

PAUL BELL: Passing of a Legend

It is with sadness that we reflect on the passing of Paul Bell at the age of 66 on 27 December 2023.

Paul introduced the Bell 3-wheeled Feller Buncher to the US market in the 80's.

It was the early days of turning natural forests in the South into managed forests. He met the challenges of creating a successful machine that could handle the variable terrain, mixed forests; harvesting large hardwood and pine without damaging them, mixed in with small diameter underbrush and the characteristic vines of the Southern landscape from Texas to Virginia.

The Bell Model T Feller Buncher, which was surpassed by the Super T and Ultra T, was named in honor of his admiration for Henry Ford.

The unconventional 3-wheeled Feller Buncher was the laughing stock of the industry when it first showed up. Half the size of its 4-wheeled shear-head fitted competitors, Paul's vision of a dangling chainsaw head with an interchangeable shear head for small diameter thinning applications, became the number 2 selling machine on the market with over 2000 machines in operation by 1993.

The success of the machine can be attributed to many things, I will name a few:

1. He ran the machine himself and was good at it. We sold 6 machines at my first demo with him in the gullies of Mississippi
2. He reacted to any design or quality issues immediately and not at the customers expense.
3. He valued 24/7 uptime for customers foremost; He bought 3 planes to service the Southern market and trained the pilots to do basic troubleshooting of the machines.

Today, 30 years later I still find Bell machines running and hear the sigh of nostalgia for those "good old days" when you could harvest trees at the lowest cost per ton ever.

Thank you Paul Bell for being the Strong, Simple and Reliable Man and Visionary you were.

René Cuchens (né van der Merwe)

