

THE LANDING

FALL 2020



STANDING STRONG

EDITORIAL



BANDING TOGETHER WHILE STANDING APART

Graham Hinch, Director, Forestry Sales & Marketing,
United States & Canada

Logging has faced some tough challenges over the years, including unpredictable weather, tough terrain, constantly changing market conditions, trade disputes, and thin margins. Loggers always find a way to overcome. During these unprecedented times, they rose again to the challenge. While considering the safety of their family and crews, loggers also looked to each other. According to one of our customers, "The severity of the situation demanded that everyone pull together. And together we're stronger."

In this issue, we wanted to say to all loggers, "We salute you." Thank you for producing what the world needs to keep running.

Recently we checked in with a few customers who we profiled in past issues of *The Landing* over the years. We wanted to see how they are adapting to a transformed world.

The common themes in their stories are inspiring. Loggers are tough and have faced many challenges before. No matter how difficult, they will adapt and overcome. No matter what the circumstances, they can persevere. Above all, we kept hearing gratitude and humility. And about hope and optimism.

But this shouldn't surprise us. No matter what worrisome news another day brings, loggers will put on a hard hat, head out into the forest, and make a difference. And despite the darkness, brighter times are coming.

In these pages, you'll find stories not unlike your own. Of belief in American resilience and ingenuity. And knowing we will come out stronger in the end. We will continue to stand behind you. Because as it turns out, keeping our distance has brought us closer together.



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Clear the way with the strong, lightweight FECON® Bull Hog® RK8620 Mulching Head.

Photography throughout this issue was taken prior to the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in North America.

Cover image:

Standing tall in a world transformed.

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DID YOU KNOW?

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF SOME RECORD-SETTING TREES, BUT DID YOU KNOW... ?

EARLIEST SURVIVING SPECIES OF TREE

Ginkgo biloba, the earliest surviving species of tree, first appeared during the Jurassic Period and is known as “the oldest living fossil” and the “oldest plant genus.”



treehugger.com



THE LARGEST TREE IN THE WORLD

In terms of sheer volume, the giant sequoia known as General Sherman is a monster of a tree — at 52,508 cubic feet, it's the world's largest tree and perhaps the world's largest living thing. General Sherman is located in California's Sequoia National Park and is one of the park's premier attractions.

thespruce.com

LONGEST BOARD CUT FROM A SINGLE TREE

The longest piece of wood cut from a single tree measured 152 feet 7 inches and was cut by Daniel Czapiewski of Danmar Sp. z o.o. (Poland) during the Strong Man Competition in Szymbark, Poland, on June 9, 2012.

The board was cut by hand over several days but completed on June 9. Many people contributed by sawing a part, including Lech Walesa, former president of Poland.

guinnessworldrecords.com

THE TALLEST LIVING TREE IN THE WORLD

The Hyperion, a coast redwood, located in Redwood National Park, measures in at 379.7 feet tall.

monumentaltrees.com



TO THE CHALLENGE

We recently checked in with customers we profiled in past issues. Here are their inspiring stories.

Loggers play an important part in helping to meet the world's increasing need for food, fuel, shelter, and infrastructure. They provide what helps keep the rest of the world working, producing the timber and pulp for building materials, furniture, paper, and wood pellets for green energy. Without loggers, America would fall short of face masks, filters, toilet tissue, disinfecting wipes, cleaning products, and countless other essential wood-derivative products.

To celebrate their accomplishments, we recently reached out to a few loggers who we have profiled in past issues of *The Landing*. We wanted to check in and see what they've been up to since we last visited. And we wanted to see how they've adapted to a world transformed by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In 2020, many loggers were cautiously optimistic about a healthy forestry industry and the coming year. Much changed when America hit the pause button in March. Many businesses closed their doors. Major sports were put on hold. Everyone came together in shared sacrifice for the common good of helping our most vulnerable.

In a time of much uncertainty, the loggers profiled in the following pages soldiered on. They adapted and persevered. They overcame fear, rolled up their sleeves, and went to work.

