

Brains, Brawn And Ou

Look out the window. Make sure you're facing the street, and focus on that telephone pole right across from you. It's pretty big, isn't it? Do you think you could climb to the top of that pole in ten seconds? Or maybe fell it to the ground and run away with it? Consider what it would take out of you to roll it over the ground, up a ramp and onto a 5 ft. tall platform.

Difficult undertakings, to say the least. Certainly not the hobbies of your typical student. Naturally, the UNB Woodsmen team is composed of anything but typical students, because this is the sort of activity that they must learn, practise and perfect, if they will again dominate the field at the upcoming 28th Annual UNB Intercollegiate Woodsmen Competition:

Most of us know a little bit about the UNB Woodsmen. They are the folks who send axes whizzing by us as we walk through the Chapman Field parking lot on the way to school. You can often see them carrying saws, axes and unidentifiable pieces of equipment around campus. They dress in everything from stereotypical lumberjack shirts and boots to shorts and sneakers. But what's behind this lumberjack business? And just what is it that they do, anyway?

Forestry today is dominated by huge machinery; skidders and forwarders, single-grip harvesters and feller-porters. Yet it was not that long ago that the woods rang with the crack of axes on wood, the grate of saws on fallen timber and the shouts of men. To be a Woodsmen is to honour the skills and endurance of our forefathers, and to maintain these uniquely Canadian traditions. What we now consider an unusual and alternative sport was the way of life for thousands of men when our country was young. The Woodsmen Competition events are based on the activities of loggers at work and at play, and thus help to preserve a part of our heritage more realistically than can a few lines in the history books.

Back to the telephone example

we talked about before. You may not think yourself capable of running up a pole or cutting it down, but to a Woodsmen, it's a sport! The pole climb is one of the more exciting events to watch, as men and women dash to the top of a 25m pole in split second time, trusting to their spurs and their skill to drive them to the top. This event mimics the

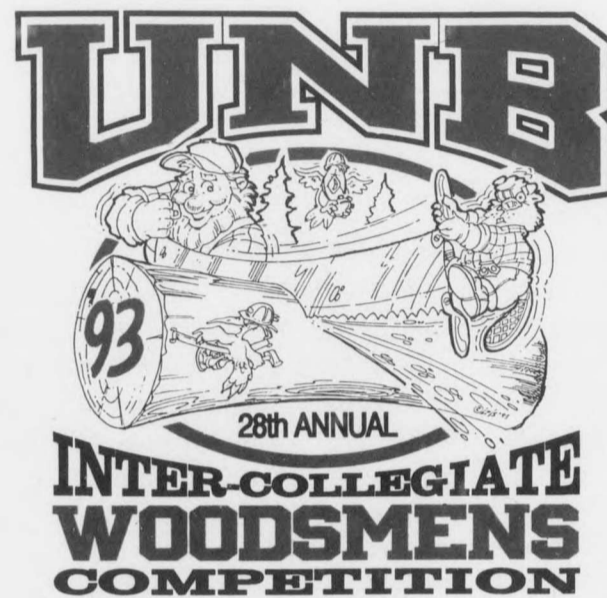
"high riggers" of old, who climbed up and equipped trees with pulleys for pulling logs out of the bush, called "cable yarding." Fell and twitch, another fast-paced event, involves the participation of the whole team. Two team members fell a pole to the ground as old-time "fellers" would have felled trees, and the

the woods' used to be like."

While a woodsman's life was one of gruelling labour, there still would be times in the evenings when the loggers could relax and turn to lighter activities. Step-dancing, storytelling and fiddle music were favorites, as were games of skill and accuracy. Axe-throwing was an opportunity to show off one's expertise, just as throwing pulpwood for distance tested one's strength. These games are also part of a woodsman's repertoire.

In modern times sports athletics, brains and brawn are united to create the exciting array of events that take place at the UNB Woodsmen Competition. More than thirty teams from as far away as Ontario, Quebec, Vermont and Maine will be here on October 16 at the Chapman Field parking lot, vying for the glory of winning here at UNB, the largest eastern Canadian intercollegiate woodsmen competition. It's not easy to walk away with the overall trophy; a team must be accomplished in all events to gain sufficient points to win overall. In addition, UNB's own woodsmen team has traditionally been the victor in both the men's and women's divisions here, putting added pressure on the visiting teams.

Many of the woodsmen teams that will be here on Saturday are considered varsity by their schools. UNB's Woodsmen team is mainly self-supporting, working at odd jobs and funding themselves with the help of such supporters as the UNB Forestry Association. In spite of their lack of consistent funding, UNB Woodsmen are the undisputed leaders in the field of eastern Canadian timbersports and are proud to be the indomitable "black sheep" of the intercollegiate circuit. Hard work and a good attitude are the main factors that propel this team to victory so often. Seasoned veterans Cindy Fife, Jennifer Loevenmark, Dave MacLeod and Leigh Black provide the team with experience and skill. Promising newcomers Jason Limongelli and James Cooper create



remaining team members run to drag the pole for 20m in the shortest time. Bonus points are awarded if the falling pole lands on a spike placed in the ground prior to chopping, which also finds its origin in history: "An axeman's skill was such that he could drive a stake into the ground 30 feet from the tree he was about to fell and hit the stake with the falling trunk" (Donald McKay, *The Lumberjacks*). Log decking, also described above, imitates two loggers stacking the timber into a "skidway" or storage pile which the teamsters would later haul out of the woods with horses and sleighs. Says Forestry Association President Jonathan Keirstead: "We'd like to encourage students and residents of Fredericton to come out and view a hands-on perspective of what 'work in

