

Happy Holidays From
Bear Creek Lumber



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The End of Another Fabulous Year

The year 2000 was a delight in the Methow Valley. Starting with a mild winter, with plenty of good snow for skiing, melting into an eye popping spring, with hills thick with wildflowers, it was followed by a just right summer for swimming and hiking, only to be topped by one of the prettiest falls (for color) in years. We did okay at the lumberyard, too!

All's Well That Ends Well

Our computer systems were stable (no Y2K here!) and our new communications database made everyone happy. Our staff stabilized, as much as is possible in this day and age. Our hats are off to the salesmen, support staff and the buyers, who put it all together to exceed sales for last year while keeping most everyone pleased with the service and products. The few people not initially pleased were also satisfied with how their problems were solved. That's the best news of all.

A Traditional To Be Proud Of

For twenty-four years, Bear Creek Lumber has been the little company that could. We have grown and modified how we operate, adjusted to market changes, and become more and more service oriented. Special orders are becoming the rule rather than the exception. We even have a mill that will custom cut the milling knives so that a customer with a historic molding can have the exact molding made out of whatever species he needs it in. We are supplying boatbuilders, architects, sign makers, cabinet builders as well as people who build playground sets and others who repair airplanes. We shipped product to Ireland, Germany, the Caribbean and the farthest reaches of Alaska. We bought lumber from small tree farms that are certified sustainable, as well as multinational firms as big as small countries. We helped homeowners build their dreams, contractors locate out those hard-to-find product specs, and even allowed architects to build with the products they were previously told no longer exist. Our customer base continues to be everyone who appreciates good wood and a fair price to go with it.



Looking Ahead Digitally

Whether 2001 can be any better is anyone's guess. We have opened an entire new avenue for people to find us with the Internet. We can send digital pictures via email of anything a customer wants to see almost instantly (depending on how fast our photographer can pull it out of a file!). We constantly improve the website, which now includes monthly pictures of the Methow Valley (click on the new logo) and more pictures of inventory than ever. Our poor photographer has 1,800 different inventory pictures to take so it will be a while until he gets them all, but if there is something you want to see, let us know and we will send him back to get another picture. He doesn't mind!

Happiness is A Happy Crew and Customers

Finally, we have the best of all worlds, a great staff and the best kind of customers. Both enjoy each other and have a great time doing business together. For Bear Creek Lumber, that's what makes it all work. From our Bear Creek family to your family, may you have a wonderful holiday and a great year to come!



The Legacy of Presidents Past

As the Clinton era draws to a close, we can look at the legacy his administration has left the timber industry.

Towards Zero Cut

Clinton is probably the first president that closed the door on timber harvests from federal land. Although technically timber harvests were not outlawed, the amount of timber coming from national forests went from 4 billion board feet in 1992 to less than 2 billion in 2000. Many of these sales were sold but never actually harvested because they are still in court, despite the Northwest Forest Plan, that guaranteed a steady flow of federal timber to small communities. Close to 100% of all timber sales are now appealed or litigated.

This hasn't been all bad news for the industry. Despite losing more than half of all mills, the lack of federal timber has forced the remaining mills to hasten innovation. A leaner industry has learned to do more with less, and the result has been more engineered materials, and a stronger private timber market. With a better market, private timberland owners are doing better things with their land and the results have been better for the environment as a whole.

Rural communities have not fared as well. The number of jobs in timber states may be up, but chronic unemployment plagues the rural towns that once had industrial logging revenues to support them. In ten years, the amount of saw timber in the Northwest has fallen from 10 billion board feet to less than 2 billion, an unsustainable amount. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of the timber industry has left the Forest Service without funding at a time when more labor is needed for forest management of unhealthy stands.

The challenge for the next president will be how to return our federal lands to healthy stands of good timber growth while appeasing an increasing irrational environmental faction that distrusts any and all chainsaws in the forest.

Another Kind of Legacy

Meanwhile, another past president is considering hanging up his toolbelt. Carpenter-in-Chief Jimmy Carter has been pounding nails for twenty year for Habitat For Humanity. At age 75, the former president has left a legacy of homes throughout the world. Built by volunteers and homeowners, Habitat has erected 100,000 houses since it began 29 years ago and plans to built another 100,000 in the next five. Carter says he doesn't know how much longer he'll be working, and has already recruited his own replacement in Jack Kemp, former presidential candidate and Housing Secretary.

Global Warming: Are trees parts of the problem?

Once thought to be good for reducing carbon dioxide levels by acting as carbon sinks, all of a sudden, forests are being blamed for emitting extra carbon dioxide when temperatures rise. The latest report from the Hadley Center for Climate Prediction comes at a time when industrial countries were planning large tree planting efforts to offset future emissions problems that might be causing global warming. The Hadley study mirrors the finding by Dr. Richard Betts, that showed planting forests in cold parts of the world does more harm than good, because forests absorb more of the sun's heat than the terrain. The additional exposure to the sun has a warming influence, that offsets the cooling effect of the carbon dioxide uptake that forests have been previously credited with.

The findings come just as the second round of meeting of environmental ministers start begin at the Hague. The only problem is that climatologists still don't even agree if the problem of global warming is man-made or a natural fluctuation in the Earth's temperature. In the past thirty thousand years, temperatures on a whole have been rising but at a relatively steady pace since the last major ice age.

