

THE VOICE OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

# TIMBER BULLETIN

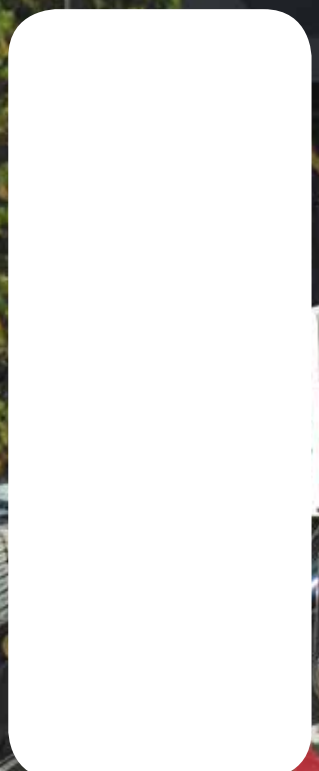
DULUTH, MINNESOTA

JULY/AUGUST 2016

VOLUME 71

## Jack Rajala Dies 63rd Expo Returns to Grand Rapids

North Star Expo  
Itasca County  
Fairgrounds  
Grand Rapids  
Sept. 16 and 17



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Grand Rapids, MN

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# TIMBER BULLETIN

Volume 71  
July/August 2016  
Duluth, Minnesota

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### ON THE COVER

The Celebrity Loader Contest is a staple of every North Star Expo. For more on the equipment you'll see at this year's event, please see page 22.

The Timber Bulletin is published six times annually, in February, April, June, August, October and December by the Minnesota Timber Producers Association, located at 903 Medical Arts Bldg., 324 W. Superior St., Duluth, Minn. Minnesota Timber Producers Association members receive the Timber Bulletin at an annual subscription rate of \$25 which is included in their membership dues. Periodicals postage paid in Duluth, Minnesota. Advertising rates and data on request. The views expressed in the Timber Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association.

Postmaster: Please send address corrections to TIMBER BULLETIN, Minnesota Timber Producers Association, 903 Medical Arts Bldg., 324 W. Superior St., Duluth, Minnesota 55802, Phone 218-722-5013.  
Issn: 10973532 – USPS: 016208

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**E**ach year in the logging business, I wonder (no...wish) will this year be the "perfect" year for logging. However, most of us would agree this year will not go down as a "perfect" year. For much of the state it was tough winter logging, followed by a summer of one rain event after another, causing production delays or even stoppages. Harvesting blow down has many uncertainties so let's all be careful out there.

## President's Column

Maybe the "perfect" year is just around the corner.



We recently lost an icon of the timber industry. The passing of Jack Rajala, a long time industry leader, will leave a path of forest restoration

and development for others with the vision and determination to follow. Jack will be greatly missed.

As we all head to the forest to produce the timber needed to sustain our livelihoods, our industry and society in general, I hope each of us will remember there is nothing more important than coming home safely to those who love us. So let's make safety a top priority.

*David Berthiaume*

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**T**he North Star Expo returns to the Itasca County Fairgrounds this year on Friday, September 16 and Saturday, September 17. It's going to be a great show with booth and lot sales running ahead of last year. The vendors put a lot into being at the show so mark your calendars and make sure that you get Expo.



## Executive Vice President's Column



What's the biggest issue facing us right now? Stumpage prices. The increases

in stumpage prices that we have been seeing over the past couple of years are not sustainable with aspen prices, in particular, having increased by more than fifty percent. We've been down this road before, most recently in the years leading

up to the crash in 2006. Stumpage prices, particularly aspen, went on a rampage. Nationwide new housing starts and other construction cratered sending the market for building materials into a tailspin that we are still recovering from.

With uncompetitive and unsustainable stumpage prices in Minnesota at the time, we saw three plants comprising one-third of the wood usage in our state permanently closed. Gone. And they haven't come back.

In my view the situation is even more serious now because of the vulnerability of paper and other pulp-based markets.

At one level the solution is resolving the imbalance between supply and demand. That's a fancy way of saying that we need more wood on the market. County wood, state wood, federal wood and private wood. Getting that done will take several things.

First, everyone with a stake in this needs to recognize the problem. High stumpage prices may look

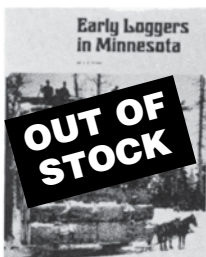
good for the manager's budget in the short term. But what is the County Board, the legislature or whomever going to think when another plant or plants or parts of plants close permanently.

