

Stories From The Archives — “Old Jack Staves Off Civilization”, by Moira Farrow

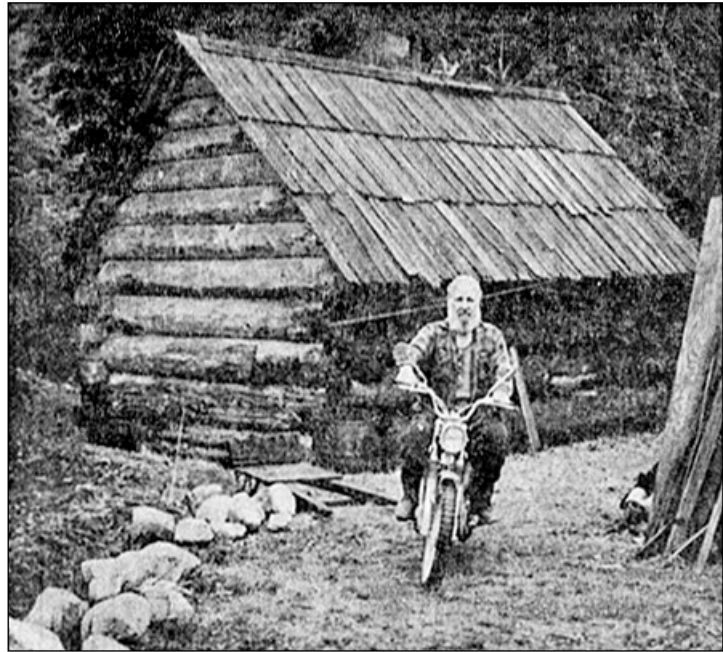
Source: [Vancouver Sun, Saturday, March 3rd, 1973, page 1.](#)

Researched by: Ralph Drew, Belcarra, B.C., May 2024.

Trapper Jack David is fighting a losing battle with civilization. Logging has killed-off the animals that used to be his livelihood. Road construction has muddied the river where he used to catch salmon. And B.C. Hydro spraying has wiped-out his potato patch.

“It’s a dog-eat-dog life, I guess,” said 73-year-old David in an interview Friday [March 2nd, 1973] at his log cabin home on the Indian River. “But I’m not moving.”

The big bearded trapper first came into the country at the head of Indian Arm in 1920. He liked the look of the rugged land immediately, but had an urge to see the world.



Trail Bike... Useful for trapper Jack David

“I wanted to try the deep water,” said David who was born on Vancouver Island. “So, I went away to sea — sail, steam and motor ships — for 10 years and then I came back here.”

Since 1930 he has led a double life, spending the winters in the bush trapping and the summers in the city as a painter and decorator. “I had a family to raise, you see, so I got a place in town, but I like the freedom out here and I spend most of my time here.” said David. He has three married sons, 12 grandchildren and one great grandchild. His wife lives at his house in Burnaby, but all members of the family are frequent visitors to the cabins in the bush.

“Four of us shared the trapline in here originally.” Said David. “We had 90-square-miles [233 km²] of country, the timber was thick and the trapping was very good. We got mink, martin, weasel and wolverine. There were quite a few wolves and cougars around in those days and they kept the animals in balance. A cougar enjoys eating a wolf pup and *vice versa*.”

But things have changed for David and his way of life in the 43 years he has lived in the forest beside the Indian River. Weldwood of Canada Ltd. began logging there about 13 years ago [1960] and B.C. Hydro slashed a right-of-way for its transmission lines that run only 100 yards [100m] or so from the cabin door.

“The trapping’s very poor now because of the logging,” he said. “When the timber’s cleared, there’s no place left for the animals to live. When they burn the slash, the small animals take shelter in the rock slides and get cooked. And when the mice, squirrels and rabbits are all burned-up, there is nothing for the big animals to live on.”

David used to be able to take a fish out of the Indian River whenever he felt like it in the old days. “But all this road building for the loggers muddied-up the river and now there’s very few fish of any species in there except for the odd steelhead,” he said.

He had just about learned to live with the loggers when the next blow came — B.C. Hydro sprayed the right-of-way near his cabin. “I had a quarter-acre of potatoes and the spray cleaned

them right out,” he said. “And it also killed off all my strawberries. Sure, I complained to Hydro and they said they’d give me a sack or two of spuds, but that was the last I ever heard from them. I never got no spuds. That potato patch would have kept me all winter and I was going to give a lot of them away.”

Even though the hydro lines run almost over the top of David’s cabin, it has no power. He uses a coal oil lamp for light and a wood stove for heat. To get fuel, he floats a log down the river and then packs it into his camp.

To keep up with the civilization that was crowding in on him, David bought a snowmobile and a trail bike and now rides along the logging roads that were once his trapping trails. “They were originally animal trails, but I used them for trapping and then the logging company came along, widened them, gravelled them, and said they were their roads,” he said.

He used to have a network of trails through the mountains and valleys and a string of 14 cabins for overnight shelter. “But now there’s only four or five left in the mountains — some fell down and some went with the logging.” David still uses two cabins in the Indian River Valley, one in the woods by the transmission lines and the other on the bank of the river near the Weldwood camp.

“They are very good to me at the camp cookhouse, they tell me to come on in, I’m welcome there any time,” he said. “But they imported a dog into the camp and it chased off some of my pet raccoons that live under my other cabin.” David said the raccoons will now only appear when he’s home because they know his footsteps. “I call all them coons Joe,” he said. “Last night I was down there and hollered ‘Come on out Joe’ and three of them came running.”

Animals mean far more to David than the skins to be sold at the fur auction. He’s surrounded by them all the time. He has two dogs and two cats, and an evergreen by his cabin door is festooned like a Christmas tree with pieces of fat for the birds. “The cats have to work for a living keeping the mice down,” he joked. “Animals are cannibalistic. They eat each other all the time. A rat even ate the tail off my Davy Crockett hat.”

David is the only person living in the area apart from the loggers and he is not going to budge now.



Photograph by Rob Amar, May 4th, 2024.

One of Jack David’s trapline cabins next to the Indian River.



Photograph by Rob Amar, May 4th, 2024.

One of Jack David's trapline cabins next to the Indian River — The cabin is located on the riverbed near the Weldwood logging camp, about 5 km north from the end of the FSR at the 27 km point from the start of the road.



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One of Jack David's trapline cabins next to the Indian River.