

But this logger cuts to save, not to fall

By CHRIS DOLGENOW
For the Emerald

In the tradition of those burly lumbermen who braved the western wilderness, University fine arts major Bill Harsey high-climbs. Armed with sharp-bladed ax and topping saw, he limbs trees much as his forefathers did.

Supported by a belt fastened to a rope that hugs an Old Grove fir and with heavy metal spurs stabbing the bark, Harsey embarks on a 70-foot ascent.

But unlike his predecessors, whose purpose in removing the branches was to prepare the tree for high-lead logging, Harsey performs tree surgery. An amputation can prevent a tree from being reduced to a stump.

"I don't condone the cutting down of a tree if it can be saved," he says.

Harsey would rather limb than crudely chop to retain the beauty of the land.

"Limbing does not endanger a tree," Harsey says. Instead, the removal of rotten and dense wood lightens the tree's load and serves as a safety precaution for people below.

Harsey currently limbs trees on private property in southeast Eugene, to prevent dead branches from crashing through houses. He climbs two trees within 45 minutes, each up to 50 feet from the ground. But the third, a stubborn 300-year-old Grove Fir, would take several hours.

After donning heavily spiked boots and 5-inch metal spurs that clamp to his ankles and knees, he swings the rope around the fir's 12-foot trunk. He carefully fastens the relatively light saw to another rope and the ascent begins.

With each step the spurs penetrate the soft bark as he swings the rope upward, pulling it toward him. At last he reaches his destination, some 25 feet above ground.

Here he swacks at a branch — then saws it off. Wiping his brow, he swings to an adjacent branch he estimates has been "dead for at least 40 years." Task completed, he says: "I need a beer right now."

His goal was to limb up to 70 feet on the tree. But that would require another day's work, so Harsey settles for "one more branch" for the afternoon. But the particular 15-foot limb he picks, looming ominously near the house, calls for special care.

"A limb that size can fall right into you," he warns. But his expertise shoots the limb like an arrow 50 feet down where it bounces neatly to one side.

This perilous pursuit "can be kept under control if you pay attention to what you're doing," Harsey says. He grimly recalls having watched a fellow high-climber plunge 100 feet after accidentally cutting his rope, and remembers his own 20-foot fall when his spurs slipped.

While Harsey thrives on outdoor living and being his own boss, the only time he enjoys high-climbing is "when it's done." Harsey, has cartooned a portfolio of drawings showing loggers at work.

He believes logging and conservation can be compatible. "Loggers have more respect for nature than most people," he says. "You only have so much and you have to utilize everything you have."

Harsey believes it is "important to think of lumber as a renewable resource." The state yield rule in Oregon calls for the amount of timber killed to equal the amount regrown. "As far as timber management is concerned, Oregon has set a standard for the rest of the country," he says.

Harsey's grandfather was instrumental in convincing forest officials to use healthy timber from discarded imperfect logs.

Harsey's father owns a logging mill and passed down to his son the art of high-climbing and high-rigging, which includes setting the trees with cables and pulleys.

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Timber....



Photo by Dennis Hickok

Bill Harsey is not your typical backwoods country doctor. This one climbs his patients; sometimes they bite back. His job is vital to the life of the tree above and to humans below. And after a hard day's work limbing trees, Harsey is not unlike most workers—he appreciates a cold beer.

today

10 point 5 is Eugene's own quiet, but classy, arts magazine published by Oz publications. Chances are you know some of the magazine's contributors. Find out on **Page 3B**.

A representative of the National Abortion Rights Action League was in town to gain support for a "no" vote on Measure 7. The proposed measure would prohibit state funding of abortions. **Page 4A**

Can local theater and arts groups survive without government funding? It looks like they'll have to. Emerald reporter Richard Seven takes a look at the constant financial struggle area artists endure routinely and finds the times are harder than ever. **Page 6B**

Steve Sandstrom, a University graduate in art, won a national journalism award sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists. Sandstrom created Mallard Drake, a challenger to the Duck mascot last year. **Page 7A**