

Ultimately the VRL sawmill closed, and so did the logging camp in Cusson. Years later, Vukelich purchased the Cusson site, and in 1984 started his own sawmill, naming it Cusson Camp as a nod to the location's rich history.



Tim Olson, Dick Olson, and Tony Vukelich reminisce about the Little Alfie controversy earlier this year.

Originally, Cusson Camp was a wholesale sawmill, sawing timbers for treatment. But soon the nearby Voyageur Log Homes began purchasing long pine timbers, and Vukelich started to specialize in long pine timbers, both for the exterior of log homes, and for the interiors, too. Voyageur was an excellent customer, but builders and homeowners working to finish their log homes came to Cusson Camp looking, for the finest pine paneling and flooring, as well.

"It'd be paneling or something to go in that log building," he says. "Most of the people that would buy a log building from Voyageur, then they'd come to me to buy the paneling to finish the partition walls, for example."

To manufacture his products, Vukelich most often purchased red and white pine bolts from area loggers, but when Superior National Forest offered the Little Alfie tract for sale in 1995, Vukelich decided to bid.

The Forest Service had good reason to offer the tract for sale, planning to thin the red pine, allowing the sun to shine on the smaller white pine so it would flourish.

"I spent a lot of time in there looking at the wood and everything," Vukelich remembers. "I sawed a lot of long timbers, up to thirty feet. That's why I wanted it.

I usually didn't bid on timber sales, and I'd never bid on a federal one, because I let the loggers do that, and then I'd buy their timber. But this happened to be a strict pine sale and a lot of loggers wouldn't want to bid on it because it was a lot of money just for the pine, and there was nothing else in there for them. There wasn't any aspen or jack pine or anything."

Vukelich wound up with the winning bid, and planned to start harvesting the following winter of 1996-97. Little did he know, there was a problem—a technicality—with the sale as constructed by the Forest Service: Little Alfie was actually outside the boundaries of the management plan for that area.

"The pine that was in the plan," Vukelich says, "they nixed that plot for wildlife reasons. So they had this pine just down the road from that sale area that needed to be thinned, and it had already been cut. So they said, let's just substitute this pine for it. And that's what they did."

Eventually, anti-logging forces found out about the snafu and got involved. They wanted to save the white pine there, and also claimed the trees in question were "old-growth," which didn't turn out to be true. A fire had ravaged the area in 1888, so the pines were around 110 years old, and besides, the site had been thinned in 1985, meaning Little



The Little Alfie story was a closely watched story for newspapers and TV stations around the state. Courtesy: Duluth News Tribune



Tony Vukelich and the crew from Cusson Camp pose with a truck at the height of the Little Alfie controversy. The wood on the trailer illustrate the products that would come from Little Alfie. At the front of the trailer is raw red pine, in the middle is the cants that Vukelich would produce for Voyageur Log Homes, and the at the back are finished logs from Voyageur. L-R: Tony Vukelich, Dave McCarthy, Jim Polasky, Erik Strubb, Chris Carr, Jesse Glass (sitting on the trailer), and Jason Wardas. Photo courtesy: Tony Vukelich.

Alfie didn't meet the definition of "old growth."

Vukelich had hired Gheen logger Cliff Shermer to harvest the site. When Shermer headed down Forest Highway 200 to Little Alfie with his feller buncher on the back of a low-boy, he was met by a bunch of protestors from a group called Earth First, a camp fire—and a bear.

"When we got to Dano Creek," Shermer recalls, "they were set up and had a bonfire in the road so we couldn't proceed on to the sale. So we had to stop. That hill down to Dano Creek is super steep, so that wasn't easy. I wasn't happy. So while we're waiting for somebody to come—the feds or whatever—a guy in a bear suit came and chained himself to the front of our truck.

"I don't know if he was supposed to be Smoky the Bear, or who the hell he was," Shermer chuckled.

He can laugh now, but twenty years ago, it wasn't at all funny.

