



Photo by Roger Werth

Weyerhaeuser trucks, buildings and equipment at Camp Baker were swamped with logs and mud early Sunday morning

Weyco's loss to volcano to be billions of bucks

By Lew Pumphrey
The Daily News

Weyerhaeuser Co.'s property loss from one day of volcanic destruction will total into the billions of dollars.

The company, which is the major landowner west and north of Mount St. Helens, has lost all of its 12-Road Camp and the log sorting yard there; most of Camp Baker and its log yard; uncounted railroad and vehicle bridges; dozens of trucks, buses, logging machines and bulldozers; its railroad system linking Camp Baker to 12-Road, Green Mountain and Headquarters; hundreds of thousands of blown-over trees and at least 10 million board feet of logs.

All working Weyerhaeuser personnel in the area of the mountain are accounted for, but some of the 21 persons reported missing are company employees who live near the mountain.

The company's official statement is that it's too early to put a dollar sign on the damage. But an employee, when asked if it could reach \$1 billion, said, "Probably."

Obviously, Camp Baker and 12-Road are closed today. So is Camp Kalama, which was undamaged but closed as a precaution.

There is no way to get to the Green Mountain sawmill, and that mill is closed until further notice. Reports indicate the mill is intact, though.

The company's woods products operations are running at the Longview millsite today. The pulp and paper operations in Longview are running, but company officials have said privately they're concerned over the disruption of wood chip supplies.

No trains can bring logs to Longview, but the railroad maintenance workers and the Longview log boom workers are working.

Most of the logs in the Toutle and Cowlitz rivers are

owned by Weyerhaeuser. Since Sunday, Bruce Ooming and Dredging Co. has been contracted by Weyerhaeuser to pluck the logs out of the Cowlitz.

Bo Bruce of the towboat company said four floating cranes, six towboats and a half-dozen barges were setting logs out of the Cowlitz since noon Sunday.

He said he has no idea how long it might take to get the logs from the Cowlitz. "In two or three days, we might be in pretty good shape," he said.

The logs are being taken to the Weyerhaeuser docks on the Columbia River and unloaded, Bruce said.

Mike Bickford, a Weyerhaeuser company spokesman, said this morning that an assessment on the condition of those salvaged logs is being made today. One worker said many logs looked to be damaged so badly that they could only be used as fiber logs.

Bickford said he was told by someone in the

Federal Way headquarters that 200 million board feet of logs are laying on the ground, the victims of the initial shock caused when Mount St. Helens erupted Sunday morning.

Most of the trees on the ground are north and northeast of the mountain, Bickford said.

The company has reported at least 50 forest fires near the volcano, none of which are being fought.

"No employees are being assigned to fight fires until the mountain's activity is quieted," Bickford said.

On Sunday, the company's two helicopters were flying reconnaissance flights for the Cowlitz and Skamania sheriffs, said Jim Bombach, the company's regional forest engineer.

Also, security chief Don Filippot reported that a security crew was patrolling the company's lands, and that one on-the-ground Weyerhaeuser worker was serving as communications link for some Skamania County deputies to the east of the volcano.

Escaping the eruption

Mountain, campers moved fast

By Steve Twardt
The Daily News

Four local residents who camped near Mount St. Helens Saturday night awoke Sunday to see much of the peak's north face explode and come crashing down.

Pat Sullivan of Kelso and three other men were camping about three miles from the base of the mountain. Just minutes earlier, he had been talking with his friend, Dennis Smith of Longview, about how disappointed he was that they hadn't seen steam this weekend.

Then Sullivan noticed movement at the summit. "I hadn't put on my glasses so I thought my eyes were out of focus," he said. "Then I realized the mountain really was moving. It looked like it dropped from the top straight down. Everything was just riding to the bottom. It was all so fast."

Sullivan, Smith and their companions — Pat's

brother, Mike, and his cousin, Junior Tompkins of Longview — heard three explosions and then watched as a dark cloud of ash and lightning headed toward them.

"There was a big bulge that heaved up a little, then slid off toward Spirit Lake," Dennis said. "Then the dog's head blew up and the whole mountain started coming down."

"We actually thought the whole mountain came right out of there," Pat said.

The four ran to their vehicles, leaving their camping equipment behind. Pat, a choker-setter for Weyerhaeuser, knew an emergency road from their campsite at the 5740 line.

