

Upfront



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Briefly

Campfire sears Sumas forest

Abbotsford fire crews snuffed out a grass fire at noon Saturday, after receiving calls about smoke rising from a treed area at the east end of Harris Road on Sumas Mountain. The grass fire covered a 20-square-foot area, about 200 to 300 feet up on the hillside and was spreading quickly toward the forest, the fire service reports.

Three youths told firefighters the fire had started as a result of a campfire they had earlier. Abbotsford Coastal Fire Centre was notified and dispatched a Ministry of Forest Services observation plane and fire fighting crew to the area. Abbotsford firefighters used a trail and rope lines to access the fire. Two off-duty career firefighters from the area also responded, and were helpful in bringing the fire under control by 1 p.m. The fire burned a 6,400 sq. ft. area. Residents are reminded there is a full ban on all open fires in the City of Abbotsford.

Local Hells Angel faces extradition to U.S.

A member of the Mission City chapter of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is facing extradition to the United States where he was indicted for drug importation and money laundering.

Brian Lee Hall, 41, was arrested last Friday by Fort St. John RCMP, while he was getting ready to participate in the Canadian Motorcycle Drag Racing Association races, states a release from Staff Sgt. Dave Goddard.

Hall, who last resided in Abbotsford, is being held in a B.C. jail for at least a week after he appeared before a Supreme Court judge Tuesday.

The RCMP Greater Vancouver drug section obtained an extradition warrant for Hall's arrest from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

Hall and others were the subject of a two-year investigation involving U.S. and Canadian law enforcement initiatives that resulted in the seizure of large amounts of cash and marijuana.

Hall faces a number of drug-related charges in the United States, including conspiracy to commit money laundering.

— COMPILED BY STAFF

Homes made of logs, love

Family bringing a little history in to modern living

CORNELIA NAYLOR
for the Times

The yard at Brian Moore Log Homes in Abbotsford is a hive of activity.

Chainsaws whine, and workers are busy on the ground and atop three half-built log structures that are steadily taking shape.

"All these parts will go together like a puzzle," said Brian Moore, nodding towards a row of hand-peeled cedar logs resting on sawhorses nearby.

Their smooth round shapes, notched and cut with precision, are ready to be fit into place.

Moore, the founder of the company, has been putting together log houses for 30 years.

During that time he's also learned a thing or two about a puzzle of a different kind: how to maintain a thriving business despite challenges like B.C.'s beleaguered forest industry, and a faltering U.S. economy.

All three projects in the yard, for example, are headed for Europe.

The largest, bound for Lithuania, is part of a \$3 million project the company is sharing with Coyote Log Homes in Ontario.

"There is a growing interest in just wood products in general," said Moore's son, client service manager Aaron Moore describing the European market.

The strength of the euro has given many Europeans purchasing power with which to experiment, he said. Brian believes that leaves Canadian companies like his in a perfect position to capitalize.

"I think we have a reputation for being pretty trustworthy, straight-



Brian Moore [left] and his son Aaron have seen their company, Brian Moore Log Homes, prosper because of the growing interest in old-fashioned log homes. — CAM TUCKER/TIMES

shooting people with good quality wood products," he said.

The Lithuania project seems to bear him out.

"The kind of challenges on this house are rarely dealt with in log home construction," says Aaron.

Because most log structures normally shrink and settle by as much as a foot over the course of about two years, builders must devise ways to compensate.

This is especially challenging if, as in the case of the Lithuania project, a lot of vertical beams have been

worked into the design.

"All these walls have to be designed to slip and move," says Brian. "The whole house is a maze of logs that are stacked up, and logs that are stood on end and connections that are going to have to be designed to move. They're going to have to adjust this house for a couple of years the way you tune a car."

Brian has been honing the skills needed to bring such designs to life since 1979, when he first decided to buy a mess of logs and start building log homes on his part of the family

farm in Saskatchewan.

What motivated him? His first answer is tongue in cheek.

"Well, it was Saskatchewan," he said. "There wasn't a lot to do."

He goes on to explain that he simply fell in love with the first log home he saw.

"I just liked the strength of the structure," he said. "It seemed like a little bit of art to me."

Another element that drew Brian to the work was the somewhat hippy-ish counter culture that grew up around log building in the 1970s and 80s.

Vestiges of these roots can still be seen both in Brian, who sports a deep tan and shoulder length hair, and in the industry. Clients from Japan to Slovenia are drawn to the romance of log structures.

"It's not just a housing decision," said Brian. "They just love it."

While the romance lingers and there is still a sense of camaraderie among log builders, Brian Moore Log Homes no longer relies on the word of mouth approach to marketing that it did in the beginning.

"It's different in our generation," said Aaron, who came on board with a degree from Simon Fraser University's business faculty, full of new ideas for the company.

Although father and son have butted heads over some issues, like the image the company should project through its website, both agree that their differences [Aaron's hair is cropped conservatively] have contributed to the company's growth.

"When you're interacting with a customer you've got two different personalities, two different perspectives," said Aaron. Brian agrees with a laugh: "He's got the brains and I've got the heart."

For more information on the log homes and to learn how they are made go to www.brianmoorelog-homes.com.

Arrests made in Marshall Road fire

Damage to The Crossing estimated at \$9 million

CAM TUCKER

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Abbotsford Police made three arrests on July 18 in connection with a massive fire that caused an estimated \$9 million in damages to The Crossing, an unfinished condo development on Marshall Road, just two days before.

Danielle Toplass, 22, Jason Read, 27, and Angela Arkesteyn-Vogler, 23, are each charged with two counts of arson and one count of possession of an incendiary material. Toplass faces an addi-

tional charge of breach of recognizance after being arrested for an unrelated matter.

"All three are from Abbotsford and known to police," said Const. Casey Vinet.

"The motive for the fire is still unclear. That's a question investigators have yet to answer," he said.

Police began their investigation immediately following the fire, as eight detectives, several units and an integrated police search and canvass team went door to door interviewing people in the area, said Vinet.

"We have worked non-stop on this case and we focused our attention very early on from reports from witnesses of some suspicious behavior just prior to the fire starting," he said.

"The resulting investigation and a number of

tips led detectives to these three individuals."

Although police have three suspects in custody, Vinet said the investigation is ongoing and investigators have not ruled out the possibility of further arrests.

Four firefighters were injured in the blaze. Flames from the fire reached more than 30 metres high and were visible from outlying areas of Abbotsford.

The heat from the fire was so intense that neighbouring buildings, power poles and trees were scorched, and police evacuated several neighbouring residents and some businesses.

Vinet said that the damage from the fire is estimated to be more than \$9 million. He added that the estimated cost does not include damage to the neighboring structures or the hydro lines.