

# EVERGREEN

Winter 2016-2017



**IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES**

# IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: HOPE, GROWTH and OPPORTUNITY

**T**he first edition of *Evergreen* Magazine - published 30 years ago this month - looked very much like this report, right down to the wrap-around photo montage on the cover.

All but one of those we featured in our first report – a handpicked collection of loggers, log truck drivers, foresters and timber buyers from Medford, Grants Pass, Rogue River and Brookings, Oregon – are gone now, as are the southern Oregon lumber companies for which they worked.

When we shared a copy of our 1987 edition with an Idaho colleague last summer, he said he thought we ought to replicate the report in an *Evergreen* edition that showcased those who work in the trenches in Idaho's timber industry. This report is that replica.

*Idaho's Forest Families* consists of ten profiles completed over the last six months of 2016. The profiles are posted in their entirety on our website [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com). Herein are excerpts from those profiles. They comprise a spirited sampling of the 8,000 men and women who work in Idaho's forest products industry:

- ▶ **Danny Schwartz** rises before one o'clock in the morning, hauls logs all day, and joyfully admits he's seen "thousands of sunrises."
- ▶ **Erin Bradetich** is the Idaho Forest Group's only female forester, but certainly not the last. Her father is also a forester, and her grandfather logged with horses.
- ▶ **Jeff Adams**, a Grangeville logging contractor, is the only logger in Idaho to have ever been named Idaho High School Association Division 2A Football Coach of the Year.
- ▶ **Jesse Short** began his mill manager career sweeping floors and cleaning bathrooms. His first boss hired him mainly to see if could cut the mustard.
- ▶ **Mac Lefebvre** wanted to live in Idaho so badly that he crossed his fingers and took a forester's job with a company that had just shut down its sawmill.
- ▶ **Jeff Berend**, another forester, enjoys his woods job so much that he can hardly believe he gets paid for the work he does.
- ▶ The four **Mason brothers**, a second-generation logging family, simply picked up where their father left off. None of them ever considered doing anything else.
- ▶ University of Idaho graduate forester, **Tera King**, was so enamored by the CSI television series that she thought she wanted to be a forensic pathologist until the day came when she heard her own voice say, "These are not my people."
- ▶ Mill manager, **Mike Henley**, started out on a cleanup crew, but kept raising his hand whenever a new job opportunity came up.

- ▶ Though he long ago turned his log hauling company over to his son, **Jim**, 85-year-old **Wes Olson** still goes to work every day because there isn't anything he'd rather do.

These profiles speak to a bright future for Idaho's forest products industry. So too does our cover interview with Idaho Governor, Butch Otter, who is currently on the Trump Administration's short list for Secretary of Agriculture. Governor Otter is playing a pivotal role in the relationship between the State of Idaho and the U.S. Forest Service – a relationship now anchored in a congressionally mandated cooperative agreement called the "Good Neighbor Authority."

Many who work in Idaho's timber industry believe most Idahoans don't care about them. We disagree, though we agree that most of our Idaho neighbors are unaware of the technological changes that have swept over the forestry, logging and sawmilling sectors over the past 30 years.

What was once a young man's game filled with danger and uncertainty, is now a rock-solid business anchored by professionals - men and women – who bring a dazzling and diverse array of skill sets to their work. Clearly, the future looks very bright for those who will follow in their footsteps.

We hope you enjoy this special report as much as we enjoyed preparing it. Be sure to read the complete profiles on our website: [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

Jim Petersen, Founder and President, the Evergreen Foundation

# GOVERNOR BUTCH OTTER: IDAHO'S FORESTS... LEADING THE WAY FOR CHANGE

*"Whether you voted for Trump on someone else, the outcome underscores a deep-seated desire for immediate change. But I don't think the media's characterization of Trump is going to turn out to be very accurate. This is a guy with a long history of asking many questions all up and down the line before he decides what to do. If you saw his CBS Sixty Minutes interview, you learned that he even asks cement workers on his construction projects for their opinions. That's not a "damn the torpedoes" approach. That's collaboration on the part of a man who values the opinions of those who work around him."*

Idaho Governor, Clement Leroy "Butch" Otter  
*Evergreen* interview, November 5, 2016

## Idaho's Governor Otter believes the Trump victory was a big win for Idaho's stakeholder collaboratives

C.L. "Butch" Otter is midway through his third term as Idaho's Governor. He also served as Idaho's First District Congressman from 2001 to 2006. Before he made his congressional run, he served as Idaho's Lt. Governor for four terms, a record in state history. Even earlier, he was Canyon County representative in the Idaho legislature from 1973 to 1976.

Otter worked for Idaho food processing giant, J.R. Simplot, for 30 years, and held a seat on the company's board of directors at the time of his retirement in 1993. Over his years with the company, he was President of both Simplot's cattle division and its international division.

In this exclusive and quite timely *Evergreen* interview, Governor Otter offers his thoughts on the significance of President Trump's improbable victory. The governor and his wife, Lori, served as honorary chairpersons for Trump's Idaho campaign. Mr. Trump swept Idaho with 59 percent of the presidential vote. Governor Otter was on the Trump Administration's list of candidates to replace outgoing Ag. Secretary, Tom Vilsack, but the nomination went to former Georgia Governor, Sonny Perdue, a Democrat turned Republican with deep roots in the rural South. As Secretary of Agriculture, Perdue will be responsible for the U.S. Forest Service's 34,000 employees and the country's 193 million acre national forest system.

**EVERGREEN:** Given President Donald Trump's astonishing come from behind win, how might his presidency impact federal forest management policies in the West?

**GOV. OTTER:** That's the \$64 question, isn't it? I get bits and pieces, and that's about all. But I take him at his word



The governor of Idaho, C.L. Otter. On the list to possibly becoming our new Secretary of Agriculture.

when he says he really wants to shake up the Washington establishment, and that includes the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, as well as the EPA. We all know Mr. Trump mostly by reputation, and his reputation is that of a businessman who gives you lots of responsibility and expects you to perform. If you don't live up to his expectations, you're out. On reputation alone, I think we can expect major directional changes in the way the federal government interacts with the states, especially as it concerns natural resource management.

**EVERGREEN:** Our own thinking is that his election will provide a huge boost to stakeholder collaboration. Do you agree?

**GOV. OTTER:** I expect a huge boost. Idahoans have a long history of collaborative success. We relied on the folks who were part of that history in

quickly selecting the 1.8 million acres in forest restoration projects that we all selected under the authority of the 2014 Farm Bill. Under the Trump Administration, I expect many more such opportunities will be headed our way.

**EVERGREEN:** Collaboration seems to be working in Idaho, but progress is slow and the physical scale of work is much too small given the urgency of the state's forest health/wildfire crisis. From your perspective, what might be done to increase the pace and scale of restoration work?

