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Commitment to Innovation and Quality Shared by Woodland Equipment and Risley Equipment

IRON RIVER, Michigan – A competitive 10K runner, Ron Beauchamp knows something about meeting goals. In 1974, he left a job as a chemical and metallurgical engineer at Ford Motor Company to become a business owner.

History of Woodland Equipment, Inc. (WEI)

When Ron established Woodland Equipment, Inc. (WEI), he was taking his first step into the forest industry. “Coming from the auto industry, I found the approach to forest machinery archaic. The auto industry was about precision, air conditioning, and ergonomic seating. Forestry equipment was rough cut steel with no attention to the comfort of the operator. My timing was good because the rubber-tired skidders were not 10 years into the market. It’s my generation that has lived through the mechanized transformation of the industry.”

The type of logging that Ron is most fond of is cut-to-length (CTL). “CTL means minimal disturbance of forest land,” explained Ron. “Skid trails are kept to a minimum and large landing sites are eliminated. Instead of needing space for the boom, space to swing and space to pile logs, the operator can go in, select their trees and pile pulpwood and logs in the gaps between trees. It also has a soft footprint. So instead of pulling complete trees with heavy machines that rut into the ground, you’re riding on top of the ground. On a good job, you leave the forest cleaner and neater than when you showed up.” He had a strong work ethic from his days growing up on a dairy farm – cows had to be milked twice a day, every day. And while he didn’t love school, he loved learning.

What Ron didn’t factor in was the severe downturn in the economy (e.g., interest rates approaching 20%) that happened soon after he took ownership of WEI. Times



Original prototype of the E-Clips® 200 being field tested with the Rolly 1 head.



Ron Beauchamp, owner of Woodland Equipment, Inc. (WEI).
The company, located in Iron River, Michigan, recently celebrated its 40th appearance at the Lake States Logging Congress in September.
(Photo Courtesy of Alan Condra, Source Media Network, and GLTPA.)



Reg Isley (left), President of Risley Equipment and his son, Dean (right), Vice President. Risley has been an innovator in the forest products industry beginning with the introduction of the RotoSaw in 1984, a product line that continues to evolve.

were difficult, but he was undeterred. "I'm not afraid of challenge," he said. "In the fall of 1974, everything fell off the map. We dealt with it day-by-day."

Ron explained that he and his wife, Karen, who celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this November, wanted to raise their family in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the place where they had grown up. WEI is headquartered in Iron River, Mich. They chose the name "Woodland" to stand as a reminder of an exquisite place. "In the Upper Peninsula, we are in one of the most beautiful parts of the world," said Ron.

Ron and Karen, who works in the office at WEI, were determined to outlast the recession of the 1970s. They did.

Others in the industry were also planning for a future beyond the 1970s, despite the shaky economy and an oil crisis. Ron heard that Pat Crawford was working on something interesting. Ron took the initiative and headed to Shawano, Wisconsin in 1975.

"I just showed up one day," said Ron. "I'd never met him but I'd heard he was building a machine. Pat really set the standard for the first zero-swing boom machine."

The machines for sale by WEI have evolved over the years as the forestry business has evolved. In 1979, Ron said WEI sold "50 Tree Farmer skidders, almost one each week". From the small town of Iron River, Mich., that year he was Tree Farmer's top-selling dealer across the entire USA.

In 1978, he became a Hood dealer for

John and Pat Hood. "By the mid-1980s, I sold 50 Hood units a year, mostly slasher units, as tree-length logging was in full swing. In the late 1980s, I began selling Risley saw heads X and selling a homemade harvesting head."

Considering the various manufacturers for whom he has distributed products, Ron explains: "Every one of them is different and did it differently." Each unique approach – each slightly different outlook – benefits the entire industry because it results in new and excellent products.

All About Relationships

Working with manufacturers over the years has been a great pleasure for Ron. "It's all about relationships," said Ron. And there's always a "symbiotic" element to the give-and-take.

The relationship with Risley Equipment, Ltd. strengthened in the 1990s. Ron was keenly interested in the development of the Risley harvesting head. He relished the opportunity to convey insight garnered from job sites, as well as to contribute his own perspective on the development of a head and headed all the way up to Alberta, Canada to do so.

"In 1995, I marketed the first Rolly head with the usual new product glitches," said Ron. "I marketed 18 Rollys in the first 24 months." During that time, many changes were made in the field to improve reliability, and WEI was the exclusive distributor.

"Risley continued to innovate," said Ron. For Risley during the 1990s, the Lim-

mit delimeter was front and center. "It was a stellar product for the next 15 years in building the business and helping it to expand."

Also during the 1990s, Risley was building its own track fellerbuncher. In 2001, Risley sold that fellerbuncher line – Timberking® – to Caterpillar Inc.

"Then Risley moved on to develop the soft track in 2003," said Ron, "and in 2005 developed the E-Clips EZ200 for Woodland as a replacement for the Timbco line that we lost once Valmet was sold to Komatsu."

Risley is headquartered in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. There was a great deal of back and forth between Risley and Woodland during the refinement of the E-Clips® EZ200, said Ron, who welcomed every chance to exchange ideas.

"It's a strong partnership: Risley is the innovator and producer; Woodland is the marketing and after-sales-support that keeps the system productive," said Ron. Both companies share an absolute commitment to innovation and quality.

