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In This Issue

Interview with Ela Bannick
Fall Clearout Specials

Dear Timberline Readers,

As many of you might notice, Timberline will look slightly different from here on out. Ela Bannick, who was Editor and main writer for Timberline, is taking some time off from work. She may be back in the future, and being one of the owners of Bear Creek Lumber, she will always be a part of the business. Due to her hard work, and integral role in the future, and history of Bear Creek Lumber, this issue is devoted to Ela, who is pictured at right in October 2006.



How much about your illness would you like to tell you readers?

I was diagnosed about three weeks ago with a Glioblastoma Multiforme, a primary brain tumor Grade 4, which is the most malignant of all brain tumors. I have already had surgery, but I haven't started the next set of therapies. I am going to shortly.

When I came out of the surgery, I came out really well. I could walk, I could talk, I could read, and I still have all of my hair! I am just extremely fortunate, and I don't know how it's gonna go from here, I am really trying to work hard to stay healthy and upbeat. I would like to think that I'll live a long life from here on. I guess if I do have a really good recovery from this illness, there is a possibility I would come back to work, I can't imagine 20 or 30 years of good health and not working. That was never a plan of mine.

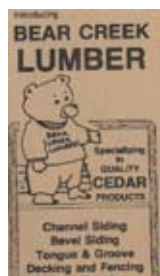
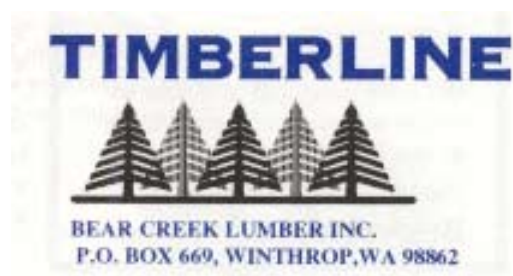
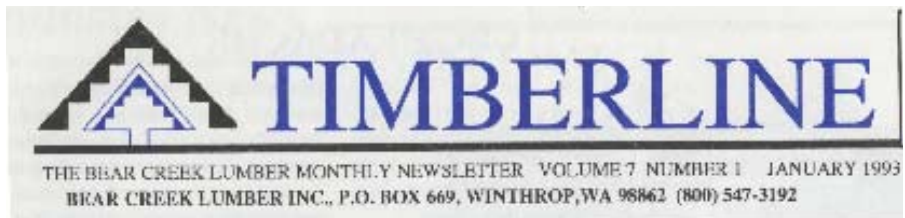
Is there anything that you would like to say to your readers at this point?

Well, I regret that this cancer/ brain tumor came out of nowhere and I didn't have a chance to fully consider how I was going to retire. So instead of having a nice planned-out measured retirement, I'll be going from working to not working. This is a regret, because I really enjoy doing the newsletter. It was a part of my monthly routine, where no I have no routine. But I am happy with the people that are going to take over the responsibility. I think they'll do just as good of a job as I was doing.

Do you see yourself coming back to the newsletter at any point? Where do you see yourself right now?

Right now I see myself as semi-retired so if I semi-un-retire it would be nice to be involved in customer service, and the newsletter because I liked that angle of being involved in the company.

In the beginning, Ela did all of the artwork for Timberline, and also for any advertising that was done. Samples of some early artwork are shown throughout this newsletter. Also shown are some early Timberline headers, from 1990 to current.



What made you start the newsletter?

Back in the very early days of BCL, when it was just Cloud and I. Many times Cloud wouldn't be there because he would be working a second job, or he'd be out delivering the lumber. He would leave me alone, and I wouldn't be able to answer customer questions about lumber. Cloud suggested I go get those answers from other sources, and write them down. He at one point suggested I take what I wrote down and turn it into a newsletter. I remember Cloud saying, "I bet all the customers would appreciate knowing those answers just as much as you want to know them." So that was the beginning of the Timberline newsletter.

Have you ever had anybody write in responding to one of your letters with a really interesting story or feedback?

