

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TIGERCAT INDUSTRIES INC.

BETWEEN BRANCHES

ISSUE 65 OCTOBER 2026

Resilient Forests
in California

Tony Iarocci
LIFE and TIMES

Six-Way
SKIDDER BLADE

MULTI-PURPOSE
Mill Yard Carrier

Tigercat® | TCi®



BETWEEN THE BRANCHES

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IN THIS ISSUE

Support News 4

Product News 5

Six-Way Skidder Blade..... 8

Appalachian Logging 12

Career Retrospective..... 16

Pirner Logging 22

Forest Resiliency 28

Man and Machine 36

Mill Yard Multi-Purpose 42

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FROM THE *Editor*

In the northern hemisphere, we had another summer rife with heat, drought and massive wildfires. It is in this context that contractors are stepping up to protect forests and communities, using sound forest management practices and the right mix of equipment. We talked to Tracey and Kelly Holt about forest treatments, advocacy, and the part Kelly played in the development of a compact, leveling track mulcher.

Tigercat Industries has been collaborating with end users for decades to design and build machines suited to high production logging and niche applications. BTB visited J&R Logging to learn about how the company is using a Tigercat 620H skidder equipped with a six-way dozer blade. Co-owner Robert D'Agostini Jr. explains how the project came about and what the added functionality is doing for his operation. Similarly, Weyerhaeuser's team in Edson, Alberta worked with Tigercat to customize a skidder with a six-way blade and a hydraulically operated pintle hitch system to replace the functionality of multiple machines in the wood yard with a single TCi 632H utility carrier.

Listening carefully to customers has been a hallmark at Tigercat. Former President and current Director Grant Somerville reflects on the career of recently retired Tony Iarocci, the company's first president. He takes us back to the early days when this customer-focused design philosophy was first established. Massachusetts based Pirner Logging is profiled in this issue, and long time employee David Balchunas confirms it. "They must have talked to loggers and paid attention," he says.

The issue also covers mountain loggers in the Appalachians who have found Tigercat six-wheel skidders to be indispensable for steep and sensitive terrain. Robby Major, an owner-operator in northeastern British Columbia, has run his 23-year-old Tigercat L870 feller buncher since new. He credits his extremely high uptime to a well-engineered machine, along with a strict maintenance program, coupled with his vast technical knowledge of his machine.

– Paul Iarocci

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EXPANDING SUPPORT IN SOUTHERN US

Tigercat welcomes Hunter Moore to the Product Support team.



Hunter Moore brings more than ten years of field service experience in heavy equipment diagnostics, troubleshooting, and repair. Known for his ability to resolve complex hydraulic and electrical issues, he

has built a strong reputation as a highly respected technician.

Hunter comes from a family with deep roots in the logging industry. His background includes leadership experience as an acting shop foreman and business owner, giving him valuable insight into both the technical and customer-service sides of the industry.

Based in Mount Enterprise, Texas, Hunter will support customers and dealers throughout Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. He will work closely with MidSouth Forestry Equipment, Tejas Equipment, and Smith Equipment LLC, alongside District Managers James Farquhar and Nicholas Edwards.

“I’d like to welcome Hunter to the Tigercat field team. We’re confident his experience and knowledge will make him a strong addition to our southern US support team,” says Kevin Selby, Vice President, Sales USA.

Hunter is eager to bring his field service experience and customer focused approach to his new role. “I’m excited for the opportunity to join the Tigercat team. I’ve spent most of my career working in field service repair, so I understand the challenges our customers and dealers face every day. I look forward to supporting our dealers and customers across the region and helping provide dependable service and excellent support.” ■

HARVESTING HEAD SUPPORT IN SOUTHERN US

Tigercat is pleased to welcome Toby Grayson as Product Support Representative, Harvesting Heads, serving the Southern United States.



Based in Tennessee, Toby brings more than two decades of experience working on complex machinery in both shop and field

environments. Throughout his career, he earned a reputation for diagnosing and resolving challenging equipment issues across a wide range of applications. His extensive technical background and hands-on approach to problem solving provide a strong foundation.

“What stood out to us about Toby was his extensive technical experience and practical approach to solving equipment problems,” says Martine Léveillé, General Manager, Service and Support. “He has worked on many different types of equipment throughout his career, and that breadth of experience will serve him well as he builds expertise in our harvesting and processing head product lines.”

“Having recently spent time working with Toby, I’m excited to welcome him to the team,” says John Withrow, Regional Service Manager. “He possesses the technical skills, work ethic, and customer focused mindset needed to excel in supporting our customers.”

In his new role, Toby will work closely with Tigercat dealers, customers, and fellow product support representatives across the region, providing technical support while helping customers maximize the performance and reliability of their harvesting equipment. He will also play an important role in supporting the growth of Tigercat’s harvesting head business throughout the southern US.

According to Kevin Selby, Vice President, Sales USA, Toby's appointment comes at an important point. "With an increasing field population and growth plans for our harvesting and processing head product lines, Toby's role will be instrumental in supporting

our existing customers while helping drive future growth across the region," says Selby. "We are confident he will be a valuable addition to our field support team and a strong contributor to Tigercat's continued success."

"I'm proud to be part of the Tigercat family," says Toby. "I'm looking forward to supporting our customers, learning from the team, and contributing to the company's future success." ■

A LIFE DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING TIGERCAT IN AUSTRALIA

Stephen Green retires after more than two decades helping Tigercat customers, dealers, and colleagues across Australia and the broader Australasian region.

Stephen Green's retirement marks the conclusion of an accomplished career spanning 26 years of support for the Tigercat product line throughout Australasia, particularly Australia. His career was defined by technical expertise, strong customer focus, and a genuine passion for the forestry industry.

Steve's connection with Tigercat began long before he officially joined the company. For eight years, he operated as an independent service contractor for Forest Centre, the original Tigercat dealer in Australia. In this capacity, he developed a deep understanding of the products and the people who relied on them. He formally joined the Tigercat support team on August 1, 2008, beginning what would become eighteen years of dedicated factory support.

Over the years, Steve became a familiar face across the Australian forestry sector, serving as an

important link between the field and the factory. "I have been fortunate to spend my career working with outstanding customers, dealers, and colleagues across Australia and New Zealand," says Steve. "The forestry industry is built on strong relationships, and I am grateful for the many friendships and experiences that have made this career so rewarding. I would like to thank everyone who has been part of the journey and wish the Tigercat team continued success in the years ahead."

As Tigercat continues to strengthen its support presence throughout Australia, Steve's responsibilities will be shared among the existing

Australian-based team, including Damien Ambrose, Jake Peters, and Warren Nolan, who will continue assisting customers and dealer partner Onetrak.

Steve leaves behind a legacy of dedication, integrity, and service excellence. His contributions have helped strengthen Tigercat's reputation throughout Australasia and positively impacted the industry. "Steve's professionalism, passion, and commitment to customers, dealers, and the Tigercat team has left a lasting impression across the Australasian forestry industry," says Glen Marley, Tigercat District Manager, Australia and New Zealand. ■



New 820 SERIES

Tigercat Industries releases new series of lighter weight, compact track carriers.

The new H820 harvester and 820 feller buncher models are the simplest, most compact, and lightest weight carriers in the Tigercat-TCi lineup.

The 820 feller buncher is best suited to the 5400 felling saw and best applied to small diameter timber and first thinning applications. It is equipped with a lighter weight ER boom with less lift capacity compared to the 822E feller buncher.

The H820 harvester is equipped with a conventional ten metre (33 ft) boom system, best suited to the TCi 544 harvesting head. Again, the H820 is an excellent solution for cost effective harvesting in small diameter timber stands and thinning applications where maximum lifting capacity is not a

primary concern. The long-reach boom minimizes machine travel, resulting in improved fuel economy and reduced track wear.

The lighter weight, lower capacity boom sets for both machines require less counterweight. This reduces the overall weight of the machine for improved fuel economy and track life, contributing to lower

overall cost of ownership. Both boom systems offer a tight tuck for excellent performance in thinning applications. ■



TIGERCAT LAUNCHES *Pull-Through* **DELIMBER**

Tigercat Industries has introduced the PD26 delimeter, a durable, high performance tree-length processing attachment designed to maximize productivity, simplify maintenance, and improve uptime in demanding forestry applications.

Built around a robust open frame design that incorporates industry-first features, the PD26 combines a heavy-duty slew system, smooth feeding geometry, and service-friendly features that help operators maintain consistent production while reducing maintenance-related downtime.

The PD26 uses a 50% larger main slew bearing with M20 (¾ in) bolted-through connections on both the inner and outer races. This, combined with heavy duty frames, eliminates the need for support rollers, providing exceptionally smooth operation without compromising strength and reliability.

