

Trumbull Creek Times

"Winter Edition"

F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER CO.

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Manager's Message

This holiday season I encourage you to find some time to reflect on the positive accomplishments and events in your life. We as a society are conditioned to focus on the negative. The difficult elements of life seem to easily obscure the rewarding and positive... if we let it! My wife is reading a book called "Happiness Advantage" by Shawn Achor. In true Holly fashion, she tries valiantly to share the good info she learns with her family of curmudgeons... yes, primarily me! But as usual, she is right. Happiness is a mindset that we choose to adopt or not. Attitudes of positivity and optimism are also a choice. I think it is irrefutable that those with rosier outlooks on life are generally better off, both physically and mentally. Not that we blindly follow a primrose path, but our attitude toward life and business challenges can set the tone for our well-being and ultimately our success.

I am thankful for our employees. I continue to be amazed by the dedication and skills of those who make Stoltze run. We will have a 50-year employee this year! I don't know for sure if that is the first in the history of the company, but the list is certainly a short one. We have added a number of new members to the Stoltze crew and we look forward to what they will bring to the company and hope to provide a challenging and rewarding work experience for them. We take our commitment as an employer very seriously and know our employees do the same in their commitment to Stoltze. Mutual respect is earned and we will strive hard to maintain that as a core element of our operation.

I am thankful for the contractors and suppliers that allow us to operate. In a year of unprecedented supply chain challenges, our suppliers and contractors continually went above and beyond to find solutions that allowed us to continue operations and fill critical needs. Quality, local companies like City Service Valcon, who are celebrating 90 years, and Western Building Centers with 70 years of operations. CRD Logging will have a 40-year relationship with Stoltze in 2023. Relationships like this are invaluable in good times and tough. That is the kind of foundation success is built upon and something we value greatly.

I am thankful for good markets in 2022. With the economic headwinds we are all buffeting, to try to deal with rampant inflation, rising fuel and cost of living, etc. AND a really tight lumber market would have been exceedingly difficult. Thankfully, markets for most of the year allowed us to have the resources to navigate the headwinds of 2022. We continue to strive to produce the highest quality lumber product Montana wood fiber has to offer. We continue to explore ways to capture the value our forests provide in a manner that is good for the environment and our communities and expect our customers will continue to see the value in that.

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Manager's Message

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To steal Kris Page's line "my crystal ball is pretty cloudy." What I do know is that 2023 will not be 2022 and the strategies we used yesterday will likely not meet the challenges of tomorrow. However, our people and our industry are up to the task. We believe in what we are doing. We know that healthy forests support healthy families and healthy communities. So, let's all endeavor to choose HAPPY in 2023 and take advantage of the benefits of positivity! Because you know what the good news is? The trees are still growing! Merry Christmas!

Paul McKenzie
Vice President – General Manager



Forester Ramblings



Good Help is Hard to Find-Like usual, our editor's notice that our Trumbull Creek Times articles are due catches me off guard, and with an already heaping plate of tasks and not enough time for any of it! It's late November and here in the Resource Department, we are pushing hard to fill the log yard before Spring Breakup. Filling the log yard this year has not been an easy task. We have had many challenges, including record inflation and outrageous fuel prices. However, our biggest challenge has been logging and trucking capacity – good help has been hard to find.

Post-pandemic, our industry lost tremendous capacity; both in logging and trucking. Some of it can be attributed to retirements, some to deaths, and some to folks leaving our industry entirely. This has made it extremely difficult to have a consistent fiber supply. The folks that you could normally call up for extra muscle just aren't there. For the first time, having enough timber under contract has not been our biggest challenge, it's been having the workforce.

Our mill runs most efficiently at 80 hours/week. With our current contractor base, we are not producing enough fiber supply to meet those demands. The big question is - how do we add capacity? As a purchaser and sawmill, do we add to our Company Crew with the expectation to produce more and have an increase in the control of that production? Do we work with contractors guaranteeing work to try and promote expansion?

