



Cleereman's staff includes: (from left) Jon Cleereman Jr., Rod Chitko, Fran Cleereman, Jeff Krueger, Adam Cleereman and Paul Cleereman.

“Customer First Service” Keeps Cleereman Industries Growing For Five Generations!

By Paul Miller Jr.

Newald, WI—From its humble beginnings as a family-owned and operated sawmill in the early 1900s, Cleereman Industries has grown into an innovative leader among lumber equipment manufacturers today.

“We like to say we build the heart of the sawmill – the carriage area,” said Fran Cleereman, co-owner of the company. “But the truth is we have grown to the point that we can fully equip a mill too.”

In fact, Cleereman Industries manufactures not only 12 Carriage models to fit any sawmill operation, but it also makes: hydrostatic and electric carriage drives; extreme duty bar type log turners; airbag and hydraulic cable tensioners; sawyer cabs and control booths; Lumber Pro; heavy duty double cut band mill; and custom material handling systems.

Paul Cleereman noted that, “Carriages are our bread and butter. We also make 150 and 200 horsepower hydrostatic carriage drives. Nobody else does that.”

Leading this decades-old company is a team of gentlemen whose years of experience in the lumber industry grants them expert insight into what a sawmill needs for optimal efficiency. Fran Cleereman, Tom Goris, Paul Cleereman, Rod

Chitko and Jeff Krueger own Cleereman Industries. They work closely with a team of 32 employees – many of whom have been with Cleereman for over 25 years – who perform their craft within six separate buildings to fulfill equipment orders.



The Lumber Pro Stationary Linear Carriage is pictured.





The Cleereman Crew.

“Our property includes 40,000 square feet of space, and included in that we have inventory, a machine shop, a hydraulic department, a material handling area, a welding area, an office, research and development, and the main building where the equipment goes through final assembly,” said Fran Cleereman. “We’re getting larger every year. We no longer serve only the smaller family mills. Now we’re also serving the largest mills in our industry.”

This year we have sold over 40 carriages as well as four Lumber Pros and all the related material handling equipment. By the end of 2015, Cleereman Industries sold over 1,060 carriages over the past 66 years.

To maintain prompt service to such a large customer base, Cleereman prides itself on quick delivery if a customer needs a part. “Excellent customer service is critical,” said Fran Cleereman. “If you buy something that we built, we have every part on the shelf. That’s been a selling point when potential new customers come to tour our facility. If a piece of your equipment temporarily breaks down, we realize that stops production. But with Cleereman, your machinery is down only as long as it takes for us to ship the part to you, or for you to come pick it up. I have come to the facility

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myself on New Year’s Eve and loaded a motor on a truck to go to Independence, VA, so that sawmill could be up and running again the next day. That’s how much we value our customers and their time.”

Rod Chitko, who oversees much of the engineering at Cleereman, added, “Our business is not always just about selling. We are selling a service, and it’s about trying to do the right thing for our customers. Our perspective on mate-



The equipment is as follows, from left to right: 100 HP Hydrostatic Cable Drive, 150 HP Hydrostatic Cable Drive, 50 HP HPU for Cleereman 50 HP Carriage Drive, Custom Sawyers Cab and Standard Sawyers Cab.



This is Cleereman’s High Speed 4-Way Sort Table.



This is Cleereman's High Speed 4-Way Sort Table.



The Lumber Pro is pictured.

rial handling today is still specialized; it's custom built to fit the mills' needs. We are a solution-based company for our customers.

"When visiting a customer's site, I start looking from the front end to the rear of the mill and study the flow. I then talk with the customer to better understand the problems they have to make the best recommendation for their needs. I will review the speeds and feeds of the primary and secondary machine centers and adjust the support equipment's speeds to save the customer money by reducing the wear and tear on the iron. In most cases by adding VFD to the support equipment, you can better balance the flow path to deliver the product (Boards and Cants) just in time. This will also save on the electrical bill at the end of the month by not overloading the transfer and pulling a full load on the motors."

The Cleereman name emerged in the lumber industry in the early 1900s when William Cleereman operated a sawmill in Green Bay, WI, about 100 miles south of Newald.

Later, he moved the entire operation to Newald with his twin brother and son, William Jr., and business partner John Jauquet. William Sr. raised two sons in the lumber industry. Robert preferred logging; Francis liked the mill.

Francis was eventually influenced by two men, the Kleve

brothers, who worked for his father, who shared their machinery insights with the young Cleereman. Francis, and John Kleve, became best friends and more interested in the machinery side of the business than lumber, and that interest later led to the start of Cleereman carriages, the first of which was built in 1949. At the time, it is reported that this technology was "startling" in the industry. However, over time, the realization became clear that with good machinery, fewer employees were required to do the job, and the carriages drove up production.

Decades since then, Cleereman Manufacturing changed its name to Cleereman Industries, and its most recent acquisition of Precision Fabricating in 2008. This has allowed Cleereman Industries to specialize in material handling equipment engineered and designed to fit the customer's requirements and needs to achieve the most effective changes for the plant in both efficiency and production.

Today, Cleereman Industries is guided not only by its lumber veteran owners, but also by a management staff equally seasoned. Among key personnel are: Fran Cleereman, president; Paul Cleereman, vice president; Jeff Krueger, vice president-carriage division; Rod Chitko, vice president-material handling division; Jon Cleereman Jr., hydraulic engineer; Adam Cleereman, design engineer; Perry Sekel, electrical design & engineering; and Rob Kittle, sawmill design specialist.

In regard to the culture and philosophy that drive Cleereman Industries, Paul Cleereman stated, "If customer service is #1 and if you do the right thing for the customer, it's going to pay off. Win/win for everybody. That's how you build relationships."



Cleereman Industries' Standard Bar Turner is pictured.

For more information visit
www.cleereman.com.