The goal of the environmental groups, who are pushing the scientific community for acceptance of these studies, is not to outlaw forests but to get world governments to stop using them as stopgaps in the race to lessen carbon emissions. Their target is to cut worldwide emissions, slowing down industrial development in the West and in developing countries. Meanwhile, most trees are still credited with doing plenty of good for everyone.

Radioactive Lumber



Crow Publications, a Portland, OR-based publication, announced in a special report last fall that radioactive lumber products from the former Soviet Union may be making their way to the United States. The contaminated logs have been shipped to mills in Europe. Although they are routinely checked by reputable mills, smugglers have been getting these logs into the marketplace clandestinely.

Finished lumber has not been routinely checked before arriving in the US. Is this cause for concern? Yes, and no. There are no checks and balances in place to test for radioactivity, so no one knows the extent of how much of this lumber may be getting through. It could be one piece in a million, or it could be container loads.

Currently the US government does not plan to change the way it tests incoming shipments. Crow's editorial staff states if US can afford to spend millions to find out if livestock manure is causing global warming, it can make sure we aren't getting nuked from moulding around our bathroom doors. For more information call Crow Publications at 800-800-9510 or log on at www.crows.com

Industry News

Bugs Burden Bugs Builders

Lumber producers are having a hard time making ends meet. Record low prices for framing, combined with the rising costs of fuel and labor are squeezing already troubled companies to the bone. Many companies are finding it hard to be able to afford to buy logs for next year's inventory. Framing lumber prices are the lowest in eight years. The low prices for studs and framing lumber are not translating into lower housing costs. The median price for houses continues to rise, going from \$158,500 in 1999 to \$160,000 in 2000.

New home sales surged in September a surprising 9.2%, the highest level in six months. The elation was followed by contemplation, as consumer confidence then dove in October to its lowest point in a year at 135.2 from 144.7 in May.

There's a lot going on metro Austin Texas these days. Developers and builders have their hands full with new projects. No one wants to live in a cave, or do they?

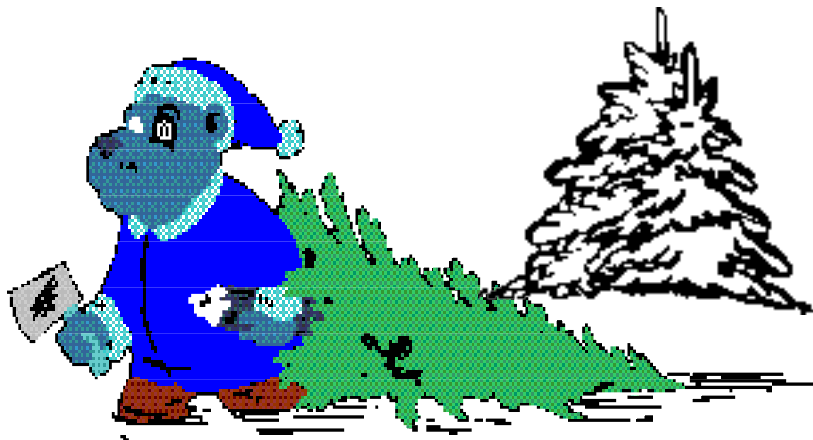
Cave-dwelling beetles, scorpions, and spiders are very happy with their subterranean digs, and new regulations are forcing builders to give the critters a little more elbow room when they start new projects. How much is a little? New regulations are requiring 99 acre setbacks around each cave (up from the six acres developers had been leaving, a 10-fold increase in cost, according to BUILDER magazine in their October issue.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services recommended the larger setbacks in a new series of guidelines that are yet unpublished in the Federal Register. The federal agency has not yet disallowed any development. Instead they are sitting on permits until the rules become official. Meanwhile, land owners and builders wait. A few have pursued the agency in court, but with no success.

Resolution is expected to be as slow as... a bug.



The Bark Side



Consider the bark side.

That's a side of a board that would have the bark on it, were it still attached to a tree. Is there a difference, if you use it up or down? That was a question posed in OLD HOUSE JOURNAL in their October issue. The question pertained to porch steps, but could also be relevant to decking in general.

While carpenters prefer to use quarter lumber with vertical grain for porch steps, the price and availability of said lumber often makes it an impractical choice. The common alternative, is plain sawn lumber where the boards are sawn tangentially to the tree trunk, to produce the largest quantity of lumber from a single log. Unfortun-

nately, this can sometimes lead to problems such as warp, cupping or shrinkage. How to best prevent this problem, which occurs more often on the bark side of the log.

Carpenters may argue that: 1) Use bark side up to prevent the wood from cupping, and the grain from raising; 2) Bark side down to prevent cupping; or bark side down to avoid splitting edges; 3) Alternating pattern of boards installed bark up and then bark down, then bark up and so on...

There is no one preferred way. The article says most carpenters they spoke with prefer to install plain-sawn planks bark-side down, since moisture invariably collects under your porch, deck or steps, the heat of the sun tends to pull this moisture up through the backside of the boards. If boards are installed bark side down, their tendency to cup towards the bark is mitigated by the sun and moisture, thereby producing a smoother surface than if bark side is up.

Good carpenter practices always make a project cleaner. These include appropriate nails and nailing patterns, priming, painting, or staining, when possible, before installation, to prevent moisture movement and of course, using the best species for the job. Cedar and redwood or hardwoods will be more stable than pine or fir, even if its treated. Bark side or not.

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