The main frame utilizes heavy-duty round tubing to reduce snagging and material hang-ups for smoother stem flow. Abrasion-

resistant wear plates enhance durability, while sloped surfaces and an open-frame structure sheds debris, minimizing material buildup.

Serviceability was a key focus during development. The bolt-on fixed front knife with replaceable backing nuts simplifies servicing. The open-frame configuration enables knives to be swung into position without interference from the frame, eliminating the need to field weld these components. All movable knife blade welds are external and fully accessible, allowing for faster maintenance and replacement.

The PD26 has a 23 L (6 US gal) chain bar oil reservoir, extending operating time between refills. The reservoir filler neck is conveniently located on the left-hand side. The tank also includes an inline outlet strainer, bolted cleanout flange, and bolt-on design for easy removal when service is required.

A centralized hydraulic manifold and optimized hydraulic circuit allows for function adjustments



and servicing to be completed from inside the cab or safely away from moving components. Advanced hydraulics eliminates the need for an accumulator, further improving the safety and reliability of the system.

The PD26 incorporates proven Tigercat Industries technology already used across its felling and processing head product lines for the saw and chain tensioner. Powered by a 63 cc gear motor with dual tapered roller bearings on the output shaft, the compact Tigercat saw unit maximizes the cutting envelope. While hydraulic auto tensioning is standard, a manual tensioner is also available upon request. Integrated features include debris protection for the bar cylinder connection, a saw position flag, a chain catcher, and chain-shot guarding guarding. ■

TIGERCAT GRAPPLE SAW

The LG4053 and LG5057 log grapples are now available with a factory optioned grapple saw, designed and manufactured by Tigercat Industries.

The heavy duty housing has an integrated bar oil tank. The hoses are fully protected by covers

and the through-tip loader boom design. A grapple saw increases the versatility and utility of trailer and track-mounted loaders. Additional functionality includes the ability to easily and safely buck large limbs, forks and root masses. It reduces reliance on ground personnel, improving workforce safety. ■



SIX WAYS *to* SUNDAY



Six-way skidder blade opens up a whole new range of possibilities for California harvesting contractor.

– Paul Iarocci

Robert D’Agostini Jr. and Saul Jimenez are owners of J&R Logging based in Mt. Aukum, California. The company was profiled in *Between the Branches* in April 2023, highlighting innovative thinking and an openness to new ideas. J&R was a relatively early adopter of Tigercat’s hydrostatically driven yarder concept. Robert spelled out the many advantages of the 180 over the conventional yarders that the company previously relied on, including increased safety and productivity, and reduced specialized labour requirements.

Similarly, for many years, J&R integrated Caterpillar 527 skidders into its logging operations. These were dozer-based, grapple-equipped machines that offered versatility to handle the steep terrain skidding function as well as road building and road decommissioning duties. The model was discontinued around 2010, eventually leaving a gap in the machinery lineup for J&R’s logging crews.

When Bejac Corporation acquired the Tigercat product line in 2020, it motivated Robert to have a close look at the brand. Since then, the Bejac team and J&R have

developed a strong relationship, and the company has integrated multiple Tigercat models into its equipment fleet including skidders, track harvesters, the LX830E feller buncher, and shovel loggers. Most recently, the company purchased its first Tigercat logger, an 880E model equipped with a loader/processor attachment.

As Tigercat machines were added to the fleet, Robert and Saul were able to improve on steep terrain ground-based extraction by replacing the track skidders with Tigercat leveling shovel loggers, gaining improvements in productivity,



The 620H cuts a water bar to decommission a skidder track. The six-way blade is multifunctional and a great asset on logging operations, allowing the crew to build decks, roads and ditches.



mechanical reliability and operator comfort. However, the challenge of replacing the functionality of a dozer (without simply adding a costly and underutilized dozer into the crew machine mix) remained unsolved.

The Bejac team, in discussions with Tigercat's engineers, believed

that the dozer concept for a skidder could provide a solution, especially for forestry companies that were willing to explore the benefits a multifunctional machine could provide. Bejac knew that J&R Logging would evaluate interesting concepts and would

be able to analyze and justify the additional costs of a product that offered increased versatility. Bejac's relationship with J&R logging led to the collaboration with Tigercat to develop a solution.

"The Tigercat six-way skidder blade was a customer-driven

Two 620H skidders pull to J&R's latest machine, an 880E logger.



development,” says Jeremy Piercy, Product Manager for the skidder group. “Over the years, talking with customers at shows, it would often come up as an idea that loggers thought would be useful. The idea was always on the back burner.” Following the development of the TCi 920 dozer, the idea became more viable, as much of the design could be carried over. “The 920 really opened the door to integrate a six-way blade onto a skidder,” Jeremy continues. “The idea came up again during customer tours and we started conceptualizing what it would look like. We had some rough layouts already complete when Bejac brought Robert on a factory tour. I showed him some screenshots of the layout, and I believe that gave him enough confidence in our design that he agreed to buy the first one if we built it.”

The six-way blade is now an available option on all H-series grapple skidders. J&R chose the 620H. “Water bars are legislated by the state on public and private land,” Robert explains. After finishing a compartment, the skid tracks must be decommissioned and water bars installed to minimize erosion and return the site to a more natural state. “We generally have two bunchers, two skidders and a processor on each job. Once a unit is finished, one skidder stays behind to cut the water bars.”

In addition to creating water bars, the machine can push open new decks, build roads and plow snow in the winter. It is a lower-maintenance-cost machine compared with a tracked dozer and far more versatile and multifunctional. Operations Manager Alex Jimenez adds that

the extra weight on the front end improves stability and traction, making it a more capable skidder in the steep terrain that the J&R crews regularly encounter.

Robert concedes that in terms of pure grading performance, a wheeled carrier can never match a conventional dozer. However, the compromise is more than offset by the utility and convenience of having a capable six-way blade on a highly utilized machine that is already required on the job. For J&R, it eliminates the requirement and associated expense of bringing a dozer onsite. ■



J&R's six-way blade in action.

(L-R) Brad Griffin, Product Support Sales Representative Bejac Sacramento; Alex Jimenez, J&R Operations Manager; Rob Selby, Tigercat District Manager; Kevin Barlet, Bejac Corporation Director of Operations; Ron Barlet, Bejac Corporation President and CEO; Robert D'Agostini Jr., President J&R Logging.



MAXIMUM *Traction*



Six-wheel skidders improve productivity and reduce impact in the Appalachian range.

– Chris McMillan

Tigercat has been building and improving six-wheel skidders for over 25 years. The machines are synonymous with steep slopes and extreme terrain conditions, and a component of many logging operations in West Virginia and Maryland. Between the Branches checked in with three contractors — all customers of Ricer Equipment in Summersville, West Virginia.

The rugged Appalachian range is the defining geographic feature of the area. Sharp mountain ridges descend into steep river valleys, along with the rolling hardwood covered hills that dominate the landscape. The region experiences

high precipitation, adding further challenges for harvesting contractors.

Triple B Logging

Brad Woodall is a third-generation logger and owner of Triple B Logging based in Summersville. Brad has been logging for twelve years, working throughout several counties in the central part of West Virginia.

Brad's brother Phillip (Woody) Woodall runs an excavator with a grapple saw, cutting and preparing the big hardwoods for Richard Dillon, skidder operator. Brad runs the loader and delimber at the

landing, merchandizing logs, and loading trucks. Rounding out the seven-man crew are Danny Snyder, who builds the roads ahead of the logging crew, and brothers Russell and Mark Hamrick, who drive the haul trucks.

Brad purchased a Tigercat 234B three years ago, switching from a Barko 495. "I was trying to buy just a delimbing trailer from Ricer, so I went down to Lucasville, and I demoed a 234B mainly to try the delimber, and just fell in love with it. The swing torque was a lot better, and it's built a lot better, so once I ran it, it was hard to give it back."

Tigercat six-wheel skidders are proving to be an asset for steep ground and hardwood logging jobs in the Appalachian range.

It was a similar story when purchasing his skidder last year. “I have always run John Deere skidders, but when it was time to get this last new one, we tried the 648 LII and we didn’t like it. It just didn’t pull well,” says Brad. “So, we demoed a brand new 620H, and then a week later we demoed the 625H, and then we decided on the 625. We were doing a pretty hard skid where we were at — about a mile long — with about half a mile uphill. So, the bogie really shined there.” Brad typically encounters steep terrain on his contracts. “We don’t get a whole lot of flat land. And we do get some really steep ground. In this area it’s quite rocky, but the bogie handles it well. That’s what sold us on the machine.”

L & L Excavating and Land Clearing

The following day we headed west to meet up with Larry Strickland and his son Levi, owners of L & L Excavating and Land Clearing LLC. The crew had just started a 150-acre (60 ha) clear cut contract just north of Charleston.