All are grateful for having work and for the health of their employees and families. And they share optimism that we will all come out of this stronger.

We celebrate you and hope you enjoy these stories, which are probably not unlike your own. We're thankful to all of you unsung heroes for your dedication and the sacrifices you continue to make to keep the world running.



STORIES: KEVIN ORFIELD



To see more of the stories, visit
JohnDeere.com/TheLanding



DANNY
RICHARDS

BLOOMINGTON
IN

STAY STRONG

TOUGH LOGGER DANNY RICHARDS PLAYS IT SAFE

After graduating from high school in 1984, Indiana logger Danny Richards, owner of Commiskey Hardwoods, started logging with just a chain saw and a 1974 John Deere 350B Crawler. For years, he hand-felled logs while using the 350B to skid them out of the woods and lift them onto a truck.

"It was the hardest time of my life," he recalls. "But I found my calling in the woods. It's the tough times that truly shape us. I love what I do, but I learned you need to stay strong. You can't give up."

Today Commiskey Hardwoods runs John Deere 540G-III, 748H, and 648L Skidders, which help the company produce 20 to 30 loads a week. Richards likes to take the controls of the company's Deere 437D Knuckleboom Loader when he's not running a chain saw. Almost all the work is select cut. When we last visited him, he was harvesting primarily poplar, along with maple, oak, and hickory.

But logging in Indiana is tough. Bidding is supercompetitive. And it rains. All. The. Time. Crews might only be able to skid wood two days out of the week. "The weather's not cooperating," says

PHOTOGRAPHY: TODD DACQUISTO



“No matter what the world throws at us, we’re going to whip it and move on.”



Richards when we spoke with him recently. “For the past two-and-a-half years it’s been so wet. And on top of that, now we have the coronavirus.”

When the Hoosier State’s stay-at-home order took effect on March 25 (it was lifted on May 4), Richards knew he had to diversify. Overseas exports have stopped, so the company had to switch to lower-grade wood. “Another way our business changed is we used to buy a lot of timber on sealed bids,” says Richards. “For several months we’ve been getting calls from private landowners and have been buying from them. It’s very unusual for me.”

Richards is also going to do some construction work. “When we’re not logging, we’re stockpiling and hauling stone to keep the cash flow going.”

The COVID-19 situation has given Richards a lot of time to reflect. “It’s just a big reminder that we can be successful at what we do — that we can do everything right — and that doesn’t guarantee success. I never thought in my lifetime I’d see the economy shut down because of a pandemic. You think, ‘Okay, I’m smart. I’ll figure it out.’ And then the whole economy shuts down. Who can prepare for that?”

But Richards believes a lot of good will come out of it. “Many families have been together more in the last few months than they’ve been for years. People who are self-centered and think the world revolves around them will come to realize they need other people. I’ve seen a change in some people’s attitudes.”

At the end of the day, says Richards, loggers were as ready for the crisis as anyone else. “When we go out into the woods to cut, we put on our hard hats and safety gear. I’m not expecting to get killed, but I need to be prepared.”

Richards tells the story of having the bar of his chain saw flip up at the center of the forehead and split his hard hat right in half. “I went into a saw shop and showed it to the woman running the store. She hung it right there on display. It’s a reminder that if my hard hat weren’t busted, my head would have been. I think I’m a tough guy, but I will continue to carry hand sanitizer and use it.”

Improving sanitary and health standards is a good thing, Richards believes. “That has to be good for everyone. And raising awareness will make people take their own health more seriously, I should think.

“This whole situation threw us all a curveball. It reminds me of Pearl Harbor. So few of us saw it coming. But in a very short time, we became strong and were able to respond. It’s all about the resilience of the American people and American ingenuity. No matter what the world throws at us, we’re going to whip it and move on.”

Commiskey Hardwoods is serviced by West Side Tractor Sales, Bloomington, Indiana.



