

BY AMANDA MURPHY,  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

# SAWDUST IN YOUR BLOOD

## Chip Capps, Arcola Logging

**B**eing new to forestry, I had never visited a logging site before. I have seen them in my travels over the years, but my visit to Arcola Logging Co. Inc.'s site north of the North Carolina-Virginia border — near Lawrenceville, VA — was going to be my first professional experience.

The owner of Arcola Logging, Chip Capps, texted me a state road to follow, then mentioned turning off onto a dirt road. My little SUV was in heaven bumping along the dry, dusty logging track. Living in the Triangle has its advantages, but it's got nothing on a lonely country road for peace of mind.

I met Capps onsite, where the pickup trucks were parked at a landing or deck. Our interview was held in the front seat of my vehicle to avoid the noise of the machinery working across the dirt road. (We both had our masks on.)

Capps graduated North Carolina State University in 1981, and went to Texas to work in corporate America for three years. In 1984, Capps got a call from his dad: he needed help with the family logging business. So Capps headed back home to work for the business his grandfather had started. Within a few years, Capps bought the business from his family.

"Once you work on your own and get involved in the woods, sawdust is in your blood," he says. "It's always there, and once you get used to being independent, you can't go back to the corporate world. In the corporate world, you do a lot of putting your ideals aside to toe the corporate line. With jobs like logging or contracting or driving trucks, you can tailor your business to your ideals."

Arcola Logging runs two crews in the woods daily: a small crew and a larger crew, depending on tract size. The organization owns nine trucks in total, but only seven run on a daily basis. Capps' son, Weldon, has been working with him full-time for three years. Capps admits working with your children can be stressful but he and his son both realize this and work to keep the relationship strong personally and professionally. Capps' succession plan is that Weldon will eventually take on the business so Capps can step back and work on other things he wants to pursue, like fishing and boating. He loves both inshore and offshore fishing and has hopes to retire in less than 10 years.

Capps has received numerous awards, including the 2000 NCFA Logger of the Year, American Pulpwood Association Southeastern Logger of the Year, and the Georgia Pacific Regional Logger. He volunteers his time on the Forestry Mutual Insurance Company (FMIC) Board of Directors, as Chairman of the Carolina Loggers Association (CLA), and with the American Loggers Council Board of Directors. He was formerly a member of the NCFA Board of Directors and Executive Committee. Capps also has volunteered his time as a County Commissioner in the past in Warren County and was the State Chairman for Log a Load for Kids for four years.



 Owner of Arcola Logging Chip Capps, and his son, Weldon.



**Q As a small business owner, what lessons have you learned along the way?**

The school of hard knocks is definitely your best teacher and a smart man learns from his mistakes, but a smarter man learns from other people's mistakes. If I had to do it all over again, I would start planning for financial succession at a younger age. Small business owners like myself put these things off when just trying to maintain cash flow to pay bills. I wish I had started sooner.

**Q Is there anything you practiced a lot as a child, and did practicing help develop any of the leadership skills you use today?**

Yes, absolutely. On both of my parents' sides of the family, there was never any question of whether or not children and grandchildren would be independent. We were taught the importance of standing on your own two feet. In other words, it was important not to take free handouts from folks and rarely did our family just rely



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on outside help. While we certainly have had support from others, my ancestors passed on the idea of self-reliance to all the children and grandchildren, and that idea sticks with me to this day.

**Q What advice would you give your future self today?**

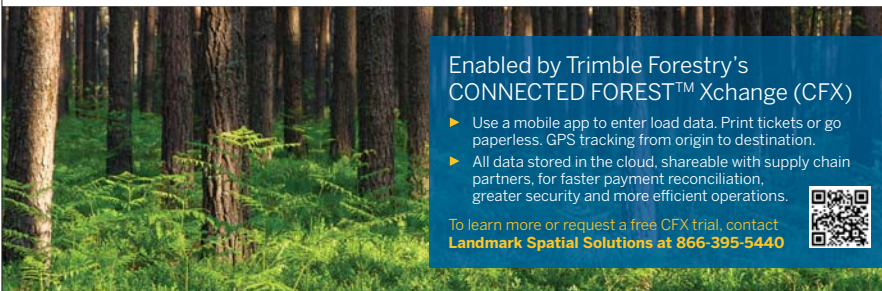
I work too much. Small business owners need to plan better so we can enjoy the people around us. We are all guilty of working too much to build our businesses, but it's important to also enjoy things outside of work and set boundaries on our personal time to protect that time.

**Q How has COVID-19 affected your operations?**

We are lucky enough to be in a business outdoors, where if we pay attention, we can keep on going with business as usual by staying six feet away from each other doing things like working on equipment. While we weren't directly affected, initially work slowed down significantly at the mills that buy logs from us in the spring of 2020. Things began to speed up afterwards because of the surge in demand in lumber and paper. We believe COVID will really affect us after the fact, like in six to 12 months after everyone is back to work. For instance, we are seeing long wait times on purchasing pickup trucks, logging equipment, we can't get parts for our equipment and there aren't new products being manufactured. There are other issues that COVID will affect down the road, including liability insurance. As insurance companies change and rebound from COVID, health insurance companies will incur costs, which will trickle down to business owners and individuals. ■

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