

Trumbull Creek Times

"Winter Edition"

F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER CO.

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Manager's Message

Oh, what a difference a year can make! 2023 has been a year of change and new challenges. Thankfully, our dedicated and committed team has been up to the task. With a lumber market that not only did a 180-degree flip on values but also in demand, we started the year scrambling for the right mix of production and inventory to adjust to our new reality. This required multiple shift configuration changes and asking folks to be extremely flexible. As expected, you were up to the challenge.

I want to extend a thank you to all the families, spouses, partners, and pets who had to adjust to changing work schedules as well. We don't take these decisions lightly and recognize the hardships outside of the workplace these changes create. We work hard to remember that there is a person behind every employee and our decisions do not occur in a vacuum.

I would be remiss in not recognizing the retirements that have occurred this year or will soon take place. Shaun Wilcomb, Jo Alene Henley, Jeff Baiar, and soon Will Wood and Kris Page. I cannot begin to add up the years of experience represented here but assure you that tenures in the 30-40+ year range are the average for most! I cannot express enough the gratitude Stoltze has for the dedication of these fine people. While each had their own professional expertise that will be sorely missed, their performance as teachers, role models, and "voice of experience" for the rest of our crew has value that will outlast their physical presence. Congratulations on a retirement well-earned and please do not be strangers!

Undoubtedly, 2024 will be a difficult year for the lumber industry as we struggle with economic and political unrest as a country. A wise priest once pointed out to me that it is best not to pray for an easy life, but for the fortitude and strength to deal with a difficult one. Human existence has always been one of hardships and challenges. One could say those challenges and our perseverance are what make a life worth living and we all know adversity is the architect of innovation. We will all be called upon to bring new strategies to the game to deal with the task at hand.

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Manager's Message

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Each and every employee at Stoltze has a vital role in ensuring our communal well-being. I encourage you to bring your ideas and thoughts to light as to how we can do something better, more efficiently, less costly, or produce a better product. As we strive to extract the value that Montana wood deserves, remember that there is a tree behind every log we handle. That tree, 70-250 years ago, was just a seed that survived squirrels, drought, winter, wildfire, beetles, buck antlers, and who knows what other adversity, just to end up in front of you in our mill. Whatever role you play at Stoltze, you have a responsibility to do the best job possible to ensure that the tree is put to its best use. As they say, with great opportunity comes great responsibility.

As we spend time with our friends and family over the holiday season, keep this quote in mind. "Return to the simple timeless and enduring values: presuming the best of each other, listening in good faith before acting or responding, exuding magnanimity and self-correcting our own mistakes," These are in my opinion words of wisdom that would help our society function more properly.

Lastly, from my family to yours, have a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year! Stay safe, be productive, and care for each other! And the good news is...the trees are still growing!

Paul McKenzie
Vice President - General Manager

Forester Ramblings

Since the last issue of Trumble Creek Times, the Resource Department has had its share of challenges and successes. However, in this issue, I want to highlight the people that make this company work. I myself entered the forestry field to work in the mountains and timber - not around people! But I've found out that no matter what, it takes a team to be successful. It's the people who make everything come together and having the right people on your team is essential to your success. Employee retention and hiring have been critical elements of our story this season.

Out in the forest, we lost two operators on our Logging Crew but were fortunate to have two outstanding guys "walk in" looking for logging jobs. Michael Sand and Roy Jensen both have been around our industry and in the woods earlier in life and now they've come back to it. We are glad they decided to join our team!

Out in the log yard, we lost our Log Yard Lead and Head Scaler John Bolles as he transitioned into the Sales Manager position. John really had a handle on the log yard but I'm sure he will do even better in sales; he is a bright and positive team member who is bringing 30 years of industry knowledge along with some new and creative ideas to help capture some niche markets with the great quality lumber that Montana grows and our plant manufactures.

Also, in the log yard as John transitions, Vincent Luce has come aboard as our new Log Yard Supervisor. Luce arrives at Stoltze with 35 years of Log Yard and supervisory experience from Plum Creek and Weyerhaeuser. I'm excited to work with Vince as he learns the ins and outs of how our log yard works and the challenges and opportunities our unique culture and environment provide.

