

**C.J. STRIFE: SMART FORESTER AND MAN OF STRONG
CHARACTER
10/10/95**

I wish I had known C.J. Strife. No one I have ever heard of has intrigued me more.

First of all, I admire his strength of character, self-reliance and faith in people. As a forester, I envy his knowledge and skill in the logging business. It has had no parallel that I am aware of throughout the Adirondacks.

He was born in 1887, in Belfort, NY, and described his education as attending school but three days and the teacher not being there for two of them.

His first work was on area farms until, at the age of 14, he started his career as a logger.

An aptitude for the business and boundless ambition eventually culminated in his becoming, perhaps, the largest individual logging contractor in New York State.

At the peak of his activities, in the late 30s and throughout the 40s, he directly employed upward of 800 people. He built, staffed and operated from 15 to 20 logging camps from Tug Hill to Lake Placid. Much of the activity was spurred on by the war effort in the late 30s and 40s.

Almost all the large, private tracts in the Adirondacks were operated by C.J., as he was popularly known.

One of many celebrity clients he worked with was Kate Smith on her property near Lake Placid. The Whitney, Brandreth and Adirondack League Club were just a few of the larger private parks on which he conducted extensive logging operations.

International Paper, Finch Pryn and Gould Paper were some of the commercial holdings on which he carried on harvesting operations.

His work sometimes found him traveling to New York or other major cities to negotiate contracts with corporate attorneys. At other times it was at someone's kitchen table, as was the case with Kate Smith. He seemed to manage that aspect of business with no problem, but it was in the field with the men where

he was most at ease. They respected him and would go the extra mile for him when the chips were down.

He resented government intrusion and complained bitterly of the increasing regulations, which he insisted stifled business. A man of his word, much of his business was conducted with a handshake.

Leo Villiere worked for him for years and he illustrated the point with a personal experience. Leo and four other local men were driving log trucks for C.J. and he decided to get out of the trucking business.

He offered to sell them all five trucks and hire them to work for him as independent contractors.

After agreeing on a price for the trucks and the terms of the contract, the questions arose as to how the trucks would be paid for. C.J. agreed to having them work off the price for a set amount each month. When asked if C.J. wanted them to sign an agreement, his reply was typical: It would not be necessary; if their word was no good their paper wouldn't be either.

In 1920, C.J. and his wife, the former Arlean Campany, moved to Brandreth Station to start his journey into the real world of logging. It was to be a real learning experience, although not always profitable, as we will soon learn.