"I was irate," Shermer says. "Once he unchained himself, I had to back that low-boy and buncher right back up that hill."

Still, Vukelich was—and is—a reasonable man. One day after work at the mill, he and his dog Pink jumped into Tony's pickup and

drove to the sale to see what was on the protesters' minds. When they arrived, Pink got himself into a bit of trouble.

"I probably didn't get up there until around 6 o'clock," Vukelich says. "Pink and I walked down the hill, and so I sit down with them around the fire, and we were talking. I just tried to explain to them what's going on up here. They were very nice, they offered me coffee. I wasn't paying any attention to where Pink was and out of the corner of my eye, there's Pink chewing away at this cake pan. They had grilled some vegetables, and they were letting it cool, and he ate it up. I felt terrible. So the next day, I was in the café having breakfast, and Joe Shermer, Clifford's brother, and bunch of other guys from Cook were going to go up there and see what's going on, so I bought a bunch of bags of donuts and Bismarcks and stuff and asked Joe to bring them to those kids because the dog ate their meal last night."

In fact, for all of the wrangling and disagreement, the fight remained mostly cordial and non-confrontational—notwithstanding the guy in the bear suit.

But it was serious business for Vukelich, who needed that Little Alfie timber, not the headache that came with the controversy. He had a mill to run.

"It was a little bit of an ordeal," he says. "That was going to be my wood for the year. I bought open market wood too, but there wasn't a lot of wood available that year. That was another reason I wanted to get that one."

Without wood, Vukelich once estimated he was losing \$6,000 in sales each day. Fortunately for Vukelich, the state's loggers and forest products community rallied around him, and the cause he'd stumbled into.

"A lot of people came and helped during it," he says. "I was without timber for a year, and Boise opened up some wood for me that they wouldn't have cut otherwise."

Vukelich also had assistance from an unlikely and unexpected source,

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Loggers from around the state descended on Orr for a rally in support of the Little Alfie harvest in January, 1998. Photo courtesy: Marshall Helmberger, *The Timberjay*.

a spy of sorts, who was able to infiltrate the enviros and conduct a little espionage.

"There was a guy who had a cabin near here," Vukelich recalls. "He was a chiropractor in the Twin Cities at that time. I met him by selling him lumber, and we became friends. So he calls me and he tells me he just had a customer, he adjusted her back, and she said she was going up to northern Minnesota on the Echo Trail to protest a timber sale. He said they hadn't started cutting, but they're going to start Monday. I said, that's not the Alfie sale, and he said yeah it was! So I got a hold of the Forest Service, and they had some people up there.

"But then how this thing developed," Vukelich continued. "The chiropractor, he infiltrated—he just loved this—Earth First. He went to their meetings, and he filled me in through the whole process. He got in costume, too. He let his beard grow, and when he'd go to their meetings, he'd wear plaid flannel shirts, the whole deal."

Still, the controversy dragged on. The Forest Service was in a pickle because Little Alfie wasn't technically in the plan. Mainstream environmental groups like the Sierra Club and Audubon Society wanted to save the white pine,

which entailed just fourteen percent of the volume on the sale. The sides negotiated and Vukelich agreed not to harvest the white pine as well as some of the red pine. But that still left plenty of long, straight red pine, perfect for the kind of timbers he loved to saw. Everybody was happy.

Well, almost. Earth First wouldn't join the agreement and continued the blockade. Another fringe environmental group called Earth

Protector went to court and sued to stop the harvest completely, claiming old growth timber shouldn't be cut (even though it wasn't old growth) and that the Forest Service should conduct an environmental impact study of the sale, including an analysis of whether the site would generate more revenue from recreation resulting from leaving the trees standing, than by timber harvest. TPA had its attorney, David

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Oberstar of Duluth's Fryberger Firm, join the Forest Service in defending the suit.

