

As We See It: MARCH 2022

THE NEXT GENERATION



The American Loggers Council recently completed the 2021 Loggers Survey. One of the glaring findings, although not a surprise, that was identified was the fact that 50% of the companies that responded were 25 years old or older (the survey did not breakdown the age of companies beyond the 25 years). This, along with the average age of the logging and trucking workforce being in the upper 50's, is an issue that must be acknowledged. What does it mean? It means that the half of the logging and trucking infrastructure and workforce will potentially exit the industry in the next 10-15 years. How does the U.S. forest products industry survive with a major loss of infrastructure and workforce?

If a company does not have a succession plan in place, someone to take over the company, (which is less and less the case in what has historically been a generation transfer), then the common "retirement plan" is to sell-off the equipment and shutdown the business.

There are some young guns that have come into the industry, that are carrying on the family business and taking a seat at the table of organizations representing the timber industry. But the numbers are disproportionate, there are far greater number of old loggers and truckers compared to young loggers and truckers.

Look around the industry, it is these "old" loggers and truckers that have built today's timber industry upon the foundation that generations before them laid.

It is said that: "The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life. A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall not sit."

Today young loggers and truckers are enjoying the shade because of the trees their fathers, grandfathers, and others planted over the generations before them. Their jobs are easier today because of the hard work and heavy lifting done by the previous men and women.

America's "Conservation" President and founder of the U.S. Forest Service, Teddy Roosevelt gave a speech "The Man In The Arena" where he said;



It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

The “old” loggers and truckers are the men that have been in the arena, whose faces are marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strived valiantly; who came up short but continued daring greatly; who spent themselves in a worthy cause.



Ronald Reagan gave his famous Freedom speech which stated:

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.

I say –

The logging industry is never more than one generation away from extinction. There may be sawdust in your bloodstream, passed on from generation to generation, but if you don't fight for it, protect it, and hand it on to them as the generation before you did, you will spend your sunset years telling your children and your children's children what it was once like in the woods where men worked hard and proud to keep the forest healthy.

These “old men” planted the trees in whose shade you sit and whose trees you will harvest. Who fought for it, protected it, and handed it on to you, as the generation before them did. But it would not have happened had they not come out of the woods, attended meetings, formed organizations, lobbied, and fought to protect and defend the timber industry.

The 20, 30, and 40 year old's today must replant so the generation after them can also enjoy the shade and trees.

I want to challenge the next generation to step up. To be the man in the arena. To quell the storm and ride the thunder that challenges the timber industry. To be the strong man that stumbles and not the cold and timid soul who neither knows victory or defeat.

So you don't have to tell your children and children's children what it was once like to work in the woods...