

Cahoon Brothers Logging Increases Chipper Productivity with Onsite Maintenance Using Bevel Buddy™ Knife Sharpener

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For Ronnie Cahoon, owner of Cahoon Brothers Logging in Pantego, North Carolina, working in the woods is a way of life. It's a business that began with his grandfather and stretches ahead into his family's future.

"I'm a third generation logger," Ronnie said. "My granddaddy was a logger and my sons are working with me now, so they're the fourth generation. When my grandfather died my father took over the business. Then when he died, my brother and I took it over. We kept running Mama's job, and we all got our own jobs started."

Today, Ronnie's entire extended family is successful in the forest products industry.

"Between us, we have four big logging crews," he said. "We have Cahoon Brothers, J&R Logging, Cahoon Logging, and Glancy Logging."

Ronnie calls his grandfather a "small time" logger.

"He did his jobs with a pitty boom and a farm tractor," he said. "When my daddy took over, he cut his trees with a chain saw. He started with a dragline and then went to a hydraulic loader."

Today, the company runs a number of Tigercat fellers, including an 860 track cutter, and 718 and 724 rubber tired feller bunches. Skidders are John Deere 748's. At the landing, trees are processed and delimbed with Tigercat 234, 244 & 250 loaders all equipped with CSI delimbers. "Logging sure has changed a lot over the

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Cahoon Brothers Logging's Bandit Model 3590 micro-chipper. The Bandit is a towable, drum style whole tree chipper capable of producing more than 100 tons of chips in an hour. Models are available with 700 horse power and 875 horse power engines.



Cahoon Brothers Logging purchased its first Bevel Buddy™ about a year and a half ago to use on the Morbark Model 27 whole tree chipper.

years," Ronnie said, "And I know my boys are going to see different ways of doing things than what I've seen."

Ronnie's company, Cahoon Brothers Logging, cuts mostly hardwoods for pulpwood and for microchips.

"We take everything we cut to Enviva," he said. "We sell both our hardwood chips for pulp and our microchips to them."

The different companies in the family are each run differently.

"On my mother's job at J&R Logging, we work for Weyerhaeuser," Ronnie said. "They own the land, and they hire us to cut it for them. It's planted in pines like a cornfield; the trees are in neat rows."

Cahoon Brothers Logging works with a timber buyer.

"We go out and cut the timber for him and haul it to the mills," Ronnie said. "We throw all the tops and waste wood into the micro-chipper, which blows the chips into a van. Then we take everything to Enviva."

Ronnie wasn't the first in his family to start micro-chipping, but he knew a good thing when he saw it.

"My brother Joedy started with it about a year ago," he said. "He talked to my timber buyer and me about it, and we kept watching what my brother was doing. In May I

decided I would try it.”

Ronnie purchased a Bandit Model 3590 micro-chipper. The Bandit is a towable, drum style whole tree chipper, he said. It can turn almost anything, including tree tops, logging slash, land clearing waste, whole trees and brush into microchips that are uniform and saleable. The Bandit is capable of producing more than 100 tons of chips in an hour. It produces enough chips to fill a 45-foot van in less than 10 minutes. Models are available with 700 horse power and 875 horse power engines.

Although he hasn’t had it long, Ronnie is pleased at how the micro-chipper has integrated into his business.

“So far I really like it,” he said.

The microchips that Ronnie takes to Enviva are processed into fuel pellets.

“I’m not certain, but from what I understand, they’re shipping the pellets out of the country and using them for biofuel,” Ronnie said.

When he cuts timber, Ronnie said, he tries to work within 100 miles of his home.

“We try to stay within 60 miles of a mill,” he said. “Enviva is starting to get a lot of mills around. Garysburg has a mill that’s Enviva Steel; we haul some chips there. And we haul to Enviva in Ahoskie.”

Even though he’s been producing microchips for only 4 months, Ronnie said, having that process in house already has made a measurable difference in his business.

“It’s helped me probably 20 percent or more,” he said.

One challenge with chippers always is keeping the knives sharp. Working on a chipping job for his mother, Ronnie said, he discovered a sharpening tool called the Bevel Buddy™, made by Precision Sharpening Devices. The Bevel Buddy™ is a portable knife sharpening tool that lets the user sharpen the knives while they remain in the chipper. All that are working with the company’s chippers indicated that it is a tremendous help to be able to sharpen the knives right in the chipper instead of having to take them out to sharpen them.

