

WWII MACHINERY DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCED LUMBER INDUSTRY

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For the most part, the logging horse has given way to the machine in moving logs and other wood products from stump to mill.

Horses are still used where esthetics and minimum surface disturbance is critical. As in most commercial operations today, cost dictates the way in which trees are harvested and in this respect the machine is the only way.

The change occurred gradually and for the most part since the end of World War II. The technology used to develop machines of war played a big part in the development of specialized equipment for woods work.

C.J. Strife was one of the first operators to take advantage of this technology and he modified some surplus prime movers to his woods operations.

Industry has made giant strides in the past 40 years in developing timber harvesting equipment and Strife, who died in 1953, would be truly impressed with today's harvesting methods. One man today does the work of 10 in Strife's era.

The one constant in the business since its inception has been the intense physical demands on the logger. The person who fells and skids the tree to the landing bears the brunt of those demands. He may produce many times the production of his early counterparts, but his energy output and risks remain the same.

The successful modern day logger has to be a better trained worker. Mechanical skills are necessary to keep present day equipment well maintained and running for peak performance.

There are many more uses for wood today and species and material that were not merchantable a few years ago find a ready market today. The logger must be well versed in this aspect of the business as he ultimately determines the final end result of the wood and its price. Many a poorly trained logger has cost his employer an amount equal to his week's wages with one wrong cut.

Safety training plays a much bigger role in present day woods operation than it did in years past. Insurance costs are predicated on accident history of the operator and sums up the statement, "Safety pays."

Modern timber harvesting equipment is tailor made to fit the terrain and product to be harvested. This has also changed the forester's role in managing the forest. Generally speaking, the trees harvested and methods used to harvest them are ways to determine what they next crop will be. This is particularly true here in the northeast where we depend primarily on natural regeneration for our next harvest.

Logging, like farming, is one of the few professions that generally face a labor shortage. The work hours, risks and extreme energy demands parallel each other, but they also share the same incentives. Few young people today are willing to accept the challenge; the few that do are a proud group and well they should be.

A young person today who likes working outdoors, is in good health and does not mind hard work should have no trouble finding a challenging career.

One last thing, men, the changing role of women in the workplace will have little effect on your career.