With the lawsuit pending, the timber harvest was on hold through all of 1997. Environmentalists kept protesting, but loggers rallied too. Cars all over the north woods had pink ribbons as a show of support for Vukelich—pink was the chosen color in honor of Vukelich's dinner-stealing constant companion. There were more formal events as well, including a memorable meeting between Vukelich and Congressman Jim Oberstar in Virginia.

"I got a call to go down to Carpenters Hall down in Virginia," Vukelich says. "So I go down there, and all the local politicians are there because Oberstar's going to be there. So the Congressman comes in, and I'd never met him before. He comes up and shakes my hand, and he genuflects with this big smile on his face. And he says, 'you're the bugger that's getting more press than I am!'"

At other times during the controversy, Vukelich was offered other, more confrontational, means of support, but those were politely declined.

"I asked folks not to do some stuff," Vukelich says.

Eventually, he had his day in

court. In January of 1998 in a St. Paul courtroom, Federal Judge John Tunheim heard arguments from both sides, including TPA's David Oberstar, who joined the Forest Service attorneys in asking the court to throw out Earth Protector's suit.

Two weeks later, Judge Tunheim ruled in Vukelich's and the Forest Service's favor, granting a motion for summary judgment. Earth Protector quickly appealed, but an administrative panel of the 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals denied that last ditch effort. Vukelich would finally be able to re-focus on Cusson Camp, but not before one last round of media coverage.

"When the court decided we could go ahead and log," he says, "up at the mill there were five of these satellite trucks from the different TV stations from all over the state."

Finally, on the morning of February 13, 1998, harvesting operations began. This time, Shermer's crew was busy elsewhere, so Greg and Tim Olson were called on to do the work. After more than two years of controversy and legal wrangling, the thinning took about a week.

"Good sale to cut because it had been thinned once," Tim Olson says. "We worked hard to protect the

young white pine growing up."

"Greg (Olson) ran the buncher," Vukelich adds. "He'd pick up the trees and actually walk them and drop them down so he wouldn't hurt the white pine."

Earlier this year, twenty years after the fuss had ended, Vukelich and Dick and Tim Olson meet for lunch. Sadly, Greg Olson is missing, having passed away in 2008. He should be here for this.

The three share food, coffee, and more than a few laughs over the battle fought and won two decades before. They pored over Vukelich's scrapbook, filled with newspaper clippings and photos from the Little Alfie controversy. One of the photos featured tree length red pine harvested from the site, stretching past the end of the 45-foot trailer. The trio estimated the sticks might have been eighty feet long, which is why it was perfect for Cusson Camp.

"The longer the timber, the more value I could get out of it," Vukelich says. "Doing business with Voyageur Log Homes, I needed a lot of 24 to 30 foot timbers that were straight. With these logs, there wasn't a lot of excess timber."

"Wow, that was nice wood," Dick Olson said as he looked at the photo.



A harvested load of tree length red pine from Little Alfie arrives at Cusson Camp in 1998. Photo courtesy: Tony Vukelich



The Little Alfie site in 2005. Seven years after the harvest, white pine had already grown in excess of eight feet, thanks to added sunlight.

“I don’t remember it being that long,” Tim Olson marveled.

Twenty years after the harvest, there are some quirky ironies in hindsight.

“A lot of those environmentalists protesting,” Tim Olson says, “they never saw the sale. They weren’t allowed past a certain point. It was bizarre.”

And there’s this from Vukelich, who’d never bid on a federal sale before Little Alfie:

“I never bid on another one.” he says, “Little Alfie was the only federal sale I ever bid on.”

But the legacy of Little Alfie lives on in other ways. For one, court challenges to timber sales have mostly stopped, and many say that’s thanks to the victory at Little Alfie.

Then there’s the harvested wood, which wound up in beautiful high quality projects all over northern Minnesota, including at the old offices of Olson Logging—now occupied by Sokoloski Logging—in Buyck. The tongue and groove paneling there is all red pine from Little Alfie.

In fact, a few boards remain at Cusson Camp, and Vukelich is still selling it to those who know it’s there. Despite retiring from the mill five years ago for the most part, he still has some inventory, including red pine from Little Alfie.