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News From the Plant



"FILL THE TILL!" News from the Sales Office



As 2023 is drawing near and 2024 is lurking in the wings, it's time to reflect on this past year and also give some shout-outs to our employees, both current and retired/retiring. As most know, the lumber market this past year has not been great. As inflation and cost of living have gone up, lumber markets have gone drastically down. We are very fortunate that the previous two years were as good as they were. It has allowed us to continue to run and make purchases that make us more efficient. All indicators say that the start of 2024 will be more of the same slow market. I say this, we will persevere. We are resilient, we are strong, and we will make it through this because of our employees' dedication.

For the last year, we have been recognizing employees and their years of service; it started with our most senior employee (Skip Zeiler) with 50 plus years and we have made our way to the ten-plus years of dedicated employees. I would like to again say thank you to these employees that we have recognized. Your commitment and dedication to Stoltze has been huge and very much appreciated. I would also like to say thank you to our employees who have under ten years of service. You are our future; you are the ones who will be carrying the torch forward. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and learn as much as you can from the employees who have been with us for over ten years. You will not only be helping yourself but also helping Stoltze move forward by making us competitive and strong.

I would now like to give a shout-out to a few employees who have just retired or will be retiring soon. Thank you, Shaun Wilcomb, Jeff Baiar, Jo Alene Henley, Will Wood, and Kris Page for your dedication and work ethic. There are a lot of years of dedication here that we will be losing or have lost; we won't be able to fill these shoes, but we will take these shoes and keep moving forward. Learning along the way and making us stronger for the future. We still have quite a few employees with several years of experience.

Well, as the saying goes, "Time flies when you're having fun." It's been 46 and a half years since I started at Stoltze and the time has come for me to write my last Trumble Creek Times.

In July 1977 I submitted my application to F.H. Stoltze, Plum Creek, and the Aluminum plant. Bear in mind this was an actual application that needed to be filled out by hand. There was no online application because there was no internet and there was no resume required. My, how times have changed. All three companies called and offered me work but Stoltze won out because they offered me full-time employment. I started two days later working nights pulling lumber off the chain. At that time, I was getting paid \$5.19 an hour, which was more than double what I was making working my previous two jobs at the same time.

This was also at a time when there were hardly any women working in the industry, especially on the production side, so this was quite a big deal. After two years of working nights, I switched to the day shift. I worked pulling dry chain, drove the straddle buggy and forklift, worked clean up, ran trim saws, worked at the bander, and eventually ended up in shipping loading rail cars and trucks. From the shipping yard, I moved into the front office as the Shipping Clerk and began to assist with lumber sales. When my predecessor, Dean Sturtz, passed away I was chosen to replace him as the Sales Manager. Not a bad career for a girl who only planned to work at Stoltze for a year to get enough money to get to Morgan City, Louisiana.

Were there good days and bad days? Yes. Over the years I took what I called my Attitude Adjustment Days where I looked at other jobs. However, I always came back with more of an appreciation for what I had and, while I never made it to Morgan City, I do not have any regrets about my career at Stoltze.

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"FILL THE TILL!"

News from the

New Sales Manager



When I was offered the opportunity to be the new Sales Manager, I was excited and, truth be told, a little nervous. Selling everything we make is a daunting task but Kris Page makes it look easy. I had an instant appreciation for how she does her job and a good example of what the job truly is. Coming from the log yard, sales has broadened my understanding of our mill and the way we do things. These last few months learning the sales position has opened my eyes to the challenges in the industry, but I believe Kris has me prepared to take the reins.

The lumber market for the last year has been tough with high interest rates and inflation taking a huge bite out of everyone's wallet, the industry as a whole has struggled to maintain a decent price point. Those factors, coupled with the aftermath of a wild building boom post-Covid, have made for some really unpredictable market conditions. To add to those challenges is the new push in the lumber industry for "super mills" that can out-produce anything built before. In their quest for more production though, they have bypassed quality for quantity. For those reasons and others, we continue to see a demand for our higher quality lumber products that others just can't match. The new year holds some uncertainty but with our dedication to consistency and quality, I'm confident we'll find our stride.

This year was the first year I've ever attended NAWLA. The North American Wholesale Lumber Association was held in Columbus, Ohio at the Convention Center downtown. We set up a booth, talked with current customers and networked with possible future customers. It was great for me to meet everyone I've been talking to on the phone for the last few months. Also, there are a lot of different innovative businesses out there I hadn't been exposed to yet. Overall, it was a great experience and a good organization to be a part of.

