

# Jerry Gray Named Florida's Outstanding Logger Of The Year

**Jerry Gray has been named Florida's Outstanding Logger of the Year by the Southeastern Wood Producer's Association**

Gray Logging's roots go back even before 1956 when W.C. Gray, Jerry Gray's father, began logging with his future brother-in-law, James Stephens, in Homerville, Ga., W.C.'s father had worked as a sawyer and the Gray family cannot remember a time when 'logging' wasn't a part of their heritage. In 1957, W.C. traveled with James Stephens and crew to New Mexico where they logged for two years in the mountains until the lumber market declined, urging them all back to South Georgia.

They soon moved to Perry, working on land that would later be bought out by Buckeye-Foley. In 1961, W.C. married Sylvia Thrift and they moved to Madison County where he ventured out on his own in 1971 and began W.C. Gray Logging. In 1973, another brother-in-law, "Buck" Thrift joined the operation. When W.C.'s sons, Jackie (1978) and Jerry (1979) joined the operation, they officially became "W.C.



Greene Publishing, Inc. Photo by Kristin Finney, September 16, 2010

**Ginger Gray holds the Florida Forestry Association Award while Jerry Gray, Florida Logger of the Year, holds the Southeastern Wood Producers Award.**

Gray and Son's."

At this time, the family business included farming as well as raising cattle.

Jerry Gray married Ginger Sale in 1981. Jackie Gray was diagnosed with melanoma in 1998 and in 2001 he lost his battle with cancer. Both W.C. and "Buck" retired from the business the same year. It was during this time that Jerry's mettle was tested and his faith sustained him as he transformed their traditional family logging operation into a professional harvesting business named "Gray Logging LLC."

Land was purchased in the Madison Industrial Park in 2002, where the current shop and offices are located. A Husqvarna dealership was also acquired at this time. Jerry and Ginger managed the

family and the business according to the principles of faith, excellence, discipline and planning based on ambitious but realistic goals. GH Timber was formed under the entity of Gray Logging, LLC in 2005 and a second crew was added. Forester Larry Hammock became instrumental in timber procurement for GH Timber and the second crew.

Ginger Gray left her first grade class of 16 years to become secretary-bookkeeper for the operations. In an effort to improve efficiencies and reduce costs to the operation, additional expansions and adjustments to the business structure were made. For ex-

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## Logger Of The Year

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Photo submitted

The truck drivers for Gray Logging are pictured from left to right: Rudy Koon, Willie Hall, Norman McCall, Jerome Carter, Kneeling, Jerry Gray, manager, Frankie Hodge, Kenny Richardson, Freddy Stalnaker and Richard Anderson.

ample, parts and supplies for equipment and trucks is purchased in bulk and stored at the shop for maintenance and upkeep. Gray Logging is not only a Husqvarna dealer but also a dealer for Gates Hydraulic, Wix Filters, Great American Parts, Goodyear Tires (bulk buyer) and Akins LLC (Oil Distributor). Jerry's personal favorite motto to live by comes from renowned basketball coach John Wooden, "If you fail to prepare you are preparing to fail."

The employees of Gray Logging enjoy an exceptional relationship with their employer. Not only are Gray Logging employees paid an above average wage for the region, but each one feels a sense of ownership in the business's success or failure due to Jerry's management principles and company employment policies. For many years, customers and consumers of Gray Log-



Photo submitted

One of the crews for Gray Logging is pictured from left to right: Richard Hunter, crew supervisor and fellerbuncher operator, Wayne Hunt, loader operator, Sammy Harrym, skidder driver, Jonie Taylor, saw hand and kneeling is Jerry Gray, manager.

ging wood fiber have referred to Jerry's business as being "a cut above." When asked what makes his business such a stand out in the industry, Jerry replied: "We believe that if we set the highest standards for ourselves, others will be pleased with what we provide for them. I would not be satisfied with minimum effort from myself and I won't accept it

from anyone who works for me. At the same time, I genuinely appreciate what my employees do for this business and I make sure they know it." Gray Logging LLC was the Florida Outstanding Logger of the Year District (III) winner in 1999, 2000, and 2004. From the shop-garage to the woods and trucking operations, every aspect of this busi-

ness evidences exceptional leadership and management. Jerry's favorite quote as told by his family and peers is: "If you don't forget where you come from you'll always know where you're going". The roots of this organization are indeed deep and thriving in fertile soil.



Photo submitted

Part of the Gray Logging crew are pictured from left to right: John Needham, saw hand and skidder operator, Dean Tuten, crew supervisor and fellerbuncher operator, Andrew Hodge, skidder driver, Edward Hutchinson, loader operator, Eugene Coney, saw hand and kneeling is Jerry Gray, manager.



Photo submitted

The shop crew are pictured left to right, Kyle Hunter, crews supervisor and mechanic, Josh Ensminger, shop manager and truck supervisor and Rodney Bearden, mechanic.