

Climbing Spurs and Tricks

The Story of HAUCK TREE SERVICE

The year 1958 marks the beginning of Hauck Tree Service. That year I was a student at Lock Haven State Teachers College in Pennsylvania. I had just purchased my first climbing spurs. They were worn out spurs used by a telephone company and were never intended for tree service, but they got me started. I could earn extra money to supplement a GI loan by removing trees. Some trees had to be climbed and taken down a limb at a time. That's one way I worked my way through college.

Sometimes beginnings are hard to pin down. Was it when I climbed on the outhouse roof the first time? What about climbing the rafters in the barn before a plunge into new hay? I couldn't resist climbing the oak tree in the barnyard. I had to shinny up to the first branch, but then it was a cinch to be looking over the highest twig, just about level with the barn roof.

On the other hand, maybe it was the firewood. It took two or three bushels of kindling every week to start that dirty coal stove in the morning. Have you ever heard the music of dry chestnut as it flew from the blade of a well aimed ax? Maybe it was helping Dad on the end of the two-man cross cut. "Don't ride the saw!" he would say. Dad and I cut down quite a few trees together with a two-man saw. A two-man saw is not the kind of thing you forget about. It inspired my logo. When I look at my logo, I remember Dad saying..."Don't ride the saw!"

Working in the saw mill for my father-in-law was educational. Loading logs or pulp wood or railroad cross ties...one was about as heavy as the other. Then along came the power chain saw. Learning to use a chain saw was a requirement for getting into tree service.

Just the same, I think 1958 was the year Hauck Tree Service was born. It was 'self-employment'... you know that big word you put on the tax forms for the IRS.

Teaching school kept me busy for three years. Problem was, I could make as much in one day climbing as I could all week teaching...and was appreciated. It was teaching that brought me to New York, and tree service that made me stay. While looking at a teaching job at Scottsville, NY, in 1960, I was amazed at all the dead elm trees in the area. The blight had done its job, nearly wiping out the stand of American Elms. Thousands of trees had to be removed from residential and city properties. My side job was secure. After three years teaching, Hauck Tree Service became a fulltime job.

I took a job in the Kodak Research Laboratories in 1964, and continued running Hauck Tree Service on the side. In 1986, Kodak paid me to leave. At 55 and still thriving on

sawdust, I was back in the climbing saddle, full time.

All three of my sons have taken a stab at climbing trees. Dean, the oldest, founded Oatka Tree Service with a partner but sold out to do something better in a machine shop. Steve and David now own Hauck Tree Service in Freeport, Florida.

I made it for forty-two years now without falling out of a tree, but not without some close calls. Once I stuck my thumb under a rope where it didn't belong and that thumb hasn't been cooperative since. Other damage has not been as sudden. All the joints seem to ache. Can't hear them creak, but then I can't hear much of anything after listening to chain saws for forty-two years. You wouldn't either. It comes in handy though, when the wife wants something done.

As I review this story in 2013, I can add that I retired from climbing in 2009 after 50 years of climbing.

