



BY CASEY CREAMER

## When has a saw just been hammered too much?

I guess I will have to say that a saw has been hammered too much when it was hammered by someone who didn't know what they were doing. As a saw smith, my job is to counteract whatever happened to the saw last. If what happened to the saw last happened during the normal production process, chances are I have seen saws in the past that look the same as this one and therefore I know what to do to counteract whatever happened to it.

On the other hand, if what happened to it was that someone who didn't know what they were doing tried to hammer it, it can be very difficult to try to figure out what a fool and his hammer might have done to it to put into its present state of disrepair.

Sometimes we get to see saws that look like they were hammered by the ugly stick. Meaning the saw is chock full of all sorts of huge hammer marks. When you hit a saw properly with an appropriate saw hammer, you will certainly leave some evidence that you were there. But when done right, those hammer marks should be very slight and not really obvious. If the first thing you notice about a saw is all of the hammer marks, chances are someone hit it too hard with a hammer that might have been heavier than needed. I swing a four-and-a-half-pound hammer. That works okay for me. A five pounder would also be okay. If I did a lot more of those thick slasher saws, I would want a heavier hammer, like six to maybe even eight pounds. But I try to avoid doing slasher saws when I can. Even if your hammer is heavier than needed, if you swing it properly you shouldn't be leaving big ugly dents in the saw.

Oddly enough, even if your saw has been seemingly hammered to death, it is still possible to hammer it properly and have it perform like it should. There is no question that trying to get all of the lumps and bumps out of a saw that is full of deep hammer marks is not a lot of fun. Of course, you won't ever get all of the lumps and bumps out in that situation. What you will do is to get the saw to be basically flat on the log side with an acceptable amount of wobble and the right amount of tension in the right area. If the saw conforms to your long straightedge then it will work. But if you put a six-inch straightedge on it, chances are it will never look very good because that short straightedge will rock on every single big hammer mark on one side and show hollow on the other side. What you want is for the saw to have an overall profile that properly fits your long 48" straightedge.

Usually when someone tells me they think their saw may have been hammered too much, I assume that they are having trouble running that saw either because it wasn't hammered properly or because they have a problem in the mill that is preventing a properly hammered saw from running properly. The other possibility is that they were told by whoever is hammering their saws that this particular saw has been hammered too much. What does that mean?

Usually when I run into that situation I have them bring me the saw so that I can have a good look at it. And generally, what I find is a saw that the guy with the hammer couldn't figure out how to make it run properly so he pronounced it no

longer useable. At that point, all I must do is hammer it properly and make sure that things are okay at the mill such as the condition of the collars and the way the saw is being sharpened, and all of a sudden, this saw that had supposedly been hammered too much is up to the task at hand.

Now, that is not to say that they don't eventually wear out. They do wear out, but it is not from being hammered too much. They wear out because the saw has hit too much metal and it will cost more to do all of the needed welding than the saw is worth. Or they are pronounced worn out because the sockets are worn out. What causes the sockets to be worn out? You have basically three choices here, in no particular order:

1. The saw was poorly manufactured with respect to the socket geometry so that in a sense the sockets were bad to start with. (That doesn't happen a lot, but it can happen).
2. The saw has a history of not being sharpened often enough which put more pressure on the dull teeth, which in turn will tend to push the shoulders back just enough for the sockets to loosen up and start to spit teeth.
3. The sawyer never bothered to oil the sockets and the bits and shanks when changing teeth.

Essentially when most of the sockets are worn to the point where the teeth no longer fit tight enough, it is time to replace that saw. You needed a new sign out by the road anyway.

Interested to learn more from Casey Creamer? You can watch our video on how Casey hammers circular saws on *The Northern Logger* YouTube page. Just search for "The Northern Logger" on YouTube and click the video entitled "How to Hammer a Circular Saw with Casey Creamer." Please send future questions about sawmills and their operation to Casey Creamer, saw doctor and president of Seneca Saw Works, Inc., PO Box 681, Burdett, NY 14818, (607) 546-5887. You can also reach out by email: [casey@senecasaw.com](mailto:casey@senecasaw.com).