Larry Strickland began his logging career back in 1978 with an old Deere 440 cable skidder and a Barko loader. Levi started helping his dad when in the woods at age twelve, operating a skidder. “He started running skidders, just working all the time. I told him, if you want to work doing this, you can make a good living because I have all my life,” says Larry.

Larry and Levi are equal partners in the company now and it has grown into a substantial operation. The Tigercat fleet includes five 234B loaders, one T234C track loader, five 625H skidders, and one 632H skidder. The head count of 40 employees includes around eighteen full-time truck drivers. The hauling side consists of about 40 trucks and 70 trailers.

L & L keeps those trucks moving. “We do about 125 loads a week, and that’s 52 weeks a year,” explains Levi who pays special attention to harvesting system balance and flow. “Our theory is that we need those loader booms moving all the time. If your loader is sitting, you’re losing money.” Most of L & L’s product is hauled to the Weyerhaeuser mill



Triple B Logging. (L-R) Richard Dillon; Tony Wright (former employee); Phillip Woodall; Joey Adkins, Ricer Service Manager; Brad Woodall; Troy Sneddon, Ricer Regional Sales Manager; Jerry Smeak, Tigercat District Manager.



Brad Woodall finds that the 625H really shines when it comes to the steep and rocky ground in his area.

near Flatwoods. The company also supplies WestRock, and Larry has a long relationship with Superior Hardwood, hauling sawlogs to the mill for many years.

Up until 2022 Larry had never run a Tigercat skidder. When he decided that the company needed a six-wheel skidder, he called his friend Tom Ricer, President of Ricer Equipment and purchased a 625H, followed by four more. Larry says that the integration of the six-wheel skidders has had a very positive effect on the business. “A good part of that is due to increased utilization. We work a lot more days with those bogie skidders,” he explains. In addition, the climbing performance, especially with traction aids, is well beyond any four-wheel skidder. “With the six-wheel skidders, we don’t have to build as many roads. Every road you build in West Virginia, you’ve got to put grass seed, and straw on them afterward.” The 625H reduces the time, expense and environmental impact associated with building and decommissioning skidder roads.

SC & L Construction and Logging

We crossed the state line into the northwestern corner of Maryland to visit Jerry Sisler, owner of SC & L Construction and Logging based in Friendsville. Jerry and his father started the company in 1983 as equal partners, logging mainly in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Jerry is a fourth-generation logger, and he has his three sons working with him.

The company sells to different mills around the area. “It just depends on who’s paying the most for certain species,” says Jerry. Products include veneer logs, low grade pallet logs and pulpwood. “We’ll separate the veneer for the veneer buyers, and then we also have scragg wood, which we sell to pallet mills, and then we sell pulpwood to Weyerhaeuser for OSB. We also sell to Covington in Virginia, to the paper mill down there. We chip all the tops, which go to Kingsford for charcoal.”

Jerry purchased his first Tigercat machines — a 244 loader and a 620D skidder — back in 2002. The current fleet includes 610E, 630E and 635G skidders, a recently purchased 250D loader, and the original 244 loader. “We got started with the 244 and 620D, and then after that we just knew. We realized how good the factory is if you have a problem. It’s just amazing.”

Jerry mainly runs the 610 on smaller jobs and thinning applications. For mountain logging he emphasizes the extreme performance difference between a four-wheel and a six-wheel skidder. “We run them together and the four-wheel skidder, the 630, which is a big skidder — it will only take maybe a third of what the bogie will pull uphill in slick conditions.”

Jerry continues, “In 2014 when we started chipping, we realized that we needed something that could bring a bigger payload, especially in these wet conditions. Then of course with the bogies you don’t rut up like you do with the four-wheel skidders.

If you hit a log or something, the back wheels will spin out on a four-wheel skidder. The bogie will just keep on going. I bought my very first bogie, a 635E, in 2014, but I demoed one in 2000. Looking back, I would have been way ahead if I'd have

bought that [six-wheel] skidder then because there's just no comparison on what it will pull in slick or hilly conditions when you have trouble with traction." ■



Watch the 625H skidder in action.

SC & L Construction and Logging. (L-R) Troy Sneddon, Ricer Regional Sales Manager; Jerry Smeak, Tigercat District Manager; Jerry Sisler; Casey Sisler; Jeff Bolyard.



L & L Excavating and Land Clearing. (L-R) Terry Cook; Jerry Smeak, Tigercat District Manager; Troy Sneddon, Ricer Regional Sales Manager; Dan Gamble; Kabin Taylor; Derrick Dunnivant; Steven Dunnivant; Jimmy Cox; Larry Strickland; Levi Strickland; Tyler Swingle; Trevan James.



DEFINING AN ERA



Tony Iarocci officially retired from Tigercat Industries on June 4, 2026. Grant Somerville, former president of Tigercat, current director, and colleague of Tony's for 48 years, writes about his life and career.

Tony Iarocci is a name that is synonymous with the Tigercat brand. He was the first president of Tigercat Industries, taking on the responsibility in late 1991 before the company had even chosen its name. This was the pioneering stage, where he led the creation of our engineering, sales, customer service, and parts organizations and the development of the early product lines.

Tony is best known for the thirty-five years he devoted to building and leading Tigercat, with twenty-six years as its first president followed by nine as its first director. However, some may be unaware that his lengthy career in forestry began many years before the creation of Tigercat.

Originally from Rome, Italy, Tony's family immigrated to Canada in 1951, settling in Brantford, Ontario. His parents were strong believers in hard work and education. Following good advice, he pursued a university education, and in 1966, earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Waterloo.

That same year he began his career at the Koehring Waterous Company located in Brantford. Founded by the Waterous Brothers in the late 1800s, the company initially built steam powered machinery, then in the 1920s became a prominent manufacturer of enormous pulp grinders for paper mills. It added construction machinery in the 1950s and then forestry machines in the 1960s. In forestry circles, the

Koehring Waterous name is best remembered for the development of the high-speed disc saw felling head, but it produced a wide variety of influential machines for both the forest harvesting and pulp and paper sectors.

This era of Tony's career exposed him to the design, development, manufacture, and field support of machinery for use in both paper mills and forests. It sparked a lifelong interest in the development of innovative machinery, a necessary building block for the future challenge of growing Tigercat.

During the 1970s, the company focused development efforts on large, wheeled harvesters and feller forwarders used to harvest softwood



Tony's retirement celebration in June 2026 after 35 years with Tigercat Industries.

from northern forests in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

The harvest was primarily used to produce pulp and paper products, with machine fleets owned and operated by large paper companies. Most of the workforce lived in company-owned camps due to the remote locations. Machine fleets typically operated 24 hours per day, five days per week, with downtime for spring break-up and Christmas. Harvesting environments in these northern operations varied from muskeg to exposed rock, with long, hot summer days at 30°C and long, cold winter nights at -30°C. Machines would often log 40,000 hours of service before being decommissioned. This challenging application demanded aggressive product development and field support programs, and close collaboration between manufacturer and customer.

Tony managed Koehring's parts and customer service operations for several years, giving him insight into the day-to-day challenges

faced by both customers and manufacturers in these conditions. During the deteriorating economic times of the early eighties, he was promoted to senior management roles in marketing and engineering.

By this point, large producers were shifting to a mix of pulp and dimensional lumber production. Sales of large harvesters designed to produce only pulp logs declined. The

company shifted focus toward large feller forwarders that delivered clean full trees to roadside where they could be merchandized into logs destined for pulpwood or dimensional lumber.

By the mid-eighties, economic pressures led producers to shift away from owning and operating large machine fleets, replacing company operations with private



Part of a very early slide deck that served as a company introduction. Note that this was pre-PowerPoint. Presentations were shown on an actual slide projector.



Three presidents: (L-R) Ken MacDonald, Grant Somerville and Tony Iarocci.

contracting companies. The enormous wheeled feller forwarders became dinosaurs that private contractors could neither afford to buy nor support.

For the most part, the shift in North America was to feller bunchers and grapple skidders, marking the birth of the most common logging system in use today. This created a need for lower cost machines, and the company was searching for new opportunities.

Tony championed the idea of designing and building a more productive and reliable tracked feller buncher. While competitors were modifying excavators into feller bunchers, Tony's vision was to produce machines that were designed from the ground up specifically for the forest industry — something that would build upon the company's many years of experience, while offering the forest industry a more affordable tool.

A prototype was built in nine months. (It shipped on June 4, 1984, ironically 42 years to the day before Tony's retirement.) The track feller buncher was a winning concept. The design and market timing were right, and the product line grew quickly throughout the decade.

However, the eighties remained challenging. The company fell victim to the Wall Street mergers and acquisitions craze, and in 1988 the holding company sold Koehring's Brantford forestry-based division to Timberjack. The new owner continued to develop the track feller buncher product line. As such, the Koehring machine proved to be the root for the two largest producers of purpose-built track machines sold in the world today.

