

And God Made a Logger: Part II

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Good morning

It's wonderful to be back in the Great Lakes States

This is my fifth visit to this part of our great country since 1997

But before I tell you what brought me here five times, I want to conduct a poll:

How many of you are second or third generation loggers?

How many of you have sons or daughters working in the business?

How many have sons or daughters who *want* to follow in your footsteps?

I ask these questions because the year I was President of the Pacific Logging Congress – 2007 - we completed a DVD titled "*This is my Office!*" that is near and dear to my heart.

I enjoyed my PLC years – not least because I am only the second journalist to have ever been the organization's president. The first was George Cornwall, who with a Seattle logger named Ed English, founded PLC in 1908. Cornwall was the publisher of two industry trade publications based in Portland, Oregon. He and English shared a concern for logger safety and camp sanitation – two very big issues in the wild and woolly days of axes, cross-cut saws and steam-powered yarders.

Back then, more than 100 years ago, loggers in the Pacific Northwest lived in remote camps, just as they had years earlier in this region. In fact, most of the loggers who worked in western Washington after 1890 came from here. They were chasing timber in an era when "cut out and get out" was very much in

vogue, a result of the fact that forestry was still in its infancy, and was largely a conversation hosted by early day conservationists who were also founding members of the Society of American Foresters. Their spiritual leader was Teddy Roosevelt, who was a great friend of Gifford Pinchot, who was the first chief of the Forest Service and a driving force behind SAF's founding. The story here is long and lovely, but if I tell it there won't be time for much else, and we have a lot to do over the next hour. Suffice it to say that the "cut out and get out" mantra did not fall from favor until the nation's early lumbermen had their backs to the Pacific Ocean and there was no place else to go to cut virgin timber. Only then did they begin to think seriously about protecting forests from fire and replanting after harvest. And it wasn't until January of 1942 that the first Tree Farm was certified in the appropriately named Gold Room at the old Portland Hotel in Portland, Oregon by the Joint Committee on Forest Conservation, an adjunct committee formed by the old West Coast Lumbermen's Association and the Pacific Northwest Loggers Association.

"This Is My Office!" was PLC's attempt to address the graying of the logging industry that is so apparent all over the country. Very simply, too few young men and women are entering the profession – and it is a profession – because they've been told – sometimes by their discouraged logger fathers and sometimes by their agenda-driven school teachers – that there is no future in logging.

I will readily concede that it is increasingly difficult to make a decent living in the logging game today, but the world is not using less wood, nor will it anytime soon.

What loggers struggle with today is pricing power - the ability to boost harvesting and trucking rates to cover the rising cost of equipment, fuel, insurance, taxes, labor and stumpage. There are many reasons why this is happening but probably none more significant than the growth of REITs and TIMOs run by bean counters who are beholden to cranky shareholders who don't know anything about forestry or logging, and have little or no respect for your culture.

Until recently, you were seen as cannon fodder, but if what I heard at a January conference in Portland, Oregon is a sign of the times, your situation is about to improve. Most of the attendees work for REITs or TIMOs. They are global thinkers and travelers whose job it is to track global trends in the movement of wood fiber: lumber, panel products, paper, chips and biomass. Its interesting work, but it tends to disconnect its practitioners from the stump, which is where the money trail begins. I thus found some joy in their dismaying discovery that your industry is graying, which is to say that there isn't much new blood in it. My joy here is rooted in my knowledge of how badly the REIT and TIMO bean counters have been beating up on you since the Internal Revenue Service approved the creation of Plum Creek Timber Company's REIT in 2001. The private ruling allows REITs to pass most of their profits along to shareholders, which is fine I guess, though I have can't see how you can with a straight face promise a shareholder a 10-year payout on an investment that takes up to 40 years to reach maturity. But never mind. What REITs also did was bring a swift end to the old vertically integrated companies that owned land and manufacturing capacity – both of which were closely aligned with your cultural roots – roots that they generously watered.

Based on what I heard in Portland in January, I'll hazard a guess that there is suddenly an awareness among bean counters of the fact that a standing tree does not take on monetary value until it is laying horizontal on the bunks of a log truck. The deer in headlights look I saw on a lot of faces tells me that not one of these outfits wants to have to explain to its already impatient shareholders that it will be necessary for them to buy \$50 million in logging equipment and hire logging crews who will expect to be paid full benefits: health insurance, retirement and paid vacations. It is not a happy thought if you are a Wall Street investor whose only interest lies in lining your pockets with other people's money, but it is a very happy thought if you are a contract logger who is suddenly seen as a far less expensive alternative to hiring, training and paying company logging crews.

"This Is My Office!" was designed and scripted to appeal to high school kids who might be interested in pursuing careers in logging or forestry if they knew the whole story – not just the part about how loggers are "killing the planet." We hired a fine cinematographer from Sacramento, California who is best known for producing Billy Graham's youth ministry. He didn't know the first thing about forestry when we hired him, so we sent him to the woods to learn.

My recollection is that the only instruction we gave him was avoid interviewing gray-haired old guys as much as possible. We wanted to see and hear the enthusiasm of young men and women who had already made the decision to become loggers or foresters or logging engineers or wildlife biologists, and that is

exactly what he gave us in a brilliantly filmed 12 minute DVD that is available free of charge to anyone who wants it. It was shot in digital code, so the entire production can be chopped into sound bites for Facebook, Twitter or use in paid advertising. If you haven't seen it, dial it up on Google. It puts a hopeful and youthful face of the future on your industry.