Second, we need to work together to come up with ways to solve the problem. Whether it's funding, personnel, seasonality of access, willingness to act or any other aspect of the problem we need to work together to resolve this issue

## Early Loggers in Minnesota

by J. C. Ryan

VOL. I



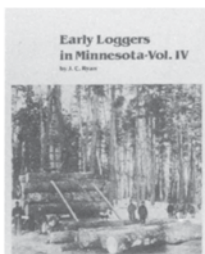
VOL. III



VOL. II



VOL. IV



First-hand recollections by storyteller "Buzz" Ryan of the loggers, loaders, swampers, wood butchers and bull cooks who ruled the woods in the heyday of the pioneer lumberjacks—with dozens of historical photographs.

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before it's too late.

Unfortunately, too late often comes too soon.



I was saddened, as were many, at Jack Rajala's passing. Jack was one of those larger than life kind of guys. He had ideas, many of them big, and he pushed them. To those outside of our world he was best known for his work on white pine regeneration. For those in our forestry world he was a constant presence. The forests of Minnesota are better because of Jack and so are those of us who knew him. Rest in Peace.



Long-time Boise forester Ken Olson retired and I wish him the best. Ken was a fixture on the Expo Committee going back to when it was named the Mechanization Committee. He and the up north crew of Larry Mannausau, Kit Hasbargen, Dale Erickson and others were key to making the Expo

go back in those days. Ken was always a strong supporter of TPA and always gave me frank advice and opinions which I appreciated. Congratulations on a great career!



I had a chance to sit down with the new Supervisor on the Superior National Forest recently. Connie Cummins is familiar to us from her time as a District Ranger on the Superior in the late 1990's. Connie took the time to meet with me on her first day in the office which I appreciated. The Superior's timber management has slipped a bit in the past few years and we look forward to working with Connie and her team on re-building their program.



It was no big surprise when Governor Dayton announced that there will not be a Special Session of the Legislature this year. You may recall that this year's Regular Session ended with no Tax,


Bonding or Transportation Bills. So we'll head back to St. Paul next year. That's one of the things that you can count on TPA to do – be there. Whether it's the Legislature, Congress, state, federal or county agencies, TPA is there for you every day.



What can you say about safety that hasn't already been said? Well, there probably isn't anything so that's why we say many of the same things over and over again. Repetition can make it second nature and part of our routine. If we make safety part of our routine then the routine won't lead to inattention or just plain sloppiness that results in an accident and an injury.

If you haven't had a safety meeting in a while, have one. And have those meetings and discussions on every job. You won't regret it.

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## Member Feature...



Jack Rajala (L) with sisters Lois and Delores and brothers/business partners Dean and Randy.

# Jack Rajala Dies

**Promoted the White Pine, and forest health, in his decades in the forest products industry**

By Ray Higgins

**J**ack Rajala, long-time Minnesota sawmill operator, and member of one of Itasca County's most prominent families, died peacefully at his home in rural Grand Rapids. Rajala had been diagnosed with brain cancer in May. He was 77.

For decades Jack led the Rajala forestry and sawmill operations, and was Minnesota's leading advocate for the re-establishment of the White Pine to Minnesota's forests.

In his 1998 book titled, "Bringing Back the White Pine," Rajala wrote,

"As a native tree in the Minnesota landscape, we also know how critically important and valuable White Pine is to the forest itself—a part of the mosaic of tree species that form the home for forest life; as super canopy towering above all else in its own exquisite majesty. It is little wonder that those who come to visit Minnesota's forests are most impressed by these majestic sentinels. It is assumed that White Pine are the pillars of the forest. As such, this tree has no equal."