Leaving behind the years he invested in Koehring was difficult, but Tony got on with his career. He earned a management role with a local hydraulic component

manufacturer and later became vice president of King Equipment. Then, in 1989, another challenge came in the form of a car accident that nearly claimed his life, leaving him with a long and painful recovery period.

In 1990, he took on a teaching role in the faculty of engineering at Conestoga College. As fate would have it, one day in 1991 he bumped into Ken MacDonald. They knew each other from Tony's Koehring days when Ken's MacDonald Steel company was a supplier of weldment components.

MacDonald Steel was struggling under the recession of that era. Most of Ken's customers were also struggling, or worse yet closing, and he needed to act. He made an existential decision to build complete machines rather than components for other manufacturers. Ken knew Tony's capabilities and offered him the



Tony inspecting the prototype 726 feller buncher he helped design and market. In 2017, the machine was returned to the factory and rebuilt.

Ken MacDonald, Jon Cooper and Tony stand in front of the rebuilt 726 prototype in 2017. Jon and Tony worked together to design the machine in late 1991 and early 1992.



challenge to create a forestry product line for his company.

This was the coming together of two very complementary individuals. While their backgrounds and skill sets were quite different, together their abilities proved a very effective combination. What they did share was an entrepreneurial nature, a strong work ethic, and a high degree of self-confidence.

Extensive field research conducted by Ken, Tony and the small team they had assembled determined that the starting point should be a wheeled feller buncher for the southern US market. They built the prototype 726 feller buncher in nine months, finishing it in the spring of 1992. The assemblers completed the machine while working in motel parking lots en route to the forestry show in Tifton, Georgia. It cut its first tree just before this live demonstration event started. A gutsy move, but this machine proved to be a winner and became the keystone upon which Tigercat was built.

Tony ensured that the research and design methods used for the 726 project became the model for all future Tigercat development programs: travel to the field, listen to customer ideas, likes and dislikes, research the competition's strengths and weaknesses, develop solutions and innovations, and make machines that are tougher, more reliable and productive. Then follow up by responding to customer feedback with rapid product improvement. Respect your customers as your business partners. These were lessons learned through twenty-five years of experience.

The list of development projects led by Tony was long and diverse as he and his team released a new product every year. The pursuit of innovation led to advancements like dual post bunching saws and shears, the hydrostatically driven skidder, and ER technology for boom systems to name just a few. These and many other developments led to major advancements in the productivity and efficiency of logging operations worldwide. The sheer scope of product development undertaken by Tigercat during this time period is difficult to convey.

Of equal importance and challenge was the development of a high-quality dealer network, and capable customer service and parts networks to support them. Tony recognized the critical value of these aspects of the business and devoted much of his time to them.

A part of the process often unseen to customers is the partnerships that must be forged with numerous component and service suppliers. Forestry is a demanding application that most commercially available components are simply not designed for. Tony relentlessly led joint development projects with component suppliers to create forestry-capable parts — everything from hydraulic pumps to paint. When this proved insufficient, he led the development of Tigercat manufactured alternatives like our axles, transmissions and final drive gearboxes.

Tony believed in seeing things in person to experience challenges firsthand. He travelled to many countries to visit vendors, factories, dealers, customers and forest operations. He regularly drove

through the southern US to meet with dealers and customers, spending long hours on the road and literally wearing out vehicle after vehicle.

Tony and Ken created a unique culture at Tigercat. They worked hard and asked the same from their team members, but they also knew how to enjoy the off-work hours. They never let their job titles become status symbols and they were genuinely respectful of everyone. They kept morals as their compass, something that has become too rare these days.

Tony is a rare mix of old school and new school. On one hand, he is a disciplined professional engineer with many of the traditional values of his era. But he is also a progressive thinker who places high value on common sense. His balance of science and practical thinking proved well suited to the design of forestry machines. He listened to what customers wanted rather than telling them what they needed, establishing a key component of company culture that became a driver of Tigercat's success.

Tony chaired countless meetings with component manufacturers, dealers, customers and Tigercat staff to solve problems. Everyone came to respect his engineering competence, his passion for solving problems regardless of detail or scale, and the success that followed.

Tony was a team builder. He was exceptionally good at reading people and identifying those with potential. He challenged young people to do big things. As a leader, he always kept himself well informed so he could make good decisions. He

was exceptional at asking the right questions to get to the root of an issue. He was decisive, believing indecision was worse than the wrong decision. Throughout good times and bad, he remained optimistic and on course.

He was always present: at shows, meetings, factory tours, social events, on the factory floors, and in the woods. He was the face of Tigercat. Tony's belief in himself and his team led to accomplishments that the industry said couldn't be

done. He led the creation of a new brand of forestry equipment in an already overcrowded marketplace while established brands were disappearing. It became the broadest product line in the forestry industry. Today, eleven manufacturing locations and a worldwide workforce of 2,000 team members build and support all kinds of truly innovative, high-quality products.

This is a glimpse of a 60-year career that made a significant contribution to the forest industry

around the world and affected the lives of thousands. We all thank Tony for the countless hours, miles and sleepless nights he dedicated to making Tigercat Industries an industry leader. I would also like to acknowledge his wife Marsha for the support that she provided along the way, and for all the work she put into Tigercat that often went unnoticed. ■

During his career, Tony highly valued travel and interactions with dealers and loggers.





THIS IS WHAT WE DO

Based in central Massachusetts, Pirner Logging blends decades of experience with a commitment to continuous improvement. Led by Chris Pirner alongside his son Jacob, and veteran operator David Balchunas, the company has embraced a growing Tigercat fleet while staying true to its core values of quality work, strong relationships, and responsible forestry.

— Samantha Paul

For Chris Pirner, a successful logging business isn't built overnight. It's built one day, one job, and one decision at a time. "We started out with just a cable skidder and a chainsaw," he says. There was no outline for success; just long days in the woods, cutting timber, hauling wood, and learning through experience. As the operation grew,

so did the equipment fleet, but the core values remained the same — hard work and a commitment to doing the job right.

Chris and long-time operator David Balchunas have worked together for more than four decades. David was the first employee Chris ever hired, and over the years their working relationship evolved into a

friendship built on trust and mutual respect.

The rhythm of the work

In the early days, the work followed a familiar rhythm. By midday, trees would be down and stacked. Lunch was spent measuring, marking, and processing wood. Then it was back to cutting until the day was done.

“It was repetitive, physical work, but we had a really good system,” Chris says. “You didn’t have to do a whole lot of talking. You just knew what the other guy was going to do.” That instinctive teamwork, the ability to work without words, is something they both still value today.

For David, logging was a way of life he grew up with. “My father was a logger,” he recalls. “You’d ride in the truck with him, carry his gas and oil. It got in your blood.” As a kid, he learned by watching and listening. Over the years, he’s operated nearly every type of equipment. When asked what separates a good operator from a great one, he points to vision.

“When you’re cutting, you have to

have a vision,” David says. “You have to see what you want it to look like before you even start.” It’s a skill that only comes with experience. Long before the first tree hits the ground, David is already thinking about the finished job — what stays, what goes, and how the stand will look when the work is complete. “Ask any experienced logger and they’ll tell you there’s a rhythm to the work,” he adds. Movements become second nature. “I shut my mind off and just cut wood,” he says.

From green to yellow

For decades, Pirner Logging ran John Deere equipment. But over the past several years, the company has gradually transitioned its fleet

to Tigercat, driven by machine performance and durability, dealer support, and long-term value.

The shift began with a Tigercat 625 six-wheel skidder in 2022. At the time, Pirner Logging was battling wet ground conditions that had conventional four-wheel skidders struggling to stay productive. “The place where the four-wheel skidder was getting stuck, that bogie skidder just kept going,” Chris recalls. “They doubled every hitch and pulled it out.”

That machine quickly proved its worth, allowing the crew to finish jobs that would otherwise have been very difficult to complete efficiently. This opened the door to additional Tigercat purchases, including an

“SKILLS CAN BE TAUGHT, BUT ATTITUDE CANNOT.”

– Chris Pirner



The 625H skidder is the first Tigercat machine purchased by Pirner Logging.



Jacob Pirner helps lead the next generation of the family business.

LX830E feller buncher, a 632H skidder, and most recently, a 250E loader. Today, nearly the entire fleet carries the Tigercat name.

David spent much of his career in Deere equipment and openly admits he previously “bled green.” The LX830E changed his perspective. “The stability on this machine is incredible,” he says. “When you can go on steep hills and you’re level and reaching off to the side cutting wood, you feel perfectly fine. This machine is amazing.” What impressed him most wasn’t just the machine’s performance, but the fact that it felt purpose-built for the realities of logging. “They must have talked to loggers and paid attention,” David says. “These things are tough, tough, tough. They hold up.”

