

Richard Shaw, aka Super 6, on Logging in the Tyler County in the Olden Days

by Michael G. Maness,
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The photo of Charley Riley beside his truck loaded with big logs has a special place in the heart of Richard Shaw of Doucette, Texas.

C.R. Riley Trucking cut logs with chain saws and moved them with mules, then by dozers, and lastly by the big specially-made tractors designed for deep wood logging called skidders.

This photo has pride of place, bringing back memories of the hard but good and honest life of his logging days.

Richard was not born here. After college, he entered forestry management, meandered to Doucette, and then fell in love with Sue, aka Beverly Sue Riley.

Charley never wanted her to marry a logger. Yet she loved her daddy so much. What else could she do but fall in love with a man like her dad. Richard went to work for Charley, trucking logs out of the woods to the mills for Charley for 28 years, for a total of 34 years in logging.

Like all loving families, there are a few things one or the other feels are non-negotiable, or must-haves. And between Richard and Sue, he made the point that this photo needed to stay on the wall. Of course, that was her daddy too.

Don't we all have a few photos among our family albums that stand out? A few that, more than the rest, seem to capture a lifetime of emotions, memories, and connections?

Richard loves to share stories about logging. It was fun and tough.

There were cold days warming by an early morning fire. Stifling heat in the summer. Taking a break and watching ants work together. Ever vigilant for the "widow maker," they all watched for that rogue log or tree branch that could take a life.

They hauled logs out of the woods all day every day from dawn to dusk—dangerous.

How many times did he need a dozer to pull, push, or winch his huge load out of the deep woods? The trucks had no carpet on the floorboard, but rather had a floor like those spray-on bedliners. Because they are going to get dirty. A few truckers would customize their floors with wood.

Onetime Charley's brother Neally was driving a dozer skidding logs when a log busted through his leg. The cabs were open back then. Neally was able to clutch the dozer to a stop, and Charley and his crew got Neally out of there and to a hospital. He recovered fine.



Charley Riley stands beside his truck in an old photo kept by his son-in-law Richard Shaw of Doucette, Texas. The load is about 100,000 pounds and reminds Richard of his 28 years of logging.



Richard does not remember the date of the photo, but he remembers that Charley loved that truck and its powerful V8 diesel.

Look closely where Charley is standing, and you will see that the poles are hinged at the bottom near the trailer bed. Notice the cable that holds the pole in place. Usually, the pipe was a length of oilfield drill stem pipe. “Very strong,” said Richard. The pipe was slid into the holder, swung up by the hinge, and the cable was attached with a pin. The cable was over an inch thick, and the leverage stress on that cable was enormous.

One time, Richard noticed a cable was frayed. He pointed it out, but his buddy was in a hurry and took off anyway. Just at the turn, the cable snapped and the load of logs fell off. Richard had told him reminded.

At some delivery points before hydraulic unloaders, the driver would knock loose the cable pin and let the logs fall off onto a dock at the mill yard. Richard still remembers the crashing sound of the tons of logs rolling off.

The load in the photo may have weighed around 100,000 pounds.

Richard quipped, “DOT would have really gotten us today for a load like that.” He did not have a lot of kind words to say about the troopers that would stop them, and no real malice either. They could get a ticket for a low tank of windshield cleaner fluid, which seemed too picky for a busy logger.

Charley’s team usually included four saws, four skidder drivers, and four choke hookers. And the truckers like Richard who hauled it all. They used mostly Homelite chainsaws back then. They had several sizes, and it took a strong arm to wield one all day.

Not without reason, both his sons Kooter and Ramon entered logging, a real logging family. CB radios kept up communications, and space prevents the history behind their handles: Richard was “Super 6,” Ramon “Porkchop,” and Kooter just “Kooter.” All worked for Charley, too, until he passed in 2000. Kooter, the oldest, bought his own log truck, which he would shine up on special weekends for “working truck” shows. He recently retired from logging and now drives for FedEx. Ramon is a lead mechanic for Tejas Equipment in Hillister, driving all over Texas and more maintaining the big skidders, cutters, shredders, and chippers that Tejas sells under affectionate brand names like Tigercat, Bandit, and Beast.

Fully retired, Richard buzzes around town in his jeep or big Dodge pickup. On a clear day in Doucette, if you are passing through, you might see him on his big Bad Boy lawnmower trimming the grass around his place, his son’s place, and Post Office.

And if you see him, pat him on the back, for the truckers are the life-blood of our economy.