**GOV. OTTER:** I understand the frustration our collaborators are experiencing, but I think help in on the way now. We all need to remember that Idaho was out of the chute earlier than many western states in terms of establishing our bona fides in Washington, D.C. We collaborated on our version of the Federal Roadless Rule, which was accepted by the Government. It was the same with wolves. Clearly, our ability to agree amongst ourselves on what was needed got everyone's attention. We've established our credibility. It should be quickly recognized and embraced by the incoming Trump Administration.

**EVERGREEN:** It has been a year since we published "*The Ticking Time Bomb in Idaho's National Forests*." In our report, we said that mortality in Idaho's national forests far outstrips growth. Has anything changed over the last year that gives reason for hope that this trend can be reversed?

**GOV. OTTER:** First, let me congratulate you on that report. I can't tell you how many copies I've passed out over the

last year, but it is a lot. I hand them out at every meeting of the Western Governors Association, and I'll do it again next month when we meet in San Diego. It's a very powerful document.

**EVERGREEN:** Well, thank you governor. We have been on the front lines in the West's forest health debate for about 30 years. But we surely aren't the first people to draw attention to the environmental crisis that has befallen Idaho's national forests?

**GOV. OTTER:** I invited Marc Brinkmeyer [Idaho Forest Group board chairman] to describe the forest crisis you reference at a meeting of the Western Governors Association in Las Vegas a year or so ago. It was a very sobering presentation. Every landowner in every western state is at risk as a result of the wildfire crisis that is sweeping through our national forests.

**EVERGREEN:** We're fascinated by the role WGA is playing in terms of raising congressional awareness of the problem and its array of solutions.

**GOV. OTTER:** The western governors are serious about getting this fixed as quickly as possible. The fact that we're a bi-partisan organization gives us great strength and credibility inside the Beltway.

**EVERGREEN:** Good Neighbor Authority provides an opportunity for state forestry departments to help the U.S. Forest Service get more on the ground work done faster. What has been the Forest Service reaction, and how much help can Idaho's Department of Lands realistically provide given its own workload?

**GOV. OTTER:** Overall, the Forest Service reaction has been very positive. They are clearly feeling the same pressures the rest of us feel. I went to our legislature for a \$2 million supplemental budget so that we could be certain that our Department of Lands was in a position to provide the Forest Service with real on-the-ground assistance in preparing, implementing and executing forest restoration projects. What is sometimes forgotten is that the full 2014 Farm Bill potential in Idaho is about 6.3 million acres, so we're just getting started.

**EVERGREEN:** It has long been our view that some in leadership roles in the USFS are playing lip service to collaboration, which they view as an unwell-

come grass roots invasion of their turf. Do you agree or disagree with our perspective – and if you agree, how might a new FS chief end the foot-dragging that many stakeholder collaboratives are experiencing?

**GOV. OTTER:** Again, I expect real change in the Trump Administration. Performance is going to be measured in some tangible and easily understood manner that ties back to the land. My overall impression is that younger folks in the Forest Service are very enthusiastic about getting more work done on the ground, and I look for the incoming Administration to do everything possible to support that enthusiasm.

**EVERGREEN:** What would be your preference for a tangible means of measuring performance on the ground?

**GOV. OTTER:** I'm not a forester, but there seems to be a lot of interest in measuring acres treated annual – the treatment means being thinning following by prescribed fire to eliminate logging slash and years of biomass accumulation.

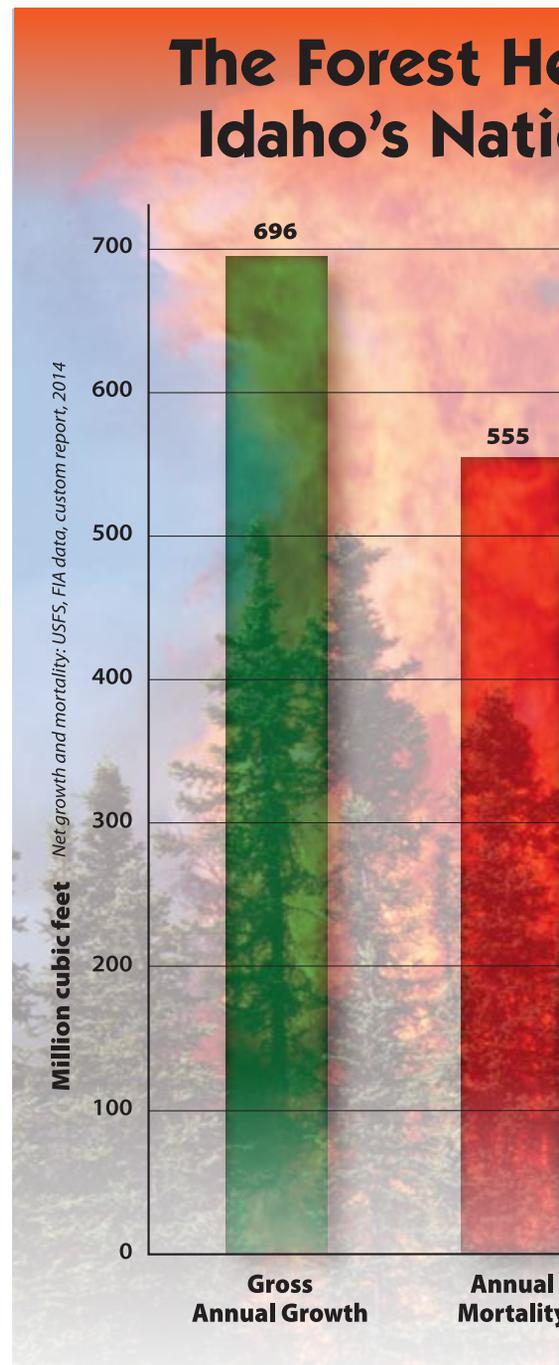
**EVERGREEN:** The President didn't say much about federal lands issues during his campaign, but one thing he did say was that he wasn't much interested in transferring national forest ownership to the states. Is that your understanding as well?

**GOV. OTTER:** That's my impression, too. I think he's too much of a nationalist to even want to consider the idea of handing title to federal lands to the respective states. But I think he will address the social, economic and environmental challenges facing states that hold great amounts of federal land that haven't been managed very well in recent years.

**EVERGREEN:** Might a more motivated Congress finally fix the fire borrowing mess in the early weeks of the Trump Administration?

**GOV. OTTER:** I hope so. Taking money from forest restoration budgets to fight forest fires is a backwards approach. We don't penalize other federal agencies that have responsibility for dealing with floods, hurricanes or earthquakes.

**EVERGREEN:** Our own view is that FEMA needs to handle big wildfires, not the Forest Service, which seems to



All Idahoans, including Gov. Butch Otter, are rightly concerned about the insect and disease infestations that are sweeping through the state's national forests. This bar graph quantifies the crisis using annual growth and mortality data provided by the U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis [FIA] group.

The green bar illustrates annual growth in millions of cubic feet.

The red bar illustrates annual mortality in millions of cubic feet. 80 percent of annual gross growth dies annually.