“I still have some old gray lumber,” he says on a trip to Cusson Camp to view the precious result of the famous controversy. “That happens to be the in thing now. It’s sawed already, so I just dry it and make

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it look like weathered wood. It's natural, there aren't any chemicals. I just leave the saw marks in it so it looks like a rough board."

Most importantly, there's the forest. A visit to Little Alfie in April offers no surprises.

In fact when approaching the site of the harvest, for all of the controversy and news coverage Little Alfie received twenty years ago, you half expect a sign or a monument indicating where exactly the fuss occurred. But there's only tall, straight red and white pine, thanks to the thinning performed by Greg Olson and his crew. As expected.

For Vukelich, walking the sale with Dick Olson brought memories flooding back.

"You can see how high they are already," Tony says, looking at all the red and white pines at the site. "All the regrowth. Because before you could see right through this. When I came in here before I cut it, you could walk anywhere. There was no brush. Just little white pine."

Today, Little Alfie is thick with white pine, thirty to forty feet tall. The red pine are even taller, over a hundred feet. And it's all natural regrowth.

"Their goal was to release the white pine," Olson says. "It worked."

"These are beautiful trees,"

Vukelich smiles, marveling at the hard work of Olson Logging. But Vukelich deserves credit too, of course, for battling his way through the Little Alfie ordeal.

That's Vukelich's legacy. He didn't ask for this fight. Little Alfie came to him. And what folks who were close to the battle remember, is not only the cause, the wood, and the forest, but also the dignified manner with which Vukelich navigated the entire situation.

"I think when you look back at it," Tim Olson says, "there were a lot of us that were really young and rebels and we really wanted to fight it. But Tony's level-headed, and he's very calm, and he was very patient with it, and it turned out really well. He went through the proper channels with it. There might have been some people around that might not have followed those channels. But Tony was patient and level-headed and it turned out well."



A stump from the Little Alfie harvest, with an example of a red pine and white pine in the background on a recent visit to the site.



Vukelich inspects a red pine board from the Little Alfie harvest. The sale was profitable for Cusson Camp, and because he still has some inventory and aged lumber is popular these days, Little Alfie continues to be profitable.

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Gold Medalist Shuster Highlights Annual Meeting

TPA Sessions Set for Grand Rapids

John Shuster, the Northland native who shocked the curling world by leading Team USA to the Olympic Gold Medal, will be the featured speaker at TPA's 2018 Annual Meeting Banquet.

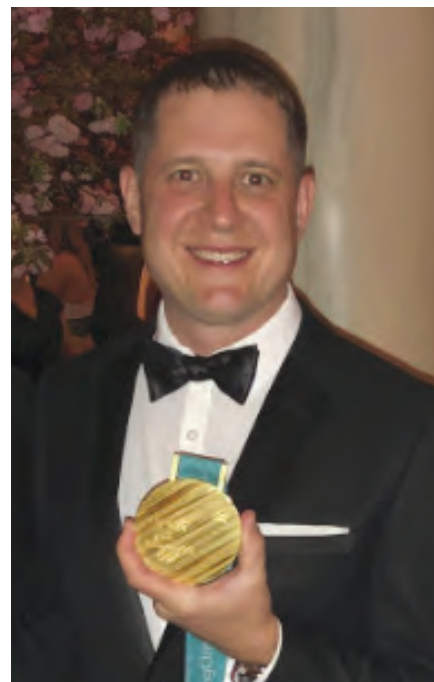
This year's events will be held Wednesday, June 13, 2018 at Sugar Lake Lodge just south of Grand Rapids.

The Banquet caps off a full day of activities for TPA members: The morning Annual Meeting and presentations feature information to help members run their businesses; then the afternoon fishing and golf events offer the opportunity to socialize with fellow loggers and vendors. The

social hour and banquet complete the day's activities.