"We came over and dropped in over Cougar," he said. "It didn't take us an hour to get down. But the trip was plenty scary. Pat said the four drove their two cars at speeds up to 80 miles an hour over the logging roads and still had trouble staying ahead of ash fallout."

"I was looking out the windshield as we headed down the mountain and I couldn't see blue sky anywhere," he said. "The ash wasn't coming down on us, but I'm sure my camping stuff is buried now."

The four came upon a white Maverick that had spun out but turned down the driver's request to pull his car out. "We told him he could ride with us but we weren't going to stop," Pat said.

The driver, Sullivan said, took a ride from another driver a few minutes later.

The four survived without injury. But Pat Sullivan is not hopeful for other campers he saw in the area.

"There were people down in the Toutle Canyon," Pat said. "We saw their campfires. Unless they left in the middle of the night, there had to be people down there. They couldn't have gotten out of there. And if anyone was down there, they didn't have a chance."

Pilots prodded scores to safety

By Vince Evans
The Daily News

Rescuers in military helicopters saw what looked to them like the aftermath of an atomic bomb.

Still, they had to convince some residents and sightseers in the Toutle River Valley of the deadly peril they faced. A few even refused to board the helicopters to leave.

For some it was already too late. One helicopter crew spotted a car along Spirit Lake Highway with its windows "blown out" either melted by heat or smashed by the force of an explosion. Its occupants were buried to death.

The rescuers didn't stop when they flew over two or three more cars with windows gone and no sign of life. They wanted to rescue the living.

Air Force and National Guard pilots flew missions into the Toutle River valley Sunday and came to the Kelso Airport to refuel, rest and await new orders.

"To a man, they told stories of being waved away as some persons ignored their warnings early in the day to ride the choppers to safety."

Air Force Reserve Maj. David Mullen said his helicopter followed a car to a house on a ridge along the Toutle's north fork. Four people got out of the car and went in the house. A man was lowered to the house to rescue them, Mullen said, but they refused to leave.

Later in the afternoon, fear took over as the nearness of the disaster struck home. People flagged the crews down, anxious to escape even though it meant leaving homes, cars and pets behind.

Gen. George Coates, in charge of the Air National Guard contingent based at Kelso Sunday, said crews were picking up some persons so badly burned and coated with ash that they were barely recognizable.

The National Guard helicopter unit had begun two weeks of training Sunday in Yakima, but word of the eruption quickly changed its plans. The choppers were scrambled at 10 a.m., but only two-thirds of the group could lift off before ash fallout grounded the rest by clogging engines and sticking to windshields.

Clouds of ash turned the sky above the airfield pitch black.

The choppers did make it into the air stopped for refueling at Wenatchee and Fort Lewis before beginning rescue operations from Kelso and Toutle.

Already on the scene was the 394th Air Rescue, U.S. Air Force Reserve from Portland, which began returning from the Kelso Airport at about noon with the first persons evacuated.

Choppers whirled above the airport and lined up to take off when missions came through, most of them via sheriff's deputies or State Patrol officers who learned where people were stranded.

Rescuers said Reed was rescued — against his will, he said — was Jim Reed, a KOMO Radio reporter from Seattle.

Reed said his helicopter followed a car to a house on a ridge along the Toutle's north fork. Four people got out of the car and went in the house. A man was lowered to the house to rescue them, Mullen said, but they refused to leave.

Later in the afternoon, fear took over as the nearness of the disaster struck home. People flagged the crews down, anxious to escape even though it meant leaving homes, cars and pets behind.

Looking like chalk eraser, worker fled

Harian Christensen left Onalaska at 10 a.m. to fetch his tool kit from the volcano's path at Camp Baker.

He never got the tools, but he did escape with his skin.

A helicopter rescued the Weyerhaeuser mechanic and four campers he met after the volcanic ash in the air knocked his pickup truck out of commission. He had been driving on a logging road roughly 15 miles northwest of the mountain.

"I didn't want to get on the highway, I wanted to stay up high," Christensen said, looking like a human chalk eraser as he sat in a waiting room in St. John's Hospital's emergency wing. He was coated in light gray.

Christensen wasn't injured, but one of the per-

sons he met had burned his hands and feet. The other two — a man and his two young sons — told him they thought they escaped injury because they were in their sleeping bags when the eruption sent a blast of heat through the area.

The four told Christensen they had been camping along the Green River trail.