At the landing, Chris’s son Jacob operates the newest addition, a Tigercat 250E loader. The company was looking for a stronger, more durable machine capable of handling the large wood normally encountered in the harvesting operations. Jacob was a driving force behind the decision to add the 250E to the fleet. After years running competing loaders, he immediately noticed the difference. “It’s a lot stronger, a lot faster, a lot smoother, and a lot more heavily built,” he says. “It’s definitely a rugged, heavy-duty machine.” As the primary operator, Jacob appreciates the design and serviceability. “Everything about it is good. There is a lot of room to work on it. Under the motor compartment, everything’s easy.”

Jacob has earned a reputation for being direct, honest, and unafraid to speak his mind. When something isn’t working, he is quick to point



Nineteen-year-old skidder operator Colton Chapman.

"THEY MUST HAVE TALKED TO LOGGERS AND PAID ATTENTION," DAVID SAYS. "THESE THINGS ARE TOUGH, TOUGH, TOUGH. THEY HOLD UP."

— David Balchunas



David Balchunas at work in the Tigercat LX830E.

it out and rarely lets flaws go unmentioned. As Chris puts it with a laugh, "If he doesn't like something, he'll tell you." That made his reaction to the new Tigercat 250E particularly telling. While Jacob's straightforward approach can be demanding, it has also helped drive continuous improvement throughout the operation. Whether evaluating equipment, refining processes, or challenging conventional thinking, he is always looking for a better way to get the job done.

The confidence in Tigercat extends beyond the machines themselves. A visit to the company's manufacturing facilities gave them an inside look at how the equipment is built and reinforced their belief in the brand. The customer-first culture was evident. Meeting

product engineers and company founder Ken MacDonald reinforced that customer feedback is genuinely valued throughout the organization. "When we went on the tour and Ken MacDonald was the way he was, that told me right there this is the company we want to do business with," Chris says. "If you ask him a question, he listens and takes it seriously."

Answer your phone

Just as important as the equipment itself is the support standing behind it when the workday doesn't go as planned. That support has come through a longstanding relationship with CJ Logging Equipment and specifically salesman George Wheldon. With decades of experience in the forestry industry,

George understands the realities of logging and has earned the trust of the Pirner crew by remaining accessible, knowledgeable, and committed. According to Chris and Jacob, what separates George from many salespeople is his focus on relationships rather than transactions. Whether there's a machine purchase on the table or not, he makes a point of staying connected and stopping by the jobsite to discuss challenges, share ideas, and see how operations are running.

"They're just customers that become my friends," George says. That approach has made him a trusted resource for the Pirmers, who frequently rely on his experience to help navigate equipment decisions, market opportunities, and day-to-day operational challenges.

Pirner Logging's newest addition, a Tigercat 250E loader.





“It doesn’t always have to be about buying something,” Chris comments. “It’s always good to bat ideas around if something new is coming, or if you’re having an issue.” For Chris, responsiveness remains one of the most valuable qualities a dealer can provide. “The biggest thing for me is that George will always answer his phone. If I have a problem and I want it fixed, these guys have always been very responsive.”

Jacob shares that feeling. “That’s the other reason why we bought a lot of stuff from George. If he doesn’t know the answer, he finds out and gets back to you.” Operating several hours from the dealership location makes that level of commitment especially important. CJ Logging Equipment has kept downtime to a minimum. “Every time we’ve had an issue, they’ve come out and fixed it,” Jacob says. “When something breaks, the parts are usually here the next day.”

The next generation

While Chris built the company, his son Jacob is helping shape its future. Since graduating high school in 2016, Jacob has become increasingly involved in every aspect of the operation, from production planning and wood merchandising to trucking logistics and equipment purchase decisions. At just 28 years of age, he already plays a significant role in guiding the direction of the business.

Jacob’s influence is particularly evident when it comes to equipment purchases. He was a strong advocate for the Tigercat LX830E feller buncher, believing the leveling undercarriage and the

ability to equip it with the larger 5702-26 felling saw would deliver meaningful productivity gains. “The head on the 822 is smaller. You don’t realize how much time you save when you can cut a tree in one pass instead of having to double-cut it,” Jacob explains. (The 5702 is the largest capacity single post felling head available for the 822E.) He also saw value in the leveling capability, pointing to the machine’s tracking performance, power, and ability to stay productive in challenging terrain. After seeing another contractor’s LX830E in action, the decision became easy.

Finding skilled, hardworking operators is just as important as investing in the right equipment. One example is Colton, a nineteen-year-old 625H skidder operator. Unlike many in the industry, he didn’t grow up in a logging family. After watching Pirner Logging work near his home, he developed an interest in forestry and has since become a valued member of the crew. “He shows up every day on time, with a smile on his face, ready to do whatever needs to be done.” For Chris, that’s what matters most. “Skills can be taught, but attitude cannot.”

While Chris and David continue to provide the experience gained from decades in the woods, Jacob is helping carry the business forward. Despite challenges such as rising fuel costs, changing markets, and demanding conditions, the core strategy remains — show up, do the work right, and leave the job better than you found it. ■

FOREST *Resiliency*



Mastication contractor integrates specialized Tigercat and TCi machines into operations vital to the future health of California forests.

— Paul Iarocci

Based in Chester, California, Kelly Holt is a third-generation forest industry professional. His grandfather, Jay Holt founded M&J Logging. He dedicated 60 years to the industry as a business owner and founding member of the Associated California Loggers (ACL). Kelly's father Tim continued to lead the long-established family business that still operates today under the name Holt Logging, Inc. He also served as president of the ACL in 1998.

Kelly grew up immersed in the timber industry. Working alongside his grandfather and father, he

learned about all aspects of the business and developed a deep appreciation for the industry's traditions and responsibilities. In 2010, he and his wife Traci changed paths, focusing on the niche market of mastication rather than production logging. "When we first started doing this, mastication wasn't a very big thing," says Kelly. The new company, Diversified Resources, won a bid for a five-year fuel reduction project in Nevada. "That's what kind of got us going. We started off with an old 2006 Valmet with a Quadco head, and we grew that into a fleet of ten machines."

Today, the company focuses on fire mitigation and remediation, encompassing vegetation management, creation of defensible spaces, and fuel load reduction. The contracts include services and techniques such as in-stand thinning and pruning, brush removal, and mastication. The client base includes public agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, and private landowners.

Tigercat fleet

Bejac Corporation is the Tigercat dealer in California (as well as Nevada, Arizona and Utah). Kelly



A two-part fuel reduction contract. The LX825 follows a commercial thinning designed to create a wide shaded firebreak on either side of the access road. Additionally, the machine penetrates the dense forest beyond the break to remove small nonmerchantable timber and understory, enhancing forest health and resiliency.



A maintenance contract like this is where the M726G really shines. The machine cost effectively covers a lot of acres masticating previously treated forests. This Sierra Pacific owned plot is just on the outskirts of Chester, California. The wide timber spacing and understory growth suppression is ideal to promote forest health and provide a defence for the town.

purchased his first Tigercat machine in 2018, an M726G mulcher equipped with a 4061 mulching head. He followed up with a 470 track mulcher in 2022. This past spring Kelly purchased the prototype LX825 swing mulcher carrier equipped with the TCi 4154-15 mulching head. Although at the time of our visit the LX825 had only worked a few hundred hours, Kelly and Traci were already eagerly awaiting the arrival of their second unit.

The company deploys the fleet of machines mostly on the basis of

terrain. Kelly explains that the M726G primarily operates on flat ground. Because the wheel machine moves quickly and can effectively treat large areas, he favours it for maintenance contracts. “That is the best bang for the buck because you can cover a lot of acreage,” Kelly explains.

The 470 is compact and benefits from very low ground pressure. “It doesn’t really like a lot of rocky ground because it’s a rigid frame, and the operator is sitting right in front of the pivot point,” says Kelly. “However, the 470 is really good on

steeper terrain. It’s a billy goat. We tend to use it on slopes up to 65%.”

Kelly reserves swing carriers like the LX825 for the harshest terrain and environments. Kelly happily reports that although the new machine has been working steadily in rocky terrain, his operator has yet to break a hammer. The large two-piece carbide tips are extremely resistant to rock impacts and produce a coarse mulch that falls comfortably within the specifications of his contracts.

Like the 470, the LX825 is purposefully compact. Compared

“IF I WAS IN A CUT AND CARRY SITUATION, IF I WAS LOGGING, I WOULD WANT AN 830. BECAUSE YOU NEED THE EXTRA WEIGHT. YOU NEED STABILITY. YOU NEED TRACK POWER. BUT WAVING THAT MASTICATING HEAD AROUND, I DON’T NEED THAT. ALL THE WEIGHT IT EVER CARRIES IS THE MULCHING HEAD.”