Some of our contractors have already expanded in 2022, rising to the challenge and requested increase in production. Kudos to those who have had the courage to invest in new equipment and their company's growth. It seems though that one of the biggest hurdles to expansion has not been simply purchasing equipment, but finding a quality employee to fill the seat. Where has all the good help gone? The folks that work in the Forest Products Industry are hardworking and proud. The work we accomplish has benefits and value that transcend monetary value. We restore and maintain ecosystems, enhance wildlife habitat, and create products that build America.

We need to continually strive to tell the story of our profession and industry. Telling our story and explaining to others what we do may be the key to recruiting talented individuals from other industries. Folks that may not have any experience logging or log hauling. I have a story later on how we did exactly that this summer.

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News From the Plant

2022 has gone by surprisingly fast. The saying is true, time does fly by. A couple of things happened in 2022, that I would like to recognize right off the bat. Number one, this year marked the 110th anniversary of F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company. Truly an amazing accomplishment. And Number two, 2022 marked 50 years that Skip Zeiler has been with F.H. Stoltze; another astonishing benchmark. I honestly don't know if Stoltze will ever see another 50-year-plus employee. There are a couple of people that have a shot, so we will see. Skip isn't saying goodbye just yet either, he is going to give us another year or so, which we desperately need, so he can spread his knowledge and train the best he can. Both the company and Skip have seen and been involved with a lot of changes over the years and I'm also positive both have a lot of stories that can be told. Thank you Skip and Stoltze family for your dedication over these years.

Now, for 2023!

2023 is going to bring us some more significant changes as well. Not so much from projects, logs, or even lumber markets. It's going to come from our employees. I know I usually talk about projects, both past and upcoming, that the plant needs to be efficient and stay competitive, but I'm not going to do that this time. The reason being is that I think that some tenured employees need to be recognized for their service and dedication to the company. This next year, Stoltze will be saying goodbye to some employees because of retirement. These employees will be taking with them a lot of knowledge, dedication, and passion from this company.

The first of our crew to retire is Shaun Wilcomb, our Plant Superintendent. Shaun will be retiring with almost 48 years with this company. Crazy! He spent most of this time in the HeadRig, sawing big and small logs. He also helped in the Maintenance and Filing departments and for the last eight years or so filled the Plant Superintendent role. With his experience and knowledge, he has helped to make operations more efficient and reliable. Shaun is planning to ride off into retirement before summer hits this next year.

The next longtime employee that will be retiring this next year is Will Wood. Will has been dedicated, outspoken, and not afraid to give his opinion employee for 46 years. He has put his heart and soul into drying lumber and operating our Dry Kilns for most, if not all, of his tenure. He has been, and still is, very passionate about the drying and the quality of the product that is produced. Will has helped us out driving forklifts for the Sawmill, Planer, and Shipping when needed. Will is planning to ride into his retirement before the next hunting season.

Dedicated, passionate, knowledgeable, and opinionated would describe this next tenured employee that will be leaving us at the end of next year. Kris Page will have 46 years of service to this company when she rides off in her Vette. Kris has pulled lumber, banded lumber, driven forklift, loaded trucks and train cars, helped in the Shipping/Sales Department and is currently our Sales Manager. Kris has been a very dedicated employee and has worked hard at "filling the till" since she stepped into the Sales Manager role. You know she's having a good day when she blows that train whistle and comes and lets you know how the day is going.

Between these four employees, that is 188 years of knowledge and experience! That's crazy! I do want to recognize a few other employees that have been with the company for a significant amount of time. All of these employees have brought experience and knowledge to Stoltze, and it's definitely been appreciated. Their hard work ethic, positive attitude, and grit have helped to make Stoltze what it is today.

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 **Forester Ramblings** 

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Late last year we purchased a Rotochopper B66 which allowed us to grind logging slash (tree limbs & tops smaller than 4.5" DIB) in the woods and supplement our sawmill residuals in fueling our Cogeneration Plant, a plant that burns biomass to produce super-heated steam. This steam is used to dry lumber in our kilns and spin turbines which generates enough energy to power 2,500 homes a day!

One of our main log yard equipment operators, Frank Liebig, stepped up when offered the position and trained for almost a week to learn the operations and SOPs of the Rotochopper. Frank has proven to be an excellent operator and his hard work has helped keep the Cogeneration Plant supplied with fuel. So far this year Frank has ground 154 loads, 3,814 tons - 7,628,000 pounds of material!

