

SPEAK ABOUT CHARACTERS AND LOG BUYERS COME UP 3/26/96

During my career in the woods and hinterlands, I have run across some diverse and colorful characters. The log buyers and my interaction with them provided me with some of my most enjoyable and memorable experiences.

Rod Carlson of Gutchess International was the gentleman of the group. Low key and knowledgeable, it was easy to do business with him. I learned some of the vagaries inherent in the log business from him.

Being the first to buy seven-foot, six-inch birch veneer, I was curious as to the use and destination of the logs. They were to be loaded into containers and trucked to Baltimore where the containers were placed on rail cars, which then delivered them to the Port of Los Angeles. The containers were then stacked three high on the decks of ships and transported to Taiwan, where they were made into door skins. The door skins then were sent back to Blount Lumber in Laconia, NY, for the manufacture of the completed product. Laconia is roughly 100 miles from where the trees were harvested in the Town of Webb.

George Ramsey was a crusty old veteran who ran a yard in Inlet for Weyerhaeuser and Commonwealth Plywood. He was perhaps the most experienced veneer buyer of the lot, but faced increasing pressure from the export log market.

Bill Helmer stopped at the yard one day and asked a few questions about the log business. Not knowing who he was or what he was up to, George told him in short order where to go. Like many of us, George's bark is worse than his bite. He was a fair man and I liked doing business with him.

Norm Wilday is an ex-logger turned log buyer who is as tough as he looks. Norm would scale logs all day in sub-zero weather in summer work clothes with light slippers on his feet. He and his partner, Bernie LaRocque, never had to look at a table to determine a log's volume. They had them memorized.

The first time we did business, I asked Norm how he paid. Norm produced an envelope with 50 grand in cash in it and showing it to me replied, "Here's how I pay."

Norm worked fast and was not one to waste time. A young buyer was looking over his logs and taking an inordinate amount of time to grade them. When Norm could take it no longer he told him, "You better head for your car, I've got my foot raised."

Frank Taio was a young man from Taiwan, factory-trained and meticulous in the examination of each log. He also would have been a candidate for Norm's raised foot.

Some time after our business dealings were long over, I discovered too late that we had taken advantage of Frank. We had used a set of log volume tables one of my foresters had made up and some of the odd length logs had been given five more board feet than there should have been. A friend of mine was present some months later when Frank discovered the error which at \$1 a foot cost him \$5 more per log than it should have.

Frank was philosophical about the whole matter. He looked at my friend and said, "Fred, I buy one whole load air."