I said a few minutes ago that this is my fifth trip to the Great Lakes States. My wife, Julia, and I were here – here being Wisconsin – last June, where we participated in the Intertribal Timber Council's annual National Timber Symposium. We have been working with ITC for about 15 years. It draws its membership from U.S. Indian tribes that own and manage timberland. Last year's symposium was hosted by the Menominee Tribe. I suspect many of you are familiar with their operation, which is one of the more impressive in the country. Not many tribe's own sawmills, but the Menominee's do, and their dimension products are held in high regard in the homebuilding market. I know this because ITC tasked me with the survey portion of a Branding and Marketing study they conducted four years ago. I am on public record as having said I think it is long past time for our government to give the national forest system back to the Indian tribes from whom it was stolen more than 100 years ago. It turns out that Indians are spectacular forest managers whose style is rooted in cultural and spiritual experiences that are publicly appealing, which is a lot more than I can say for the lost souls that are currently leading the U.S. Forest Service over a cliff.

Since 1998, we have published three issues of *Evergreen* magazine focused on forests and forestry in Indian Country, most recently about three weeks ago. It is titled “*Forestry in Indian Country: Solving Federal Forestry’s Rubik’s Cube.*” At 72 pages, it is a beautiful and incisive presentation of problems and progress amid this nation’s tribally-owned forests. The Intertribal Timber Council intends to use it to promote “Anchor Forests,” a management concept they are testing that would allow them to manage larger chunks of federal timberland adjacent to tribal forests. Tribes are rightly concerned about the spread of insects and diseases from poorly managed federal lands into their own well managed forests. Using a variety of thinning techniques the Forest Service refuses to use, they hope to reduce ecological risks – mainly catastrophic wildfire - along the 3,000-mile long border that adjoins federal forests to theirs. For perspective, that is a border two-thirds as long as the U.S. Canadian boundary.

In addition to the three tribal reports we have published since 1998, you will find all of the *Evergreen* issues we’ve published since 1996 in downloadable PDF files on our website. Click on “The Best of Evergreen” on the tool bar and they’ll pop up. Among them are editions that showcase forests and forestry in Minnesota, Indiana, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, the Douglas-fir region, the Eastern Hardwood Region, the Northeast’s hardwood and white pine forests, all of Canada.

One of the most interesting issues we’ve published was “*The Bountiful Harvest,*” a project we took on in 2001 with the blessing and financial support of the Forest

Resources Association, which was then run by my old friend, Richard Lewis, who I suppose some of you know. Now retired, he was easily one of the most competent forest industry executives I had the pleasure of knowing.

“The Bountiful Harvest” brought me to Escanaba – Trip No. 3 in my Great Lakes journey - where in the course of my research I met Jim Carey, who was gracious enough to allow me to ride shotgun with him in his Ponssee harvester. It was the first time I’d ever seen an on-board computer that did its own bookkeeping as it went, recording trees harvested by species, diameter and length. It even checked in with the mill during our lunch break to find out if we needed to alter our cutting pattern after lunch. When I asked why, Jim explained that the mill’s lumber salesmen could order changes based on sudden changes in the market.

Of course, Jim had to push the buttons to make all this happen, but he did with such dexterity that it reminded me that I had earlier watched a young man from a Washington, D.C. ghetto school make John Deere’s harvesting simulator look like child’s play, which it was to him because he had mastered Game Boys much earlier in his young life, and now – after humbling the simulator’s operator – he wanted to know if *he* could get a job in the woods, and how much did it pay! What was not lost on any of us who watched him log on a video screen was that this young man was black and that he was probably growing up in a fatherless home with a mother who desperately wanted to find a way for her son to escape his ghetto surroundings.

Jim, are you out there this morning? Please raise your hand if you are. Jim even fed me a great steak at his home that evening after work. Thanks again for a very memorable day in the woods.

I never cease to be amazed by the levels of skill and professionalism that I find riding around in the cabs of machines that in an hour produce more wood than an entire crew of strong backs could have produced in a day 25 years ago – and you do it now with a margin of safety that has protected thousands from injury or death. It's still a dangerous business, but nothing like it was even 25 years ago.

The mechanization of the logging industry – its automation if you will – remains one of the great untold stories of your pursuit of safer, more efficient, “light on the land” logging systems. Sadly, the public still sees “dumb old loggers” whose knuckles drag on the ground. It is an unjust misperception that is reinforced by the idiocy of cable television shows like “*Ax Men*” and “*Swamp Loggers*.” Both shows portray loggers as unruly, foul-mouthed and poorly-educated hell-raisers who log when and where they damn well feel like it. Nothing could be further than the truth in the high tech world around you, a world also swamped in regulation – some of it good and some of it the product of overzealous state and federal bureaucrats hell-bent on perpetuating their existence at your expense.

Trip No. 2 to the Great Lakes Region came at the invitation of Jerry Rose, who was then Minnesota State Forester. He had seen our *Evergreen* issue featuring forests

and forestry in Indiana, and he wanted something similar in his public relations tool box, so I spent a couple of weeks tramping around the “Land of 10,000 Lakes” and we published *“Minnesota White Pine: Window on the Past, Bridge to the Future,”* a very nice issue that would not have been possible without the help of a Big Fork, Minnesota lumberman named Jack Rajala, who hosted me on his Tree Farm. Perhaps some of you know Jack, or at least know about his passion for bringing back eastern white pine in Minnesota, a passion that led him to write a book about it titled *“Bringing Back the White Pine.”* I still have my autographed copy, and have given away a dozen or so additional copies to people who expressed surprise that the eastern white pine had not gone the way of the passenger pigeon, which it clearly has not.