In February, the Gold Medal victory by Shuster and his teammates captured the imagination of the nation, the first ever for Team USA in Men's Curling. Shuster's journey to the Gold Medal is an amazing rags-to-riches story, and the aftermath of the victory has seen him and his teammates traveling all over the country, including to the White House.

The morning portion of the meeting will feature a presentation from TPA Executive Vice President Wayne Brandt on activities over the previous year, as well as informative presentations from



Olympic Gold Medalist John Shuster is the guest speaker at this year's TPA Annual Meeting Banquet at Sugar Lake Lodge south of Grand Rapids.

others in the industry, including DNR Division of Forestry Director Forrest Boe.

Sugar Lake Lodge feature the beautiful Sugarbrooke Golf Course, as well as clear, blue Sugar Lake. We've again chosen this location not only because of the success of previous years' events, but also because it is centrally located just south of Grand Rapids.

Registration forms for the 2018 Annual Meeting, and Golf and Fishing Event have been mailed. Call the TPA Office for more information. We hope you'll join us for these great events!

Schedule

Wednesday, June 13

Morning—Annual Meeting

Afternoon—Golf and Fishing Event

Evening—Social Hour and Banquet

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Golfers at the 2017 TPA Annual Meeting Golf Event take a break for a photo op. This year's event will again be held at Sugar Lake Lodge's Sugarbrooke Golf Course.

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Results of DNR “Million Cord Study” Questioned

In March, the Minnesota DNR announced it has set a new 10-year sustainable timber harvest at 870,000 cords offered for sale annually from DNR-managed forest lands.

The “Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis” was initiated by Gov. Mark Dayton after TPA and Minnesota Forest Industries urged him to increase the harvest on state lands from 800,000 cords to one million. TPA Executive Vice President Wayne Brandt served on the stakeholder advisory group along with past TPA President Dale Erickson.

The DNR settled on the 870,000 cord figure, despite several of the forest model runs conducted in conjunction with the study indicating that a harvest exceeding one million cords on state lands would be sustainable.

In addition, the DNR says it will launch a special five-year

initiative that could offer up to 30,000 additional cords of ash and tamarack per year in response to the threat posed by emerald ash borer and eastern larch beetle, two invasive species that kill ash and tamarack trees.

Governor Dayton initiated the study in November, 2016. At that time he directed DNR to increase the annual harvest to 900,000 cords for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2017, through FY2018, until the study was completed. As a result, the 870,000 target harvest level represents a decrease of the DNR’s target over the past two fiscal years.

The TPA Executive Committee has sent a comprehensive letter to Governor Dayton, outlining its concerns with the revised harvest level. In addition, TPA Executive Vice President Wayne Brandt continues to engage the governor’s office and DNR on this issue.

The DNR says the new

sustainable harvest was determined after more than a year of scientific analysis, discussions with stakeholders -- including conservation organizations and the forest industry -- and public input.



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Shermer Logging named Minnesota Logger of the Year

Shermer Logging, a 28-year-old business owned by Cliff and Mary Shermer in the Gheen area of northeast Minnesota, has been named 2018 Logger of the Year by the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® State Implementation Committee (SIC). The award was announced April 17 during the Minnesota Logger Education Program conference at Fortune Bay Resort in Tower.

“You won’t find a more widely respected person in Minnesota’s forests than Cliff Shermer,” said Jason Evans, chair of the Minnesota SIC. “Cliff and his excellent staff set the standard for safety and innovation, while always completing their logging jobs in an aesthetically pleasing and sustainable manner.”

Shermer, who serves on the board of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association and is a former member of the Minnesota Logger Education Program board, was quick to pass on the credit to others.

“There are a lot of great loggers out there, but I’ve been fortunate to hire the best people and I’ve also learned by watching others,” said Shermer, 68. “I see the smart techniques others use, pick their brains a little and try to incorporate their best practices into what we do.”

“The logging industry is filled with great people and companies working together to help do our jobs more effectively. Being chosen as the Logger of the Year is a huge honor, but our crew deserves the credit for where we are today.”