**COMING
TOGETHER
WHILE
STANDING
APART**

NEWBERRY

SC

BUDDY

LOMINICK

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHUCK BLACKBURN



BUDDY LOMINICK KEEPS THE FAITH

Like his father, William “Buddy” Lominick Jr., vice president of Big Pine Logging, is passionate about logging. “We’re doing what we love, and we have a lot of good times,” he says. “Of course, we work a lot, too.”

“Twenty-four seven,” said his father, Bill Sr., when we paid them a visit back in 2016. At the time, the Newberry, South Carolina, company was running three crews, harvesting 180 to 200 loads of pine a week. It had just purchased a John Deere 648L Skidder and a 643L Feller Buncher.

“We didn’t want to lose anyone,” says Buddy. “Good help is so hard to find, so we try hard to hold on to our people. We’ve been able to keep going as three crews, and we’re grateful to keep everyone working.”

The company is currently doing about half lumber and half pulp. “We’re considered essential because we support the construction business. Honestly, I think pulp and paper are more important, toilet paper and sanitary wipes being two examples of necessities that have been in high demand.”

Like many office workers, Buddy’s wife Chasity, an accountant, began working at home. “Her office hired a new employee who she trained using videoconferencing,” says Buddy.



“We didn’t want to lose anyone. Good help is so hard to find, so we try hard to hold on to our people. We’ve been able to keep going as three crews, and we’re grateful to keep everyone working.”

Bill Sr. built the company with a chain saw, a 10-wheel Chevrolet C65 with a knuckleboom loader, and a John Deere 548D Skidder. Buddy has worked hard over the years to update the company with the latest equipment and JDLink™ machine-monitoring technology. “Dad was always more of a flip-phone guy,” he says, as he shows how easy it is to get machine location, health, and other JDLink updates on his smartphone.

When the stay-at-home order was issued in South Carolina on April 7 (it was lifted on May 4), mills in the area began to slow up or go into partial shutdown. Quotas were cut by half. “It’s been up and down,” says Buddy. “With inventory building up, they call you when they need you and buy just enough to keep the mill running.”

Big Pine Logging has avoided cutting staff. Like many small businesses, the company received help from the Small Business Administration’s Paycheck Protection Program. The program provides an incentive for businesses to keep their workforces employed during the COVID-19 crisis by forgiving loans if employees are kept on payroll for eight weeks.

Loggers are born to deal with adversity, according to Buddy. “You’ve got to really love logging. If you don’t, you won’t make it. Profit margins are narrow. There are weather and down markets. And now on top of all that, a pandemic. You’ve got to have a thick skin to be a logger.”

Yet despite hardship, he has maintained an attitude of gratitude. “I’m just glad I have a place to show up for work every day and provide for my family,” he says. “So many people are struggling. I’m grateful we’ve been able to keep things going.”

Loggers always manage to overcome, Buddy believes. “The coronavirus is just another thing to deal with,” he says. “I reflect a lot about my community — we might be social distancing, but we’re coming together. People haven’t lost faith. That’s the one thing that has been so good to see. No one is giving up. Despite the darkness, brighter times are coming.”

Big Pine Logging, Inc. is serviced by Flint Equipment Company, West Columbia, South Carolina.

TOGETHER



ANDREW

JAROCHE

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL MAURO



“We’ve been working for two months during the biggest pandemic in our era, and we’re fortunate to have stayed healthy and fine. We’re being cautious, diligent, and smart, and making it work.”

WE ARE STRONGER

ANDREW JAROCHE'S EMPLOYEES — AND HIS COMPETITORS — HAVE HELPED HIM SURVIVE

The last time we visited Andrew Jaroché was at a Gold Key event in 2015. He had just taken ownership of the first John Deere 803MH Harvester to roll off the assembly line at John Deere Dubuque Works. In addition to the 803MH, his logging operations included a Deere feller buncher, two Deere processors, and two Deere forwarders. His company, Maple Hardwoods Inc., in Hessel, Michigan, was producing 120,000 board-feet of rough-sawn hardwood timber a week, which is used for flooring, countertops, trim, and cabinetry.

