

People & Places

Education a passion for California logger

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

VIOLA, Calif. — As a group of seventh-graders looked at a fire bulldozer during a field trip at a logging site, Larry Strawn asked them how many played video games.

Most of the youngsters raised their hands.

“Tell your parents you’re practicing for your career,” said Strawn, owner of Blue Ridge Forest Management in Redding, Calif.

In reality, Strawn tries to limit the hours his grandkids spend on video games. But educating future generations about the timber industry has always been a top priority, and computers and video technology are a wave of the future.

Operating machines is “all hand-eye coordination, just like with a video game,” the 70-year-old Strawn told the youngsters from Evergreen School in Cottonwood, Calif.

Strawn was instrumental in starting education days in the woods in the early '90s, working with a long-time employee, Delbert Gannon, who later became his business partner.

It was a time of change and contraction for the timber industry, as the federal listing of the northern spotted owl and other environmental regulations were causing upheaval. Loggers began to realize it was important to tell the public what really goes on at logging sites, they have said.

“The first class was eight,” Strawn said. “We did that for a number of years with Sierra Pacific (Industries) and Blue Ridge and it grew to about 200.”

Enter the Sierra Cascade Logging Conference, with which Strawn has been involved for more than 20 years. The annual Anderson, Calif., gathering in February began to include an auction dinner to raise funds for educational activities, including the springtime field trips to an active logging site.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Logger Larry Strawn stands near a stroke delimer he had rebuilt after it was burned in a fire two years ago. Strawn started holding education days in the woods in the early 1990s, and now the annual event draws about 600 schoolchildren from around Northern California.

Western Innovator

Larry Strawn

Age: 70

Occupation: Logger

Residence: Redding, Calif.

Family: Wife, Trish; children Sandi, Sheri and Mike Strawn; eight grandchildren; one great-grandson



“It was hard to get kids to come up here because schools are so strapped for funds that they couldn’t come up,” Strawn said. “Now we fund the buses.”

This year, more than 600 elementary through high school students attended the lessons and demonstrations at a logging site in a meadow near Viola, about 40 miles east of Redding, on April 29 and 30.

Each year, the students visit about 15 stations learning about various aspects of logging, including maintaining water quality near sites, how various equipment is used and

how forests are replanted after timber sales.

“There’s career opportunities out here,” said Gannon, owner of Creekside Logging Co. in Redding.

Often, the annual field days have specific themes. For instance, students two years ago visited a salvage logging operation in an area burned by the 2012 Ponderosa Fire, a nearly 30,000-acre blaze that swept through miles of brush and timber and forced evacuations of three mountain communities.

The burn areas provided a backdrop to inform students about wildfires and the

efforts to restore forests in their aftermath. Students saw a demonstration of felling what was left of some trees, watched as charred bark was scraped from logs that were later loaded onto a truck, and heard firefighters from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection discuss the behavior of wildfires.

This year, presenters — which included crew members from Blue Ridge, Sierra Pacific and Creekside as well as representatives from Shasta College in Redding and Cal Fire — stressed the growing role that computers and technology are playing in the industry.

“It’s just great to interact with grade school kids and get them seeing what they can do in the forestry industry,” said John Livingston, a heavy equipment instructor at Shasta College, who’s been presenting at the field day for the past three years.

The field trip is one of several education-related events hosted by the logging conference, which also brings as many as 800 fourth-graders to its large-equipment expo at the Shasta District Fairgrounds each year.

College students hold logging sports competitions during the logging conference while FFA members test their knowledge of forestry. Sierra Pacific also sends teams to festivals and fairs to teach kids about the many uses of wood, and last fall the timber giant hosted a tour for adults at its Anderson mill.

But one of the biggest events of the year is the field trip to the woods.

“This is Sierra Cascade’s highest priority — education for young kids,” Strawn said.

A Redding resident, Strawn spent lots of time in the woods as a boy helping his father, who was also a logger.

“I didn’t think there was much of a future in it,” he said. “I took a job driving a low-bed truck. I made three times the money I had made logging and was miserable.”

In 1969, a friend had “an old junk Cat and I bought a junk loader and we were partners for a year,” Strawn said. The friend moved to Idaho and Strawn stayed in Redding.

Gannon, 43, worked for Strawn for 20 years before his mentor started pondering retirement and helped him start Creekside. Work for Blue Ridge is slowly being phased out, Strawn said.

The two still believe there’s a future in logging, they said.

“It’s a good industry to get into right now, just like farming,” Strawn said. “Delbert and I felt that with kids’ education in school, logging just had a bad name. We wanted to get the word out that we’re here to stay. It’s a natural resource.”

“We’re trying to get high school students to make a career out of it,” he said.

Basketball tradition returns with next generation

By **RYAN M. TAYLOR**
For the Capital Press

TOWNER, N.D. — I suppose it’s common for parents to try to recreate parts of their own childhood for their children. If we grew up with a pony, we try to get our kids a pony. If we had a treehouse that we loved, we help nail one up in the backyard for our own little climbers. Of course, children aren’t necessarily replicas of their parents, but we do our best to give them that chance!