The Onalaska man said he ran into trouble as he drove farther and farther along ash-coated roads.

"The ash looked like concrete, only whiter," he said. "It was heavy, gritty."

Where the ash was a few inches deep, he could feel the heat through his leather shoes as he made his way down the road. He met his four companions and they walked together. Luckily, a helicopter spotted them.

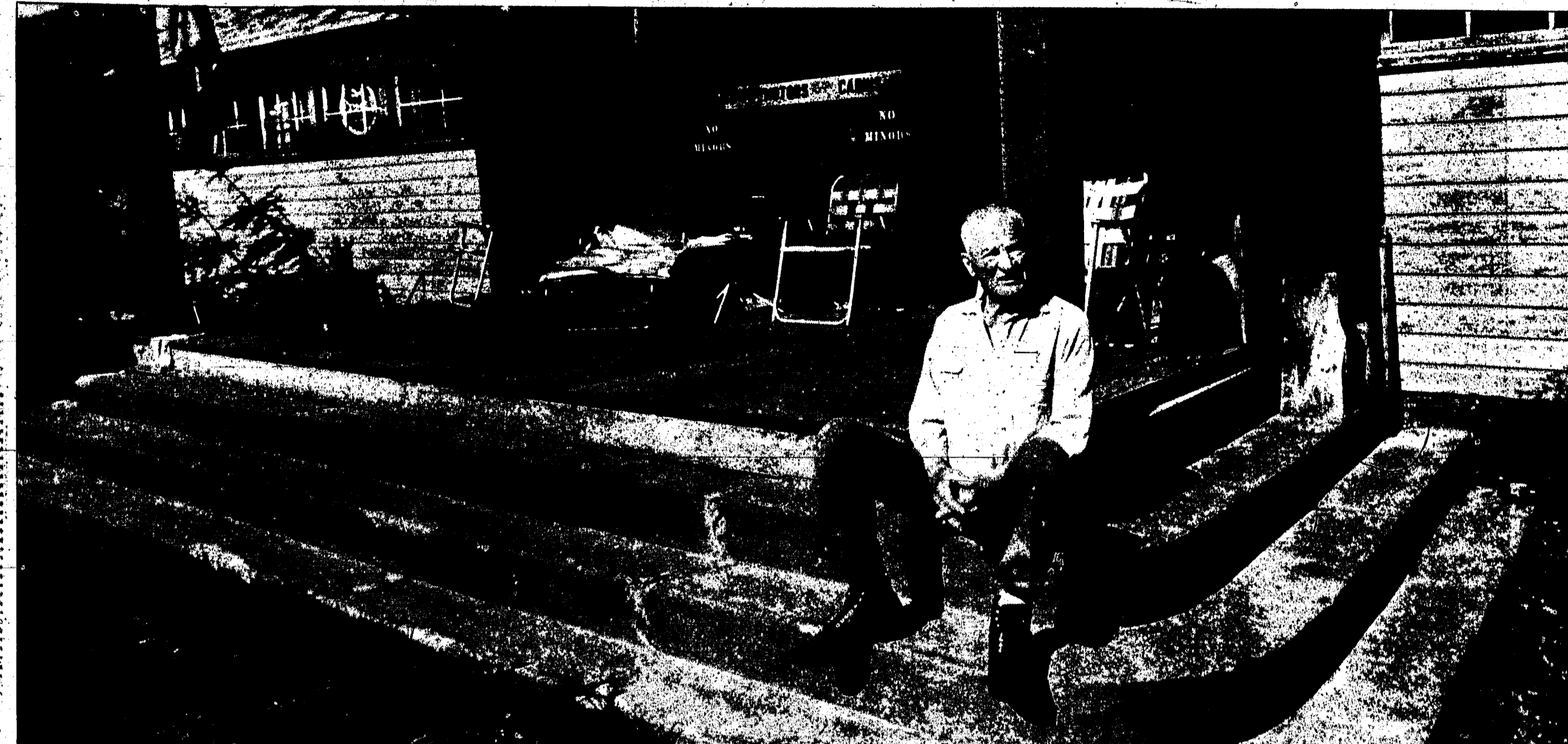


Photo by Roger Werth

Harry Truman basked in sunshine Saturday afternoon on his front porch; Sunday morning he was likely buried by his beloved mountain

Harry Truman lived, and likely died, by his rules

By Rick Selfert
The Daily News

It was the day before the mountain blew sky high, almost certainly taking Harry Truman with it.

