

After The Storm



Correctional facility uses loaner sawmill and edger.

They will talk about Hurricane Katrina for a long time in Wiggins, Mississippi. The storm was huge. It was fierce. “It hammered and hammered and hammered and hammered,” repeated Tim Garrison, owner of four Wood-Mizer sawmills and resident of Mississippi.

Katrina was an unwelcome guest who stayed a long, long time. “Twelve hours,” says Patty Rogers, local coordinator for the Coastal Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council. She lives outside Wiggins with her family and said the storm “was so loud you couldn’t hear the trees fall right outside.”

Wiggins is a rural community twenty miles north of the Gulf Coast in the heart of the Mississippi Delta lumber belt (lumber is Mississippi’s second most important agricultural crop.) The area has been through numerous storms, but nothing like Katrina’s 200-mile-per-hour winds which left hollow places in the plentiful forests. Homes and businesses were also heavily damaged and repair crews are everywhere. “The blue tarp is a common sight,” says John Hicks, a colleague of Wood-Mizer.

John Hicks, Tim Garrison and Patty Rogers were key players in Wood-Mizer’s response to the hurricanes.

Just after the storm, Tim called Wood-Mizer to offer his property outside Wiggins as a temporary pick up site for new sawmills. His property, known as Beatrice Sawmill, includes a camp with a kitchen and open areas for unloading and loading. It is perfect place for Wood-Mizer to get mills closer to the affected area and to its new customers for training.

John lives near Wood-Mizer’s headquarters in Indianapolis and was called upon to help after Patty Rogers requested assistance from Wood-Mizer. Patty and her organization had a vision of enlisting the help of inmates from Stone County Regional Corrections Facility in processing damaged trees. As you may recall in our previous issue of *The Wood-Mizer Way*, Wood-Mizer answered the call for a loaner sawmill and edger.

Working with Patty and the prison, John set up a familiar, orange Wood-Mizer LT40 Super-hydraulic sawmill and a Twin Blade edger just outside the razor wire fence which surrounds the medium-security facility. More than a dozen inmates learned from John how to cut and trim logs hauled in from surrounding forests by the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

Richard Harvey kept the sun off with a black baseball cap while he worked on the sawmill. He says he will probably work for two uncles in their landscaping business when he returns to Jackson. “A sawmill would give the company another way to make money,” he says.

One of Scooter Robinson’s blue tattoos is the name of his son, Burton Lynn. The five-year-old is a motivation for Robinson to leave prison with a way to make a living. “I picked up on the Wood-Mizer pretty quickly,” Robinson says.

Even inmates whose release is years in the future are glad to help the area recover from the storm. They believe their new skills will help them eventually.

The Wood-Mizer LT40 stayed in the prison yard for months and cut thousands of feet of pine and cedar. “We would rather not have had the hurricane,” says Warden Dwain Brewer. “But working with the Wood-Mizer sawmill has been a positive for the inmates.”

Work also continues for Tim Garrison at Beatrice Sawmill. Garrison is a big man who will sing and play his guitar with little or no prompting...a nice treat for new Wood-Mizer owners who picked up their mill, a half-day’s instruction, and a meal at Garrison’s camp.

Still, six days a week, –Sundays are for church and family – Longleaf pine logs are trucked in for Garrison to convert to 1 x 4 lumber, a staple of roof construction. “Biloxi is thirty miles away,” says Garrison. “Since Katrina, I’ve cut enough 1 x 4s to stretch from here to Biloxi and back.”

At the moment, there seems no letup in the recovery work in Wiggins and elsewhere near the Gulf Coast. That’s why they’ll be talking about Katrina for a long time and Wood-Mizer will continue to get mills to the area. ☺

*Wood-Mizer:
Where
They’re
Needed
Most*



Top: Wood-Mizer temporary pick-up location is in Perkinston, Mississippi. Above: Damaged trees are converted to usage lumber by Mississippi inmates.