Shermer Logging has nine full-time and four part-time employees. The company now becomes a nominee for the Forest Resources Association’s Lakes States Regional Outstanding Logger, to be named in October.

The Minnesota SIC includes representatives from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, forest companies, the University of Minnesota, family forest owners,



Cliff Shermer (left) receives the Minnesota Logger of the Year award from Minnesota SIC chair Jason Evans at the MLEP Logger Conference in Tower.

the Minnesota Logger Education Program, Minnesota Timber Producers Association, Minnesota

Tree Farm Program, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and SFI-certified county land departments.



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Aurora Man Guilty of Stealing Birch from DNR

David Lawrence of Aurora pleaded guilty in April to harvesting roughly 1,200 birch trees from DNR land without a permit.

Lawrence entered the guilty plea to “timber trespass,” a gross misdemeanor, in St. Louis County District Court. The plea agreement

Timber Talk

calls for Lawrence to serve one year of unsupervised probation, pay a \$900 fine and make

restitution.

Lawrence admitted to stealing the trees southwest of Embarrass in woods off Tower Biwabik Road in March of 2017, in order to sell them for home decorative use. According to the DNR, the stolen trees were valued at approximately \$3,400, including the trees themselves as well as the cost to repair the damage to the forest.



Federal Spending Bill Includes Funds for Fire and Forest Management

The Fiscal Year 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill enacted in March includes provisions to reform the way the Federal government funds wildfire suppression, as well as some badly needed forest management reforms.

“I commend Congress for addressing the issue,” said Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue.

“Improving the way we fund wildfire suppression will help us better manage our forests. If we ensure that we have adequate resources for forest management, we can mitigate the frequency of wildfires and severity of future fire seasons. I thank Congressional leaders, with whom I’ve frequently

discussed this issue.”

The spending bill, which provides funding for Forest Service activities for the remainder of FY 2018, includes management reforms including amendments to Good Neighbor Authority to allow road repairs and 20-year Stewardship Contracts for certain forest types. The fire funding provisions address the growth of the 10-year average and provide emergency funds for fire expenses above the capped 10-year average.

The Omnibus includes a new fire suppression funding mechanism, which will adjust funding caps to accommodate firefighting needs and end the need for regular fire borrowing from non-fire accounts at the Forest Service and Interior Department. The legislation provides a budget cap adjustment

for wildfire starting in FY 2020 at \$2.25 billion, which increases to \$2.95 billion in FY 2027. In addition, the legislation freezes the wildfire suppression line item at the Forest Service at the FY15 level, to stop the slow migration of non-fire funding to the fire programs at the beginning of each fiscal year.

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On the Markets

The *Timber Bulletin* publishes information regarding results of a sampling of recent timber sales and other market indicators, as well as other market-related news items.

Recent Timber Sales Average prices, as reported by each agency

Agency **Regular** **Intermediate**

Cass County

February 22—Sealed Bid

Aspen	\$34.00	\$29.85
Red Oak	\$37.28	\$29.16
Bur Oak	\$24.85	\$10.10

All 5 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Cass County

March 29—Sealed Bid

Aspen	\$42.56	\$37.37
Birch	\$25.19	\$23.39
Red Oak	\$42.22	\$31.48
Maple	\$19.29	\$20.04

All 6 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Crow Wing County

March 30—Oral Auction

Aspen	\$40.49	NA
Oak	\$19.93	NA
Birch	\$18.38	NA
Maple	\$11.96	NA
Red Pine	\$67.94	NA

All 13 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Hubbard County

April 9—Oral Auction

Aspen Mixed	NA	\$35.07
Aspen Pulp	NA	\$37.52
Oak Mixed	NA	\$17.19
Birch Pulp	NA	\$13.68

All 11 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Beltrami County

April 10—Sealed Bid

Aspen Pulp	\$39.95	NA
Red Pine Bolts	\$60.82	NA
Red Pine Pulp	\$15.19	NA
Jack Pine P&B	\$36.81	NA