My great, great grandfather and his neighbor faced down two sections of virgin eastern white pine northeast of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin in the 1880s - a feat that was the subject of my 1997 trek through Wisconsin in pursuit of stories that had been written about their exploits. My father, who was a history buff, had found their stories in a book titled *“Past and Present of Chippewa County,”* published in Chippewa Falls in 1913.

Rufus Johnson, my great, great grandfather, was 30 when he left rural Cortland County in New York for Wisconsin. He and my great, great grandmother, Helen, traveled by train from Binghamton to Eau Claire, then by stage coach to Chippewa Falls, where they hired a man named Jim Woodruff to take them to Arthur Township together with what the Chippewa writer/historian called “a span of

mules,” which is usually defined as a team of 20 mules. I presume my Johnson forbearers used the mules in their land clearing work. Here is what their chronicler wrote in his 1913 essay.

“No road led to the place, but on the Monday morning following his arrival here, Mr. Johnson began to cut down trees preparatory to making the highway that now adjoins the home. He also build a log cabin which is still standing and is now used for a hen house. Subsequently, he erected the frame residence which has remained the family home to present time. Throughout his active business career he devoted his attention to general agricultural pursuits, winning success and gaining recognition as one of the substantial and respected citizens of his community.”

The article also makes mention of the Johnson children: Luona Mae, Ralph and Erwin. Luona Mae was my great grandmother. She married my great grandfather, Charles John Smith, in Cadot in February of 1882. They had five children, including my grandmother, Ivy, and my great aunt Nora, who I will return to in a moment.

“Charlie” Smith and his older brother, Edwin, traveled from New Hampshire to Chippewa Falls in 1872, the same year the Johnson’s arrived from New York. Although they did not know each other, the Smiths and Johnsons bought adjoining sections of heavily timbered land and, soon after their arrival pooled

their resources – the Johnson mules and the Smith oxen – and began the monumental task of clearing 1,280 acres of mostly eastern white pine.

There were sawmills in Chippewa Falls by 1872, but the rail line wasn't extended to Chippewa Falls until 1880, so I have no idea how much pine the Smiths and Johnsons piled and burned or how much was hauled to Chippewa Falls, which was about 15 miles away and its own daunting task. But I can tell you that my great grandfather Smith was a sawyer in Chippewa Falls until 1902, when he moved his family to Harrison, a sawmilling mecca at the south end of Coeur d'Alene Lake, in northern Idaho. He had been hired to be the head sawyer at the old Russell and Pugh Lumber Company, which stood at water's edge amid docks that serviced the lake's steam-powered stern wheelers – back then the only way you could get from Harrison to Coeur d' Alene unless you walked or had a horse. I still have the gold pocket watch that the company gave him when he retired in 1927.

He must have had a keen eye, despite his thick glasses, because back then sawyers made their cuts visually. There were no laser scanners and no one had ever heard of best open face sawing, or overrun for that matter; and the carriages were powered by steam, not electricity. I would have enjoyed watching him work. The best sawyers had a cadence in them. It was like they had practiced with a metronome at their side.

Charlie's brother, Edwin, stayed behind on the family farm near Drywood, a tiny town northeast of Chippewa Falls that today consists of the Drywood Tavern, famous for Willie Nelson's impromptu summer visits. The tavern is just down the road from the Drywood Volunteer Fire Department, which is next door to an old country cemetery. I know this because I have been there, and I'll get to that part of the story in a moment, but what I you to know first is that Edwin Smith was both a Wisconsin farmer who was widely admired for his progressive farming methods, and a well-respected logger who for 18 years drove logs in the big spring drives on the Chippewa and Yellow Rivers. His ox team worked year around with him, hauling logs in the winter and pulling plows in the summer. He farmed for more than before turning the place over to his bachelor son, Edwin.

When I went to Wisconsin in 1997 to ground truth the family tree my father had sketched in pencil on a yellow legal pad, I took with me photocopies of the stories about Edwin Smith and Rufus Johnson. The narratives included range, township and section notations, so with the help of maps I borrowed from the Chippewa County forester, I was able to locate both farms. The Johnson homestead is still a working farm but the Smith tract is again a beautiful stand of timber – mostly hardwood this time – which I photographed and added to my late father's notes. I'd like to go back again someday, mostly I suppose for sentimental reasons. I suspect the old Smith homestead again looks about the same as it looked when the clearing began in 1872. Edwin Smith had told the writer who assembled the 1913 Chippewa narratives that "the place was just as it came from the hands of nature, with merely a trail leading through the woods." It was spring when I was

last there, but there were no trails made by Indians or deer, just a tree canopy that had long since closed.