Lastly, If you're in the neighborhood you should stop and wish Kris a happy retirement, she has put in a few years here. Or, if we haven't met or you just want to put a name with a face, stop by the sales office and say hello. We're always happy to hear from our friends and co-workers. Merry Christmas and I hope everyone has a safe joyful New Year.

John Bolles
Sales Manager



Another year is coming to a close, which always signals for me to mention a reminder that it's time to review and prepare for Stoltze's benefit open enrollment. Open enrollment is a time to review current benefit plans, enroll in new coverages if needed, and make any necessary changes to existing plans or supplemental coverages. It's also a good time to update mailing addresses and tax filing statuses with any changes, if applicable.

As I ponder over my typical blurb of benefit renewals, the thought that keeps coming to mind is the employees who are retiring from Stoltze this year and past employee retirements. I ask myself, how am I going to replace the kind of knowledge, experience, longevity, and dedication that they have put into their careers at Stoltze? The truth is I am not going to replace them, they are irreplaceable when it comes down to what they have contributed to Stoltze. I feel grateful that I have had the opportunity to get to know and work with them, I have tremendous respect and admiration for their dedication and the high caliber of their work.

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I find it a rarity in the current job market to find such a group of long-term employees who are truly retiring from the company they have worked for, for their entire working careers, more or less. It's a special experience to be part of. Especially for our new and future employees, they are receiving the opportunity to learn and work beside such individuals with firsthand experience and mentorship. This is something that you don't see in many work environments in today's world. So, as I try to find a way to close this article, I really just want to recognize the employees who are retiring in 2023, wish them the very best in their lives and endeavors ahead, and express the impact that they have had on Stoltze and me personally.

- Shaun Wilcomb – Plant Superintendent – Retired June 30th – 48 years
 - Jeff Baiar – Plant Electrician – Retired October 16th – 35 years
 - Jo Alene Henley – Sawmill Operator – Retired November 30th - 29 years
 - William Wood – Lead Kiln Operator – Retiring on December 28th - 47 years
 - Kristin Page – Lumber Sales Manager - Retiring on December 31st – 46 years
- Thank you and Happy Holidays!

Leah Michael
Personnel Manager



Forester Ramblings



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With John's absence from scaling, we have had two additional guys come aboard to help operate equipment and learn how to scale. Dave Shutt is a former Plum Creek Log Yard Operator and Scaler who is getting back in the game and brushing off the rust after a decade-long hiatus. We also were able to bring in Zach Temple. Zach is an army reservist who just moved to Montana from Tennessee. Zach has a history of working on heavy equipment and clearly stated that he no longer wanted to work on equipment, he wanted to run it! Zach has also been learning to scale. Hopefully, Zach sticks with it and continues to learn proper scaling while also getting his fair share of heavy equipment operation to keep him satisfied!

In the woods, we have been trying to bring on some additional contractors to help with capacity. A couple of new contractors on the road construction side we are happy to be working with are Clearwater Site Development and T&S Cheff Construction Inc. Also, JD Thinning has been a huge help in tackling complex road package items and general road construction packages.

On the logging end of things, we are anticipating multiple contractors coming onto help us meet our production goals. Some of the newest to come aboard are Roberts Logging and Covey Logging. We also are excited to have Mike Newton and Kevin St. Onge coming back on-line. It goes without saying that without these contractors, and our current "core" group of contractors I haven't mentioned, we would not be in business! I want to thank you all.

Without quality people, we wouldn't be able to carry the 111-year reputation F.H. Stoltze has earned over the years. A big thank you goes out to our employees in the Resource Department, those who have been here for over 30 years, and to the guys who have recently joined our team. The same with our contractors, this article could go on for five pages if I took the time to recognize everyone equally. Please know that we appreciate you! Together, we can make this company successful for the next 100 years. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Cameron Wohlschlegel
Lands & Resource Manager





News From the Plant

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They have seen a lot of things go well and not so well; talk to them, ask questions, and become more engaged in what we need to do to become stronger. Especially if you see or have an idea about making something better and/or smoother. Don't let their knowledge and experience go unused! Now, more than ever, we all need to come together, work together, and communicate so that we can stay strong now and in the future. If we do this, there isn't a doubt in my mind that Stoltze will be here for future generations to enjoy and be a part of a great company.

This year has definitely gone by fast and has had its share of ups and downs, but we are still here! Hopefully, 2024 won't go by as fast. I'm sure we will have some bumps along the way. As long as we stay the course, stay together, work together, work safely, and tackle whatever is in front of us, we will come out of 2024 stronger than ever. But it's going to take all of us, to do this sometimes swallowing our pride to do something differently or making new products or trying new ways to be more efficient.