The orange bar illustrates net growth, or what survives annually – 141 million cubic feet. This amount is calculated by subtracting annual mortality [555 million cubic feet] from annual gross growth [696 million cubic feet]. Net annual growth will eventually fall to "0" and then enter the minus column. This is the challenge facing Idahoans and their forest families.

The blue bar illustrates annual harvest, the amount of timber loggers annually remove from Idaho's

# Health Crisis in National Forests



national forests. About 24 million cubic feet are removed. This equates to 3.45 percent of gross growth, 4.3 percent of annual mortality and 17 percent of net annual growth in Idaho's national forests. Converting cubic feet to board feet

🌿 696 million cubic feet [the green bar] equals 3.028 billion board feet, enough timber to construct 151,400 three-bedroom homes

🔥 555 million cubic feet [the red bar] equals 2.414 billion board feet, a volume equivalent to a solid block of wood the dimensions of a football field stretching 1.82 miles into the sky every year, year after year

🌲 141 million cubic feet [the orange bar] equals 613.4 million board feet

Forest economists estimate that the number of woods workers in Idaho could be tripled [from 8,000 to 24,000] without exceeding net growth on national forest lands in Idaho that are legally accessible to management – meaning lands that are already roaded and not reserved in no-harvest areas.

have turned fighting wildfires into its own cottage industry. Do you agree?

**GOV. OTTER:** Yes, I do. The Forest Service's sole focus should be on forest restoration because it is key to protecting watersheds, fish and wildlife habitat and the wealth of recreation opportunity that our national forests provide.

**EVERGREEN:** Do we overplay our hand if we buy into the idea that Trump's win came in large measure as a result of a deep-seated anger among the nation's rural voters over the way the federal government has treated them over the last 25 years?

**GOV. OTTER:** The flood of red that colors the election night map tells its own sad story about the way the federal government has treated rural counties over the last 20 or so years. The dam finally burst. But what must not be forgotten is that Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by about 130,000 votes. But she lost because the Electoral College vote favored Trump by a substantial margin. Credit our Founding Fathers for seeing the need to protect rural areas from the undue influence of our more populous cities.

**EVERGREEN:** Your thoughts on how the incoming Administration might calm the nerves of anxious conservationists who fear a return to the James Watt era?

**GOV. OTTER:** President Trump gave a very conciliatory victory speech on election night. I think this is a guy who wants to bring as many people of varying points of view as possible into his big tent. He is going to be a collaborator on a very large scale, which is another reason why I think our all-volunteer stakeholder collaboratives are going to get lots of help over the next four years.

**EVERGREEN:** We hope so, but many see a kind of "damn the torpedoes" mentality that they don't trust.

**GOV. OTTER:** Whether you voted for Trump on someone else, the outcome underscores a deep-seated desire for immediate change. But I don't think the media's characterization of Trump is going to turn out to be very accurate. This is a guy with a long history of asking many questions all up and down the line before he decides what to do. If you saw his CBS Sixty Minutes interview, you learned that he even asks cement workers on

his construction projects for their opinions. That's not a "damn the torpedoes" approach. That's collaboration on the part of a man who values the opinions of those who work around him.

**EVERGREEN:** If asked by the incoming Administration, what would you advise concerning the need for Congress to insulate collaborative stakeholder groups from serial litigators? Might binding arbitration or balance of harms legislation be the route to go?

**GOV. OTTER:** We have to fix the Equal Access to Justice Act. Litigation has become little more than a fund-raiser to serial litigators who use the Act to tap the federal treasury. Inserting "loser pays" language into the Act would eliminate a lot of expensive nuisance lawsuits without undermining the intent of the Act. Equal access should be equal, but so long as litigators can blow up the good work of stakeholder collaboration, it won't be equal. That's got to change.

**EVERGREEN:** What role do you expect the western governor's will play in the selection of key federal resource managers, to include the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, the Under Secretaries and Chief of the Forest Service?

**GOV. OTTER:** I hope a big one. We are state-level fiduciaries on the front lines in western states that hold millions of acres of federal forest and rangeland that is in environmental crisis. Something has to change very quickly. Last time I checked, somewhere between 80 and 90 million acres of federal forest land in the West were on the brink of ecological collapse. The lands are vital to our entire nation's social, economic and environmental health. We have a lot of work to do and not much time left in which to get it done.

**EVERGREEN:** Should the collaboratives in Idaho, Montana, eastern Washington and elsewhere have a say in who gets picked?

**GOV. OTTER:** I don't see why not. They've certainly earned their stripes over the last bunch of years, and they certainly know what's needed in terms of ground-level performance and results.

## Blessings luck, and a little bit of Mayberry

# IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: DANNY SCHWARTZ



*"It was downright scary in the beginning," Schwartz says of what it was like the first time he navigated 80,000 pounds up and down winding, one-lane roads with turnouts that allowed loaded and empty trucks to pass within a whisker of one another. "You're in mud or slush or snow or dust all of the time. You keep an open mind and learn everything you can from more experienced drivers, or you won't make it."*

Danny Schwartz  
One-truck log hauler  
Grangeville, Idaho

Danny Schwartz and his wife, Dixie Rae, standing next to their Peterbilt.

**T**he first time Danny Schwartz took the wheel of a logging truck 28 years ago, the ride nearly scared him to death.

And now?

"It's just a blast," he says of his 14-hour days, which begin when his alarm goes off at 12:55 a.m. "The view from my office would make a great magazine cover."

The affable Schwartz's love affair with big trucks began when he was still a boy. Loaded log trucks passed his house on Smith Creek Road in Syringa, Idaho dozens of times every day. At 14, he wrangled his first job at Gus Denton's cedar mill.

"I wanted a motorcycle," Schwartz recalls. "But I knew better than to ask my dad for the money, so I talked Gus into hiring me."

Denton must have had a keen eye for talent – or at least enthusiasm – because he allowed young Schwartz to drive every piece of big equipment in his mill yard: log loaders, lumber fork lifts and dump trucks. The boy was smitten, but the road ahead would be long and challenging.

"For the first three years I drove after high school, I wasn't sure I was cut from the right cloth," Schwartz admits. "Driving log trucks can be a little scary at times. You never graduate from this college because there is always something new to learn, like how a loaded truck handles on different soils,"

"Soils?" I ask.

"Sure," he replies. "We have a lot of

different kinds of soil in forests around here. Some quickly turn into mud when- ever it rains, and mud can be slicker than snow. Other soils contain some granite, so gaining traction is easier. You'd be amazed what you can do with a loaded logging truck in the dark on snow or mud."

"I'll bet I would," I think to myself. "But do I really need a demonstration?"

Schwartz' baptism under fire came the first time he drove a logging truck. The year was 1988. A friend who had been hurt, but needed to keep his haul job, asked him to drive the truck until he was able to drive again.

"He told me to get in the cab, and get as many loads as possible every day," Schwartz recalls with some amazement. "He didn't even go along for a check ride. His truck was a 1975 Kenworth with 13 speeds and a Cummins 350. That was how I got started."

