

Washington State Folklife Council

c. 1970's
Tape 1, Side 1

Northwest Logger Poetry

Transcribed by Lauren Le, May 25, 2004

Once upon a Monday morning,
The riggin' crew was a-moaning.
They had all been drunk the night before.
All but me, and I was sober,
From September to October,
Temperature hung at ninety or more.

Cussin', fussin' at each other,
And we hated one another.
To find conditions worse would be a chore.
Then things went from bad to worse,
Enough to make a preacher curse.
Humidity dropped to nine minus four.

But we keep right on working,
That outfit allowed no shirking,
At every slacken pace you'd hear a roar.
The hook tender he was rougher,
And the riggin' slinger tougher,
Than the barrel of a Colt 44.

They sent us running down below,
Where a mountain goat would not go.
The timber was all rotten to the core.
And all the stumps were cut real tall,

There were no choker holes at all,
And down our shirts the cooling sweat did pore.

It was the middle of the day,
And we were trying to make her pay,
We hooked a turn of three truck loads or more.
A wild yell from slinger Bill,
The logs went crashing up the hill,
The mountain seemed to tremble to the core.

It hung into a jagged bluff,
As I was reaching for my snuff,
Came crashing back upon us with a roar.
I couldn't see a place to hide,
"My God look out!" the hooker cried,
As a sliver tore right through the shirt he wore.

It done him in, done in but good,
Skewered him with a piece of wood,
I jumped like I'd never jumped before.
I landed with a crashing thump,
Underneath a big cedar stump,
The logs overhead rolled, crashed and tore.

Finally, things stopped coming down,
There where dead men all around.
A sorry sight all blood and guts and gore.
It killed a whole crew very dead,
The logs with blood were painted red,
I had to pack them out—a nasty chore.

So I signaled the riggin' back,

Called to the whistle punk for slack,
Dragged the dead where the chokers reached before.
Then I hooked them round the hip,
Where the chokers could get a grip,
The whistle blew and up the hill they tore.

It wasn't over we did learn,
When the chaser unhooked the turn,
The head from Bill's body had been tore.
Quickly I charged back down the hill,
To find the head of slinger Bill,
I cursed him—at his very soul I swore.

Till I finally found his head,
Resting in a devil-club bed,
It glared at me with glassy eyes that bore.
Knowing I should have left it there,
Instead I grabbed it by the hair,
Then started for the landing once more.

I started walking right along,
Then started whistling a song,
A tuneless little song of days of yore.
Then both my ears started ringing,
And my head started singing,
“I ain't got no body anymore!”

My fingers tremble as I write,
It's near the middle of the night,
I can hear something scratching at the door.
I cover up my ears with dread,
His eerie voice would wake the dead,

He sings that same ole diddy o'er and o'er.