Thank you all for your commitment, and for what you bring and mean to F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company. We will keep pushing on, keep plugging away, and take every day as it comes. Remember, tomorrow is never promised. Keep the attitude positive. You, and only you, can control your outlook on what lies ahead. Work safe, play safe, hug your loved ones a little tighter, and smile a little longer.

Trevor Kjensrud
Plant Manager



"FILL THE TILL!" News from the Sales Office



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Working my way up from production to Sales Manager made me realize that 120+ people were depending on me to sell our lumber. I used to joke with my predecessor and say, "I don't want to pressure you, but all of us are depending on you to sell this wood." When I finally sat in the sales chair, I realized that it was not a joke but a tremendous responsibility and one that I am honored to have had entrusted to me.

Throughout my time here I have seen many changes. One of the most significant has been in safety. When I started on the line, we did not have a lock out tag out procedure to make sure that equipment could not be turned on if someone was working on it. I had a few close calls when I was clearing a jam and someone turned on the machine not realizing that I was still working on it. Talk about getting the old heart pumping! I have also seen big changes in the lumber market. While the drastic ups and downs are exciting, the times when the market just bumps along without big swings are actually the best for us to move large volumes of wood.

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to work for F.H. Stoltze for over 46 years. I would like to thank all of my coworkers who were there to help me learn the business and be successful here. I am also thankful for all of the managers that I have worked for who took a chance on me and encouraged and supported me to learn more and to take advantage of opportunities to move up within the organization. Finally, I would like to thank the Stoltze family for their continued interest and support. If it weren't for them none of this would have been possible.

Kris Page
Sales Manager





As everybody knows and has talked about in this newsletter, we have had a lot of retirements this year. I want to also thank all of these retirees for their hard work and dedication. It is because of employees like you, and the Stoltze family, that the rest of us are fortunate enough and have the ability to work at such a wonderful company.

All of these retirements mean we are losing years of knowledge and experience, but I wanted to talk about one in particular. I started here in 2015, the same year as Kris started as the Sales Manager. I know Kris had already been here for years and years before I started, but we were both just getting underway in our new roles. It feels surreal that it has already been eight and a half years. I started as the Shipping Manager working for Kris, learning sales from her, learning how to work with her, and her hard work ethic. Although I had already worked in the lumber industry for over five years, I had never worked in sales and shipping. Kris taught me a lot about sales. That everything in sales is not black and white, but has a little or a large gray area. She also taught me that you cannot replace or overlook years of hands-on experience and knowledge. Kris may not have always been the easiest to work for... but she has become a great friend and confidant at work. I had a long-term plan that, as Kris knows, did not involve her working past 2/2/22, but as Jeff retired that changed. I went from working for Kris to working with Kris and as you can tell Kris also decided to work a little longer than originally intended so my long-term plan would have been foiled anyway. Kris is a dedicated Stoltze employee and she will be missed here. She brought a lifetime of knowledge and "Krisisms" with her, and I feel fortunate to have had the ability to work with her as she has shared her years of experiences with me and her occasional crystal ball predictions. I wish her the best and am sure I will see her at least monthly, if not more often, when she shows up with her laptop needing fixed. Congratulations Kris and welcome John into the new role.

So Artificial Intelligence seems to be the new thing. I wanted to take a minute to see how it did when I asked it to write an article about the current lumber market. This is from Bing Copilot.

"The lumber market has been experiencing a significant downturn in recent years. According to a [Business Insider](#) article, lumber prices tumbled 66% last year, making it the worst-performing commodity of 2022. The US housing market slowdown, caused by rising mortgage rates, led to a decrease in demand for lumber. Commodity strategists predict that lumber prices are likely to remain under pressure over the first half of 2023."

Wow, this seems to be a pretty well written paragraph, but as you can see there is still room for improvement. It still requires an eye for detail. It wrote an article about 2022 instead of the current lumber market and predicted the first half of 2023, even though we are about done with 2023. Either way, still very impressive. This is just one paragraph out of what it wrote when I asked for an article on the current lumber market. Pretty soon we won't need to think at all, just tell the computer what we want and it will write everything for us. I really hope we do not get to this point. Even though I may not be the biggest fan of writing, it does put me out of my comfort zone and help me grow as a person.

Wishing everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Josef Kuchera
Editor



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