Schwartz drove his friend's truck for four months. Then another truck owner called him, and he drove for him for two years.

"It was downright scary in the beginning," Schwartz says of what it was like the first time he navigated his loaded, 80,000 pound truck down a winding, one-lane road with turnouts that allowed loaded and empty trucks to pass within a whisker of one another. "You're in mud or slush or snow or dust all of the time. You keep an open mind

and learn everything you can from more experienced drivers, or you won't make it."

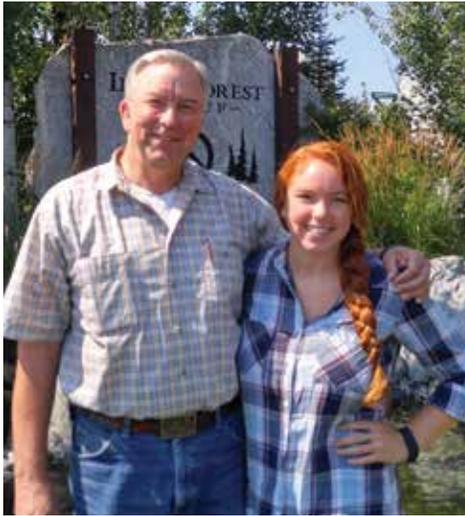
It took Schwartz 30 minutes to chain up his truck the first time he had to do it. Now he can do it in about seven minutes – still not as fast as a Kamiah driver who had his chains on and was gone before Schwartz had his chains laid out the first time he had to chain up.

Schwartz' self-deprecating humor and his eagerness to improve kept him alive until joy finally overcame fear. Now there is no place he'd rather be at one o'clock in the morning than in the cab of his truck headed into the woods.

"We call it "Morning Joe," he says of the CB radio chatter that splits the darkness. "Saturday Night Live has nothing on the ribbing we give each other."

Please read the entire Danny Schwartz interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

# IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: ERIN BRADETICH



*"This isn't a dying industry as some suggest. The world's consumers aren't using less wood, nor should they. Wood is the most environmentally friendly structural building material on earth, and good forestry is key to reducing civilization's carbon foot print. That's my story and I intend to keep telling it."*

Erin Bradetich, Forester,  
Idaho Forest Group,  
Sandpoint Idaho

Erin Bradetich and her father, Doug.  
"She has a lot of sawdust in her blood."

**E**rin Bradetich always knew she wanted to be a forester.

What she did not know was that she would be her father's only son in a manner of speaking, of course.

Yup, she's the woodsy one," Doug Bradetich says of his 26 year old daughter, the only female among 11 foresters employed by the Idaho Forest Group. Among the 11: her father, Doug, who has been working in forestry since he got out of college in 1981.

Erin is the youngest of three Bradetich girls. Stacey, the oldest is Director of Finance for a San Francisco hotel company. Amy teaches fourth grade at Sandpoint's Northside Elementary School and Erin buys state and private logs, mainly for IFG's Laclede mill.

Woodsy? Well, the petit red-head hunts deer, handles a chain saw with precision, loves cutting firewood with her dad, and ran a monstrous 980 loader in IFG's Chilco log yard when she was a college student.

"She has a lot of sawdust in her blood," her father says with an admiring smile.

"Yeah, I do," Erin concedes. "My great grandfather was a logger, my grandfather worked in our Chilco mill when it still belonged to Louisiana Pacific, Dad's been a forester since he got out of college and I have cousins that work in the woods. Except for my sisters, we're pretty much a timber family."

Erin has only been with IFG for eight months, but she's already decided this is

her last career move. In time, she hopes to become the company's resource manager, an executive level job that would put her in charge of IFG's forestry staff, plus log procurement for all three of IFG's northern mills: Laclede, Moyie Springs and Chilco. Her boss, Alan Harper, is currently the company's northern resource manager, and there are others who have seniority, but at 26, Erin definitely knows what she is about and where she is headed.

Before joining IFG in January, she worked for two years in the Idaho Department of Lands timber sale layout department in Sandpoint, then managed company timberlands for Stimson at their Plummer, Idaho location before she got the chance to join IFG's forestry department.

"I love it here," she says of her job. "Every day is a little different and I'm pretty much my own boss. I come and go as I wish, and there are lots of opportunities for public outreach. I really enjoy visiting with people about forestry and logging."

"Enjoy" is not a word most foresters would use to describe the arduous and often thankless task of searching for logs among the thousands of landowners who own patches of timber in northern Idaho. Many are absentee owners and most have never thought much about actually managing their timber for income, much less any other purpose.

"It runs the gamut," Erin says of the cold calls she makes on timberland

owners. "I've been welcomed with open arms and I've been told to leave and never come back. Most people don't have a land management objective. It's just home or a place to come in the summer. There isn't much understanding of the economic value of timber, or the need to manage trees to protect them for insects, diseases or wildfire."

Erin's job comes with a lot of windshield time – time spent driving to remote areas in western Montana, northern Idaho and northeast Washington in search of logs that will be transformed into a wide variety of lumber products at IFG's Laclede, Chilco or Moyie Springs sawmills.

"We consume a lot of timber – more than any other lumber manufacturer in Idaho," she says. "Most of it comes from state timberlands or private landowners. Some from the Forest Service, but not much. I don't buy federal wood, but I can tell you we've made a big investment in collaborative groups in hopes of securing more federal timber in the future."

IFG's foresters use a software program that locates timber tracts based on their acreage. There are thousands of private landowners across the three-state region Erin covers, so she isn't likely to ever run out of potential customers. But few of the landowners she visits have ever given much thought to managing their timber.

Please read the entire Erin Bradetich interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: JEFF ADAMS



*"The people in my life – my family and friends – helped me restore my faith in myself," Adams explained. "You surround yourself with good people, so you always know where you stand, and you trust each other to do what you say you will do. It all comes down to something else my Dad told me. He said, 'Show me your friends and I will show you your future.'"*

Jeff Adams  
Owner - Elk Mountain Logging Company  
Grangeville High School Football Coach  
Grangeville, Idaho

Jeff Adams, logger and football coach.

In Jeff Adams world, there is no clear dividing line between coaching and logging, which may help explain why he is possibly the only logger in Idaho history to have ever been named the Idaho High School Athletic Association's Division 2A Coach of the Year.

"Every year I get 56 new sons," Adams says with in quiet drawl that sounds a little southern, but isn't. "I tell them I coach the same way I log; with great care and a lot of respect for those for whom we work. I don't care who your daddy is. If you work hard, show respect and always do your best, you can play for me, and I will work my heart out to help you be the best you can be."

It is the beginning of a riveting two-hour conversation with one of the most inspiring young men I've ever met. It took him three weeks to return my phone call, but when he finally did he suggested we meet in the conference room at Northwest Insurance Agency on Main in Grangeville. I was soon to learn that the conference room doubles as the war room for the coaching staff. Every wall was papered with diagrams of offensive and defensive plays.