I left the Smith and Johnson homesteads that day in 1997 determined to find Johnson graves my father had mentioned in his notes. Remember that the Smiths had all gone to Idaho, so there would be no graves around Chippewa Falls. But my long dead father had made my job more difficult by not identifying the cemetery in which my Johnson ancestors were buried, so I was left to knock on the doors of farmhouses. Eventually I found my way to the Drywood Tavern, where the bartender suggested I check the cemetery just down the road, next to the volunteer fire station. I walked the cemetery for more than an hour, checking and rechecking headstones. Nothing – until I looked at my feet and discovered that I was standing at the foot of one of the few headstones in the cemetery that was flush to the grass. It read: Rufus Johnson, Born 1842 Died 1906; Helen Johnson, Born 1842 Died 1907.” Their son, Edwin, who never married, was buried next to them. Suffice it to say, I was humbled by my discovery. There they were, resting in graves less than five miles from where they and the Smiths had cleared two sections of timberland with axes, cross-cut saws, mules and oxen.

I mentioned my grandmother, Ivy, and her younger sister, Nora. Ivy was 16 and Nora 12 when with their parents, Charlie and Luona Smith, they moved to Harrison, Idaho in March of 1902. Ivy married Paul Petersen, a Norwegian millwright who passed through Ellis Island with his sister and some cousins in 1902, the same year the Smiths arrived in Harrison. Through something close to Divine Intervention, my grandparents, both slow movers, met at a community

Fourth of July picnic in Harrison and were married in Spokane, Washington in 1908. By the time my grandfather died of pneumonia in 1928, he had made a small fortune in sawmilling and construction in northern Idaho. My grandmother never remarried.

Aunt Nora, the wild child, did not marry until 1930, two years after my grandfather died, and when she did she married a retired Princeton economics professor who quickly developed the habit of leaving the room whenever I asked her about her exploits in northern Idaho logging camps. In a speech I gave a couple of years ago and an industry gathering in northern Idaho, I said that Aunt Nora would want them to know that she liked good cigars, good whiskey and big time loggers, and she did not much care in which order they came.

Poor old Uncle Willie – his formal name was William Walker Wallace – was as straight-laced as they came. How he ended up with my aunt is one of life's great mysteries, but he could not leave the room fast enough whenever I asked her to tell me the story of how she had narrowly escaped death in the Great 1910 Fire that swept across northern Idaho and western Montana and is believed to have been the largest wildfire in U.S. history. She had hopped a passenger train at Avery, Idaho, only to be waylaid in a tunnel on the Idaho-Montana divide where the train she was riding took refuge. The engineer had figured out that his passengers would be asphyxiated if he did not make a run for it, so he slowly eased his human cargo across a burning trestle, 300 feet above a firestorm. By the

time they reached Haugen, a logging camp about 20 miles east, melting varnish was running down the sides of the all-wood passenger cars.

The rest of this story has no meaning if you do not know that my professorial Uncle Willie took it upon himself to make sure his only grandnephew grew up with a working knowledge of college-level economic theory, the “dreary science.” He thus required that, whenever I visited, I take my seat on a footstool in front of his recliner every morning so that we could trade off reading *and discussing* the meaning of articles he had selected from his two favorite newspapers: *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. All well and good until you realize I was only 9 or 10 years old at the time.

Blessedly, Aunt Nora took pity on me and we soon devised an escape plan. On cue, I would ask her to again tell me the story of her harrowing escape, especially the part about what she thought about when she peered into the firestorm that was licking away at the bridge timbers beneath the train.

“Well, Jimmy,” she’d begin, as though I’d never heard the story before [and this was Uncle Willie’s cue to head for the exit] “there wasn’t time to think about much of anything, but I remember that, looking into the jaws of hell, I damned near pissed my pants!”

By the time Nora's story veered close to bodily function, Uncle Willie was nowhere in sight because he knew that I'd next be asking her [and she was still a showstopper in her sixties] about all those big time loggers she had hobnobbed with in her youth in the hell-roaring logging camps along the St. Joe River. Then we'd sneak out back of my grandmother's apartment house and smoke cigarettes behind a loading dock. We justified this – or at least she did – because I suffered terribly from asthma as a child, and the cigarettes she bought for me were herbal smokes that actually helped quiet my sneezing and coughing. We'd burn through a couple of smokes – she smoked Pall Malls - then stroll innocently into my stately grandmother's apartment, no doubt reeking of cigarette smoke, and she, who never smoked - or drank – would greet us with all knowing eyes, but she never turned us in to my mother, who would have joyfully killed us both.

My presentation this morning will be wide ranging, but if I accomplish nothing else, I intend to lift you up, to thank you for your enormous environmental and economic contributions to our nation's well-being, and help you light the way to a brighter future for your family, your communities and your profession.

I have never given the same speech twice, and this will be no exception. But given the astonishing response I had to a recent essay titled "*And God Made a Logger,*" I decided I'd title this morning's remarks "*And God Made a Logger, Part II.*" Pretty imaginative, wouldn't you say?

I have no idea how many magazines asked me for permission to reprint Part 1, but yours was one of them. So at least some of you read it and know that I was paraphrasing, *“And God Made a Farmer,”* which was the title of a speech by radio legend, Paul Harvey, at a 1978 Future Farmers of America convention. But the title has its roots in a 1940 Letter to the Editor of the Ellensburg, Washington *Daily Record*. Ellensburg is big farming and ranching country, but it didn’t fully develop until after the Roosevelt and Truman administration’s finished their hydroelectric developments on the Columbia River – developments that allowed hundreds of thousands of acres to be irrigated. Democrats don’t like to admit this, but Roosevelt championed hydroelectric development in his first run for the White House, beginning with his famous “Portland Speech,” given on the steps of the Benson Hotel in downtown Portland Sept. 21, 1932. To make matters even worse, Simon Benson was a Norwegian logger who made a fortune, especially after he invented the “Benson Raft” a 700 to 1,000 foot-long torpedo-shaped log raft capable of transporting 4 to 8 million board feet of logs from Portland to San Diego, a distance of 1,100 miles in open seas. Their economic impact of his cheaper than rail transportation system was so great that between 1906 – the year the first raft was launched – and 1922, homebuilding in southern California doubled every four years.