Along with the book he authored,

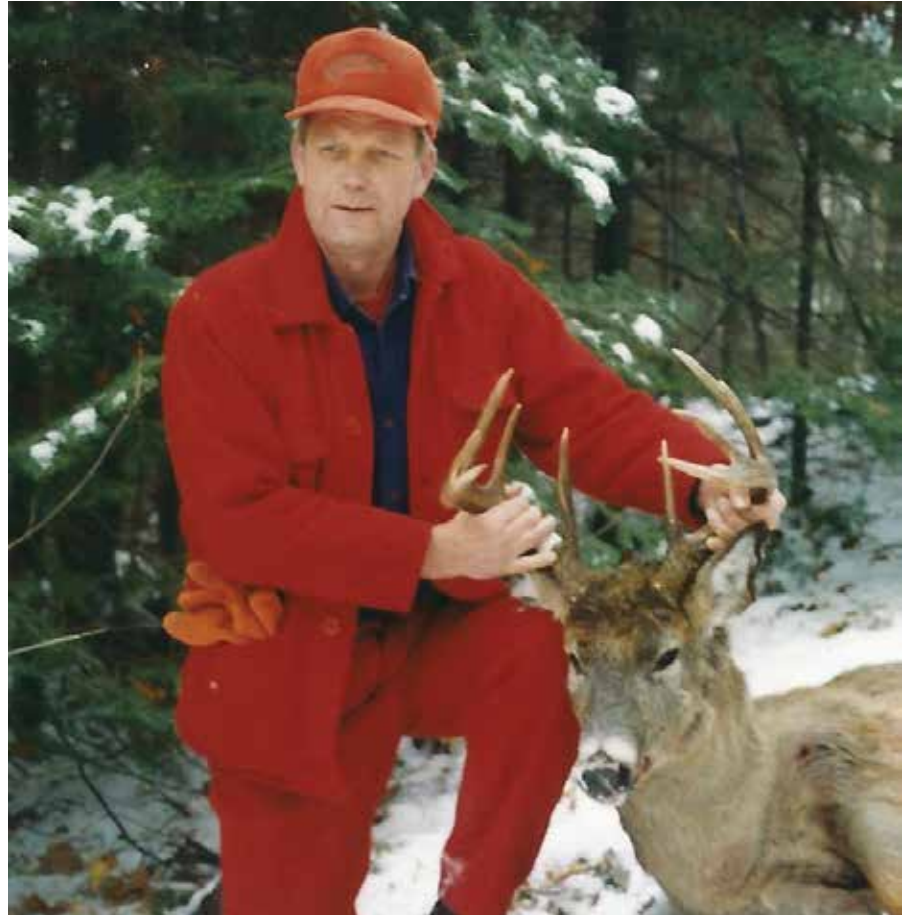
Rajala also oversaw the planting and natural regeneration of tens of millions of White Pine seedlings during his lifetime. He also promoted the widespread use of "bud-capping" the seedlings, preventing deer from browsing on them.

"Jack inspired his family members in the business, as well as many others in the industry, with his White Pine restoration efforts," said John Rajala, Jack's son and business partner. "As a young boy growing up in Bigfork and then partner for



30 years, I spent as much or more time with him in the northern forests than anyone. Although the pinnacle of his efforts was the White Pine, his real legacy was much broader. We worked tirelessly to retain and restore as many acres of high quality, productive, and healthy natural northern Minnesota forests as possible. It was about both economic and environmental sustainability. It was an honor to walk that path with him, and I will never forget. And now going forward, as he told me many times, we will need to find our own way to continue the work.”

Born in Effie, Rajala graduated from Bigfork High School. From there he attended college at St. Olaf—he captained the football team there—and graduated with a degree in accounting. He returned to Itasca county to work at the family businesses, which had been established in 1902 by his grandfather Ivar Rajala, a Finnish immigrant. In recent years, Rajala served as the company’s chief executive officer and co-owned



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them with brothers Dean and Randy, and son John. Dean passed away earlier this year. Between mills in Deer River and Bigfork, the Rajala sawmills produce a wide variety of native wood products, including lumber and veneer for furniture, homes, cabinetry, pallets/crating, and more.

"Jack cherished his partnership with Dean and Randy," John Rajala says. "Family businesses are never easy. But they made it work with a fierce loyalty to each other, above all else. They owe each other a debt of gratitude for the success and longevity of the businesses, because they each have been critical with their own contributions."

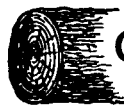
On top of Jack's work in the Rajala Companies, he was active in forest products industry organizations, including TPA, Minnesota Forest Industries, the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, and more. He also served as a regent at Concordia College in Moorhead, on the boards of directors at both Minnesota Power's parent company

Allete, and at Grand Rapids State Bank, and as president of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids.

"Like many in forest-related businesses, Jack was heavily involved in the local community," John Rajala says. "He understood that the health of the community was vital to the health of our businesses and our industry."

But Jack's commitment to others runs deeper than that, often helping others on a more personal level.

"At his core he was a very humble man," John says. "Yes, he often took charge and was a strong leader when that was called for. But when it's all said and done, Jack's greatest impact was at a very personal level. He walked many paths in his life, both literal and figurative. He came to know and accept the basic challenges we all face. Coupled with his strong faith, he was able to be a deep help to many in their time of need. That's the father I'll remember most."



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# 63rd Expo Returns to Grand Rapids

**T**he scenic red pines of the Itasca County Fairgrounds will once again frame the setting of the North Star Expo in 2016.