“We bought our first Bevel Buddy™ about a year and a half ago to use on the Morbark Model 27 whole tree chipper on my mother’s job,” Ronnie continued. “We would have a chipper out on the road and when the knives got dull, we would run the Bevel Buddy™ over them. It would take us three or four minutes. We’d let the hood back down and go back to work.”

Prior to purchasing the Bevel Buddy™,

Ronnie said, they would have to take the chipper apart and take the knives back to the shop to sharpen them. Even if he had a spare set that was sharp and ready to install, changing the knives represented significant down time.

“On the Morbark chipper it takes about 30 minutes to change the knives,” he said. “Now I can hit the knives with the Bevel Buddy™ and in 5 minutes I’m ready to go again.” Ronnie said that the Morbark chipper of his mother’s is used primarily for chipping hog fuel.

Now that he has a micro-chipper of his own, Ronnie said, he uses a Bevel Buddy™ on it as well to reduce down time in the woods when the knives on his Bandit get dull.

“The Bevel Buddy™ is the biggest help I’ve ever had,” Ronnie said. “I get an average of 20 loads between sharpenings. Sometimes I might get more than that, but it depends on the kind of wood that you’re chipping.”

Mark Mills, president of Precision Sharpening Devices, said what drives his company is focusing on the end customer that is using the chipper. “Our Bevel Buddy™ product can save that customer money on knife sharpening costs, knife



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purchases, and even fuel cost due to chipping with sharper knives,” Mark said.

“I worked in a fully integrated wood yard for 21 years,” he continued. “That’s where this tool was born.” Mark saw a need for a sharpening tool that would be useful for the smaller tow-behind chippers that arborists use. Once Precision Sharpening Devices started selling the Bevel Buddy™, however, the forest industry discovered it and put it to work on the larger chippers such as the Bandit that Ronnie uses.

“Where Ronnie is working, there’s a lot of sand that’s really tough on the chipper knives,” Mark said. “The knives get dull really fast, especially when the guys are chipping dirty wood for fuel chips. They need something to keep the knives sharp and keep their production up. Many companies need the sharpeners on a day to day basis, so they purchase a second one to use as a backup.”

Mark said his goal for the Bevel Buddy™ is to return the edge on the chipper knives to factory sharpness.

“If a guy gets 10 loads or 15 loads on the factory edge of his knives, then when

he uses our sharpener, we want him to get the same 10 loads or 15 loads on a sharpening,” he said. “A user can do that in his machine up to three times. That’s where you really see your production numbers add up.” Mark indicated that a logger that is able to increase the efficiency of his chipper, can fill his quotas quicker. This gives him more time to service and maintain other equipment in his logging operation. This is a benefit of using the Bevel Buddy™ that many users often don’t understand until they have used it for a little while and experienced those time saving benefits of its efficiency.

After 25 years of manufacturing sharpeners for chippers, Mark indicated that the patent process on the Bevel Buddy™ is nearing completion. The product will most likely be patented by the time this issue of *TimberLine* is published.

In regards to micro-chipping, Ronnie said he sees a big future in this side of the forest products industry.

“I didn’t at first, but I’ve been watching it for a year with my brother,” he said. “I’ve seen what he’s done with it. We talked to Enviva about it and decided to

give it a try, and I love it.”


Ronnie’s children have stepped into the forest products industry, just as he went to work with his father.

“One of my boys, Brad, is 32,” he said. “He runs the micro-chipper. My other son, Tyler, is 26. He runs the tractor most of the time, but sometimes he runs the micro-chipper too. My wife is our bookkeeper, and my daughter was helping in the office until she decided to go to school to be a sonographer.”

What the next generation will do remains to be seen, Ronnie said. Brad has two sons, but they’re too young yet to have decided what their future holds.

“I’m hoping that’s going to be my fifth generation,” he said. “One’s nine and one’s four, so it’s too soon to call right now.”

Ronnie sees good prospects for his business in the near future.

“If this goes like I think it will, I’d like to be right on top of things,” he said. “With the economy the way it’s been, we just haven’t been doing much of anything. But now that we’ve started micro-chipping, I can see the light.” 



Ronnie Cahoon (center), owner of Cahoon Brothers Logging with his sons, Tyler (left) and Brad (right).