When Michigan's governor announced a stay-at-home order on March 23 (it was lifted on June 1), Jaroché made sure his employees were comfortable and safe. Truck and logging machine cabs hold bottles of hand sanitizer, and social distancing has been strictly enforced. "We've been working for two months during the biggest pandemic in our era, and we're fortunate to have stayed healthy and fine. We're being cautious, diligent, and smart, and making it work."

Since the start of the order, Jaroché saw sales fall 50 percent, with loads of hardwood dropping from six to three per week. The company has seen a large backup of inventory of flooring- and pallet-grade material. But it's also seen an increase in the demand for aspen because of a customer that supplies Lowe's®.

"Aspen is used for fencing and decking, and many people worked on home-improvement projects while they were at home. But aspen doesn't pay the bills, hardwood does. I'm just glad I've got loyal customers who have kept me on at a certain capacity so I can keep the lights on."

The Small Business Association's Paycheck Protection Program also helped Jaroché, providing an incentive for him to keep his workforce on payroll and employed. "I'm grateful for the sacrifice of our 35 employees who have lost a few hours and bonuses. I'm just trying to survive, and we've had no one quit. Everyone has stuck together."

EMPLOYEE

Loyalty

It's not surprising that Jaroché has fostered a family environment that has paid dividends in employee loyalty. But what's really surprising are his competitors. "What I love about our industry is how everyone came together," he says. "I'm buying logs from competitors because I have markets for them. And they have markets and interests for other things. The severity of the situation demanded that everyone pull together. And together we're stronger."

Maple Hardwoods Inc. is serviced by AIS Construction Equipment Corp., Williamsburg, Michigan.

ROLLING WITH THE CHANGES

ELLERBE



NORTH CAROLINA LOGGER AND LOCAL JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP ADAPT AND PERSEVERE

Used primarily for lumber and pulpwood, loblolly is the most common pine in North Carolina and the most commercially important tree in the American Southeast. "There's a lot of loblolly pine around here," says Wayne Sugg, owner of Sugg Logging, Ellerbe, North Carolina. "That's what I really like to cut. We stay fairly busy cutting it."

Ellerbe is a small, quiet town with a population of just over 1,000. It's about a half-hour drive from the aptly named historic golf resort Pinehurst. And it's not far from the towns of Pinebluff, Southern Pines, and Whispering Pines. There's a lot of logging in the region, as the town names indicate.

Suggs started his own logging company almost 15 years ago after operating a skidder and feller buncher for a local logger for over a decade. When we visited him in 2019, he was producing an average of 80 loads of pine logs and pulpwood a week, running a John Deere 843L Series-II Feller Buncher, two 648L Skidders, and a 437D and 437E Log Loader. Recently he's been demoing a 748L Series-II Skidder. He also runs a John Deere 700K Dozer.

Unlike many family logging companies, Sugg didn't descend from a long line of loggers. "There are a lot of families who have done this for generations. I'm proud that my wife and I have been able to do this on our own — that nothing was handed to us. We have a very good crew and we all try to do our best job. I'm amazed at how far we've come and our good name."



WAYNE
SUGG

PHOTOGRAPHY: TERRY SINCLAIR

When North Carolina's stay-at-home order went into effect on March 30 (it was lifted on May 22), the pulpwood market went down. "The mills are taking mostly saw logs right now," says Sugg, "one of the wood buyers says because Lowe's® is really demanding it right now, and prices are down. There's been a lot of home improvement with everyone being at home. I'm hearing that pulp should come back in about a month."

Sugg's wife Tina closed her boutique store when most of the state's businesses shut down. "Logging was considered essential because we help provide wood for shelter and pulp for paper products, so I was able to keep working. But I think everyone is essential. No one should be singled out."

Sugg is grateful to be able to keep working. "So many people are out of work and struggling. I'm thankful to be putting food on the table." Like all loggers, Sugg has seen his share of ups and downs. "I didn't think I'd ever go through anything like this in my lifetime. But I'm hopeful things can return to normal."