If he knew what was coming, he gave no inkling to the knot of visitors gathered in the sun outside his lodge Saturday afternoon.

Harry was still the same acidic curmudgeon, the same front-stoop raconteur, the same challenger of the fates.

A reporter, new to Harry's rambling soliloquies, got Truman's backles up by asking him what he thought of Spirit Lake property owners who resented his special treatment by the state. Same owners wanted the same free access to the lake that Harry enjoyed.

Harry walked away from the prying in a huff. "The law is here to look after them," he said. "Not me.

Talk to the officers."

The day had brought a flood of owners to save their possessions. "Everybody in the goddamned country is up here," grumped Harry. He called the lake's sojourners "nesters."

Later, after retreating to his lodge and being coaxed out again by a photographer, he reminisced on the lodge's stoop. He talked about flying biwings in World War I in Europe. He spun yarns about the Taylorcraft pontoon planes he uses to fly in and out of the lake.

"You'd have to take off in a circle until one pontoon lifted off. That's the only way you'd get off the goddam lake."

He was famous, he said, long before the mountain-focused national attention on him. "Anytime you've lived 54 years in one place, you're famous."

And he looked forward to his long vigil in the quiet summer in years. "I've always been self-sufficient," he said. "I have plenty to do here."

His memorabilia-strewn lodge displayed its newest treasures — banners that Salem school children presented to him last week hung from the bar. "Harry — We Love You," they read.

When the photographer asked him to pose outside, Harry readily obliged. A Coke glass full of bourbon in one hand, the volcano's ruddy holdout ruffed through a pile of fan mail as the photographer snapped away.

Talk turned to the mountain. He allowed that a few days before he had canoed over across the lake to Bear Creek.

"It's uncanny seeing the mountain over there," Harry Truman said with a hint of awe. "You know you can't really see how big it is from here."

Somebody had accused him of "crowding predestination," he said — of forcing his time to die. He had crowded predestination before, he said. It was nothing new to him. It was much a part of him as the lodge, the lake and the mountain.

Skamania County Sheriff Bill Closser had come to pay what would turn out to be a last call.

Closser, who had earlier reluctantly admitted that Harry was breaking the law, said authorities had asked Gov. Dixy Lee Ray to grant Harry immunity from her executive order declaring the mountain off-limits.

Harry could stay. "That shows a lot of law and a lot of order here," Harry said matter-of-factly.

There is an unwritten law, Harry seemed to say. The world makes exceptions for the likes of Harry Truman. Harry Truman lived by his own rules. And, save some miracle, he died by them.

Homeowners in, out just in time

By Rick Selfert
The Daily News

"We're playing Russian roulette with the mountain," said Skamania County Sheriff Bill Closser as he walked up from Harry Truman's boat house on Spirit Lake Saturday afternoon.

He didn't know how right he was. It was the day before the mountain blew its insides out.

Closser, a few reporters and 35 families cleaning out their Spirit Lake cabins survived the game. Fifteen hours later they would have lost.

While the volcano slept through the sunny Saturday afternoon resting for Sunday's holocaust, Dwight Sutherland of Longview pondered what to take from the A-frame that fit and his family built with their hands eight years ago.

"My God, look at all the ash," he said, surveying his grounds.

Sutherland hadn't visited the cabin since the week after the first eruption on March 27.

The picture window view of the mountain had changed too. The northern flank of the volcano had shifted up and out. "That whole damn thing is going to the left," Sutherland said. At worst, he thought, the road would be blocked by the slide and water would back up, possibly flooding his house.

Others, like Sutherland's neighbor, Bud Will, were moving furniture to lots to avoid backed up water.

Today, their homes are likely blown to smithereens or buried in ash. But Saturday, Spirit Lake seemed like a garden party. Neighbors yelled across lots with requests to borrow pipe wrenches and other tools. "I'd be water skiing on a day like this," Sutherland said as he moved a large hand-made table into his truck.

Deep in the mountain, the volcano seethed, preparing to vent its fury.

Sutherland had come alone. His wife, Lorelei, forbade their children to join him. Sutherland chuckled at her caution.

"The last time we were here we just grabbed," Sutherland said as he drank a beer and looked for places where the fine ash had found its way inside the cabin.