And by the way, there is a Wisconsin connection in this small segue. Benson emigrated from Norway to Black River Falls, Wisconsin in 1868. He was 16 and readily found work in the woods. At 24, he owned a general store in Lynxville, but after it was destroyed by fire he headed west for the tall timber where he made

millions, and gave away millions to philanthropic causes, including a technical high school in Portland that he built out of his own checkbook.

But I digress – and need to get back to our main story. I wrote *“And God Made a Logger”* in about 15 minutes on the night of Feb. 7, 2013 after watching Chrysler Corporation’s stunning Super Bowl rendition of Paul Harvey’s *“And God Made a Farmer.”* Despite the fact that I’ve been writing for money for more than 50 years, I am hard-pressed to tell you where the words came from or how they so quickly arrived at my fingertips. Rather than offer up some foolish explanation, I’d prefer to credit Divine Inspiration - with a capital “D” and a capital “I.”

About all I can add to this little story is that *“God Made a Logger”* went “viral,” meaning that a whole lot of people read it and passed it along to their friends and relatives who passed it along to their friends and relatives

God only knows where these email trees go, but their root structure underscores the incredible power of the Internet. If you are not using the Internet and social media to tell your story, you are missing the greatest communications tool since Johannes Guttenberg invented the printing press in 1439. It laid the foundation for our modern knowledge-based economy, paving the way for the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. But unlike Guttenberg’s marvel, the Internet is free to all comers and moves at the speed of light. Use it to good advantage.

I make no claim to be a biblical scholar, or even a street corner philosopher, but I think that in both *God Made a Farmer* and *God Made a Logger*, we cast the Good Lord in the all-knowing role of a benevolent God addressing humankind's three greatest material needs: food, clothing and shelter. He addresses these needs in a laundry list of things – character traits if you will – that He wants to see in men and women who chose farming or logging as their life's work – or in the case of Rufus Johnson, farming *and* logging.

Let's quickly run through God's laundry list:

He is looking for someone who loves nature and doesn't mind getting up at the crack of dawn; someone with the strength of a mule and the constitution of an ox; an innovator and problem solver who takes pride in a job well done; a guy with first rate mechanical skills who can fix anything, anytime and pretty much anywhere; an artist, not with delicate paint brushes but with 25-ton machines that can't think for themselves; a guy who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty who can visualize a logging job from start to finish before he cuts his first tree; a man of faith who isn't easily discouraged when his luck is running low; a man with a generous heart who never hesitates to help those less fortunate than himself; a strong man who cherishes his wife and children, and never tires of his role as husband and father, no matter how tired he is when he walks through the back door at the end of a long day in the woods.

And finally, God expects his loggers to encourage their sons and daughters to follow in their footsteps because good loggers are hard to find and even harder to

keep. Witness the recession's impact on your own ranks. Something like half of Wisconsin's loggers quit, retired, went broke or took another job. It's the same all over the country. In Montana, at least one-third of the state's loggers packed their equipment and went to North Dakota. Now they work in that state's burgeoning oil and gas industry and are making more money than they've ever made in their lives. Their migration has had a sobering impact on timberland owners, who can ill-afford the loss of infrastructure and know-how necessary to harvest and process their logs. Something has to give here. What can't go on is the propensity among landowners to balance their books on the backs of loggers. If you can't make enough money to maintain and replace your aging equipment, pay your fuel bill or pay your employees a respectable wage – including medical and retirement benefits – something is wrong, and it probably isn't on your end. The deer in headlights look I saw at the REIT/TIMO conference in Portland last January tells me that a great awakening has begun. Where it will lead is anyone's guess, but were I you I would use this moment in time to have a heart to heart conversation with the landowners that are your customers. We thus arrive at *"And God Made a Logger, Part II,"* the "how to" problem solving phase. This is where we check the boxes on God's laundry list.

I am reminded of an observation shared with me several years ago by a lumberman friend in Oregon. I was working on a book that chronicles the post-World War II history of the West's lumber industry, and I had asked him for his thoughts on the greatest strengths and weaknesses of those who fearlessly

waded into sawmilling after the war without knowing the first thing about it – and often without having a dime to their name.

“Oh, that’s easy,” he said. “We were all independent as hell.”

And what about their greatest weakness, I asked.

“Well,” he growled, “I guess it would be that we’re too damned independent!”

I think the same thing can be said about all of you. On the plus side, you are independent as hell, meaning that you aren’t afraid to make tough decisions about your business. And on the minus side, you are too damned independent, meaning that you can be hard to get along with in meetings with others and you have a helluva time checking your guns and knives at the door.

I want to invite you to look around this room. Yes, these are your competitors, but you share common bonds and a common heritage that you should never allow anyone to break apart. How many trumpets did Joshua’s army train on Jericho’s walls? 1,000? 10,000? We don’t know – but I think the lesson here is that if you expect to accomplish the impossible, you best surround yourself with people who also believe in the impossible. Thereafter, it’s a good idea if you sound your trumpets in unison, again and again and again.