Jeff Adams exudes a kind of sincerity, confidence and dedication that is rare in today's increasingly cynical world. Grangeville, Idaho, population 3,123, is very lucky to have him. And he counts himself lucky to call Grangeville home.

"This is the safest place I've ever

lived," Adams boasts. "We moved here to raise our kids – four girls. I am surrounded by love, at home and in this town. I love the people here; I love the guys that work for me; I love our coaching staff and the prairie spirit these kids display; I love the Forest Service guys we work around; and I love that mill on the edge of town."

Hard to believe that Adams' indomitable spirit nearly failed him after his father died in 2009. The Great Recession almost crushed his logging business and he missed his dad's homespun wisdom to the point where he wasn't entirely sure that he wanted to continue logging. He credits IFG President, Scott Atkison, and Bill Higgins, IFG's resource manager for its Lewiston and Grangeville mills, with encouraging him not to give up on himself.

Adams did not give up, possibly because logging is in his third-generation blood; but more likely because of a piece of career advice his plain spoken father had given him years earlier.

"He said pick the one thing you like the most and be the best at it that you can possibly be," Adams recalls. "There wasn't anything fancy about my dad, but he possessed a kind of downhome wisdom that is hard to find today. You never wanted to quit on him and I never did."

Adams knew he was a good logger, but his head was in a bad spot. His equipment was tired and so was he.

Worse, the mechanics of logging were changing rapidly, and he knew he was finished if he too didn't change. So with the memory of his father's voice in his ear, he doubled down on his own future prospects.

"In 2013, I bought the first new machine I'd ever owned," he replies when I ask him how he changed. "It was my personal investment in Scott, Bill and my crew. Now all of our equipment is new. Our guys work in cabs, above the ground where the view is good and the work is much safer than it was 20 years ago."

Please read the entire Jeff Adams interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## The glory of the woods

# IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: JEFF BEREND



*"We are sitting on a gold mine," he says quietly. "Not just a recreation paradise, but lands that have tremendous tree growing potential. You get up into the high country as I do most days and there are trees as far as you can see in every direction."*

Jeff Berend, Forester  
Idaho Forest Group  
Chilco and Laclede Idaho

Jeff Berend and his sons  
enjoying a leisurely game of golf.

Jeff Berend thinks he might be one of the luckiest guys on earth. He spends most of his workdays driving the back roads of northern Idaho looking at forests. Tough duty.

Berend is a forester with the Idaho Forest Group. It is a job title that comes with a lot of windshield time. If he isn't looking for timber to buy for the company's Chilco or Laclede mills, he is overseeing logging contracts on state or private sales he bought.

"I probably spend three-fourths my time in my pickup," Berend says. "Now and then I think to myself, 'I get paid for doing this!' It's pretty amazing."

It is especially amazing given the fact that northern Idaho's conifer forests are among the most beautiful and productive in the entire Intermountain West. Who wouldn't jump at the chance to spend their workdays amid such splendor?

"It's mainly boots on the ground stuff," he says of the multiple forester's hats he wears. "One day I might be looking at a timber sale the State Department of Lands is offering. Another day I might be looking at a private tract I've spotted, or working with a logger who will be harvesting timber we've purchased from the state or a private landowner."

Berend's window seat on northern Idaho's lush forests have given him a great appreciation for their potential.

"We are sitting on a gold mine," he

says quietly. "Not just a recreation paradise, but lands that have tremendous tree growing potential. You get up into the high country as I do most days and there are trees as far as you can see in every direction."

Berend comes by his appreciation for forests naturally. The Seabeck, Washington native worked for an arborist when he was in high school, trimming and removing trees from residential yards in the old lumber community on the Hood Canal.

"I liked the work so much that I decided to make forestry my profession," he explained.

After Berend graduated from high school in 2000, he headed for the University of Idaho, which houses one of the nation's most respected forestry schools in the nation. He graduated in 2006. "I interned in the log yard in Lewiston in the summer of 2005," he recalls.

"Then after I graduated, I was fortunate enough to be hired to manage the Lewiston log yard. I moved up here to Chilco after the Bennett-Riley Creek merger was completed in 2008. Been here since then. Love it. I know I sound like a commercial, but this is the greatest company. We have a lot of freedom in our work, but of course it comes with lots of responsibility. I like that."

Indeed, IFG seems to have embraced a time-honored suggestion about work and those who do it; Give

a man [or woman] sharp tools and get the hell out of his [or her] way. Berend's arsenal includes a software program that identifies thousands of northern Idaho timber tracts by size [100 acres or larger], digitized terrain maps in exquisite detail, and satellite imagery capable of telling Berend most of what he needs to know about tree species and their distribution.

"It's not like the old days," Berend says of the dazzling array of computer firepower at his fingertips. "But there is still no substitute for walking the ground. It gives you a feel for the land that no computer image can provide. That's when I remind myself just how lucky I am."

Small wonder then that Berend sees a very bright future for young men and women who are considering their career options, and would like to know more about their forestry-related options, both academic and vocational.

"Don't believe all that nonsense you hear in school about how forestry, logging and lumber manufacturing are dying industries," he says with a wry smile. "IFG is only eight years old and we're already the ninth largest lumber manufacturer in North America. That should tell you something about how much wood consumers are using – and increasing wood use is a good thing because no other raw material on earth is so environmentally friendly."

Please read the entire Jeff Berend interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: JESSE SHORT



*“Technology does most of what strong backs and keen eyes did for generations. And it does it with more speed and efficiency than can any human. Of course, humans are the still ones invent, install and run this stuff, so the message here is that succeeding generations of mill workers will need to be technologically more knowledgeable than the previous generation.”*

Jesse Short, Mill Manager,  
Idaho Forest Group,  
Lewiston, Idaho

Jesse Short monitors HewSaw production.

Jesse Short got his first job in an Idaho saw mill by pestering the mill manager until he couldn't stand it anymore.

“You're becoming a real pain in the butt,” Jim Perry told Short one morning after he had shown up the fourth or fifth time in Perry's office at the Louisiana Pacific saw mill in Moyie Springs. To end his suffering, Perry hired Short to clean toilets, offices and mill debris. “I had gotten my first unemployment check and I didn't want any more of them,” Short recalls. “I wanted to work.”

Today, little more than 20 years later, Short is manager of the Idaho Forest Group's new Lewiston sawmill, arguably the most technologically advanced sawmill on Earth. And he helped design it. Not bad for a young man from a northern Michigan town so small that he had to take a bus to a neighboring town that had a high school.

After he graduated from West Branch High School in 1995, he entertained the idea of making his first million in homebuilding and real estate. He got his builder's license through Delta College in Saginaw, Michigan, but was horribly disappointed in how easy it was to get a builder's license. What to do?

“I had a friend whose family hunted elk around Bonners Ferry every year,” Short recalls. “They sold everything and headed west, thinking they'd settle there, but they never got any further than Libby, Montana. I went out to visit

and fell in love with the place.”