With operators working alone in their own machines, social distancing in the woods has been relatively easy. JDLink™,

John Deere's machine-monitoring system, helps, too, with remote monitoring and diagnosis of the company's machines. "It helps us be proactive so we can catch an issue before it becomes a major problem," says Chris Brooks, forestry manager, James River Equipment, Sugg Logging's John Deere dealer. "This helps minimize technician visits to the logging site. With machine-location data, the technician can even arrange to visit the machine without anyone else there."

The dealership also offers customers the ability to order parts online along with curbside pickup. "The one thing that makes me optimistic is how people have been willing to adapt," says Brooks. "Our salespeople know, for example, that we can't just drop by and pay a customer a visit anymore. We need to call ahead and see what they're comfortable with. We've had no complaints. And none of our customers are throwing in the towel. Everyone is ready to work hard and help the economy come back strong."

Sugg Logging LLC is serviced by James River Equipment, Mt. Gilead, North Carolina.



Pride



"So many people are out of work and struggling. I'm thankful to be putting food on the table."

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL



LOGGER PAUL BURTON HANGS TOUGH

Logging technology has come a long way since “Tuffy” Burton began logging in the early 1980s. “We often do double the production with just two guys over the old days when we had 25,” says Tuffy’s son, Paul Burton, owner of Paul Burton Forestry, Newberry, Michigan. Today the company runs an eight-wheeled John Deere 1270G Harvester and a 1210G Forwarder. Back in the day, it ran 15 hand fellers with chain saws.

The father and son make great partners. Tuffy has always preferred to drive trucks, while Paul’s passion has always been running logging machinery. Paul joined his father’s business in the mid-1990s and five years ago, he bought the company out. That’s always been his father’s dream: “He’s very self-motivated,” says Tuffy. “For a long, long time, he’s been the key. We’re more partners than we are father and son.”

When Michigan’s stay-at-home order was issued on March 23 (it was lifted on June 1), Paul Burton Forestry was considered an essential business, like many loggers. But business slowed down, creating much uncertainty. “Paper consumption was down and nobody was in their offices at the mills, but they started giving me a little more production,” says Paul. “I began to see light at the end of the tunnel.”



Rural Newberry has largely been spared from the ravages of the pandemic, unlike large metropolitan cities in Michigan such as Detroit. At the time we spoke with Paul, there had been only one coronavirus case in his county.

Social distancing hasn't been an issue. Burton and his operator used to ride together but now take separate trucks. "We maintain a strict distance when we are talking to each other in the woods, but often we are in our separate machines," he says. "Out in the woods, you naturally socially distance. And we keep plenty of hand sanitizer available."

Paul Burton Forestry's dealer, McCoy Construction & Forestry in Escanaba, has maintained a safe distance while assuring the logging company it's there if needed. "They'll shoot us a text to keep in contact," says Burton. "They tell us not to be afraid to call them. If we need parts, we can arrange to pick them up outside without having to go in the store. They do all the little things right. Our salesman Jason Whitaker has been great."

"Our sales personnel were grounded during the stay-at-home order, but with today's technology including cell phones, computers, and videoconferencing, you can do so much remotely," says Whitaker. "At the dealership, we took a lot of measures to help keep things safe, too. We limited and

controlled access to the inside of our building and set up barriers that enforce six feet of distance."

Whitaker remains hopeful about the future. "My mom used to always say, 'This too will pass.' We have a lot of intelligent people in this world working on solutions. We'll figure out ways to deal with this, and I'm optimistic life will return to normal. A different normal maybe, but normal. I'm just thankful to be working — and for friends, family, and the frontline workers, including doctors and nurses."

Like Whitaker, Burton was able to spend more time with his family during the stay-at-home order. "I've been very grateful to spend more time with my wife. And I'm thankful that contractors and homebuilders have kept working. Sometimes we don't realize just how tied our business is to the housing markets."

Burton's wife is a teacher. "She's really had to work long hours to come up with remote-learning content for her kids. Teachers really have been the unsung heroes through all of this."

