



BY CASEY CREAMER

This is somewhat of an add-on to last month's Sawmill Forum. It had to do with a situation where I had hammered six saws for a customer and all but one ran fine. The bad one dove out of the log like crazy. A saw doctor like myself makes some assumptions based on five saws being fine and one acting terrible. But before I made those assumptions, I had to make sure my variables were covered. In that case, one variable was easy to assess: The same person hammered all six saws and had been hammering all of their saws for many years with no other issues.

Here is a totally different case with similar math, but more variables. I once ran into a situation where someone purchased a new saw from someone other than me, but the factory asked me to look at the saw because the mill was having trouble with it. The saw looked okay except that after running improperly on a mill, it was at a point where it needed to be properly hammered. Was it hammered properly from the start? I don't know. Sometimes I can tell when a saw doesn't run right because it wasn't hammered right in the first place. Other times, it is not so clear.

After checking all of the things on a new saw that can't be corrected with a hammer, such as socket geometry, I hammered the saw properly. I sent it back to the mill and it still would not run properly for them. The mill manager told me that his four other saws ran okay. Therefore, he said, this new saw must not be hammered properly because it wouldn't run, while his other saws ran just fine.

Now, if the person who hammered those four saws was the same person who hammered this one, it might be another story. But since I didn't hammer those other saws, and I didn't have the chance to inspect those other four

saws, they represented an unknown variable to me. The fact that four saws ran okay while one saw didn't run okay does not automatically point to the one saw not being hammered properly. My assumption was that the four saws were not hammered according to my specs, but they worked okay on this mill because whatever was wrong with the saws was wrong in the direction that they would compensate for whatever was wrong with the mill, which is exactly why a properly hammered saw would not run properly on this mill. I did eventually have the opportunity to inspect the mill and found that they had very serious collar issues along with some alignment problems. Probably whoever had been hammering their saws was hammering them to be dished towards the log side, while their worn collars were dishing the saws towards the board side. Well, if the saws are dished .030" towards the log side and you tighten the nut on the collars and as a result the saw gets pushed .030" towards the board side, you are now invoking the law of compensating errors. There are times when two wrongs can make a right, at least for a little while.

That is not the right way to do things, but the end result was that the bad collars would straighten up the dished saws so that they would run okay. A saw that was straight at the beginning would end up being dished .030" towards the board side and would never run properly. For some reason, the mill manager was so hung up on the mathematics and logic of four saws running okay and one running poorly that he never could grasp the concept of having to fix his collars so his brand new saw would perform properly. Of course, if he had accepted what I told him and had the collars resurfaced, his new saw would have run okay, but his four other saws would have to be hammered properly for them to run okay.

He just couldn't get past the thought that if one out of five saws didn't run right, that new saw had to be the culprit.

Then there are some who would say that if four saws are running okay, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." I have seen many mills fall into the trap where, instead of fixing a problem properly, they just keep mis-adjusting everything they can to eventually compensate for the original problem instead of fixing the one thing that was wrong to begin with. For example, if you have to run 1/8" of lead or more to make the saw run properly, you definitely have a problem that needs to be resolved. And then after you fix that original problem, you have to remember to set the lead back to 1/32" to 1/16" and correct whatever else you mis-adjusted in the process, or you will still be having problems.

Imagine if your pickup truck had an alignment issue that made it constantly pull to the left. You could get an alignment done to correct the problem. Or you could just run the right side tires with about ten pounds lower air pressure than the left side tires and chances are, your truck will drive in a straight line. Of course, your tires will wear on the outside edges prematurely, but at least you didn't have to pay someone to realign your truck.

*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.*