– Kelly Holt

with the LX830E upon which it is based, the new undercarriage reduces overall width by 5 inches to 3,25 m (10 ft 8 in). Along with a lighter-weight boom system, it is almost 4 000 kg (8,800 lb) lighter than the LX830E.

“There are a few reasons why I wanted this smaller carrier,” Kelly explains. “First, if we’re in plantations, a lot of times we’ll have specs on tree spacing — maybe 15 to 20 foot spacing. As you’re leaving your trees, you have one here in the

middle, you go up and turn. With a bigger carrier, you might uproot the standing tree, or the track might hit it. We also have ground compaction requirements. If ground pressure is too high, it will eliminate you from even being able to bid on the job.”

The second reason is transportation. “Our lowbeds are only good for a certain weight. Up here on these roads with the LX830, I would require a pilot car front and rear and I’d have to install outriggers.” The smaller size is a big advantage

for Kelly because the machines move a lot — up to ten times per year. “If I was in a cut and carry situation, if I was logging, I would want an 830. Because you need the extra weight. You need stability. You need track power. But waving that masticating head around, I don’t need that. All the weight it ever carries is the mulching head.”

For Kelly, another big and somewhat unanticipated advantage is fuel consumption. The LX825 was designed ground-up for mulching,



The LX825 hydraulic system is optimized for masticating, delivering high performance, high production rates, and excellent fuel economy. The TCi 4154-15 mulching head is perfectly matched to the carrier.



Hands-on business owner Kelly Holt grew up in the industry. His practical knowledge, operating expertise and mechanical ability perfectly complement Traci's strengths in project management, grant writing, policy development, compliance and advocacy.

with very efficient hydraulic circuits and high flow to the head. The machine is burning over 30% less fuel than his other swing carriers, while still maintaining production.

The LX825 was essentially birthed in California with a commitment from Bejac and a selection of local contractors to provide feedback to quickly develop a machine suited for niche mastication and fire mitigation requirements. The machine was also designed with a convertible hydraulic system so that contractors can easily swap the mulching head for a felling saw as required. Considering the volume of dead standing timber in California, Kelly thinks this will be an additional benefit when working on post-fire remediation contracts.

Kelly was very impressed with the design process, and the ongoing

support he has received from Bejac and Tigercat. "I loved being involved in some of the design of the head and the machine. I mean, Tigercat machines are customer-built machines. Engineers design them, but they're built based off customer input. Having engineers that actually call you and want your feedback — that is huge to a customer like me."

Tigercat district manager Rob Selby stresses that the dealers and end users are critical to the process. "I've been through a few of these projects over the years, where you work closely with the customer group, and the dealer group, as we're designing something. Those projects always work out well when you have a close group with lots of good input along the way. The dealer needs to pull in the right customers to let us have those discussions."

LX825 in action

Sierra Pacific Industries is a fourth-generation, family-owned forest products company based in Anderson, California. The company owns over 2.4 million acres of timberland in California, Oregon and Washington, making it one of the largest private landowners and lumber producers in the country. As a progressive company, it offers up its forest lands for public use for the pursuit of recreational activities like hiking, cycling, fishing, hunting, and cross-country skiing.

We visited a Sierra Pacific forest, where active logging was underway. This forest is a patchwork of clear fell and selective harvesting compartments along an extensive road network. Diversified Resources deployed the LX825 to a fuel reduction treatment that followed

behind a commercial thinning operation to create a wide shaded firebreak on either side of the access road. The LX825 was masticating the brush, logging waste, and accumulated dead wood on the forest floor within the thinned-out stand. Additionally, the machine was penetrating the denser forest beyond the break to remove small nonmerchantable timber, understory and ladder fuel, enhancing the health of the forest and further strengthening it to defend against future wildfires.

Incorporating fuel breaks into road systems is smart thinking and the most obvious way to make an immediate mitigation impact. Sierra Pacific's proactive approach serves as a great model that could be applied to public lands. "The roads are already there, and the break just needs to be enhanced where it makes sense to do so," Kelly explains. "It's on top of a ridge that comes up from the valley. You get wind driven fires coming up in the valley. So that's a good spot for defence for a fire." The additional benefit comes from the fact it is people who generally start wildfires, and roads are generally where the people are. The strategy puts the strongest defences in the most high-risk locations.

Challenges

Forest management in California with the aim to restore health and mitigate against wildfire is probably more advanced than any other jurisdiction in North America. For example, Fire Safe Councils support communities in wildfire preparedness and resiliency through grant funding, program support, technical assistance, community

outreach, planning, and mitigation activities like firebreaks to protect communities. Cal Fire, in addition to responding to fires, provides technical and financial assistance for private forest management, and offers vegetation management programs encompassing prescribed burns and mastication. The California Association of Resource Conservation Districts also supports the implementation of forest resilience projects.

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— Kelly Holt

However, to this day, massive swaths of land right outside of Chester contain nothing but dead standing trees, long past salvage value. "It's been five years since the Dixie fire, and I still have the hardest time driving into town," says Traci.

"Our fires are getting so large that the wood only lasts for so long. So, when you have a million-acre fire, you have to go in there and cherry-pick it. You take the good stuff next to the road, where the cheapest logging cost is. When it goes bad, you just have to treat it somehow,"

Kelly says. "A lot of it is state funded. These grants are available to private landowners to get as much of that forest on the ground as they can. Then they go through and replant it."

Even though California is at the forefront of forest management as a driver of greater forest resiliency, the mitigation model is based on a complex system of public funding and grants. Traci handles the back-office functions related to project management, grant writing, policy development, and compliance. Because the contracts are so often reliant on some form of government funding, another big part of the job for Traci is advocacy. "At the federal level, we are trying to get the Forest Service to increase the scope of what they are doing in terms of timber sales and fuel reduction. We've got a contingent back in D.C. right now that are speaking with the folks that have the power and the decision-making ability to accelerate the process on the west coast."

Advocacy work must tackle several different issues and target groups. It is not just about fighting for budget, but overcoming established cultural norms within government, while also addressing and modifying public perception. It's tough to overcome but important because public opinion influences government decision making. "You look at the Dixie Fire footprint around us, and there's a lot of standing dead timber," says Kelly. "Well, it's our national public lands where it's still standing, because they didn't do anything with it. They could have done something, but they chose not to for whatever reason. If you look at the private land — Sierra Pacific, Collins, Beatty — all

**“AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, WE ARE TRYING TO
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– Traci Holt

of them got in and got the timber out while there was still value to it. Then they treated the land and replanted it.”

“Part of the advocacy work is getting the federal government to do the right thing with that land,” Traci adds. Deriving value from the timber salvage where possible could offset the cost of treatment solutions. The consequences of leaving the land untreated are significant — hazardous standing trees, erosion and water quality issues, and takeover by invasive species. Proactively logging and masticating — following the model of private land stewards like Sierra Pacific — funds fire prevention and presumably, a better future outcome for California’s forests.

There is the sense that public perception is beginning to shift as a result of the sheer number and size of the fires that California has experienced. As entire towns have been wiped off the map and stunning forestlands have been reduced to barren moonscapes, rigid environmental stances have begun to give way to more practical solutions. “It’s sad to say, but it’s almost like you had to burn down Hollywood to open people’s eyes to the problems that we face,” says Traci.

Kelly worked on the Dixie fire. “I remember one night, over one twelve-hour shift, the fire grew over 100,000 acres. It was moving at 70 miles per hour.” At one point the fire

reached Chester, coming very close to the Holts’ property and home, close enough that a woodpile and one of their flatbed trailer decks lit up. Traci was in phone contact with one of the company’s employees who was on the property. “I could hear it over the phone,” says Traci. “It was like a freight train in the background.”

Memories like these motivate Traci and Kelly. They are deeply invested. In a sense, their work is directly benefitting and protecting their own backyard. And the proof is there for anyone to see. Kelly can point to mitigation treatments that the company completed prior to the Dixie fire that are adjacent to untreated areas. The difference is stark. The treated forest survived and the untreated forest burned up. Kelly sums up. “As a family, generational business, what is really important to us is the quality of our work, our integrity, and being good stewards of the land. We’re not just after a paycheck. We are after a reputation.” ■



LX825 improving forest resiliency.

The result of the commercial thinning is a shaded firebreak adjacent to the road. The Diversified Resources contract entails masticating the logging residual and thinning out the dense stand beyond the break (visible at bottom centre).





Tigercat

MAN
and
MACHINE

Owner-operator Robby Major has been subcontracting his bunching services in the Peace River region of northeastern British Columbia for over 30 years. Since 2003, he has relied on a single machine, a Tigercat L870 feller buncher.

— Paul Iarocci

R. Major Logging is owned by Robby and Tracy Major. They live in the small northeastern British Columbia town of Progress on a quarter-section hobby farm. Born in Dawson Creek, his family relocated to Vancouver Island, where he grew up. Robby moved to Chetwynd when he was fifteen. He quit school halfway through tenth grade, and by age sixteen, he was working in the bush.