The 63rd Annual event returns to the Grand Rapids site on Friday September 16 and Saturday September 17, after a two-year stint at Bemidji's Sanford Center. The Expo will return to the spacious and wooded fairgrounds for the first time since 2013.

"It's great to be back in Itasca County," said TPA Expo Committee Chair Chad Lovdahl. "We had a great two-year run in Bemidji, and we'll be back there someday. But the trees around the Itasca County Fairgrounds make it an excellent site as well, and we look forward to another great event."

In addition to the usual equipment displays, the Expo will host a Famous Dave's barbecue on Friday night, complete with beer garden. Tickets are available in



A highlight of every Expo is the Best Load competition, in which loggers and truckers show off the best of the best of Minnesota's wood. This load of oak was one of the top finishers at last year's Expo.



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advance or at the door. Saturday morning marks the popular free pancake breakfast, served by Nortrax.

Like at any Expo, there will be plenty of competitions:

The Best Load contest is taking place again this year. Only the wood will be judged, not the truck it is hauled on. Points will be scored on the timber quality, product quality, product manufacturing, load appearance, and load securement. Monetary prizes are awarded to the top finishers.

The Loader Contest offers a great chance for Expo attendees to see big equipment at work. Plus, competitors from the worlds of politics and the regional media will also try their hand at the loader.

The Coloring Contest will take place this year as well. In the last issue of the Timber Bulletin, you'll find a pull-out poster for the little ones to enter. (If you don't have that issue, don't fret, we'll have additional copies on hand at the event). Just have them color the poster and either bring it to the Expo or mail it to the TPA office.

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Entries will be posted at the Expo for all to enjoy.

Don't forget to bring in your wood cookies for the Big Cookie Contest. Remember to attach a list indicating species, where taken, and company name.

Test your visual skills and Guess the Weight! Entry forms will be available near one of the Best Load trucks.

We'll have fun for the whole family. See you September 16 and 17 in Grand Rapids!



The North Star Expo often serves as an outdoor classroom for students learning about the forest products industry.






Expo vendors put a lot of time and effort into making sure their displays look their best. Last year, Ziegler Cat received the blue ribbon in the Best Large Equipment division.



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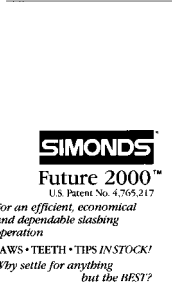
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# NORTH STAR EXPO

## 63rd NORTH STAR EXPO 2016 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### Friday, September 16

8:00 am - 12:00 pm	MLEP Training- Wood Markets
9:00 am - 5:00 pm	Equipment Displays Open
9:30 am	Display Contest Judging
10:00 am - 11:00 am	Loader Contest (sign up at site)
11:30 am - 12:30 pm	Celebrity/Media Loader Contest
12:30 pm - 3:00 pm	Loader Contest (sign up at site)
5:00 pm	Equipment displays close
5:00 pm	Cash Bar Social Hour begins
6:00 pm	Dinner and Door Prizes- Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que

### Saturday, September 17

7:00 am - 9:00 am	Free Pancake Breakfast (Sponsored by Nortrax)
9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Equipment displays open
9:00 am - 11:00 am	Loader Contest (sign up at site)
11:30 am	Coloring contest winners announced
1:00 pm	Winners announced for Loader, Master Loader, and Best Load contests
1:30 pm	Winners announced for Guess the Weight, Big Cookie, Vendor Drawing, Wood I.D. and Big Cookie contests
2:00 pm	Equipment displays close

### CONTESTS

**Guess the Weight** - Guess the weight of a fully loaded truck

**Wood Identification** - See how many tree species you can identify

**Loader** - Test your skills against the clock

**Masters Division Loader** - Loader contest for those 50 and over - sign up at site

**Best Load** - Come and see the Best Loads of Wood on Display

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# Cummins named Superior NF Supervisor

**C**onnie Cummins is the new supervisor of the Superior National Forest, replacing Brenda Halter, who retired in June.

A graduate of Purdue University, Cummins comes to the Superior from Oregon, where she has served as supervisor of the Fremont-Winema National Forest since 2014. Cummins has previously served in Minnesota, as a forest planner and

## Timber Talk

environmental coordinator on the Chippewa National Forest, and as district ranger of the LaCroix District on the Superior for nine years. She also served in Wisconsin's Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest on the south shore of Lake Superior.

"While I have thoroughly enjoyed my short time in the West and its many opportunities and challenges, I am very excited to be returning to the Midwest and to a forest which holds a special place in my heart," Cummins said. "My daughter lives in Sturgeon Bay, Wis., and my son resides in Duluth. I am happily looking forward to experiencing some family time as well as dusting off my cross-country skis, lacing up my trail shoes and hitting the trails and lakes of northern Minnesota."

