



## Right tool for the job

**Two Sennebogen 830MT D material handling machines have proven to be the right machine for the specific jobs—requiring both versatility and a deft touch—at two Stella Jones pole plants in British Columbia.**

*By Jim Stirling*

Selecting the right machine for a specific job is key to running a cost efficient operation. The decision is challenging when the work place is a log yard and the material handling within it requires both versatility and a deft touch.

The material handling equipment in Stella-Jones Canada Inc.'s pole processing plant in Prince George, British Columbia had served the company well but was old and in need of replacement.

“We took a look at different makes of machine to find the right one for us,” said Andy Vogt, Stella-Jones plant manager in Prince George.

As it turned out, the answer was close to home. A Sennebogen 830MT D which had been used in recent local equipment demos was sitting in dealer Great West Equipment's yard in Prince George.

“Great West is our regular equipment dealer—they're just down the road from us— and they've always looked after our needs well, and given us the service we require,” added Vogt.

The Stella-Jones team took a close look at the Sennebogen 830MT D and liked what they saw.

Robert Stewart, who was plant manager at Stella-Jones in Prince George when the business plan to acquire the machine was first put together, took up the story. “The Sennebogen has a lot of hydraulic power. It takes a fine touch to grab a large load without damaging the wood,” says Stewart, who is now sales manager with Stella-Jones in Prince George.

“The controls on the Sennebogen are very user friendly and the hydraulics are very responsive. We also found that the stance of the machine, with its wide wheelbase, is much better for getting around—even in soft ground—than what we experienced before.”

The only significant change required on the Sennebogen was to customize the Rotobec grapple on the machine. The tines and tips were widened to minimize damage during wood handling.

“We have to be gentle with the poles. We're dealing with a finished product,” explained Vogt. “It just makes sense.”

The versatility requirements of the Sennebogen 830 at Stella-Jones are that it needs to be a lift and load, pick and carry machine. They use it to load and unload rail cars and to transport poles to the inspection yard, the finish stage and the other working areas around the yard, said Vogt. And until recently, the machine was also used to handle and load railway ties. They required the Sennebogen to move and load square timber with the same dexterity as round wood.



The Sennebogen 830 has a heavy duty undercarriage engineered for towing stresses and a drive train for pulling loads. The railway tie trailers used in the Prince George yard loaded up to about 75,000 pounds. The nearly 85,000 pound rubber-tired Sennebogen is powered by a Cummins 206 hp engine.

Stella-Jones is a manufacturer of treated wood products with plants across North America. The company provides products primarily for railway companies, telecom providers and electrical transmission utilities.

The main end use for the company's Prince George plant is now electrical distribution utility poles, continued Vogt. The most common lengths produced are in the 40 to 45 foot range with some customer requirements for 80 to 100 feet long poles.

The Sennebogen needs to handle the longer lengths with the same dexterity and velvet touch as the shorter poles. The poles are mainly of cedar and Douglas fir and acquired from as far away as Idaho, he added. That was not always the case. Sourcing the wood used to be much simpler: the poles were predominantly pine from regional forests. But the mountain pine beetle epidemic has put an end to that.

"The Sennebogen has given us no headaches or unwanted surprises since going to work for us about a year-and-a-half ago," reported Vogt. The lack of surprises includes a built-in fuel efficiency. Fuel consumption with the Sennebogen hasn't been an issue, he added.

One of the features of the 830 is its elevating operator's cab and the improved vision and comfort it offers. Adjusting the cab's height to match the machine's function is an advantage when dealing with a finished product. The operator can see the tops of the rail cars when loading, for example.

"You quickly get used to the high lift cab," said Wayne Karlson, the Sennebogen's regular operator. "It helps to get the job done better."

Interestingly, another Stella-Jones operation to the south, in B.C.'s Kootenay region east of Cranbrook, was discovering the same benefits of the Sennebogen 830 quite independently from the experience of the management team at the Prince George plant. The Galloway pole processing plant near the Montana border was recently acquired by Stella-Jones and is on the site of the old Selkirk Forest Products operation. Dealer Great West Equipment played a role in this acquisition of the Sennebogen 830, just as it has up north in Prince George.

"We had already looked at the other two big names in material handling," recalled Richard Harkies, Stella-Jones plant manager in Galloway. The people at Great West told Harkies about the Sennebogen and as a result, he travelled to an equipment demo of the 830 near Lavington in the Okanagan.

"I hadn't heard of the Sennebogen before," confessed Harkies. He knows all about them now and the compatible match the machine makes with his plant's requirements.

As was discovered in Prince George, the mobility of the Sennebogen proved an important factor. "We have to drive half-a-mile from one end of the yard to the other. With a separate transmission on each axle, it pulls smoother, it doesn't shift as hard and it's more stable," he said.



It all adds up to the Sennebogen 830 proving itself to be the right machine for the job.