All 7 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Beltrami County

April 12—Oral Auction

Aspen Pulp	\$46.34	NA
Red Pine Bolts	\$63.98	NA

Red Pine P&B \$36.73 NA

Jack Pine P&B \$33.90 NA

All 13 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Becker County

October 13—Oral Auction

Aspen Mixed	\$42.17	NA
Jack Pine		
Mixed	\$29.24	NA
Birch Mixed	\$16.06	NA

All 10 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Cass County

April 26—Oral Auction

Aspen	\$36.88	\$38.11
Birch	\$19.83	\$22.73
Red Oak	\$32.23	\$27.75
Maple	\$21.15	\$20.80

All 6 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

Clearwater County

April 26—Oral Auction

Aspen Pulp	NA	\$42.64
Birch Pulp	NA	\$18.96
Oak Pulp	NA	\$31.29
Basswood Pulp	NA	\$14.54

8 of the 9 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.



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LOGGERS OF THE PAST . . .

Timber for the Mines

by J. C. Ryan

This story is reprinted from an earlier *Timber Bulletin*—one of the first of “Buzz” Ryan’s ever-popular contributions to these pages. The *Bulletin* will continue to reprint selected stories from the memories he recorded for us.—*Editor*



When we speak of logging and lumbering in Minnesota in the early days, we are referring mostly to the cutting and sawing of the virgin pine stands to produce lumber and building materials for the construc-

tion of homes, farm buildings, warehouses and other businesses. However, as pointed out in my previous articles on railroad ties, cedar poles, etc., there were many special uses for the timber from our

forests. Some was shipped to foreign markets for ship construction, piling of all sizes was needed for dams, dikes and other building construction, and square timbers were needed for building docks, wharves and salt bins. Our Minnesota timber had many uses.

Tall, straight Norway pine were much in demand for mining trestles.



However, there was one industry within our own state that used a great deal of timber that many of our present-day citizens know little about. This was the mining industry. As soon as iron ore was discovered and mining began, the need for timber to carry on the work began to grow and became a major cost in the mining of ore.

At first timber was cut adjoining the mines, but after the large forest fires that covered most of the Iron Range in the late 1890s and early 1900s, much of the timber suitable for mining was destroyed. As a result, the mining companies had to reach out to most of northern Minnesota for their mining timber.

Before trucks were used to remove waste and stripping material, this hauling was done by railroad – and each year long trestles would be constructed for the locomotives to haul this material out to be dumped off the sides of the trestles. Starting at ground level, these trestles would gradually build up to about 50 feet in height, with some trestlework being about a half mile in length.

Tall, straight Norway would be used for the legs of these structures, and they had to be at least 10 inches in diameter at the top end. Other types of timber such as tamarack were sometimes used, but Norway pine was most common for trestle legs. Many cross braces were needed, plus timber for the top and finally ties to lay the rails on.

Most of these trestles would be built during the winter months, and in the spring many of these new structures would be seen all over the Range, branching out from the mines. There also were many of these used to carry the iron ore to washing plants, etc. Besides the trestles, there were many spurs in and around the mines, using a great number of railroad ties as well as timbers to support the ties. All bridges were constructed from timber, some of it being sawed but much of it used



Trestles built of round timber were sometimes a half mile long. Tall Norway pine was used for trestle logs.



Below: Timber yard at the mine near Eveleth about 1900.



round.

While open pit mining used considerable timber, it was the underground mines that used the bulk of mining timber. Starting with the framehead, constructed entirely of timber in the early days, to the very ends of the underground tunnels there were continuous walls of timber. There were mine timbers, poles, cribbing, and lagging forming the sides and roofs of the tunnels plus ties on the floors. The miners lives depended entirely on the timber supporting the roofs above them.

Many of the heavy timbers were of pine or large tamarack, the cribbing and poles mostly of tamarack and the lagging of cedar. Good quality timber was used – free from rot and flaws – and it was checked regularly by mine inspectors for quality that would assure proper safety for the men.