With the purchase of the Rotochopper, we soon learned that the biggest challenge to hauling effectively and efficiently was going to be consistent trucking. To help have some certainty in trucking we developed a new position titled Truck Driver/Equipment Operator. The thought being, this individual would have the ability to drive our Peterbilt and haul woody biomass from the Rotochopper when grinding or be able to be plugged in wherever needed most when not driving, such as the log yard or logging crew.

Cody Congdon-Snyder was our first hire for this position and proved so beneficial to us that we also hired James Frankhouser. These two gentlemen have proved to be critically important and great additions to our Resource Team. They both have been excellent drivers and have jumped in feet first into learning and honing their skills on a variety of logging and log yard equipment when not hauling fuel.

This story is an example of how good help is hard to find. Yet, if we think out of the box and try to do more with less – like creating a value-added position that demands a higher skill set that commands a higher wage, we can attract great new talent to our industry. Both of these guys come from very different walks of life but they have a common objective; a good career and wage that will allow them to live and raise a family in this beautiful valley we call home. Are there other ways we can attract new talent to our industry or tell our stories and promote our industry? Our landscape needs management. We need to continue to think outside the box, untraditionally, maybe do business a little differently than in the past, work together to achieve more, and attract new talented folks like Cody and James to our industry and continue to add capacity.

I hope all our Stoltze contractors, my fellow co-workers, and all of our affiliates have a great holiday season. I want to thank you all for your hard work; it has not been an easy year for any of us. I want you all to know if we continue to work as a team, all together, pulling in the same direction, we will succeed and overcome any challenges together. Stoltze has been in NW Montana now for over 110 years, and we plan on being here for 100 more.

Cameron Wohlschlegel
Lands & Resource Manager





"FILL THE TILL!"

News from the
Sales Office



The end of the year always signals, for me, that it's time to review and prepare for Stoltze's benefit open enrollment. Open enrollment time is also a good reminder, with all of the hustle and bustle in your lives, to review your current benefit plans, enroll in new coverages if needed and make any necessary changes to existing plans or supplemental coverages. It is also a good reminder to update mailing addresses and tax filing statuses with any changes. With all of these important things to think about, make sure to take time to slow down and cherish the season, spending time and reconnecting with loved ones.

Stoltze added another retiree to the list for 2022. We would like to congratulate and thank **Tom Martin** on his **37 years** of employment with Stoltze and wish Tom the very best in his retirement.

Wishing you and yours a joyous holiday season and a prosperous 2023.

Leah Michael
Personnel Manager



Tom Martin

In July we were wondering about the "new normal" and after the roller coaster ride of the past year and a half, it looks like it has finally arrived. The lumber market has stabilized and is bumping along. We are not seeing the extreme spikes or drops in prices that we had 18 months ago. While prices have come down from the highs we saw in 2021 during the pandemic, they are at levels that more closely reflect what is going on in the housing market. It is a lot less nerve-wracking selling wood in a market that is going bumpety bump than in a market that is all over the place with rapid highs and lows. While we never like to see surfaced inventory build, having prompt wood available in a stagnant market does allow us to meet customers' immediate needs. It has been helpful to have wood on the ground for immediate shipment- selling out of the log deck always seems to age me.

There was also a bubble in the market right before Thanksgiving. Weyerhaeuser mills were on strike and there had been wood curtailments out of Canada. This led to a slight panic that allowed me to have strong sales to end November. That bubble, as well as continuing home construction, has enabled me to keep moving wood, and since "they make it while we sleep" it has been good to be able to keep wood moving.

There have also been changes in our 4/4 common board market. There is a lot of fire salvage wood being milled in California and Oregon and that is causing prices to be quite competitive in the #3 and #4 markets, which has made it more difficult to move boards. It has been no surprise that sales have gotten quiet with the year coming to an end and the winter weather slowing home construction. Most of our customers are focused on taking care of immediate needs instead of speculating. With construction slowing down, an influx of cheap boards, and the current state of the economy, everyone is being cautious.