Short worked briefly in construction around Libby, only to learn to his dismay that the work was seasonal. Thus began his pestering of Jim Perry in Moyie Springs.

“I soon graduated from cleaning toilets to shoveling wood chips,” Short says. “I didn't know the first thing about sawmills, but back home in Michigan, my teachers had preached devastation of the West's forests, and watching all of those log trucks come into the Moyie Springs log yard every day didn't do anything to change my mind. I began to wonder if I didn't have another short term job.”

In hopes of easing his mind, Short asked the company's Moyie Springs' forester if what he'd learned in school was true. He was quickly dispatched to Bob Schrenk's office in Libby. Schrenk, who was then Kootenai National Forest supervisor, assured Short that there was no basis for his fears. Properly managed, the region's federal forest lands would never run out of timber.

That LP's Moyie Springs management team would send Short to Libby to assuage his fears said something about the potential they saw him. He was soon promoted to production manager on the graveyard shift. Not long afterward, Louisiana Pacific sold its mills at Moyie Springs and Chilco to Marc Brinkmeyer. Short just kept working.

“There was a lot of excitement over the change in ownership,” Short recalls. “LP had neglected the mill for several years, so there was a lot of maintenance catching up to do, and we were pretty far behind on technology. Marc also brought us a new emphasis on worker safety.”

Short soon became day shift supervisor, then mill manager.

“It was quite a transition for me,” he says. “When you work graveyard, you never see anyone except the rest of the crew, so when I moved over to the day side, I got my first real exposure to our customers. Addressing customer needs is where the rubber meets the road.

And it's a lot of what I do now.”

When Riley Creek and Bennett Forest Industries merged to form the Idaho Forest Group in 2008, Dick Bennet's grandson, Scott Atkison, became the new company's president. Atkison, like Jim Perry years before him, saw something in Short that he liked very much, so when IFG purchased Clearwater Paper's Lewiston sawmill, Atkison asked Short if he'd like to run the Lewiston mill.

“It was the opportunity of a lifetime,” Short recalls. “I was soon working side-by-side with Scott, Marc and Allen Selander on a new mill design and construction project that took us four years to complete.”

Please read the entire Jesse Short interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: MAC LEFEBVRE



*“Logging and sawmilling are small mostly family-owned businesses. We all know one another professionally, and many of us are personal friends. We live in small rural communities. Our wives socialize and our kids play together. At the end of the day, your workforce and your reputation for doing exactly what you say you will do are the only assets you have.”*

Mac Lefebvre  
Log Buyer and Forester  
Idaho Forest Group  
Grangeville, Idaho

Mac Lefebvre in his element.

**M**ost every business in Grangeville, Idaho belongs to the local Chamber of Commerce, including Home Grown Quilts, the United Methodist Church and the Idaho National Guard. Likewise, the Idaho Forest Group, which is easily the town's largest employer, though IFG has been loath to leave anyone with the impression that its five state-of-the-art sawmills are more important to the economic fabric of rural Idaho than any other business.

Small town boy, Mac Lefebvre, a forester who doubles as IFG's Grangeville log buyer, echoes the company's sensitivity with a good deal of grace, noting that IFG is the product of the very timely merger of two much smaller companies whose respective owners – Dick Bennett and Marc Brinkmeyer – recognized that their futures hinged on embracing technological advancements in wood processing that many more conservative lumbermen chose not to embrace. It was a daring move given uncertain log supplies and chaotic lumber markets, but it worked.

“We are part of a magic recipe that you won't find in too many communities,” Lefebvre explains when asked to describe what makes Grangeville somehow different from many of the West's remote timber communities.

“We have people, a town and a mill, all pretty much surrounded by forests,” he says. “Those who live and work here

are the glue that holds it all together, and our forests are the engine that drives us forward. There is a vibrancy here that I think all of us feel. It's a neat mix and a lot of fun for me.”

“Fun” isn't a word most foresters would pick to describe their jobs, but Lefebvre sits in a catbird seat few foresters can claim. His closest log buying competitor is in New Meadows, 89 torturous up and down miles to the south. In between lay some of the most productive federal, private and state-owned forests in Idaho.

“We are blessed here because we have multiple log sources,” Lefebvre says. “Not every mill is so lucky. There are lots of horror stories about mills that were totally dependent on federal timber sources that dried up. Those mills are gone.”

Lefebvre knows something about what happened in rural Idaho communities when the once stodgy timber industry began to remark itself in the mid-1990s. He had just moved from Kettle Falls, Washington to Cascade, Idaho when the walls caved in on the latter community's Boise Cascade operation.

“Boise shut down its Cascade mill just before I arrived,” he recalls. “But we made the move anyway because I wanted to be in Idaho, and Cascade still seemed fairly secure to me because the company still owned about 100,000 acres of very good land between McCall

and Cascade. Being a forester, I figured I'd be working on that land base and selling logs on the open market, but then Boise Cascade unexpectedly sold the land to Western Pacific and I was out of a job.”

With a wife and three kids to feed, clothe and educate, Lefebvre needed a miracle. It came in the form of IFG CEO Scott Atkison, who was then running the Grangeville mill. Needing a good forester who share his passion for excellence in all things, he quickly hired the out-of-work Lefebvre.

“I could not believe my luck,” Lefebvre recalls. “We did not want to leave Idaho. Although I grew up in Rainier, Oregon, my family roots are around Bonners Ferry, Idaho. We fit here. That's why I chose the University of Idaho over Oregon State when it came time for me to go off to forestry school. There is no replacing the vastness of Idaho's forests and wilderness areas. This is home. There are families here that have been here for four or five generations. No one wants to leave.”

Please read the entire Mac Lefebvre interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: THE MASON BROTHERS



*"Loggers are optimists. Otherwise, we wouldn't be loggers. We like our future prospects and hope to pass a good business along to our kids."*

Jerry Mason,  
Mason's Logging,  
Rathdrum, Idaho

Left to right, the Mason brothers: Jim, Pat, Jerry and Ron.

**R**ight off, Pat Mason wants you to know that he is older, smarter and better looking than his brothers. His younger brother, Ron, says it's true that Pat is the oldest, "but none of that other stuff [actually he used a different word] is true."

The Mason brothers: Pat, Ron, Jim and Jerry, are the heart and soul of Mason's Logging, a Rathdrum, Idaho logging company started by their 77-year-old father – another Ron – in 1979. But now it is the brothers' show, and it is as well choreographed as any logging operation you could hope to find working in Idaho, or anywhere else for that matter.

The brothers clearly enjoy poking fun at one other, but this foursome is all business when it comes to the tough and inherently dangerous work that occupies them from sunup to sundown six days a week. Safety is everything. There is no margin for error.

Logging is a vastly different business than it was when the elder Mason entered the profession in 1979. Back then, loggers packed chain saws, saw gas, tools and oil, axes, aluminum wedges and small hydraulic jacks used to tip falling trees the right direction.