He went out to check the crystal clear creek tumbling down the boulders behind the cabin. Eleven-year-old Darren Sutherland had stocked the creek with trout. "He never takes what he catches. He just catches them and puts them back."

Darren had asked his dad to check on the trout. "He's been worried to death about his fish," Sutherland said. "He worries about the little things."

An unseen State Patrol plane watched the mountain to radio a warning should an explosion come.

The property owners said they hoped to convince law enforcement agencies and Gov. Dixy Lee Ray to let them in every couple weeks to check the property on "safe days" like this one. Several said they were more afraid of vandals than they were of the mountain. None of them, however, reported any break-ins. The only damage was from the mountain's ash.

Alder trees behind the Sutherland cabin were strangely bare of foliage. Only a few skinny leaves had budged out. "The alders are usually bloomed out by now," Sutherland said. And his lawn was criss-crossed with tracks of ash. "The ash is choking the grass off," he said.

Like others, Sutherland didn't know if his property was priceless or worthless. Would the mountain's fame turn the land into a national monument? Would the government buy the owners out? The owners didn't know, but they had talked about the options.

As Sutherland prepared to leave, his pickup brimming with possessions, he talked about his loss even before the ruin. He had no plans to sell, he said. Two years ago a Portland doctor offered him \$50,000 cash and Sutherland turned it down. "I want to pass this on to my kids. I hope they enjoy it as much as I have."

Today there is likely nothing to pass on.

Kelso family lost cabin Cousins watched peak go

By Steve Twardt
The Daily News

Sandy Ford was sitting on the front porch of her family's Spirit Lake cabin Saturday afternoon, marveling at the peace and quiet.

Twenty-four hours later, she wasn't sure she even had a cabin.

Sunday morning's sudden eruption of Mount St. Helens surprised everyone, but it held special consequences for Sandy and her husband, Roy, of Kelso. Their chalet-style cabin, which they have had since 1972, is probably lost.

"I haven't hit me yet," Sandy said Sunday afternoon. "I'm trying not to think about it."

The Fords and about 50 other persons gathered at the Ostrander Road exit of Interstate 5 Sunday, awaiting the logjam in the Cowlitz River. The logs did not appear until late afternoon, but plumes of smoke could be seen through the haze all day.

Sandy was wearing her "I own a piece of the rock" shirt and several persons stopped to ask about the cabin.

"I just didn't think this was going to happen," Sandy said. "I thought she would just steam and belch a couple of years and then go back to sleep."

"We enjoy that place, and this is the time of year we start spending a lot of time up there," Roy added.

Sandy said she was wearing her "I own a piece of the rock" shirt and several persons stopped to ask about the cabin.

"I don't know whether to talk about it in the present tense or the past tense," she said.

Sandy was one of about 20 persons who traveled caravan-style to Spirit Lake Saturday to retrieve belongings. The road to the lake had been closed off by Gov. Dixy Lee Ray.

"The closure didn't bother us as much as the way it was done," said Roy. "We figured we knew the area and we wanted the ability to go in."

So while Roy was at work, Sandy drove to the cabin to retrieve some camping gear and other valuables.

"The only things I brought out were things I could use this summer," Sandy said. "We figured we wouldn't get back in this summer and we didn't want vandals to break in."

"Families may be the least of their problems now."

"We talked about an eruption in passing, but we never dreamed, never, that it would start doing this," Sandy said.

The Fords built their own cabin, which Roy says is one of about 75 at the lake. If it took them four years just to complete a vehicle-strength bridge to their land.

The Fords had hopes of using the cabin as a retirement home before passing it along to their two daughters. Roy figured he had invested \$35,000 in the cabin; he hoped his insurance would cover at least \$25,000.

Roy said he had a feeling of relief.

"At least we were out over this. This is our fun, our recreation; but it's not our livelihood. The people who are losing their homes, that's sad."

Cousins watched peak go

By Andre Stepankowsky
The Daily News

If it weren't for a promise they made to a relative, cousins Darren Greenwood and Brian Hart may not have lived to say they were among the first to see Mount St. Helens erupt violently Sunday.

They had promised to help the relative move furniture at 9:30 a.m. To keep the appointment, they had to leave a spot a few miles from the mountain shortly before it erupted and sent destruction down the Toutle River Valley.

"If it weren't for that deadline we wouldn't have gotten out of there in time," Brian said. "All four bridges we crossed to get out of there are gone."

