

## Twin-Cut Beginnings

By Janet Plante

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Where does an innovative idea come from? In the case of the Twin-Cut sawmill it comes from experience. From watching sawyers while you are still young. From being a sawyer yourself and thinking there has to be an easier way to do this. From dreaming in those spare moments about how you would do things different or change things to make it better or easier.

Where does an innovative product come from? From that sawyer when he meets someone who can see what he sees and can make it happen. But there is the trick! How do they see what you see? They don't have the experience that derives the idea. To find someone with the experience that transcends application. Someone who just understands, probably someone who should have been an engineer but choose a different route.

But you didn't find each other just for the sawmill you had other projects before that. Based on your forestry experience there were other machines that needed to be built first. Harvestors that did things such as using a topping saw. Something that was so simple and intuitive there was no thought of patenting it, something that has now become industry standard. A team was formed; ideas and experience intertwined with practicality and knowhow from both sides. Together you built the machine. Together you developed a system of communicating to expose weakness and solve problems, the results no less than revolutionary.

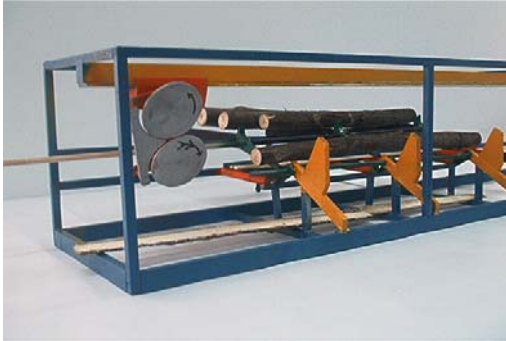
How interesting that by the time we have the experience, know how, necessary resources and education to do what can be done we are approaching a time when we should be looking towards retirement. The amount of time and energy that needs to go into a new project or development to get it done in a timely fashion does not allow for leisure. And if we have those earth shattering ideas too early in our career we are too busy making a living to invest the required resources. The proverbial rock and hard place.

Ah, but I digress. Timing, a critical component in all things, was if not right, at least close, although if you ask the participants it took too long to get where we are now. However here is where we are.

Back to the beginning – communicating the idea was essential and what better way than visual. A model was required for those that cannot see. A weekend, some readily available supplies and voila the 'model'. The power of the visual representation cannot be underestimated.

There is an invisible barrier that all new ideas face. **What currently is.** How will what is proposed make things better? And for that matter what is wrong with the way things are being done now? If it ain't broke why fix it? It takes a special type of person to venture into that territory. After all you could be WRONG! And no one wants to go there. I have nothing but respect for those who choose to undertake the new or different approach. It is

their role to advance the masses and it is they who shoulder the blame, for no recognition comes when they are right, and often they are but a stepping stone to the true path.



It is amazing to watch what a visual representation can do. Not everyone can see even then but watching the light come on is fun. Turning the model into reality now there is another talent. A number of things become counter intuitive. Things that should work don't and things that you thought you would have problems with work as smooth as silk. You know you have come a long way down the path when you only manufacture one prototype.

(And it is still working!) Even the simplest of inventions often work through several models before striking the right combination of components & process. To achieve that kind of success says something of the inventors and the process they use. The experience of the support team was put to work, understanding what needed to be done to achieve the required results for such a complex piece of equipment, and that was nothing less than outstanding. Looking back at the time frame can be both overwhelming (it took that long?) and astounding (We accomplished that in that amount of time, WOW!)

So here we have it. The product of our dreams and our hard work and we are proud of this accomplishment. Every time we watch it in action we are amazed and we renew our confidence in its ability to perform. Our hesitation to send it out into the world is gone. We are confident it will do the job and do it well.