## Titus named Cass County Land Commissioner

**T**he Cass County Board has named Kirk Titus as its new land commissioner. Titus replaces Josh Stevenson, who was promoted to Cass county administrator.

Titus goes to Cass County from Crow Wing County, where he'd served as land services supervisor/natural resources manager since 2009. Titus is a graduate of Iowa State University. Among his previous jobs are as a U.S. Forest Service forester in South Dakota, and as a forester for Weyerhaeuser's TrusJoist mill in Deerwood.

## Cease named Itasca County Land Commissioner

**K**ory Cease has been named Itasca County land commissioner by the county board there.

Cease succeeds Garrett Ous, who retired in May after 20 years as land commissioner in Itasca County. Before that, Ous served as land commissioner in Clearwater County.

Cease has worked for the Itasca County Land Department since 2001. A graduate of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks with a master's degree in forest sciences, Cease also spent four years working with the U.S. Forest Service.

## Environmental Groups Sue Feds over NLEB, Other Species

**T**wo environmental groups have filed suit against the U.S. Forest Service, the Superior National Forest, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, challenging the biological opinions and consultation regarding the northern long-eared bat, gray wolf and Canada lynx.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Earthworks filed the suit in federal court in Washington, D.C., seeking to have all projects on the Superior stopped until new biological opinions are prepared and consultations between the USFS and US F&WS are undertaken. They are asking the court to find that the Endangered Species Act is being violated, challenging the government's biological opinion that states the species won't be adversely affected by forest plan activities. The groups object to timber management, mineral exploration, and construction of roads and trails in the forest.

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# Loggers are Looking at Big Machines

**T**en years ago when the housing and building markets crashed, mills closed, and timber markets tightened, many Minnesota loggers back-burnered purchases for big equipment like feller bunchers, processors, and stroke delimiters.

But equipment dealers around the state are seeing loggers re-enter the equipment marketplace. Dealers say there are several factors, but an improved logging economy is one of the chief reasons.

"Business is very robust," says Paul Estabrooks, sales manager for Ponsse, manufacturers of cut-to-length harvesters and forwarders. "A lot of it is due to guys updating older equipment that hadn't done it for a while. We're also seeing some guys coming on board, switching brands. We've seen several customers switch from conventional to cut-to-length. But the improved market conditions in logging is a huge factor."



The Barko 260B feller buncher at the company's demonstration harvest.

Nortrax Regional Vice President Dale Gessell agrees. In fact, the dealer of John Deere equipment

is seeing stronger markets for equipment in this region than anywhere else the company sells

The advertisement features two pieces of heavy machinery. The top image shows a smaller tracked carrier with a large circular component. The bottom image shows a larger tracked carrier with a harvester attachment. The background is a textured grey.

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logging equipment.

"Locally, here in the Midwest, the forestry market has been pretty solid for the past 12 to 18 months," Gessell says. "I think some of it was pent up demand. People were putting it off and putting it off. But a lot of our machine sales have been in the forestry market—as opposed to agriculture or construction—over the past 12-18 months. That's not the case in other parts of the country. We're seeing better activity here than anywhere else in Nortrax."

Nortrax is one of two dealers to host equipment demonstrations in northern Minnesota this summer, showing off its wares to the logging community. The other, Northern Timberline, partnered with Barko to let potential buyers know how their product lines have evolved and improved.

"The Barko 260B and 240B have been upgraded with Tier 4 Final emissions to meet EPA-mandated requirements for off-road diesel equipment," says Barko's Mitch Fedie. "The upgraded Cummins QSB6.7L engine offers a 5 horsepower bump (225 from 220 hp) and a 10 percent increase in peak torque from Tier 3. IQAN hydraulic controls have also been upgraded and operators have commented that the "B" series controls seem smoother than the last generation. Many of the loggers at the demo already owned Barko loaders and we wanted to show them our expanding product line. Some were in the market for a new feller buncher now, while others expressed that they are looking to buy this fall."

That's where the North Star Expo comes in. Several equipment dealers, including Ziegler Cat, Ponsse, Titan, Road Machinery, as well as Nortrax and Northern Timberline, will have their products on display at the 63rd Annual Expo, held this year at the Itasca County Fairgrounds.

