



Keep it Simple

Barnes and Sons Logging has that “Go for It” spirit

By Clayton Petree

For well over 150 years, the West Coast forest industry has been, in good times and bad, an attraction to free enterprise entrepreneurs seeking opportunity. Even in times of economic stress, like those faced in recent years, there are those willing to take a risk and approach a challenge in a new way. They “go for it” — establishing the new businesses needed to preserve the future of the industry.

An example of optimism and entrepreneurial spirit in 2014 is Lewis County’s Barnes and Sons Logging LLC, a newly formed company that logs tracts defined by the Forest Service as being at the urban public forest lands interface or “Forests at the Edge.”

Two-Man Team

Barnes and Sons Logging is a father and son team. Don Barnes, Mike says of his dad, logged from about the mid-1980s through the mid-90’s and enjoyed the experience. “I have always wanted to log. I have a small construction side, Barnes Trucking, and I thought the more diversified we could be, the better off we would be. My dad and I thought that if we could get into logging it would help fill the voids when construction gets slow.”

According to Don, Mother Nature also played a hand in the decision to start a new business. Don and Mike co-own 25 acres of timber near Centralia; acres that had been hit by an ice storm a few years ago. “If you look around, you’ll see a lot of trees with the tops busted out of them, so we thought it would make sense to log the stand before the bugs and rot got to it,” Don says.

Staying Small

The Barnes’ approach to harvest is the opposite of the “Go big or go home” philosophy often prevalent in the latter years of the last century. “Our long-term plans are to keep it small; maybe eventually get a little bigger with a couple more guys but for now, the way we are doing it is working good,” Mike comments. “We do all the work ourselves but we will have subs come in if we need the help.”

A second approach to keeping it simple is explained by Don. “Modern equipment is tremendously expensive. If you buy something like a feller buncher, you are looking at hundreds of thousands of dollars of investment, and that means you have to keep the machinery running all the time.”

Pointing to a Komatsu XT445 L feller buncher equipped with a Quadco 22” hot saw that is owned by Don Fudge Contract Cutting, Don continues, “An experienced contract cutter can come in and get the job done quickly and well, and then they’re gone. Once we’ve paid them for the job, we’re done. No machine payments and no need to go out and make sure the machine is kept busy. They move on to the next job, and we get on with our job.”

Mike adds, “It was really nice to have the feller buncher on this job., He stacked all the butts so they’re pointing the right way; the smaller trees like what were on that job are easier for a buncher to control rather than having them hand felled.”



Once trees are on the ground, the stems are shovel logged to landings and prepared for hauling. A Danzco pull-through delimeter is used in tandem with a Doosan 225LL log loader to prep stems and load them onto trucks.

“The trucking so far has been pretty easy to arrange,” Mike says. “Between the two of us we know of quite a few trucks around so finding trucks has not been an issue.”

Flexibility

The interaction between Mike’s construction company and the logging effort provides for a considerable amount of flexibility in prepping and accomplishing a harvest. A Caterpillar D5 dozer, a Kenworth T800 dump truck, and a Link-Belt 160 excavator are used for road building and other tasks.

Even when Barnes and Sons has equipment available, Don and Mike stay open to opportunity. While harvesting their own 25-acre parcel, for example, the fir market began to soften so Horsley Timber and Construction was called in to process some of the timber with a dangle head delimeter owned by that company.

“That was an advantage for us because we were able to process and ship the logs faster than we could on our own,” says Mike.

Past investments in land with timber have allowed Don and Mike to shape their business for success on their own terms rather than forcing them to go in directions they prefer not to go.

For the future, Mike says, “We plan on doing a lot of our own timber but will look at jobs that come our way. For now we just keep our heads down and keep moving forward. We are learning new things all of the time.”

Mark Twain once responded to newspaper reports pertaining to his death claiming that, “The report of my death was an exaggeration.” In 2014 the forest products industry can say the same to those who believed the industry would roll over and die in the face of the on-going recession. The key to the future, as Barnes and Sons Logging demonstrates, is maintaining a flexible operation capable of adjusting to take advantage of opportunities.