A Road Well Traveled

R D Reeves Construction finds the solutions to stay diversified and local

By TimberWest Staff

R D Reeves Construction Inc. has been able to stay within 50 miles of home and on the same tree farm for over 40 years.

Located in Rainier, Oregon, R D Reeves is operated and managed by Roy Reeves, Roy’s daughter Robin, and his son-in-law, Marc Clarke.

The company originally worked for Longview Fibre Company, which transitioned to Longview Timber, owned by Brookfield Management, and now the tree farm is owned and managed by Weyerhaeuser’s Columbia Timberlands.

Reeves adds that most of the roads in the tree farm were constructed by his company. “I’ve built all the roads we’re logging on, every one of them. Built hundreds and hundreds of miles in those days.”

Reeves, like many other logging company operators, started in the woods right out of high school. After several years working and honing his road building skills for someone else, he opened his own doors as a road building company in 1969 (hence the name R D Reeves Construction). A few years later, he branched out and began doing right-of-way cutting and some thinning. The company then moved into clear cutting.

The Move to Logging

“We didn’t move into heavy logging until the 90s,” Reeves says. “I got out of road building as a primary function, and we sold our last machine in 2012. “I had pretty much ‘roaded’ everything up by then.” The company still maintains the ability to build roads, just on a smaller scale from the days when the activity was the main focus.

The company operates two ground-based sides on the Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands tree farm.

“Our niche has been centered on yoder logging,” says Clarke. “We bought our first double-drum yoder in the 90s. It’s one of the first two used in this application in the area, and we have owned several over the years.” However, Clarke notes that they have observed a decrease in the use of the drums over recent years. He says there has been concerted effort by the industry to reduce the exposure on the ground and a trend toward the use of innovative logging techniques, like cable assist and self-leveling logging shovels.

Versatility

R D Reeves subcontracts out the cutting to Pellham Cutting Inc. Most of the log hauling is provided through their other company, Reeves Trucking Inc. The company runs one Peterbilt and three Kenworths. One of the Kenworth trucks is a quick-change long to short logger.

For many years Reeves has operated two shovel sides on one logging unit. This approach, when applicable and if managed correctly, offers many advantages. Operating seven machines on an 80+ acre unit offers a lot of versatility.
“We can maintain an average of twenty-four loads per day in plantation type stands,” says Clarke. “We also run a simultaneous chunk program.”

The Right Tools

“One of our major challenges is to boost production levels to accommodate the increase in average piece count per load. The introduction of the plantation units into the system has forced us to adapt and to make our operation as efficient as possible,” says Clarke.

To increase the efficiency factor, Reeves and Clarke identified log processing as the weakest link. They had to have something that would address the piece count issue and decided on the addition of a second dangle head.

“We have a 2014 Link-Belt 290/Waratah 624C processor combination, and it has been a reliable workhorse for us,” Clarke says. “We were going to standardize and get another 290/Waratah combo right when the 4040 was introduced. The 4040 boasted many advantages over the 290, and advantage is what we needed.”

“Awesome,” is the word equipment operator Adam Kurtz uses to describe the new 2015 Link-Belt 4040. “The 4040-TL is fast and powerful. Boom is 50 percent faster…lots of extra swing power. The cab has been redesigned and is great, a lot quieter and laid out well. Bigger fuel tank is a bonus; appreciate filler cap now on the cab side. Very stable, thanks to a bigger counterweight and the fuel tank in the rear.”

The company has had more than twenty Link-Belt machines over the years. “They’ve been good for us,” Clarke says. “The motors are fuel efficient and reliable, the undercarriages provide excellent life. We have a good relationship with the dealership, which has always provided outstanding service.”

Currently, R D Reeves operates the Link-Belt 4040 and 290 with a Waratah 624C dangleheads as processors. The company also uses a 2007 Link-Belt 240 LXT and a 2011 Link-Belt 240 X2 as log loaders.

While the Link-Belt brand has always been a consistent partner for R D Reeves, the company also relies on Caterpillar and John Deere to help meet their production goals.

A 2013 CAT 568 with a twin drum system does double duty as a shovel and a yoder. The power of the 568 is evident when shovel logging uphill or for cable logging turns on the landing. The company’s other shovel is a 2011 CAT 325DFM log loader.

Reeves fields two track-based ground skidders. One is a 1997 factory certified 2013 rebuilt CAT 527 with a swing grapple. The other skidder is a 1996 CAT D5H also equipped with a swing grapple.

The company utilizes a John Deere 2454D with a Denharco stroke delimber as a processor and a John Deere 650J with a winch for road maintenance and scarifying duties.

Core Values and Commitment

The fact that R D Reeves has been working the same ground for over 40 years is quite unique. Clarke says the company’s longevity in the area is primarily due to the core values of the company.
“Safety, quality, and production, in that order, are what we strive for,” he says. “These are core values for all of us, as a company and as individuals. We’ve always done business this way, and it aligns well with the companies that hire us.”

The Crew

Reeves and Clarke both feel that the most challenging aspect of running a logging company is constantly adapting to changes in the industry and maintaining a skilled workforce, but success is defined by providing a good quality of life for the employees.

“Our crew is the most important part of the company. We’ve managed to assemble a very conscientious group of individuals who enjoy their career choice and who want to work in the woods,” Clarke says.

The company also believes in taking the time to invest in a new generation of loggers. “Currently we have a young crew member that has advanced from a chaser/choker setter to a machine operator in less than a year. With the correct instruction and supervision, as well as his enthusiasm, he should do well.” Clarke adds, “If we don’t take the time to educate and train the next generation then we can’t complain about not having an available or skilled workforce in the industry.”

That commitment to their employees and to the future is a responsibility welcomed by Reeves and Clarke.