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Survival of the fittest



When Sam started replacing his used equipment, his first new machine was a Cat 330C FM shovel loader from Peterson Machinery, Eugene, Ore. He says without Cat Financial he “never would have made it.”

Hard work and specialty logging will get Myers Logging through the recession

If anyone can survive a recession on top of an ongoing slump in the logging industry, Sam Myers can. He has lived through his own personal “recession” before and had the determination and fortitude to work his way up and out.

Based in Eugene, Ore., Myers Logging contracts solely for one private landowner, who has been able to keep Sam and his two employees working regularly so far. “I have a lot closer relationship than I would if I worked for a mill where there were 10 other con-

tractors. This landowner has three or four contractors, and we all specialize. I do the ground based logging, someone else handles all skyline logging, another cut-to-length, etc.”

Starting out on a Skidder

Like many loggers, Sam got his start in the business when he was just a kid. He helped his grandpa log his land and even ran an old skidder when he was six. When he was in the third grade, he knew he wanted to be a logger.

From there, his story might be a bit

more colorful than most. He went into the business fulltime as a chaser after high school. “I wasn’t smart enough to start in the summer. I started in the dead of winter. It was horrible.”

Over the next few years, he learned more and progressed until the day he broke his leg while cutting timber. “I couldn’t run fast enough, and the top of a tree fell on me. I should have been killed.” He was off work for about four weeks. “When my leg started to heal, I just put a garbage bag around my cast and came back to work.”

Day and Night

In 2001 at age 31, Sam had the opportunity to buy his boss’ equipment and continue as a contractor for the same private landowner. “The equipment was all



Sam Myers (right) contracts for one landowner in Eugene, Ore. His brother, Bill (left), operates the Cat 330D FM shovel loader.

torque on that machine. It worked so well that his old processor couldn't keep up. That's when he was working day and night." So it was no surprise when Sam's next purchase was a Cat 322C.

The latest new machine is a Cat 330D FM shovel loader with single bar grousers and high swing torque, and the 330C has been repurposed as Sam's processor. The 322C also found new life as a back-up shovel loader. Lastly, Sam's line-up also includes a Cat D5 track-type tractor that he leases from a retired logger.

Sam says that, compared to the C model, the Cat 330D is "like getting out of a Volkswagen and into a Mercedes. They'll both take you down the road, but that D model is a lot better ride. It's a dream to run. The C model does everything we ask it to do. It just isn't quite as nice."

Bill adds, "The 330D is also a little faster on the attachment. It feels more comfortable going up and down all that steep stuff. I don't hesitate now. And with the one bar grouser on there, I get around a lot better."

Slowing Down

Towards the end of 2008, Sam reported that work had slowed down quite a bit, and he doesn't expect to continue moving the same volume in 2009. "They don't want me to cut because the market is so bad, but I am not looking to change equipment or lay people off."

old and worn out, so it was rough going for a long time. I owed more than it was worth. I started in the hole and had to dig my way out."

During the next few years, Sam loaded logs while his brother, Bill, did the yarding. At night Bill went home, and Sam stayed to process logs. Sam would work through the night until the trucks showed up at 4:30 a.m., and the cycle began again.

He took catnap breaks during the night and in between trucks. "I'd sleep an hour, work three. Then the next thing you know the trucks would show up, so I'd load trucks all day. Maybe have a little nap when everyone left."

It took him seven years to work himself out of the hole. Now all the old equipment has been replaced, and he goes home at night to sleep.

Out of the Hole

His first new machine was a Cat 330C FM shovel loader from Peterson Machinery, Eugene, Ore. "If it wasn't for Cat Financial, I never would have made it. They took a big chance by loaning me the money for my first machine."

Peterson sales representative Kirk Carter recalls, "We put high swing

I have two employees, and I am going to try to keep everyone working and getting a paycheck until things can pick up."

To keep everyone working, Sam was planning to diversify by doing what he termed "pre-poleing" — a select harvest of 75-120 ft. trees to be used for utility poles. Sam says he will have to change his operation to do this specialty logging.

"You have to take really good care of the wood and be very conscious of breakage and knots. It's a real slow process. Since we are in a slow-down situation, I will probably do the cutting by hand myself. I will probably park my processor and one of my loaders. We will run just one loader and use the Cat D5 tractor with the swing grapple to do my yarding."

Sam says that once the poles are out, he will probably rehab the unit — harvest the remaining trees. "I hope the pre-poleing will keep me busy for a few months until the landowner decides he has a market for some other product."

Still Content

A sure sign that Sam is a logger to his core, he says that he is still "pretty content" with what he does, despite the times. He credits his survival to hard work and quality.

"There is no secret. It's very hard work, but you have to have the quality. That's where I try to be — the best quality possible. That's what got me in the door, and that's what's kept me going. I just try to make the landowner the most money. That's the key. And it all comes down to the quality of the work, the quality of the log, and what's left when you are done."

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