If our children take up the sport of basketball, I’ll remind them to follow their mother’s cues on the court and not my own. She’s the one in the family with the letter winner’s jacket, a couple trips to the Class B state tournament in high school, and a year of court time at college.

Cowboy Logic
Ryan Taylor



‘Country ball’

Myself, I never played “town ball,” but I did play some “country ball.” Country basketball in my neighborhood was a pretty rag-tag affair. My neighbors and I had hoops with wavy plywood backboards in our yards. Ours was on turf and their hoop was on gravel, so we usually played there.

Sometimes, we’d go down to Doug’s. He had a hoop in the hay mow of their barn. You could feel the hay mow floor kind of undulate under your feet as you drove in for the lay-up. If you didn’t let that unnerve you, and you were careful for the boards

that stuck up a little high, it was a pretty good court.

Eventually, our country ball got organized to the point where we adopted a name, the Smokey Lake Lakers, in honor of a large, putrid alkali lake in the area. We were the local Lakers. Some of the team members took a high school home economics course and used their sewing time to make team sweatpants for all of us. Aqua blue and algae green were our official colors.

Slam dunks

As we became more official, we adopted a new home court. We moved into the Berwick Town Hall. Berwick had ceased being an incorporated town, but the community of about 10 souls and several dogs still had a hall with a hardwood floor, a couple of hoops, and a stage that facilitated our reverse slam dunks

as we practiced some hang time coming off the stage behind the hoop.

Alas, as things go, the Berwick Hall is no longer an option for my kids. Doug’s barn was torn down and my hoop with the plywood backboard has toppled. My wife said our kids need a basketball hoop. I told her I’d go look for a salvaged highline pole and I’d even buy a brand new piece of plywood.

She went online and before I knew it a truck pulled in the yard with some fancy, schmancy steel pole, an offset glass backboard, a dunkable rim, and some assembly required. I accepted it. Better than video games, I said, and I commenced assembling. I followed the instructions, right down to the 25 bags of concrete and a few sticks of rebar stuck in the hole I dug to secure the base.

Shooting hoops

The instructions adamantly stated it would take “at least four capable adults” to hoist up and attach the backboard. Me, my wife and a passing neighbor pulled it off with ease, proving, I guess, our superior capabilities.

I have to say that the sturdy pole, the glass backboard and the concrete driveway are pretty inviting. The kids are getting ready a little quicker in the morning so they can shoot a few hoops before the school bus comes, and their mother joins them for a little coaching.

Me, I’ll get out there, too. But first I need to find my aqua blue Smokey Lake Laker sweatpants. Then, while the kids are laughing at me, I’ll drive in for the easy game-winning lay-up.

Calendar

To submit a Calendar item, go to the home page of www.capitalpress.com and click on “Submit an Event” above the calendar.

Saturday, May 9

Spokane Junior Livestock Show Market Sale, 8 a.m. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center, one-day market sale for swine, goats, lambs and steers.

Northeast Washington Haygrowers Association spring meeting, 8:15 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Dun Renton Ranch, Deer Park, Wash., includes pesticide applicator recertification credits, field tours, equipment displays, weed identification and management, 509-276-5955.

Wednesday, May 13

19th Annual Distillers Grains Symposium, 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Sheraton Crown Center, Kansas City, Mo.

Designing and Establishing Insectary Plantings Field Course, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., The Dalles, Ore., 541-737-6272. Insectary plantings in commercial orchards. There will be opportunities to practice field ID of native plants used in insectary plantings and beneficial insects associated with them. Farmer hosts will share practical tips and challenges. The course will be at Omeg Family Orchards and Dahle Orchards. Participants must provide own transportation. Drew Merritt, co-owner of Humble Roots Farm

and Nursery; Gwendolyn Ellen, Farmscaping for Beneficials coordinator; and farmers Mike Omeg and Tim Dahle will co-lead.

Thursday, May 14

19th Annual Distillers Grains Symposium, 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Sheraton Crown Center, Kansas City, Mo.

Washington FFA Convention, 8 a.m., Washington State University, Pullman.

Friday, May 15

Washington FFA Convention, 8 a.m., Washington State University, Pullman.

Saturday, May 16

Washington FFA Convention, 8

a.m., Washington State University, Pullman.

PerryDale Parents Club Taste of Italy Dinner and Auction, 4-9 p.m. Polk County Fairgrounds, Rickreall, 503 932-0558. Fundraiser to supplement educational needs of students.

Wednesday, May 20

Seafood HACCP Segment II, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., University of Idaho, Boise, 208-364-6188. For seafood processor personnel who develop, reassess and modify the HACCP plans and manage verification activities.

Thursday, May 21

Food Allergen Workshop, 8:30

a.m.-4:30 p.m., Holiday Inn, Yakima, Wash., 360-902-1961. Food allergen workshop for processors, retailers, consultants, sanitarians, regulators.

Saturday, June 13

Sheep in the Foothills, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Boise Foothills Learning Center, Boise.

Saturday, June 20

Ketchum Kalf Rodeo, 1-9 p.m. Glenwood, Wash.

Sunday, June 21

Washington Potato and Onion Association Annual Convention, 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights, Wash.

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