“I started working for a guy named Glen Bedell who was logging for Canfor,” recalls Robby. “It was a typical first job.” Robby progressed from hand bucking logs to operating a skidder. Eventually he moved on to a log loader. By the time he turned nineteen, Robby had obtained his Class 1 licence. “I started driving truck and hauled logs for about ten years.”

Around 1994, Robby purchased a second-hand Case feller buncher equipped with a rudimentary shear head from his brother-in-law and began working as a subcontractor. Later on, he had a discussion with a neighbour, Brian Young, owner of Young’s Mills who offered to take him on as a subcontractor. It gave him the confidence to upgrade to a Timberjack 618. Robby contracted for him for over twenty years from 1997 to 2018. “Brian was the biggest logger for Canfor at the time.” These days, Robby is working for Hi-Sky, West Fraser’s biggest contractor.

Shayne Waldie, owner of Hi-Sky Enterprises Ltd. cuts 480 000

cubic metres annually for West Fraser, Canfor and Louisiana Pacific. Shayne is an innovator, running a combination of cut-to-length and full-tree systems. With up to six logging sides, Shayne deploys a broad mix of machinery to optimize his contracts and crew. Due to challenging terrain and limited decking and roadside processing space, the crews often run a feller buncher ahead of an infield processor and forwarder.

**“I’M NEVER WORRIED
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FIRST OF ALL, IT’S
A TIGERCAT. AND
SECOND, HE’S
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MECHANIC AND
A REALLY GOOD
OPERATOR WITH VERY
STEADY PRODUCTION.”**

— Shayne Waldie, owner of Hi-Sky Enterprises Ltd.

Shayne also utilizes a Tigercat 635H swing boom skidder. He likes the steep slope performance as well as the ability of the machine to manoeuvre loads in selective felling compartments with less damage to the remaining stand.

Hi-Sky hauls its own timber and Shayne additionally maintains

a fleet of coal haul trucks that service the area’s mines. When both businesses are running near capacity, Hi-Sky employs up to 300 people. R. Major Logging is the company’s only subcontractor.

Robby purchased the first 618 in 1997 and acquired a second unit at auction a couple years later. “I had two bunchers and one guy working for me. I ran that way until 2003,” Robby explains. “By that time, I was falling for a yarder and getting tired of looking up and down, falling the steep ground with a flat-bottomed machine. I was working all the time, running one feller buncher and doing all the service and maintenance work on both.” One day he received a call from Glenn Pope, a salesman at Inland. He explained to Robby that he had a Tigercat L870 feller buncher sitting on the lot and invited Robby to have a look.

Next, Glenn offered to bring the machine to the bush the following week for a trial. “I got on and started cutting trees with it. Of course I liked it, and Glenn took both of my 618 machines on trade. I got a good trade value and I had enough downpayment that I was able to just run it myself. I didn’t have to double-shift it with a second operator.”

The L870 was larger, heavier and slower than the 618 bunchers it replaced. However, according to Robby, the difference in climbing ability and stability was like day



The structure of the 5702 felling head is completely original.



Robby's L870, at over 30,000 hours, is an extremely reliable, high uptime machine.

and night. He could confidently work over the side of the machine in bad terrain. He could walk uphill carrying a twenty-inch-diameter tree. He no longer struggled to climb and crest an embankment onto the road at the end of the day. The comfort of the leveling base was a major improvement. Robby had simplified his life and business.

Four years later, the machine was paid for and still in pretty good shape. Robby kept plugging along as the years passed, doing most of his own repair work. He continued to make a good living with his Tigercat machine.

Last year Robby started with Hi-Sky, primarily working on clear fells with leave trees, as he describes it. He cuts to a prescription with the aid of GPS in the cab. The prescription specifies the percentage of leave trees per size and species. The map identifies pipeline crossings and designated wildlife patches.

He is currently working on a crew with one other feller buncher. Shayne's employees run newer machines, but Robby easily maintains the required production with his aging L870. "I'm never worried about Robby," Shayne

admits. "First of all, it's a Tigercat. And second, he's a really good mechanic and a really good operator with very steady production."

The machine has now surpassed 30,000 hours. How does an owner-operator maintain high uptime on a twenty-three-year-old machine? First, Robby is meticulous with maintenance. "I service it after work and usually on weekends. I log everything in my maintenance book. Last year, I had virtually zero downtime. That's how crazy it is." He keeps an inventory of spare parts in his shop, including main boom

“I JUST TAKE CARE OF IT. THEY TELL YOU A LOT IN THE BOOK. I’VE GOT THE OPERATOR’S MANUAL, THE SERVICE MANUAL, THE ENGINE MANUAL AND THE HOSE BOOK. BEING ORGANIZED HELPS A LOT.”

– Robby Major, owner of R. Major Logging

and stick cylinders and a grab arm cylinder for the head.

Robby considers it is an advantage to own an older, simpler machine. He concedes the electronics are getting better and more reliable on new iron “but I don’t have to worry about being down for three days because of a ten-dollar sensor because I don’t have any sensors. The only electronic thing really is my speed sensor for the anti-stall, and it’s never given me any trouble.”

Robby’s familiarity is also a big advantage. “I’ve crawled over every part of it,” he says. Robby is so in tune with his machine, he can hear and even smell emerging issues like a dripping hydraulic hose. He once heard an unfamiliar sound that soon led him to the cooling fan. “After several thousand hours, the fan bearing was weak, so I just stopped and ripped it apart. Some operators wouldn’t have noticed that. And I’ve seen what happens when that fan comes off. It’s never good. It goes from a \$250 part to thousands of dollars of repair work.”

He has a strict warm-up and cool down routine. In winter he covers the rad to build heat and warms the machine up slowly, keeping a close eye on the gauges. Then he cuts a few trees at 1,500 rpm to let everything loosen up before opening it up. “I cool it down slow as well. I just take care of it.” He also leverages the documentation available to him. “They tell you a lot in the book,” he says. “I’ve got

the operator’s manual, the service manual, the engine manual and the hose book. Being organized helps a lot. It’s not that hard with one machine. It’s a lot of work and long hours, but I mean, it’s my job. If you look after it, it looks after you.”

He is very mindful of the gauges. “I run a 150 °F maximum on the hydraulic temperature and I keep the engine running cool, no matter what. My machine doesn’t have a reversible fan, which I don’t mind. I like getting out and stretching a little bit anyway, so I just get out and clean the screen a couple times a day. I have a compressor in the back of the truck. Once a week, I blow the dust out of it. If it starts running hot, I stop and figure out what the problem is.” He rarely experiences O-ring or hose issues.

Spring break-up in the northeast part of the province generally spans three months but depending on the weather has lasted up to five. “We have a little acreage in Arizona. We team rope, so we take horses down with us. April in this Peace River area is not a great month for weather. It’s my favourite time to go away on holidays. I have cameras at home on my place. I just keep watching until the snow is gone. Then I come home.” After a well-deserved holiday, Robby starts his annual maintenance routine.

“First, I take all the guards off it and clean it all out. It takes about two days. I clean every last stick out of it, before I even go near it with a

washer. Every couple years, I’ll take the rad right out of it and hang it on a chain.” Then he starts on the big jobs, leaning on Inland’s service expertise when required.

“Chris Stubbs is a great mechanic at Inland. When I’ve got something that I need a hand with I try to get him, but like I said, I don’t use them too often. This year I split the tracks because both my track tensioners were leaking. I pulled the idlers and track tensioners out, took them to Prince George, had them chromed, and put them back together.” While the tracks were off, Chris helped Robby pull the travel motors and replace the brakes. “Then I put the tracks back together myself, welded them up and tightened them. That’s the kind of thing I do.”

Over the life of the machine, the Cummins 6CT 8.3 L engine has been replaced twice. The saw pump and motor have only been replaced once, a job that Robby completed on his own. The undercarriage has been rebuilt twice, and the carrier is on its third main pump. He recalls cutting right-of-way on a steep hill way back in the bush when the main pump failed. “I had to get an excavator in and build a trail for my pickup. I got my come-along out there, drained the hydraulic oil into a barrel, got the pump out, and changed it. That’s just what you do when you’re in the bush. I had Stubbs come up for that. He set it all up real nice, and it’s probably the best the machine has ever run.”



Most of the blocks are clear fells with some residual standing timber. The prescriptions define wildlife habitat areas as well as size and species specifications.

Robby is currently working the machine about 50 hours per week, eight to nine months out of the year.



Robby says that in general, access to most components, hoses and service points is quite good. “The worst thing is the track hoses. I’ve changed them several times over the years. And in the wintertime, when it’s frozen cold, that’s a pretty much a full one-day job because of all that mud and debris freezing in there. On the newer undercarriages, they come up the back and are easy to get at. On the other hand, mine go a long time because they’re tucked away and protected.”