There were a number of loggers throughout the northern part of the state who sold their entire output to the mining companies. In the early days, this timber was hauled to the railroads and shipped by rail to the mine sites. In later years, much of it was trucked to the mines.

The timber used on the Mesabi and Vermilion Range mines was mostly cut within 50 miles of these ranges from Grand Rapids to Ely, while timber used on the Cuyuna Range was cut in the Brainerd, Park Rapids and Aitkin areas. Trestle timber was cut in tree lengths and skidded to a landing where it would be cut into lengths desired, with as much long timber as possible. Cribbing, poles and mine timber would be cut into shorter lengths.

Each mine had its timber yard, with experienced men making up the timber into sizes needed in the mine. Lagging was cut into six-foot lengths in the woods and split before transporting it to the mines. Most all of the mining timber was cut during the winter months and transported to the large timber storage yards that surrounded the entrance of each mine.

There were a number of mining timber dealers or brokers who purchased timber from the small loggers and sold it to the individual mining companies as well as direct to each mine. Gillis Brothers of Hibbing was one of the larger dealers on the Range. John Luke of Biwabik also bought for a number of independent mines. There were other dealers in Duluth and on the Cuyuna Range.

Some of the loggers of mining timber were Knuti Bros. of Aurora, William Harvey of Eveleth, George Harvey of Virginia, Harry Homer of Ely, Eino Koski of Tower, Fred Blair of Palisade, Sarri Bros. of Eveleth, Peterson Bros. of Zimm – and many more.

The Oliver Iron Co. had its own buying and logging operation with offices in the Wolvin Building in Duluth. From this office, they purchased all of the timber used in the U.S. Steel mines, not only in

Minnesota but in Wisconsin and Michigan. Early in the game, Oliver had purchased large tracts of timber in Minnesota as well as in Michigan and had a good force of cruisers, timbermen and foresters to look after and manage their lands. They had their own camps and logged each year some of the special mining timber they were unable to purchase.

They had some very nice stands of pine in the Burntside Lake area and in western Lake County from Winton to Scott Junction. Some of the last stands of virgin pine were cut from Oliver lands. After the demand for mining timber slacked off they sold some of their pine stands to lumber companies who cut them for lumber.

For many years Oliver drove the upper Cloquet River and its branches from Brimson north. They had a hoist set up at Indian Lake, where the mining timber was hoisted from the water and shipped by rail to the mines. The headquarters for their logging operations on the upper Cloquet also was maintained at Brimson for many years. John Steinke was their head woodsman and logging superintendent at Brimson and later became general manager of all their woods operations – a job he held until he retired. The Oliver also had much timber on the lands that were being mined, and this was cut under the supervision of their timber department.

The Oliver Mining Company was one of the first companies to engage in fire protection for their timber holdings and hired a number of patrolmen to work with state agencies in protecting their lands. They were also one of the companies that formed the Wales Forest Protection Agency to protect timber lands of western Lake and eastern St. Louis counties.

Other mining companies on the Range had some small timber holdings of their own but depended on the purchase of timber for the bulk of their operations.

In 1896, the first steel “head frame” or “shaft house” was constructed at the Adam Mine and was soon followed by steel replacing wood on many of the other mines. With the coming of trucks, the long wood trestles began to disappear, and by the late 1920s a wood trestle was a rare thing. With the closing of the last underground mine at Ely, the use of mine timber ended.

While railroad ties still are used at the taconite plants in limited amount and a few special uses for timber may occur, timber for mining is a thing of the past. The Oliver Mining Company still has some timber holdings in Minnesota and Michigan, but they are very limited.

The era of mine timber is gone – but we are reminded of the very important part that our vast virgin forest played in the development of the mining industry in Minnesota.



Lagging for mines (above) was cut in six-foot lengths and split in the woods.



Above: The Cloquet River full of logs and mine timber above Brimson. Below: Oliver Mining camp east of Brimson in 1918.



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