

## **21. Harvest:**

J. F. Kelsey - - - 2024 May - - - Rev 6

### **A High Value Timber Sale:**

For whatever reason it is decided to have a timber sale, the land owner usually would be ahead to use professional help. For a **high-value** timber sale, finding professional help is even more vital. There are all flavors of people between your standing timber and the veneer mill, from saints to con-artists who love dealing with a naïve landowner that doesn't know the value of their holdings. For the kind of timber we are proposing to grow, there is a lot of money involved, which becomes an attraction.

A professional forester's life is "knowing-the-ropes" of timber sales. They will correctly mark trees to be sold aligned with your wishes, write legally binding contracts, solicit competitive bids from reputable buyers, inspect logging and transport operations, and generally protect the landowner's interest. By contrast, the landowner often will have exactly one timber sale in their lifetime. Your trees are what they are. You can't change them at this point. There is no reason for you to listen to a buyer's whining about your quality. Only what's on paper matters. Anything verbal is just noise.



***Figure 1. Beauties!***

### **Final Harvest:**

Black walnut trees live a long time, but just like us, they are mortal. On good sites they will still be healthy, growing, and making the owner money on their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday or longer. During their following 100 years they will deteriorate, lose value, and eventually fall down. The wisest timing would be to harvest at peak value, at the first sign of deteriorating tree health.

Judging the health of high valued trees is a topic worthy of much study. I'm a neophyte in this regard, but I do know that a large dead canopy branch or basal carpenter ants are signs that harvest is due or past due. An acre has enough room to support about two dozen of these final handsome giants.

Loggers have some expenses in setting up a legal logging site, so they rarely would be interested in dealing with a single tree, or even a single truck load. However in the case of a grand veneer black walnuts, such thing have happened. Keep in touch with forestry organizations and Walnut Council members, and don't be in a hurry. Your trees are growing in volume and prices are rising.



**Figure 2. Surprise! The buyer has more risk when buying standing timber, and less risk when buying logs as shown in Figure 1.**

## Partial Harvest:

Thinning by the method of “Pampering Crop Trees” was covered back in chapter 20. At some point in time, the trainers are gone and it is walnut trees that need to be removed. A good target time for such a thinning would be 50 years. It has been determined that the crowns of walnuts over age 60 will not expand to claim new canopy openings. On a 80 site-index site, all the tree would be 80 feet tall. Diameter growths should be from 0.2 to 0.4 inches per year, or 10 to 20 inch DBH at age 50. It is the slow growers and ugly trees that are to be sold, so this is not going to be like a power-ball win.

Once the culls are big enough to sell, it is a harvest, as well as a thinning. Due to high demand, “big enough” is a slowly decreasing number for both veneer logs and saw logs. Currently there are markets for saw log as small as 10” inside the bark and veneer logs around 15 inches. There is no reason to sell a 16” veneer tree even if it is bothering a better veneer tree. At each partial sale – remove the worst trees and save the best. Do not let a logger decide. A logger will naturally want to take the best and leave you with the worst.

The main issue for such a thinning harvest for the landowner is protecting the remaining crop trees. Harvesting large trees during a partial harvest is brutal work, but the remaining crop trees need to be protected from felling trees and skidding damage. Logging agreements should address this subject, with an explicit penalty for injuring a remaining crop tree. Large open bark injuries do not healed before microbe invasion, and are step one in creating a hollow tree.

Using the layout suggested in chapter 6. And with the trainers gone, there would be 32 foot alleyways between walnut rows. That is plenty of room for skidding, but a little tight for felling 80 foot trees. The best solution is a feller-buncher, which just lays the trees down. Although, that might be hard to arrange for a small sale.

The essence of thinning is to get cull trees out of the canopy competition. If the logger does not want a tree marked for removal, he should be obliged to kill the tree standing, thus avoiding surrounding damage from felling.

As partial harvests continue, the remaining tree quality gets better and better. With good growing practices these harvests should become veneer sales. Veneer factories (*below*) buy in truck-load lots (about 8,000 board feet). Smaller sales will need to go through accumulation centers.

Finally your great grand children need to watch the health of the final remaining giants. As long as they are growing, it's money-in-the-bank at double compound interest. Past mature stems start to deteriorate either from the top or from the bottom. To monitor tree health, we nowadays look for dying crown or carpenter ants entering the base, but by then, they will probably get an internal ultrasound. When the mature giant's health peaks and begins to decline, it is time to cash him in – at least \$30,000 a pop.



**Figure 3. Loading a half log onto a veneering machine**