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News From the Plant

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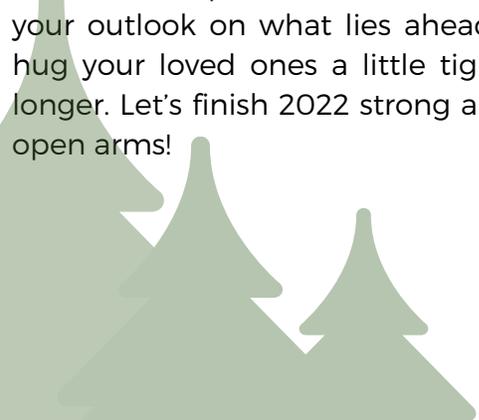
Jo Alene Henley (CurveSaw Gang Operator) will have 29 years of service, Brenda Kjensrud (Certified Grader) will have 18 years, and Stan Hudson (Millwright) will have 6 years.

There are only two other employees that have 40-plus years of service in 2023 with our company: Scott Daumiller with 46 years and Gary Wood with 44 years. There also will be a handful with 30-plus years in 2023: Allen Wagner Jr. (38), Jeff Baiar (35), Jerry Lentz (33), Rocky Street (31), and Travis Draband (30). This kind of dedication and service these individuals have shown to one company is truly remarkable. I cannot say this enough- thank you all for the dedication, knowledge, and passion you have shown F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company throughout the years. You all are a huge part of why Stoltze is still here today. Now it's time for the rest of us to step up, work together, and take this company to the next level.

Why did I talk about these employees or employees in general? Because I felt it necessary to recognize our employees instead of projects or equipment. Hopefully, you have heard me say it before, but if not, I will say it now. Our employees are our biggest asset, and nothing is more true today!

Thank you, all past, present, and future employees, and the Stoltze family for your dedication and commitment to F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company. It's because of you all that we have seen 110-plus years and hopefully will see 110 more! We will keep moving forward, 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. Let's finish 2022 strong and welcome 2023 with open arms!

Trevor Kjensrud
Plant Manager



"FILL THE TILL!"

News from the

Sales Office



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I just returned from the North American Wholesale Lumber Association (NAWLA) Trader's Market in Phoenix, AZ. When I boarded the plane in Kalispell it was six degrees and windy. When I stepped off the plane in Phoenix it was a pleasant 65 degrees. My feelings about the market were confirmed at the Trade Show where I encountered an attitude of extreme caution as no one is speculating on lumber.

Going forward into 2023 I am having to readjust my thinking to operating in a normal market after all of the craziness of the past two years. I am optimistic that if we do our best to produce a quality product as efficiently as possible, we will be positioned well. I am grateful to everyone at the mill and the planer who work so hard to make quality Stoltze lumber and I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Kris Page
Sales Manager





We have a new face in the office. Shauna left us in September and moved to Alaska. We wish her and her family the best. She was a dedicated, smart, and reliable employee and she will be missed. Leslee Daken was hired into Shauna's position in September.

Chuck retired in December of 2020, and we were finally able to pull together a retirement celebration on September 17th, 2022. Over a year and a half later. With Covid and different schedules, it was hard to find the perfect opportunity, but I think the one we did find went off perfectly. It was a great celebration. We had many people from all over show up, and I still have no idea who they all are, but they showed up to wish Chuck farewell and congratulations even if he had already been retired for well over a year. There were great speeches, great food, a few tears, and an all-around good time. Many of our managers and supervisors had an opportunity to meet Stoltze family members for the first time, myself included. After seven years, I had never met any of the family that owns the company all of us are so fortunate to work for. I know I have said it before, as have many other people, but, again, congratulations Chuck, we will miss you, but you have left this company in great hands.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Josef Kuchera
Editor



Pictures are from Chuck's retirement and the family visit.

DEDICATED TO THE STEWARDSHIP OF MONTANA'S FORESTS, F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER CO. CONTINUALLY STRIVES TO BE A RELIABLE, QUALITY-DRIVEN PRODUCER OF WOOD PRODUCTS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY WHILE CREATING LONG-TERM VALUE FOR OUR COMPANY AND COMMUNITY AND IMPROVING RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



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