History of Risley

Reg Isley is at the helm of Risley and, like Ron, grew up on a farm. That upbringing made you very resourceful. "You were grateful for what you had," said Reg. "It was a time of no running water and no power, but acres of unbroken farmland. My mother and father were true pioneers: working in camps, running trap lines, logging, sawmilling, and building the Alaska highway."

Reg's passion for innovation was lived daily, prompted by his family's diversity and a stack of *Popular Mechanics* that his father had left behind. "Anything that you could dream was possible," said Reg. So with determination to be active in the workforce, and a dream to pursue aeronautical engineering (his passion), Reg chose welding. He used his creativity and skills to build his first helicopter and airplane within the first four years of receiving his welding ticket.

Reg's business ventures began with a focus on service, repair, and manufacturing in the industrial resource sector of Grande Prairie Alberta, Canada. Risley's name comes from the "R"



Tim Gafner, US Product Specialist for Risley Equipment.

in Reg and his last name “Isley”.

In 1984, Risley introduced the RotoSaw, an innovative product that provided a means to mechanically cut a tree up to 30" with the aid of modified excavator adapted for forestry. This product line continues to evolve, with over 1400 built and in service to date. The newest cut-line tool from Risley – the Rotosaw-H1920R – is just 4700 pounds, has a 360-degree rotation, and is designed to be paired with virtually any 18-25 ton forestry carrier.

As the forest industry continued to adopt mechanization, Risley carried on working with all major Equipment O.E.M.s to develop integrated solutions for both mobile equipment carriers and the forestry attachments to be carried on them, such as the Rotosaw®, Lim-mit®, Rolly®, Cobra®, Sidewinder®, and Slingshot®.

The pursuit of a purpose-built forestry carrier evolved over time from custom excavator conversions to the purpose-built Timberking line of Fellerbuchers, the TK700 and TK1100 series that was sold to Caterpillar in 2001. Reg, still with his childhood dreams, saw this as an opportunity to offer the world of forestry a product line that was world class, from a company that was world class.

Today, 12 years later, in the light of a new dawn, Risley introduces the “E-clips”®: a multi-purpose, multi-industry, next generation “Transformer”.



The new Risley Hot Saw was introduced recently at the Lake States Logging Congress in Escanaba, Michigan.



The E-Clips® has a Risley Flex-Trac® high-speed track system like an Army tank, with a rubber-bushed, steel-pad configuration. “Speed, along with traction and terrain capabilities, mean this machine can really climb and, at speeds above six mph, can compensate easily when a track goes over a rock,” said Reg Isley.

E-Clips® 200 Newest to Market

Some readers of these pages might have met with both Ron and Dean Isley, the Vice president of Risley Equipment, when the E-Clips® carrier was on display at a recent forestry show in Escanaba, Mich.

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“Dynamic oscillation” is the term Risley applies to its suspension design. “The E-Clips® moves as fast as an eight-wheeled bogie machine.”

Collaboration was a key part of getting the E-Clips® EZ200 ready for launch. The machine was field-tested with Woodland customers over an 18-month period. This identified some fundamental changes. Now the E-Clips® EZ200 has a Rexroth drive system and many other focused improvements.

Ron likes the entire concept of the E-Clips®, especially the rubber-brushed steel tracks that increase the longevity over all steel. “This design is unique in that it has infinite wear life. When the rubber wears out, you just pull out the rubber bushing and replace them,” said Ron. “That’s a real benefit to my customers.”

The E-Clips® carrier is a multi-purpose vehicle, which is the way forward. With its capability to distribute load between the front and rear axles, stability, and smooth ride, it meets the needs of professionals in mining, oil and gas, construction and agriculture and more, as well as in forestry.

Continuing Innovation

WEI offers its own computer control system (WCS) for the Rolly; it has been in the computer business for 25 years and has installed its latest version of WCS on more than 100 Rollys. “We’ve made it North American simple,” said Ron. “The European system was driving customers crazy with overcomplication. Our version is a CAN Bus (controller area network) state-of-the-art system that takes away some of that frustration. Just push a button and it works.”

Doers both, Ron and Reg have known each other and been friends for 25 years. “You have to get off the porch,” said Ron. Getting to customer sites and understanding how machines are being used allows a dealer to better serve. It also enables a dealer to anticipate the needs of customers, he explained, and to relay ideas to manufacturers.

Ron travels often to oversee installations and adoptions of equipment. When we spoke with him in early October, he was preparing for a trip to Kentucky and he had just been in Maine and New York State.

“There’s a verse from a wise man called Solomon that sums up my philosophy: Whatever you do, do well, for when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom,” said Ron. “Forthrightness” is what he values most in colleagues, including Reg and Dean. When he talks with them, he always asks about when to expect the next new product from Risley. That’s how intense the commitment to innovation at Risley is. A Vision and Mission to Step  Ahead! ®



Flex-Trac Harvester

A real life transformer

A superior product
designed to make your job
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Rolly II



Eclips® EX300



Eclips® EX400

TRANSFORMING INDUSTRY WITH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS



- Risley's Eclips® is powered by a Cummins® 300-400 hp Tier III Engine
- Exclusive Risley high-speed steel Flex-Trac™
- Independent Floating Dynamic Transfer Suspension
- Bi-directional cab for conventional style tractor operation
- Flexible multi-purpose attachment points

www.RisleyEquipment.com

Phone: 780-532-3282
Toll Free: 1-866-783-7243

Contact: **WEi WOODLAND**
Equipment, Inc.

800-825-9904
www.woodlandequipment.com