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Clyde Schurman, Founder of Schurman Machine, Dies at 92

WOODLAND, WASHINGTON (December 18, 2006) – USNR, the largest U.S.-based manufacturer of sawmill equipment, is saddened to announce the death of Clyde Laverne Schurman, founder of Schurman Machine Works, Inc. He passed away in Woodland, Washington on Dec. 10, 2006 surrounded by friends and family. He was 92.

Clyde Schurman was an inventor who loved machine mechanics and steam engines. His understanding of people, machinery and the sawmillers' determination to modernize, led to the implementation of significant changes in the sawmill industry that have dramatically effected the way mills process lumber to this day.

“Clyde had an excellent reputation for building heavy duty, high quality sawmill machinery,” said Phil Kinsella, USNR’s longest standing employee who was originally hired by Clyde in 1962. “One of his sayings was, ‘If 1 inch plate is good, 1 ¼ inch plate

is even better,' Phil remembers. "Another was 'Make it heavy enough and it won't vibrate.'" This philosophy built Clyde a reputation for having the best and most heavy-duty equipment in the business.

Schurman Machine Works became well-known for manufacturing a wide variety of innovative and robust sawmill equipment including edgers, trimmers, gangs and bucking systems. One of the most revolutionary product ideas to come out of Schurman Machine however, was the application and use of thin-kerf saws on its edgers and gangs.

Mike Knerr, Vice President of USNR, was originally hired by Clyde as a fabricator in 1969. He said, "Clyde's innate understanding of machinery earned him a reputation as one of the most innovative manufacturers of heavy-duty sawmill machinery, a heritage USNR is proud to be a part of."

Clyde Schurman was born Sept. 10, 1914, in the small town of La Center, Washington, to Frank and Evangeline (Eckert) Schurman. His father was a blacksmith who taught him how to work on machinery. While still in school, Clyde started a little shop to help farmers by sharpening their plowshares. Even before graduating, he had a local reputation as the young craftsman who fixed farming equipment and repaired machinery. As sawmills sprang up in the area in the 1930's, they came to him for help.

In 1939 Clyde Schurman moved his shop to Woodland, Washington to better service the up-river loggers and sawmills. Local farmers had come to count on him to keep their equipment running, so when World War II broke out, they banded together to get him a deferment from service so he could help them continue to provide food for the country. Schurman Machine even picked up some defense contracts for sawmill machinery, as wood was needed for the ships.

After the war in 1945, Vern Thomas of Thomas Lumber came to see him about a new edger for his mill in North Seattle, Washington. Clyde accepted the project and built his

first edger which was made out of cast iron. Based on the success of that first machine, Clyde decided to specialize in edgers, gradually moving away from farming equipment.

In the mid-1950's he began experimenting with new ideas and making changes to his designs. Thin-kerf sawing was a difficult sell because it required new technology, new saw filing equipment, and new ways of doing things. But the huge potential to increase yield inspired Clyde, so he included sawfilers in the design process, which eventually led to a more positive reception of the new equipment.

As the 1970's rolled around, Clyde found "the demands of more technology were taking all the fun out of work." So when USNR offered to purchase the business in 1975, he agreed. Clyde sold Schurman Machine Works to USNR, which continued to operate out of his original building in Woodland until 1982. Later that year, USNR relocated to a new facility at its current location, just across the freeway from the old shop. The new building sits adjacent to Schurman Way, a road named in Clyde's honor.

"Clyde is one of the most respected men I have ever known," said long time friend Phil Kinsella, USNR's Manufacturing Production Manager. "Everyone who worked for Clyde became a better person because of his high standards and morals."

Clyde Schurman married Mildred Elizabeth Christensen on March 20, 1940. She preceded him in death in October 2005. Survivors include two sons, Gerald Schurman and Roger Schurman; two daughters, Linda Wyttenberg and Janice Schurman; a brother, Paul Schurman; a sister, Florence Thompson; two grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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