Like lumbermen, you have a terrible time sounding your trumpets in unison. About half the time, you can’t even find your trumpet! What’s up with that? Why are you not constantly burnishing the social license to practice forestry the public has generously granted you? The public can understand anything but silence, and

if you don't fill the void silence creates your enemies will. Believe me when I tell you that you have enemies who will do or say anything to get you run out of woods, especially out of this region's federal and state forests.

Only two things stand between you and the fate that has befallen so many lumbermen and loggers in the West whose trumpets fell silent. Those two things are the united voice this association offers you and the voices of state and federal elected officials who are courageous enough to stand with you. Your voice provides the political cover they need to withstand withering attacks from your enemies. This isn't rocket science. It's simply the cost of doing business, and if you don't pay it, you'll pay dearly down the road when the public decides to jerk your social license – the operative word here being “when,” not “if.” In Oregon and Washington, 90 percent of the federal timber supply vanished after the northern spotted owl was listed as a threatened species.

I will go to my grave arguing that politics got in the way of a more favorable outcome because the region's logging and lumber industries lost their voices after the 1980 recession. They failed to defend their social license; forgot that doing so is a *daily* cost of doing business. The result is an economic disaster from which our region's rural timber communities may never recover.

I'd like a show of hands:

How many of you have ever talked to the press?

How many of you have ever hosted a woods tour?

How many have ever written a letter to their Representative or Senator?

How many have ever spoken in a school classroom?

How many of you have a website?

How many have a Facebook page?

If your hand isn't up, you aren't doing your part to defend the social license everyone in this room shares. Letting the other guy cover for you isn't good enough. And the press already knows Henry and what he thinks, but they don't know you or your story. You have great resources available to you through this association, but no organization – this one included – is stronger than its weakest link. Don't be the weak link. Find something that you can do and do well for this association and make getting it done your responsibility.

Summit comments and your action plan

Hurdles I see: a crumbling USFS that is culturally light years removed from the Forest Service that did such a magnificent job of managing our national forests after World War II; also the Equal Access to Justice Act and a regulatory process that is wired for failure; ESA and charismatic mega-fauna; and most of all, a public that wants complete and accurate information and isn't get it. You might heroes in Escanaba, International Falls and Tilmany, but you don't have many friends in Madison, Minneapolis or Ann Arbor, where a group calling itself the Young Evangelicals for Climate Change held a day of Prayer and Action last week on the Calvin College campus.

“We are called to love God, to love our neighbors and to be good stewards of God’s creation,” said Rev. John Bolt, a spokesman for the group, who also said the group’s actions were “a sacred calling.”

What chance do you think there is that this group would see the work you do in the woods as good stewardship? I’ll hazard a guess that it’s somewhere between slim and none – and Slim probably just bought a bus ticket to Escanaba. But I think you should tell the Rev. Dr. Bolt what he thinks. Call him out. Take him for a tour. Better yet, take the whole Evangelical Christian group to the woods. The research on the relationship between forestry and carbon storage is very, very clear. So too are the energy and air quality equivalencies for major structural building materials including wood, steel, concrete and plastic. Wood wins hands down in more than 40 years of government funded research in the U.S. and Canada. This is a slam dunk for our side – as we first reported in *Evergreen* nearly 25 years ago.

We have touted the many environmental advantages of wood in at least 9 editions of *Evergreen*, including 7 editions of “*The Truth about America’s Forests*,” our statistical, pictorial review of growth, harvest and mortality in U.S. Forests. Since we started publishing “*The Truth*” in 1989, we have given away more than one million copies across these United States. We hope to do our 9th edition soon, but first we need to raise the money to do it. We’d also be thrilled to tell the Great Lakes story on *Evergreen* pages. It is the only forested region in the United States that we have not featured in one of our signature editions... That seems a

shame given the history and modern-day economic and environmental significance of the Great Lakes forestry and wood products manufacturing.

Aaron Neiman emailed me a copy of the summary notes from last year's Wisconsin Forest Economic Summit. I was surprised to learn that Wisconsin leads the nation in dollar volume of timber products sold. I have no doubt that Gov. Scott Walker is a driving force behind this summit, which has me wondering if similar events occur in Minnesota or Michigan, or if it might be possible to put together an annual Great Lakes Forest Economic Summit. In the category of action items needing attention, this is a pretty good one, which brings me to the action items list from last year's summit. After reading through it – twice – it occurred to me that it could have been assembled in any state in the United States where the forest products industry has a presence. Let's touch on your action laundry list for a moment:

Public misperceptions about forests and forestry do need to be corrected, just as you suggest, but it won't happen until our industry accepts the fact that forestry education is a cost of doing business. I've jawboned this for 30 years to no avail. Lumbermen detest what they call "soft dollar" programs, these being programs whose results are too elusive to make accurate measurement possible. Such is the case with what I call "forestry education," which is the heavy lifting we do.

In case you're wondering, "hard dollars" are the dollars lumbermen invest in their mills. They can measure the result in terms of increased productivity or increased production or both. And that's great, but I find it astonishing that my lumberman friends think nothing of spending \$50 million on a new sawmill – but not one damned dime to protect their timber supply.

Student misperceptions also need to be corrected but, again, it won't happen so long as the guys who can write checks refuse to accept the fact that forestry education is a cost of doing business that must be paid annually.