"Business is starting to ramp up," says Titan Machinery's Ryan Schall. "People are looking forward to the winter months, end of the year, beginning of the season type of stuff. Good things come from shows like the Expo. It's a good place for us to mingle with the customers in a more laid-back situation. They can look and see



Attendees at the equipment demonstration hosted by Northern Timberline and Barko take a close-up look at the 260B feller buncher

what we have going on, and there isn't any pressure. It's a place where we can make some connections."

The Expo is sort of when sales start heating up every year," says Ziegler Cat Territory Manager Ryan Milette. "2015 was a very good year for us, and the way it's looking, 2016 will be equally strong."

Barko isn't the only dealer with something new to show at the Expo. Several of the big equipment sellers have something new to show off.

"The new Komatsu 931 Processor will be at our display area," says Jon Anderson, vice president of northern operations for Road Machinery and Supplies. "We will also have field mechanics on-site at the show available for question and answer during the day."

At the Nortrax demo in August, the company showed off John Deere's new TimberNavi jobsite mapping system. Nortrax bills it as a fully integrated, easy-to-use



Those attending the Nortrax live demonstration also had the opportunity to hear presentations and attend MLEP training at the event.

jobsite mapping solution that vastly improves on existing systems and can be added to new or existing equipment to help the operator navigate the harvest site.

The TimberNavi system is designed for full-tree logging operations. By providing accurate, in-machine visibility of terrain, harvesting area, and position relative to cut-block boundaries, TimberNavi enables operators to navigate confidently and efficiently through the jobsite. In fact, not only are loggers using the system, some mills and public agencies attended Nortrax's August demo to learn how they can use it to put timber sales together.

"Through satellite technology, you can put sales on maps in the machine, and the logger can go out on the sale and see where he is and what needs to be done on the screen," Gessell of Nortrax says. "Machines can see other machines, so your skidder and your feller buncher can see each other, where they're going, or your harvester and your forwarder. They can also see what piles of wood are left, so if you get a bunch of snow over the weekend, you can come out Monday to forward and you know where all the wood is on the site. We have contractors buying these



John Deere's 1270G cut-to-length processor

systems already."

Ziegler Cat plans to have several machines on site at the Expo, but Caterpillar will be introducing some new products later in the year with Tier 4 emissions, including a 573D Series Wheel Feller Buncher in November.

For Ponsse, Estabrooks is keeping his company's Expo plan close to the vest, for now.

"We're going to have something nobody's ever seen before," Estabrooks says. "Expect a surprise coming from Ponsse."

The 63rd Annual North Star Expo runs from 9AM to 5PM on Friday September 16, and from 9AM to 2PM on Saturday the 17, all at the Itasca County Fairgrounds in Grand Rapids.

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# On the Markets

**T**he Timber Bulletin publishes information regarding results of a sampling of recent timber sales and other market indicators, as well as other market-related news items.

## July Storms Result in Salvage Auctions

**S**trong July storms caused blowdown in several areas of Minnesota. Several affected agencies are planning on holding salvage auctions in hopes of cleaning up fallen timber. In other cases, the blown down timber is on existing timber permits.

The DNR saw blowdown on roughly 4000 acres of state forest land, in the Cloquet, Aitkin, Tower, Bemidji, and Backus areas. Just under a third of the blowdown is on existing permits, and those sales will be reappraised, if the damage is at least 20 percent of the remaining sale volume or value, or if the blowdown affects high valued timber.

The DNR has scheduled three salvage auctions:

Aitkin Area	August 23
Tower Area	August 30
Cloquet Area	September 6
Aitkin/Backus Areas	September 7
Bemidji Area	September 13

Aitkin County plans to have a salvage to clean up blowdown in the Hill City area, and a salvage auction in late August or early September is planned. The county will also work with existing permit holders with damaged sales.

Likewise, St. Louis County expects at least one salvage sale and will work with permit holders on existing sales, where necessary.

## Recent Timber Sales Average prices, as reported by each agency

Agency	Regular	Intermediate
<b>Lake County</b>		
<i>June 22 – Sealed Bid</i>		
Aspen P&B	\$31.26	NA
Birch P&B	\$18.45	NA
Maple P&B	\$12.61	NA
Ash P&B	\$10.16	NA
Balsam P&B	\$10.45	NA
8 of the 24 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.		