We have, and I would say, that the negative responses are usually very personal. One time an architect called me, very upset because we had shown pictures of projects, but we hadn't mentioned the architect's name. I had another time when a guy was mad because he felt I didn't give him enough of a headline in the article. There are some people who perceived that I have made (and I may have) a political statement, and then they make the exact opposite political statement. Some people thought I was too generous to the environmental side, when others thought I was too negative to the industrial side of the political argument. I tried to be as neutral as I possibly could, and whenever I wrote articles. I tried not to take one side or the other. In the early years of the Timberline, I really felt the timber industry was being irresponsible in the way it logged. Over the next ten years they changed and became more responsible about their logging practices, but the environmental movement became irresponsible in not recognizing the fact that the timber industry had changed. I became more critical of the environmental movement because it seemed they did not want to give the timber industry a break. Plus they began going after the construction industry, which I felt was kind of unfair, because this was really increasing cost of housing. In our country, affordable housing is a big issue. We shouldn't take away the availability of housing to people with lower income simply based on an environmental wish list.

But isn't lumber the most environmentally sound building product you can use?

It definitely is, because trees (lumber) don't take chemicals to grow. They grow with sunlight and rain. Lumber is definitely the best thing you can use to build with, but people get upset when trees get cut for commercial uses. Some people think that trees are too special to be used for building purposes. Indeed, trees are very special. They do a really good job of cleaning the air, but as I found through my research over the years, an old tree doesn't do as good of a job as all the young trees that can replace it.

Of all the Timberline articles you have written over the years, what are some of your best memories?

Just that I learned what a good product timber is. The trees clean the air and are very good for the earth. It doesn't make me feel bad when they get cut down, because older trees don't do as good of a job of cleaning the air as younger trees do (as I mentioned previously). For every older tree you cut, you get 50 to 100 young trees; that's how much sunlight space one old tree takes. That is something I wouldn't have known before I started doing the newsletter.

What other articles stand out from Timberline?

Mainly learning about the ups and downs of the timber industry in the last 30 years). Whereas the 30 years before that, it was very stable. The lumber industry did really well when it was a free market business. Then the government got into regulating it. At that point it became very economically unstable, and hundreds of mills were shut down. Which became harder for us to find the lumber. We had lumber sources that we have developed over 30 years, and suddenly a lot of those sources no longer existed. Our customers who expected to be able to get a continuous supply of certain types of wood, found that we couldn't continue to supply those woods because the source wasn't there anymore. So Cloud continued to look for new sources when the old sources were shut down.

It's got to be an interesting place to be, in the middle of the industry, in the position of selling the lumber. You are not in the timber harvesting part of the industry, and you are not in the home-building industry. You are in the position of selling lumber, that has been harvested, to the people who build with it.

We are the middle guy, and it's best not to take one side or the other. It is better to try to give both sides of the story. Then allow people make their own decisions. I also remember I brought up the immigration issue, and had somebody write back really mad at me. I said that without immigrants working in the construction industry it would be difficult to build as many houses as we build. A reader didn't like that opinion, so he wrote me a full page letter arguing the opinion that it would be better for American workers not to have immigrant workers coming into the construction industry.



How long have you been writing the Timberline, and how did it evolve over the years?

This newsletter started as a hand-folded one page letter to customers twenty years ago. I wrote the text on my original Macintosh computer and it was basically just text, with maybe two or three articles in it. I would photocopy pictures on to the page, or use my own drawings.

I would then print it out in my own printer, and have copies made at a local copy shop. They would then collate and fold, making them ready for mailing. At that point we would bring those copies back here, to our house. Then, my four children and I would sit in the living room placing labels on, sealing, and sorting until all 12,000 copies were ready for the mail.

It evolved into 4 pages with color pictures, and many more articles...Many people wrote in that they would like "How-to articles". I started trying to add those articles on siding, decking, and finishing, anything that I thought would help people who buy our wood, have a better understanding of how to use it.

How many years did you do it that way for?

About five years.

How did you do it after that?

I got the guy who was making the collated copies to help me get the newsletter ready for mailing. He would help me set it all up and get it all out to the post office. It was nice because he was local, but the cost he was charging me was higher than quotes I was getting from other places. I asked him to give me a more competitive quote. He felt that he was doing it as cheaply as he could, in black and white. I went on the internet, and did some research. I found three or four other companies that could do the printing, in color, for the same amount that he was charging me for black and white.

Today I work on a G5 Mac, using InDesign 3.0. I send the copy on CD to New York where it is published and mailed out to points worldwide by Graphics Printing Plus and Mailbox of Ithaca, who do a fantastic job of getting this newsletter to you, our readers. 2006 also marks the tenth anniversary of Timberline online. You can read all ten years worth of back issues right on the website!

www.bearcreeklumber.com/services/timberline.html

Shown below is a Timberline header from January 2000



What's been the overall response to your newsletter over the years? Are customers really happy that you are providing that information?