Structurally the machine has been very sound; no cracks in the undercarriage and just a couple of small plates on the stick boom.

Everything on the 5702 head is original with just a small weld on the butt plate and a repair on the wrist.

The machine was equipped with a tree counter but it stopped working a long time ago. “2,000 to 2,500 trees used to be pretty common for me. I would cut for twelve hours, especially when I had payments.” At age 65, Robby doesn’t cut the same volume or work as many hours. However, he still puts in ten hours. Factoring in maintenance and travel time, it amounts to a fifteen-hour day.

Robby appreciates the way that Shayne runs the operations. “He is great to work for because he will

cut right to the end of the season, knowing that if they can’t get all the wood out, the loading and hauling will be the first operation to start back up in the summer.” It extends the season a little further into spring and makes the next startup flow better, keeping everyone busier. “He’s a smart logger. He can start hauling that wood out before the crew starts working. Even if it’s not processed, the processors can come in early because they can work on the road. Then when we get back bunching a new block, they’re not all waiting on us. Everyone has something to do.” ■

Hi-Sky Enterprises is based in Chetwynd, BC. The town hosts an annual international invitation-only chainsaw carving contest every June. The carvings are displayed throughout the town. Each year twelve carvers start out with an eight foot 40 to 50 inch diameter western red cedar log. They have 35 hours to complete the sculpture. The results are stunning.



Multi-Purpose MACHINE



Tigercat Industries collaborates with Weyerhaeuser team in Edson, Alberta to improve mill yard workflow and efficiency.

– Paul Iarocci

Weyerhaeuser's Edson, Alberta mill facility inputs primarily aspen logs and manufactures oriented strand board (OSB). At 43 years, it is the oldest OSB mill in Canada, operating around the clock on four twelve-hour shifts.

The mill yard operation involves unloading eight-foot logs from B-train haul trucks with large track-based log loaders. The mill maintains a sizable log inventory. "We offload the logs and stack them in decks anywhere from five to seven metres high," explains Log Yard Department Lead, Murry Hellekson. Until recently, most

of the mill intake has been fed by agriculture tractors pulling wagons that are loaded from log yard inventory. "Other than what we directly offload from the trucks during the dayshift, at least twelve to eighteen hours every day the intake is strictly supplied by the wagons," says Murry.



The 632H can pull 42 tonnes, a 25-30% yard production increase. Consuming 11-12 L/hr, it has cut fuel costs nearly in half.

Two other important tasks in the log yard are road maintenance and deck reclaiming. “After we’ve removed our inventory, we have to clean up the log debris, brush and mud,” Murry says. “Our decks are about fifteen metres wide and up to a couple hundred metres in length. We push the material, without crossing roads, from one end to the

other to reclaim the top surface. It’s a messy job.” It’s usually wet, because spring is when the major cleanup comes.

The yard operates with a three-person shift — two loader operators, and one on the log forwarding machine which shuttles back and forth constantly except when

the trucks come in, or during maintenance detail. Murry explains that these windows allow for yard grading duties, along with additional tasks, like snow clearing in winter, and dust control in summer.

“IT PULLS STRONGER AND THE FUEL ECONOMY IS WAY BETTER THAN WE EXPECTED. WE ARE ACTUALLY USING ALMOST 50% LESS FUEL.”

– Jody Muldoon, Maintenance Manager

The challenge

For many years, the log forwarding operation was accomplished with the use of high horsepower agriculture tractors equipped with a silage-style blade. The bulk of the yard maintenance work was accomplished by bringing in dozers and graders on a contract basis. This system had several shortcomings. The ag tractors had issues with durability and mechanical reliability, and the fuel

consumption was heavy. Limitations in the blade design, including the profile and clearance, made the machines difficult to rely on to assist with yard maintenance. “Our decks weren’t always getting done because we didn’t have the right machine for the job,” Murry adds.

As Maintenance Manager Jody Muldoon explains, “The challenge given to me was to find a more fuel-efficient machine that can do more and pull more wood, so that we’re

doing less trips and using less fuel. We also wanted a more reliable machine. We had considered using a skidder and thought if it had a six-way dozer blade, it could replace what we hire a grader and a dozer for.”

In the 1990s, Jody ran logging equipment. “I worked for seven years out in the cut blocks, running skidder and delimer — feeding this mill actually. And I have good friends who are still contractors who feed this mill, and a lot of those



Reclaiming decks in this type of ground condition previously required that the company contract a D6 dozer or excavator. Log Yard Department Lead, Murry Hellekson estimates 80% of the work can now be done with the TCi carrier.



(L-R) Jamie Forsey, Green End Coordinator / Log Yard Supervisor; Jody Muldoon, Maintenance Manager; Murry Hellekson, Log Yard Department Lead; Len Parker, Operations Manager; Clint Andrea, Wajax Sales Specialist; Alex Farquhar, Wajax Product Support Representative; James Farquhar, District Manager Tigercat Industries.

contractors run Tigercat equipment today. So, I'd seen the reliability record of Tigercat over the last 30 years, and I have nothing but good things to say. It's durable, reliable logging equipment. So, when this project came about, Tigercat obviously came to mind."

Maintenance Supervisor, Ryan Norrish, and Log Yard Supervisor Jamie Forsey worked with Murry and the log yard crew, asking what they wanted out of a new forwarder. Then he reached out to Wajax to explain the requirements. "And that's when Tigercat came to us and said they could give us a 632 with a six-way dozer blade. And that was a game changer for us. Ryan worked with Tigercat and was instrumental in getting the design that we needed," says Jody.

Aside from the blade, the other important customization was the development of the hitch. "We use a pintle hitch system with a hydraulically operated pin on the forwarder so that we don't have anybody standing in between the trailer and the forwarder," Jody explains. "The operator can back up, actuate the pin with the hydraulics, and take off. There's no risk or hazard of getting pinched."

Jody characterizes the development process as transparent and efficient, with clear communication. Online meetings and 3D modelling allowed Ryan, Jody and the rest of the team at Weyerhaeuser to validate the design at multiple stages in real time. "It was really easy for us to work with them on the design, because we could visually see what they were presenting to us," says Jody.

The result

The yard crews are piling hours on the TCi 632H carrier. In the first three months of operation, the machine acquired 1,500 hours. It's been running eighteen hours a day on average, every day. With far less engine horsepower than the ag tractor it replaced (285 vs 500), the 632H is accomplishing more. It can pull two trailers with a total weight of about 42 tonnes. Consequently, yard production has increased 25-30%. The real kicker is the fuel economy. "It pulls stronger and the fuel economy is way better than we expected. We are actually using almost 50% less fuel," Jody reports.

The functionality of the six-way blade has greatly reduced the reliance on dozers and excavators for deck reclamation. Murry estimates that 80% of the work that



The pintle hitch system is hydraulically actuated. Tigercat Industries custom developed this with the Weyerhaeuser team. “The operator can back up, actuate the pin with the hydraulics, and take off. There’s no risk or hazard,” says Maintenance Manager Jody Muldoon.

was previously contracted out can now be accomplished in-house with the 632H.

Murry and Jody say that they are discovering other unanticipated benefits. One example is the back-blading ability of the machine. The blade design and profile are better suited to the back-blade function compared to the ag tractors, and the blade clearance is more than double. “It’s just a finer way to tune what you’re blading, because when you blade frontwards, you leave ruts behind you. When you back blade, your watershed is better, everything is better. The clearance is so much more. Even if I’m back blading over a bunch of mud, I can at least level it out to where it will drain water,” explains Murry.

He adds that the ability to turn the seat around is a benefit, especially when reclaiming a pad. “Instead of turning around, you just spin your seat around and you can go as fast backwards as you did forwards. When you reverse the seat, the controls reverse on the joystick. It’s very intuitive.”

The mill has a high degree of reliance on the single TCi machine — it is feeding the log intake and maintaining the yard. Jody emphasizes the importance of uptime and after sale support. “The support was another part of our consideration,” Jody says. “What kind of after purchase support are we going to get? Because reliability is key. If that machine is down, the mill isn’t getting fed and it shuts

down. That’s a huge cost to us. We have access to engine diagnostics and can log in and work with this equipment, including directly with the Wajax technicians. Getting quick support is huge for us, and Wajax has been really good.”

Jody sums up by stating that the entire development and procurement process as well as the startup and initial results have all been very positive. “We will definitely be sharing this concept with the rest of our mills.” ■



Watch the TCi 632H in the wood yard.

**"TIGERCAT CAME TO US AND SAID THEY COULD GIVE US
A 632 WITH A SIX-WAY DOZER BLADE. AND THAT WAS A
GAME CHANGER FOR US."**

– Jody Muldoon





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