The slower period has given Burton plenty of time to reflect. "I hope the little towns up here in the Upper Peninsula are going to survive. They're taking it really hard. I hope people start appreciating those of us in the timber industry a little bit more. We are rural and don't get much visibility. But as a country, we're tough. We'll just keep moving on."

Paul Burton Forestry is serviced by McCoy Construction & Forestry, Escanaba, Michigan.



"We are rural and don't get much visibility. But as a country, we're tough. We'll just keep moving on."



PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID LEE MJOLSNESS

WAKEUP CALL

ALABAMA LOGGER JOHN MCGOWIN GIVES THANKS EVERY DAY

Pay a visit to John McGowin and his wife Sylvia late some afternoon, and you'll likely be offered a seat in a rocker on the front porch along with a sweet tea. As you "set a spell" (as Southerners say), you'll take in majestic longleaf pines, which provide a backdrop for the fully functional windmill that McGowin has lovingly restored.

Not that McGowin, owner of McGowin Logging Company in Chapman, Alabama, lives a life of leisure. He's often up before dawn, eager to get out to the logging site. He found his calling when he was a young man and shows no sign of slowing down. When we last saw him in 2017 and spoke with him again recently, he told us essentially the same thing: "I can't see ever retiring. I just enjoy what I do. If I weren't logging, I'd be associated with it in some way. So why not keep going?"

McGowin is always a step ahead of everything, making sure greasing and fueling get done in the afternoon so operators can get to work first thing in the morning. The woods and decks are always ready to go to maintain high production. Machines are well maintained, and McGowin leaves the woods as unharmed as he can after he logs them. It's no surprise McGowin was selected Alabama Outstanding Logger of the Year in 2014 for following forestry best-management practices.

The McGowin family history in logging dates back to the turn of the 20th century, when trees were felled with a crosscut saw and logs were hauled in log carts pulled by oxen. The family ran a logging operation in Chapman until the 1960s. But McGowin is a self-made man. In 1993 after over a decade supervising logging operations for another company, he founded McGowin Logging with a John Deere skidder, a feller buncher, a loader, and a contracted truck. "I've learned to just get up every morning, say a prayer, and take care of the people working for me. It's been a good living, it really has. I've enjoyed it."

The company currently runs three John Deere 648L and two 648H Skidders, three 437D Knuckleboom Loaders, and two 650K Dozers. It does first and second thinnings as well as clearcutting pine. When we last visited, his two crews were producing 30 loads a day, or about 150 loads a week. After Alabama's stay-at-home order went into effect on April 4 (it ended on April 30), things slowed down a bit, but the company

still runs two crews. McGowin has felt blessed to stay busy, hauling wood for Resource Management Service (RMS) to be used for making paper.

He admires the wives of crew members who are registered nurses. "I don't know how they do it. They've got some horrific stories. They have kids at home, but they just keep right on going. They're just strong."

McGowin has asked a few of the nurses how the pandemic has changed their lives. "Ninety percent of them — and 90 percent of people in the forestry industry, too — will tell you it has brought their families closer together. One of the women said, 'My children didn't know how to play out in the yard, but now they do. We're actually spending time with them outside and learning to cook and all kinds of things.'"

McGowin's cousin is a surgeon. "He works 24 hours on, 12 off. You've got to be dedicated to do that. It's like logging — you've got to really want to do it." His secret to success? "You need desire, but you also need a good spouse, good employees, and good equipment."

YOU NEED
Desire

He believes a lot of good will come out of the pandemic. "It's caused a lot of people to really wake up. Most people take for granted what they have. You've got to be thankful every day, and people are realizing that more. I'm grateful we've got a good reputation, a good group of dedicated people, and good equipment. That's helped us get through this, and I'm optimistic about the future."

McGowin Logging Company Inc. is serviced by Warrior Tractor and Equipment, Montgomery, Alabama.



“Most people take for granted what they have. You’ve got to be thankful every day, and people are realizing that more.”

JOHN
McGOWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY: TODD DACQUISTO



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