Today, Mason's sons ride in the cabs of machines armed with massive hydraulic cylinders, seated in air-ride seats outfitted with joy sticks and buttons that control the machine's every movement. Computers do the heavy lifting, just like they do in every office around the world.

Jerry, the youngest brother, runs the office, keeps the books, rustles jobs and communicates daily with mills that buy Mason logs. He attended North Idaho College.

"That means he never gets his hands dirty," older brother Pat teases.

Maybe not, but from his laptop computer, Jerry can check anytime to make sure Pat, Jim and Ron are working. "Using GPS, I can monitor board foot production by tree species, log quality, machine fuel consumption, you name it and I can probably get it in one or two key strokes."

At the speed of light, and using satellite links, Mason can also share his information with the sales staffs at mills that process Mason logs. Most of those logs come from timberlands owned by the Inland Empire Paper Company. IEPC is owned by the Cowles family, which also owns the Spokesman Review and a string of television stations. The elder Ron Mason started logging for IEPC some 30 years ago.

"As we grew up, we all became Dad's slave labor," Jerry says with a smile. "We bumped knots on log landings, set chokers and did whatever else Dad needed doing. There wasn't much doubt about which direction our lives were headed. We are a very close knit family."

The Mason brothers also sell private logs to the Idaho Forest Group, by far Idaho's largest wood processor, with mills at Chilco, Laclede, Moyie Springs, Lewiston and Grangeville. IFG buys many of Inland's sawlogs. In return,

Inland buys residual wood chips from IFG for its paper mill on Argonne Road in the Spokane Valley. The 500-ton-a-day mill has operated continuously since 1911 and services 120 customers in the western United States.

"We are small cogs in some pretty big wheels," Mason says of the work he and his brothers do.

That might be given the enormity of the infrastructure complex that processes fiber harvested from public and private forestlands in northern Idaho and eastern Washington. But the capital investment the Mason brothers have made isn't for the feint-of-heart.

"It will cost us between \$1.5 and \$2 million to replace our current equipment configuration Mason says of the company's equipment outlay, which includes a log processor, two grapple skidders, a track-mounted loader and a massive bulldozer. "And we're looking to buy another processor, so that will set us back close to a half-million dollars."

The business end of the current log processor is its \$180,000 computer controlled head, a fearsome device as tall as most men that grasps logs, pulls them through a set of de-limbing rollers, then cuts them into precise log lengths before gently stacking them in neat piles. Ron Mason can process a log in about ten seconds.

[Please read the entire Mason brothers interview on our website – www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: MIKE HENLEY



*"...and that's what it's all about, no matter what you do with your life, learning how to build trust – and good teams are very important. A lot of people helped me get to where I am today. My responsibility is to pass my good fortune along to others in my work and personal lives."*

Mike Henley, Mill Manager,  
Idaho Forest Group,  
Chilco, Idaho

Mike Henley, Chilco and Laclede mill manager.

Talking with Mike Henley is like drinking from a fully charged fire hose. Henley, 47, manages the Idaho Forest Group's mills at Chilco and Laclede. He talks a blue streak, and probably covers ten miles a day on foot, all of it between his office, the Chilco log yard and every nook and cranny on the sawmill site eight miles north of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Nothing escapes his watchful gaze – including a scrap of paper that he picked up as we walked [briskly] toward the log yard.

IFG's board chairman, Marc Brinkmeyer, hired Henley – fresh out of Sandpoint High School – in 1988, 20 years before IFG was formed through the 2008 merger of Riley Creek Lumber and Bennett Forest Industries. Brinkmeyer, a former Arthur Anderson auditor and chief financial officer for Oregon-based Brand-S Lumber Company, had purchased Riley Creek in 1976.

Henley started at the bottom, on a cleanup crew at Laclede, a fact that explains his penchant for picking up waste paper wherever he finds it. On the day in question, he stuffed it in his pants pocket, and there it stayed until we walked past a trash bin. Neither of us said anything, but I knew in an instant that he cares very much about the reputation of the company that hired him 28 years ago.

IFG has owners," he would later say in an oblique reference to his aware-

ness of the fact that corporations are faceless. "But IFG is really its people, and there are more than 850 of us who are the image and likeness of this company, which is by far the largest lumber manufacturer in the state of Idaho."

It is indeed. In fact, IFG, which owns mills at Grangeville, Lewiston and Moyie Springs, plus the Chilco and Laclede mills that Henley oversees, is now the ninth largest lumber manufacturer in North America – still small when compared to Weyerhaeuser, Canfor or Sierra Pacific, but not bad for a company that did not exist a decade ago. Its size is perhaps best understood in log truck measure. Five of ten loaded log trucks seen on Idaho highways is headed for an IFG mill.

"We average about 150 loads a day here at Chilco," Henley replies when I ask about the 20 or so loaded trucks lined up in the log yard. "But right now, we're getting 240 loads. The trucks start lining up at about 3 a.m. We strive for a 20 minute turn around because we know time is money to our drivers. They don't make any money sitting here waiting for us to unload them."

Henley's awareness of the time cost of money came swiftly and without warning when the housing market crashed in 2008. There being no market for its products, the Laclede mill was shut down for a year. Henley was transferred to Chilco. He took 40 of

his best people with him.

You could use all sorts of adjectives to describe it: hard, painful, difficult, challenging. It was that and more," he recalls. "I couldn't take everyone, so many of our Laclede families lost their jobs. Those of us who went to Chilco took pay or benefit cuts, but we pulled together and we learned how to be the low cost manufacturer."

"And how did you do that?" I ask.

"By digging," Henley quickly replies. "We learned what things actually cost, how to buy better, how to work more efficiently, how to exploit technology and how to leverage our assets. It's a process few mill people ever get to experience, but we did and we are better for it."

The result is a special bond that joins Henley with his leadership team – men and women he has known and worked beside for 28 years. If there is anything that binds them other than their shared experience with hardship, it is Henley's belief that he should never ask an employee to do a job he has not done himself – and he never has, but it took him a long time to slow his own torrid pace, so he could learn how to manage people.

Please read the entire Mike Henley interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: TERA KING



*"I would absolutely encourage anyone to pursue a career in forestry or any other natural resource-based career. In fact, that's exactly what the Clearwater Basin Youth Conservation Corps is trying to do. The more we can introduce local kids to the career opportunities available in their backyard, the better. There are currently over 40 vacancies on the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests and more retiring all the time. There's also a shortage of professional truck drivers. We need young people to bring their families back to their hometowns to fill those jobs, especially in light of recent mill closures that will have serious social and economic impacts on communities."*

Tera King, Partner  
Northwest Management, Inc.  
Moscow, Idaho

Tera King, Northwest Management, inc.