They had left Kelso for Weyerhaeuser's 12-mile Camp on the South Fork of the Toutle River at 4:30 a.m. to photograph the mountain. They said they were within three miles of the volcano's base on the 5,600 line. They left the mountain at 8 a.m., half an hour before the eruption began.

"On our way down Spirit Lake Highway we saw people pointing to the mountain," Darren said. "It was erupting. It looked like an A-bomb going off."

"When it first went off, we didn't know whether to take more pictures or get the hell out of there," said Darren. It was a close call.

The mountain rumbled and shook the ground as they stood near Diederich's Grocery near South Toutle Road and Spirit Lake Highway. A mushroom cloud quickly obliterated the sun.

"One lady said she didn't know the mountain was erupting until she felt her waterbed shaking," Brian said. Darren said one elderly man didn't realize the volcano was erupting until he walked outside his home and saw that the sky was dark.

They couldn't believe people were rushing east on Spirit Lake Highway to get a better view.

"We got out of there while we still could," Brian said. "People were charging toward the mountain."

Spirit Lake Highway got so congested that they turned left on South Silver Lake Road and drove to Headquarters Road, which brought them onto Interstate Highway 5.

Song predicted eruption

Now Harry Truman you gotta go
You can't be stuck there in that snow
You gotta leave that dirty mountain side.
It's gonna rock, it's gonna roll,
It's gonna leave a nasty hole.
It'll be too late to find a place to hide.

— Chorus of Ode to Mount St. Helens, recorded by Stull & Co.

By Kathy Connolly
The Daily News

It's a toe-tapping country western tune, said Bob Hansen, a 24-year-old Seattle area resident and a guitarist in Stull & Co.

Hansen, clad in jeans and polka-dot cowboy boots, showed up at the Lakeside Cafe near Silver Lake Sunday to check on sales of his first recording.

In 14 verses, sung by a matter-of-fact young female voice, Ode to Mount St. Helens neatly prophesied Sunday's eruption.

Well the tourists come to see her smoke,
And they all think it's one big joke,
That mountain's just a molehill in disguise.
But when that lava starts to ooze,
They don't want you on that mountain when it blows,
Heck, we just thought she was overpublicized.

"When I first went off, we didn't know whether to take more pictures or get the hell out of there," said Darren. It was a close call.

The mountain rumbled and shook the ground as they stood near Diederich's Grocery near South Toutle Road and Spirit Lake Highway. A mushroom cloud quickly obliterated the sun.

"One lady said she didn't know the mountain was erupting until she felt her waterbed shaking," Brian said. Darren said one elderly man didn't realize the volcano was erupting until he walked outside his home and saw that the sky was dark.

They couldn't believe people were rushing east on Spirit Lake Highway to get a better view.

"We got out of there while we still could," Brian said. "People were charging toward the mountain."

Spirit Lake Highway got so congested that they turned left on South Silver Lake Road and drove to Headquarters Road, which brought them onto Interstate Highway 5.

And Harry Truman if you're smart tonight,
You'd better hang on to your knickers tight,
Take notice when that summit starts to fly,
'Cause when that sucker gets ready to blow,
And steam escapes and the mud slides flow,
You can stoop to kiss your molten ash goodbye.

Hand-lettered sign tacked on a shelf in the Lakeside cafe advertised the Ode to Mount St. Helens.

"We wrote the song mainly about getting Harry Truman to get off the mountain," said Hansen, his brown curls escaping from under his wide cowboy hat. His mother, Jeri Hansen, wrote the words when she was laid up in the hospital. Then Hansen, a taxi driver in Seattle, recorded the song, along with his mother and his sister, Sui.

Oh, the stegosaurus' nerves are wound
And the Richter's scale is jumping round,
They don't want you on that mountain when it blows,
You should know that all good things don't last,
And you might be coming down real fast,
'Get your rear in gear' as that old saying goes.

"Do you know if Harry Truman's died?" he asked a bystander near the counter. "If he did, we want to write a song of mourning for him."

Will I know you're stuck in to your guns,
And you think that we're the cowardly ones,
'Cause when we start running scared, well you're all smiles
And you say you know that mountain well
But when that baby starts to swell
It's gonna rock, it's gonna roll,
It's gonna leave a nasty hole,
It'll be too late to find a place to hide.