## Cass County

*June 30 – Sealed Bid*

Aspen	\$44.51	\$51.09
Red Oak	\$48.85	\$52.64
Birch	\$27.61	\$32.31

All 5 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

## Hubbard County

*July 11 – Oral Auction*

Aspen Mixed	\$47.83	NA
Aspen Pulp	\$41.47	NA
Birch Pulp	\$15.98	NA
Oak Mixed	\$28.97	NA

All 15 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

## DNR—Warroad Area

*July 21 – Oral Auction*

Aspen Species		
(WC)	\$25.47	\$18.92
Balsam Fir		
(WMP)	\$23.68	\$24.80
Jack Pine		
(WMP)	\$41.60	\$40.40
Mixed Spruce		
(WMP)	\$27.85	\$32.35
Tamarack (WC)	\$ 2.53	\$ 3.03

All 25 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

## Cass County

*July 28 – Oral Auction*

Aspen	\$40.60	\$32.79
Red Oak	\$35.51	\$43.55
Birch	\$22.44	\$27.07

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**Beltrami County**

August 2 – Sealed Bid

Aspen pulp	\$23.25	NA
Tamarack pulp	\$ 6.10	NA
Balsam pulp	\$10.41	NA

All 7 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

**Koochiching County**

August 3 – Oral Auction

Aspen P/B	\$34.03	\$36.52
Spruce P/B	\$19.19	\$25.71
Jack Pine P/B	\$51.11	\$46.86
Red Pine P/B	\$50.13	\$40.50
Balsam P/B	\$11.70	\$13.95

29 of the 30 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

**Beltrami County**

August 4 – Oral Auction

Aspen pulp	\$47.42	NA
Tamarack pulp	\$ 9.73	NA
Balsam pulp	\$17.69	NA
Birch pulp	\$19.89	NA

10 of the 11 tracts offered during the sale were purchased.

**Aitkin County**

August 17 – Sealed Bid

Aspen P/B	\$36.89	NA
Mixed		
Hdwds P/B	\$15.87	NA
Red Pine P/B	\$32.35	NA
Maple P/B	\$12.50	NA

24 of the 27 tracts offered during the sale were purchased

**St. Louis County**

May 12 – Oral Auction

Aspen		
pulpwood	NA	\$21.14
Black Spruce		
pulp	NA	\$21.81
Birch pulpwood	NA	\$ 5.15
Norway		
Pine pulp	NA	\$15.72

21 of the 32 tracts offered during the sale were purchased

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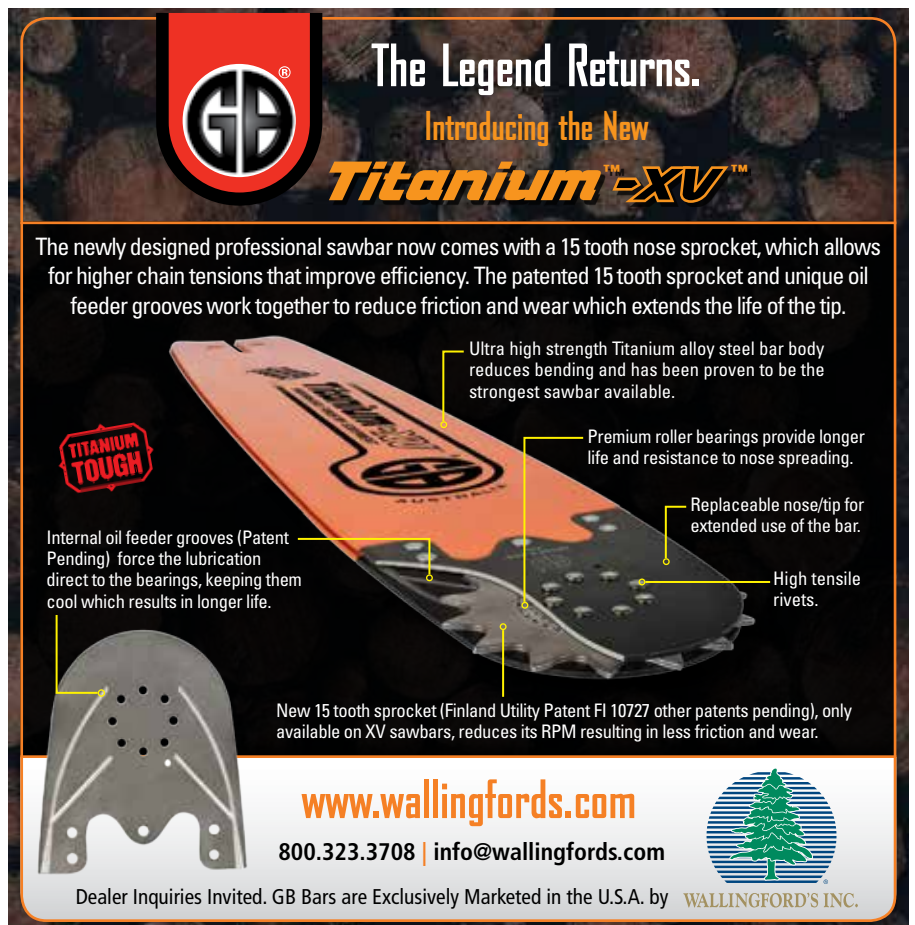
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LOGGERS OF THE PAST . . .