**T**era King is a University of Idaho forestry school graduate and partner in Northwest Management, a Moscow, Idaho forestry consulting firm with clients scattered across the western United States. She is a Grangeville, Idaho native, and grew up hunting, fishing, hiking and riding horses in the four million acre Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest, which covers about 74 percent of Idaho County, easily Idaho's largest county. In this wide-ranging interview, she answers questions about her career, forest collaboration, the public discourse and her hopes that forestry's best days are dawning now.

**Evergreen:** We think it's remarkable that a Grangeville kid would stay in Idaho after she graduated from high school. Many leave to find jobs. Why did you stay?

**King:** I think I was like most small town high school kids in that my main goal upon graduating was just to get out, whatever that meant. It wasn't until after I left to attend school at the University of Idaho that I realized what it really meant to be part of a small community. When all that support is stripped away, you really find out who you are and what's important. I guess that's what keeps me here mostly. I like knowing my neighbors. Besides, where would I go that's better than Idaho?

**Evergreen:** Grangeville, population 3,141, is the county seat of Idaho County, Idaho's largest county by far. At 8,500 square miles – most of it heavily forested - it is larger than Rhode Island, Delaware and Connecticut, combined, yet it has only seven incorporated towns. What did a kid growing up there do for fun?

**King:** Anything and everything. Obviously, there are not a lot of services in town to spend your money on. Most kids learn to drive early on the farm or ranch or hauling firewood for Grandma, so by the time you actually have your license, its total freedom. You make your own fun and you have millions of acres in which to do it. Our family made full use of the wealth of public land in Idaho County.

We rode horses in the backcountry, buzzed around the trails on motorcycles and ATV's, hiked to many of the wilderness lakes, fished, hunted and camped. Oh yeah, and you drag Main Street and cruise the backroads with your friends!

**Evergreen:** With so much forest in Idaho County, we assume most everyone's livelihood is related to forests in one way or another. Are we correct?

**King:** That's certainly the way I see it. My grandpas and many of my

uncles logged or worked at one of the mills at some point. One of my grandpas even owned a logging company and a post and pole outfit in the 1970's and 80's. Most of the longer-tenured families in Idaho County probably have similar histories, but even if there's not a direct connection with forest industry in the macro sense, all of the support services that go along with it - the machinists, the mechanics, the fuel stations, the tire stores, all of those families depend on that forest-to-market infrastructure too. Now, forest management on public lands also includes all kinds of "ologists" to help with recreation, wildlife, fisheries, fire, roads, archaeology, etc. A lot of those people raise their families in the local community, but many are contracted from out of the area, which means they're supporting the local restaurants, hotels, and supply stores as well.

It's all connected.

Please read the entire Tera King interview on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)

## IDAHO'S FOREST FAMILIES: WES AND JIM OLSON



*"Back then, drivers could fix most anything on their trucks. You even learned how to reline your own brake shoes. Today, almost everything is run by computers that talk to each other...If you can't run a laptop computer, you can't diagnose a problem in one of them. That's how sophisticated they've become since Dad started out in '61."*

Jim Olson,  
Wes Olson Trucking,  
Sandpoint, Idaho

Father and son, Wes and Jim Olsen

**W**es Olson paid \$22,000 for his first new logging truck in 1966. Last month, his son, Jim, ordered a new Kenworth for their company's senior driver. He paid \$160,000 for it.

"Yeah," Jim says casually. "He's driven for us for 25 years, and he's always wanted a white truck, so we bought one for him. We'll paint the hood green to match our Olson Trucking color scheme, but it's basically a white truck, which means it will need a bath every night."

The whole idea of it amuses the daylight hours of Jim's 85-year-old father, a handsome man who doesn't look even close to his age.

"I come here every day because it beats watching TV," Wes explains when I ask why, at his age, he is here and not out having fun.

"This is fun," he declares without hesitation.

"Besides, there is nowhere else I'd rather be," he says of the company's modest office on Baldy Mountain Road, minutes northwest of downtown Sandpoint, Idaho.

"I also believe my wife likes it better if I'm here," he adds with a wry smile.

The Olsons – father and son – dispatch 26 log trucks from their shop five days a week. Jim does the actual dispatching the evening before. Most of their drivers are on the road by two or three o'clock in the morning. The drivers with the longest routes – Elk River, Idaho or Cranbrook, British Columbia –

are generally gone by midnight.

"We rarely see them unless they have a problem, which isn't often," Jim says.

The Olsons employ 31 people: 26 drivers, three mechanics and two office ladies. Their company hauls logs for the Idaho Forest Group, Stimson Lumber Company, Potlatch, and, occasionally McFarland Cascade, which hires them to truck cedar utility poles to a treating plant in Tacoma, Washington. From the Olsons' office, you can see McFarland's pole yard just across Baldy Mountain Road. This square mile area has been ground zero in Sandpoint's lumber industry for more than a century.

"We've done a little bit of everything over the years," Wes replies when I ask. "When the lumber market went down in 1973, we sent trucks to Alaska to work on the pipeline. I went up to Prudhoe Bay the first time in 1969, over the Ice Road. Where the ice wasn't safe, they moved us on big hovercrafts that could carry four trucks at a time."

Before I can ask, Jim chimes in. "Yes, we've watched Ice Road Truckers on TV. Let's just say we think it's a little overdramatic, like Ax Men. But I guess you do what you have to do to keep your audience entertained."

Lord only knows how many million miles Wes Olson drove in the woods before he handed the company over to his son in the late 1990s. But he confesses to a fascination with big

trucks that began when he was a boy growing up in a Wyoming logging camp.

His mother was a camp cook and his father logged. They moved to Sandpoint in 1942. Wes was 12. He graduated Sandpoint High School in 1948, carpentered for a few years, then joined a construction crew at Albeni Falls Dam, where again the comings and goings of huge trucks fired his imagination.

"No brains," he says of his 1961 decision to get into the log trucking business. I am again drawn to this good-humored man's perpetual smile and gentle disposition. No wonder Wes Olson Trucking is in its fifty-fifth year.

"I didn't have much choice," son Jim adds to his father's self-effacing explanation before I ask him the obvious next question: Jim, what had you wanting to follow in your father's footsteps?

"It was child abuse," Wes gleefully interjects before Jim can formulate his answer. "I tossed him in the cab of a truck when he was 17."

"It just sinks in over the years," Jim quietly replies as his father trails out of the room. "I've been around here doing whatever I could do to be helpful since I was a kid. Back then, drivers could fix most anything on their trucks. You even learned how to reline your own brake shoes. Today, almost everything is run by computers that talk to each other."

Please read the entire interview with Wes and Jim Olson on our website – [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com)



### About The Evergreen Foundation

The Evergreen Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation formed in 1986 to advance public understanding and support for science-based forestry and forest policy. Learn more at [www.evergreenmagazine.com](http://www.evergreenmagazine.com) or contact our founder, Jim Petersen, [jim@evergreenmagazine.com](mailto:jim@evergreenmagazine.com) or our marketing and social media director, Julia Petersen, [julia@evergreenmagazine.com](mailto:julia@evergreenmagazine.com).