Establishing technical programs would also be helpful. So too would a return to teaching simple dirt forestry at the college level. I don't know about Minnesota, Wisconsin or Michigan, but way too many old line forestry schools have driven off an intellectual cliff in their pursuit of politically correct agendas focused on phony environmental issues that do forestry no favors. I no longer recognize the once widely regarded forestry program at the University of Washington. Oregon State University's forestry program is also drifting into dangerous intellectual territory, despite the fact that it is a land grant college. The University of Georgia has one of the few forestry programs in the country that has stayed the course.

Speaking of research, you have in Wisconsin the finest wood research program on earth: the U.S. Forest Service's Madison laboratory. We featured the lab in "*Giant Minds, Giant Ideas*," a November 2003 *Evergreen* edition. You can view it in PDF

form on our website. When the issue flashed into my mind the other night, it also occurred to me that I have not been to your region 5 times – as I said earlier this morning – I have been here 8 times!

The point I want to make here is that you could do yourselves a very good turn by developing some activities that give students – and loggers – the opportunity to tour the Madison lab. You can easily spend an entire day there. We spent two days on the two tours that I developed – and still didn't see it all.

I see that you also think you need for timber consultants in Wisconsin, and I presume Minnesota and Michigan. Market forces will fill some of this void, but I presume that part of the problem here rests in the widely held misperception that forest products manufacturing – and by inference forestry itself - are dying industries. Environmental activists have been spreading this rumor for 25 years. They have inflicted heavy damage in classrooms all across the country, but the world is not using less wood. It simply gets imported from somewhere else, just like most of the other raw materials we consume in our manufacturing processes. If you know my old friend, Jim Bowyer, who taught at the University of Minnesota for many years, you know that he launched a one-professor war against ignorance among his first year forestry students. Jim and I became good friends because of our shared commitment to doing something to improve student perceptions of forestry and the environment. *Evergreen* because one of his favorite classroom handouts. He even gave tests based on material he assigned from *Evergreen*.

Increasing the federal timber supply is also on your action list. It's been on mine for 25 years, and I regret to say we have made zero progress. There are many reasons, no least – again – the industry's refusal to view forestry education as a cost of doing business. The truth is that forestry's enemies are running circles around forestry's friends. They are better organized, better funded and politically well-connected among Democrats who, with rare exception, have embraced the entire anti-forestry agenda. This is ironic given the well-documented fact that the Roosevelt and Truman administrations were the architects of the post-World War II federal timber sale programs. I know this history very well because three of those architects – Dan Goldy, Leonard Netzorg and Joe McCracken – were personal friends. I devote several chapters to them in a book I finished last year. The short story here is that it was the Roosevelt Administration that saw in the West's great national forests the economic engine that the nation needed to make the transition from wartime to peacetime footing.

You may not know this, but most of the timber consumed in the Second World War – some 60 billion board feet - came from private lands that were deliberately overcut, with President Roosevelt's reluctant approval, because the country did not have time to build roads into national forests that were still largely inaccessible when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

A few modern-day Democrats know this story, but most don't. For reasons of their own, they continue to buy into activist misrepresentations of the history of forestry and conservation itself, including the roles played by Teddy Roosevelt

and his great friend, Gifford Pinchot. I'll come back to Roosevelt in a moment, but first I want to touch on the Forest Service, which was Pinchot's great contribution to conservation as it was defined in his era.

I don't think Gifford Pinchot would recognize today's Forest Service. I barely recognize it myself. The cultural change that has swept over the agency over the last two decades is astonishing. The old ties to rural timber communities have been very purposefully severed by the agency's leadership and a regulator process that makes it virtually impossible to manage timber for any objective. Witness the dismaying loss of late succession reserves in catastrophic wildfires in the West. More than 100 million acres of federal forestland in the western United States are now in Condition Class 3, an ecological delineation that means it is ready to burn. Coincidentally, most of these acres lie in no-harvest old growth reserves that were set aside as habitat for federally threatened species.

I won't bore you with the details here, because I know you have a better relationship with the Forest Service here than we have in the West, where nothing happens without the approval of politically powerful anti-forestry groups that continue to pursue a "sue and settle" strategy with federal land management agencies. But I do think it necessary that I remind you that most federal forest management decisions – even those that seem miniscule – are made at the Washington level – and that the Washington office is within easy walking distance of the national offices of every anti-forestry group in the country. Thus, your hope for persuading Forest Service officials in this region to boost harvest levels hinges

on convincing the Washington office that such a move would improve forest health and habitat quality. Don't waste your breath talking about how boosting harvest levels might stimulate a resurgence in secondary wood products manufacturing. No one in the Washington office cares.

Out West, collaboration is all the rage with the Forest Service because they perceive it to be a way to bring warring factions together in the same room in hopes of getting them to agree on common ground approaches to timber sale planning. I am aware of five successes – one in Idaho, one in Montana and one in eastern Washington and two in Arizona – but elsewhere the process has failed miserably, and where failure has occurred it is because the Equal Access to Justice Act allows activist hardliners to “sue and settle” with agencies that attempt to advance plans that don't meet with their approval. So, while collaboration has worked in some notable instances that should not be minimized, it is not a legally binding process and is thus defenseless against serial litigators. Congress could fix this oversight in a heartbeat, but won't for fear of offending environmental activists who shower campaign dollars on their friends in Congress.