I've never gotten any really bad feedback about. Most people seem pretty happy. We hired a guy named Bill Bailey to call almost everybody that gets the newsletter, and survey our readers. The overall response was, that they all seem to be happy, and want to keep getting it. So my impression is that most people who are not happy, would write us and say "please take my name off the list". They usually said it because the person that was getting the newsletter may have died, or was no longer in the construction industry. Or for some other reason they just didn't want to – they had no interest in hearing about Bear Creek Lumber anymore.

How many people did you initially mail it to?

Initially twelve thousand, and then we decided that was overly ambitious and cut it down to about six thousand, and now I believe it's about five.

What do you think the impact of the newsletter has been on your business over the years?

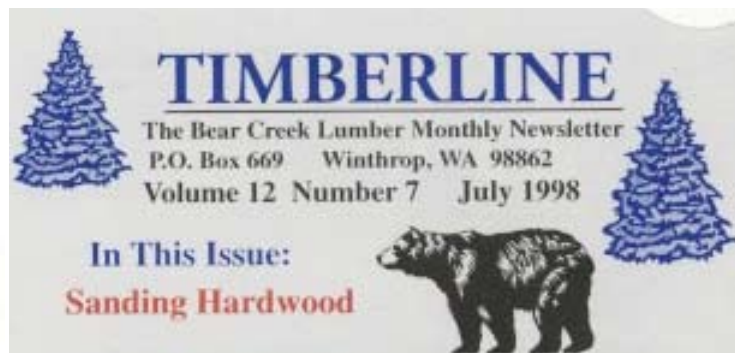
I think it's been real positive. We are a small company and it allows us to stay in contact with our readers who are spread all over the world. They come from all different walks of life, and instead of having salesman calling them all the time, they just get a newsletter that tells them what's going on at Bear Creek Lumber.

How do you feel about coming up on your 30 year anniversary for Bear Creek Lumber?

It is pretty exciting, I never thought I'll be a business person for 30 years!

Any other thoughts that you would like to share?

Well, I am very, very thankful for all the love and care I am getting from everybody around me since I have gotten sick. I am very grateful for the success of our business, and for all the great customers that we have had over the years. I would like to thank them for all their friendship, and the prayers they are sending me now as I am getting better. I would like to let them know that this could be a long haul, and I will try to be there for them if I can, but I just have no idea what the future holds for me.



Where do you see the newsletter going in the future?

I think with our specials we are going to try to do easier to relate to special sheets, so the people can see the specials and order them very easily, I really like that idea. I would hope we can do more information articles about our staff. Do more staff interviews, like this one, and help people understand the company more in a personal way. Also continue to do customer interviews and show customer's pictures, with the architects name mentioned, and that sort of thing. People seem to really like to see the end use of the wood, and that to me is pretty important. I would like to see the newsletter used in that way as well as mentioning specials, and clearance items, and that sort of thing.

Are there any stories you would like you readers to write in and share with you?

Yes, if you have a story about having had a primary brain tumor, and what your experiences were. I would like to create a forum on our website for people who survived brain cancer, since it is an unusual type of cancer for people to get. It'll be nice to hear from anyone that's gone through it, so we can all share our experiences. Also I am researching Chemotherapy, and other treatment, options. So if anyone has any suggestions, please let me know of them.

If you would like to share a personal story with Ela, email survivors@bearcreeklumber.com. Thank you, from Ela.



Above is an example of an early advertising header. Shown to the left is an example of our first Timberline Newsletter. It is the oldest one I could find, and it was published in January 1987. Shown below are bags of Timberline Newsletters ready to be mailed, this picture was taken in 1996, back when we sorted, labeled, and assembled all of our own mailouts.



We here at Bear Creek Lumber will do our best to continue in the tradition of fine quality newsletters. From now on, production of Timberline will be a collaborative effort by the entire staff.

Omaste Witkowski (omaste@bearcreeklumber.com) will take over as editor of Timberline, and Joe Hammer (joeh@bearcreeklumber.com) will continue as Sales Specials writer. The rest of the staff will be writing articles, and making suggestions as to the direction we will go in the future.

If you would like to see particular content, please feel free to write us, and let us know.

Thank you again for your support.

Omaste

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