# Care Given to Old Jacks

by J. C. Ryan

This story is reprinted from an earlier *Timber Bulletin*—one of the first of “Buzz” Ryan’s ever-popular contributions to these pages. The *Bulletin* will continue to reprint selected stories from the memories he recorded for us.—*Editor*



I spent my childhood in the Bemidji area, and grew up with the logging industry. I have known most of the big and near big logging companies and many of the smaller jobbers that worked for the larger firms.

One of my pet peeves is to hear people today sound off about the terrible living conditions of the old-time lumberjack. There seems to be a tendency to picture old-time logging companies and loggers as exploiters of labor that had little thought or feeling towards the lumberjack other than to work him 10-12 hours daily, give him the poorest housing, feed him the worst food, give him meager pay and send him off to the poorhouse to die when he was old. *This was far from the truth!*

Most companies and independent loggers took very good care of their workers and older men. They and their foremen had a following of jacks that worked for them year after year, and they made a special effort to help and keep their working force.

Men who worked many years for a company often were kept on the payroll long after they were able to produce, and were paid as long as they were able to walk to the table to eat.

It was not uncommon to see several old jacks working around camp – piling, splitting wood, filing lanterns and doing minor chores while they recuperated from illness or injury (or were just too old to work in the woods.)

I remember going to a Crookston Lumber Co. camp, where George Brown was foreman, and seeing 12 old jacks just able to hobble to the table. Only when they couldn’t walk to the table were they taken from the camps.

Many older jacks were kept on as camp watchmen or were allowed to take care of a few head of horse during the summer months when the camps were not in operation.

They were given jobs that they were capable of such as watching railroad crossings, haying hills on the ice roads and working as night watchmen.

Some companies set up shacks and furnished food for their old-timers. During slack times. I have seen camp foremen stop

on the street and pick up several old-timers and take them to the camps to rest and be fed. One could always stop at a camp and stay several days even if the camp was not hiring at the time. Very few old lumberjacks went to the poor house or became recipients of public care.

In 1916, there were about 30,000 men working in lumber camps in Koochiching County; there were only five old men in the county poorhouse.

In some smaller towns, companies set up small hospitals where their men could go if hurt or sick and stay until they were able to return to camp. During the peak of logging days, many jacks had hospital tickets they bought from the “Lumberjack Sister” of St. Mary’s Hospital in Duluth; and they could go there if sick or disabled. The companies often paid for these hospital tickets.

Much has been said about the poor food that was given the jacks. This was not true. While I worked as log inspector in 1922. I ate and stayed at more than 70 camps that winter, and with the exception of fresh fruit and milk, the food was as good as or better than food served in leading hotels. The best food available under the conditions was always served, and the camp foremen were always looking for the best cooks. They knew that a well-fed crew was a happy crew and put out the best work. It was only in a few of the smaller jobber camps that one occasionally found poor food.

It was true that no inside toilets or shower baths were found in the camps, but

very few homes in the small towns had these facilities during the early 1900s. However, most camps had a small building where men could wash their clothes and “boil-up” to get rid of lice. The men themselves did a good job of policing. If a man came to camp that they thought might bring lice, they insisted that he “boil-up” before sleeping in the bunkhouse. There was always plenty of soap and hot water available.

The lumberjack was a happy, clean living individual in camp. This was not true when he went to town to blow his stake. He then slept in “dump hotels” or boarding houses and lived under pretty tough conditions until his stake was gone. Then he was ready to return to camp. His camp foreman or company man would rescue him from the “vultures,” get him back to camp and give him a few days to get back into shape for work. I have seen these men stay in camp up to two weeks before they were able to go back to work after blowing a big stake.

There were no relief rolls during the heyday of the logging industry and it was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that transient and W.P.A. camps were set up to take care of these men. This was after most camps had closed and companies had gone out of the logging business. During the peak days of the logging industry, it was the companies and loggers that looked after their workers. If all industry took as good care of its workers as the logging industry did there would be few complaints.



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To serve our readers better, the Timber Bulletin offers free classified ads of up to 85 words to all members and associate members of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association. All ads must be submitted in writing to the Association office. The MTPA assumes no responsibility for ad contents and accepts free ads on a first-come, first-served basis within space limitations.

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