Your 2013 action list also expresses a hope that you can find a way to stimulate private timberland owner interest in forest management. You have something like 352,000 small landowners up here. Is that just in Wisconsin or does that number apply to the entire three-state region? Either way, it appears that non-industrial private landowners own 80-90 percent of the forestland that is available to you. It would be interesting to know how many of these are absentee landowners who are the heirs of grandparents and great grandparents who were homesteaders. In

1997, then Indiana State Forester, Burney Fischer, asked us if we'd help him shed some light on what he considered the greatest threat to Indiana's forests - and it wasn't logging. It was the conversion of thousands of acres of productive forest to subdivisions filled with McMansions. Typically, these subdivisions were built on land that had been in the same family for several generations. The heirs had no idea what they owned or how valuable it was, so they were easy prey for land developers. I'd be very surprised if the same thing isn't happening in the Great Lakes States – all the more reason to get busy with a forest landowner outreach program that targets these landowners. In Indiana, several lumber companies offer free forest management services to private landowners who agree to sell them the timber at some unknown point in time. I talked to several landowners in the course of our Indiana investigation who were astonished to learn how much their timber was worth, and how much value a well-planned stand management program could add.

I see you are also interested in increasing exports to China. Who isn't? It's the age old story about wishing you could sell just one pair of shoes to every Chinaman! I can tell you this: log exports to China saved our region's logging and trucking sectors after the housing industry collapsed. The log export yards at Longview, Washington, which is less than an hour from where we live, hummed all through the recession. And you can always tell which logs are headed for China. They are the ones that have been debarked. The Chinese like to make big speeches about how debarking prevents insects and diseases from U.S. and Canadian forests from infecting Chinese forests. This is nonsense. The Chinese are very astute traders.

They can probably tell you to the log how many additional logs can be loaded on to a ship if the logs are debarked first.

I note your interest in recruiting more value added wood product manufacturing. The biggest impediment to this isn't log supply. It's the enormous cost of starting a new business today. Simply siting a new high speed sawmill today costs about \$50 million – and that's a mill sited on an old mill site. Forget trying to site one in a green field. Of course, there are a lot of value added widgets that you can build in your garage or a small space in an industrial part, but even so, the soaring cost of regulation is an enormous impediment to growth everywhere you go today. Most states offer tax incentives, which is laudable, but why should taxpayers have to foot the bill for runaway bureaucracies? A better approach would have states assume take control of the permitting process, then streamline the regulations. It should not take nearly as long or cost nearly as much money to start a new business as it does today. There is a lot more than I could say about this, but I am not running for public office here or anywhere else.

I commend you for the time you've spent putting together a laundry list of action items, and I wish you luck checking them off in a timely manner. But at the risk of sounding like a broken record, I want to remind you that forestry education is a day in and day out cost of doing business. There are no silver bullets and there are no Hail Mary passes – and anyone who tells you otherwise does not know what the hell they are talking about.

I have spent my entire professional life – more than 50 years – communicating with the public in newspapers and magazines, on radio and television stations and in advertising and public relations. I can boil my entire career down to two simple but involute lessons: First, always tell the truth, and second, nature abhors a vacuum. If you don't fill that vacuum with your truth, someone else will fill it with their truth – and you probably won't like what they have to say about you.

My time with you is running short. I'd like to close out with a few thought provoking quotations that seem apropos this beautiful spring morning on the Upper Peninsula. I've collected these over my *Evergreen* years. You'll find many more on our website. Simply "click" on "Quotable Quotes" on the tool bar.

First, these words from Teddy Roosevelt, our nation's "conservation president," spoken at a Society of American Foresters meeting at Gifford Pinchot's Washington, D.C. home in March 1903:

"And now, first and foremost, you can never afford to forget for a moment what is the object of our forest policy. That object is not to preserve the forests because they are beautiful, though that is good in itself; nor because they are refuges for the wild creatures of the wilderness, though that, too, is good in itself; but the primary object of our forest policy, as of the land policy of the United States, is the making of prosperous homes. It is part of the traditional policy of home making in our country.

Every other consideration comes as secondary...You yourselves have got to keep this practical object before your minds; to remember that a forest which contributes nothing to the wealth, progress or safety of the country is of no interest to the Government, and should be of little interest to the forester. Your attention must be directed to the preservation of the forests,

not as an end in itself, but as the means of preserving and increasing the prosperity of the nation.”

Now this from my friend, Alan Houston, an affable PhD wildlife biologist and man of God from middle Tennessee:

“When we leave forests to nature, as so many people today seem to want to do, we get whatever nature serves up, which can be pretty devastating at times, but with forestry, we have options, and a degree of predictability not found in nature.”

And this from my late friend Leonard Netzorg, who began his life as a union organizer in lunchrooms at a Ford assembly plant in Dearborn, Michigan in 1935, and went on to become the greatest lawyer the timber industry ever had:

“Society has demonstrated an unwillingness to vest in scientists the final authority to make the decisions that affect the rest of us. We insist that our non-scientific views be heard, that we whose lives are affected have the right to participate in the decision making and policy processes that flow from today’s scientific facts. The timber industry is going to have to share these forests with others that have different values and want different things from the forest. Frankly, I welcome it, and I rue the day when polarized factions no longer tear away at the fabric of our society. The American Revolution is still going on. We are still changing, still learning. If some of us were not constantly tearing away at what others of us think we know, we would all still think the earth is flat. What is science today is witchcraft tomorrow.”

Thank you, and good day.