

Good afternoon! Thank you for attending this session. My goal is to open some minds up to the idea of working easier in the trees. This might seem to be a simple, evident, idea but from my experience, that isn't the case. The people who attend TCI, ISA and chapter trainings are typically the more progressive companies. I have to be reminded every once in a while that we are really just the tip of the iceberg.

Our lives are enveloped in technology. Many of you flew to Milwaukee on really complex airplanes. Those who drove most likely have computer controlled fuel injection on their vehicles. I'd be surprised if there is less than 75% of you who don't have a cell phone and/or a pager. Speaking of them, in MN we ask folks to turn them off during the presentations. Anyone who gets a call is asked to make a \$20 donation to the TREE Fund. The TREE Fund is an example of modern arboriculture too. Dedicated to funding research into issues that directly effect our lives is the purpose of the TREE Fund. The Tree Dynamics & Arborists' Techniques Fund is part of the TREE Fund that is dedicated to finding solutions to the challenges that face climbing arborists. Techniques, equipment, training and identification of hazards are all issues that will be addressed.

Many times I've talked with climbers who seem interested in modern climbing techniques but the interest fades when they realize that they have to practice the new techniques and probably spend some money on new gear. There are other climbers who realize that in order to move ahead, they must reduce production for a time in order to learn. Once the new skills are mastered, the paybacks are appreciated. For some climbers, making the step from a tautline hitch to a Blake's is their introduction to progressive climbing. For others, it's the use of a split tail. Again, the climbers who take the time to learn, see the value in this more technical and complex system.

Don't get too enthralled by the "latest" technique or gear. Learning incrementally is the best plan. Make one change in your system and work with it "Low and Slow" until you can use the skill without looking. Once you can tie the new knot or use that new biner by using only your fingers, you are ready to add another change. If you self-test by doing this "Eyes closed" test, be sure to check yourself before you take your safety off and start to climb. In a short time, you'll be able to add more pieces to your system. If more than one change is made at a time, you'll have no way of knowing which new piece has made the difference. Take the time to attend the demos on the show floor. On Saturday there will be a climber's picnic at the park where the Student Climb is being held. Everyone is welcome to hang out and share techniques.

The climbing systems that climbers use these days are quite complex. Gone are the days of a rope and rope snap. Now, progressive climbers use SRT to access the crown, set a false crotch, and tie in with one of many high performance climbing hitches. The more individual pieces that are added to our systems the more things can go wrong. In order for us to climb safe we must make sure that EVERY piece of equipment is working. Stepping into using

modern technology demands that climbers make a visual inspection of their systems often. Not just when the gear is being put away. While I'm climbing, I make it a point to check my systems over every time I re-clip a biner. If I recrotch in the tree, I'll make a visual check of every piece of gear and a manual check of any piece that comes across my hands. Gear gets retired and destroyed when it no longer functions.

Remember, our safety doesn't just effect ourselves. There are two words that I'd like to leave with you to consider while you move on in, Widows and Orphans. What good are we if we are hurt or aching from our work? By joining in with modern tree technology there is no reason that a climber can't have a long, healthy, productive career.

What does it take to be a tree climber?

In The Home Owner's Tree Book by John Stuart Martin, Mr. Martin relates his introduction to tree climbers by in the chapter titled "Pirates, gypsies and noblemen"

...any man [or woman TTD] content to earn their livelihood by climbing trees has to be a little bit "tetched" to start with. They have to be lean, muscular, nerveless, and somehow persuaded that trees are challenging. They must want to climb and conquer then no matter how tall and perilous. Due to their concentration on survival, and their pride of prowess, all tend to be prima donnas: sensitive to criticism, quick to anger, devil-may-care in their fun and games.

The book was written in 1962. Have things changed that much in forty years? Some have, but there are basics that will be with us as long as there are tree workers.

How many in the audience started their career on manila rope and are still active climbers? Not necessarily every day climbers. Please raise your hands. Take a look around. Get to know this group of climbers. We've stayed with arboriculture and have succeeded in being productive.

Our careers started when the best manila climbing rope that could be bought had a breaking strength of about 3,000#. Because the rope is a natural fiber, the strength deteriorated. Now, we have ropes with a minimum breaking strength of 5,400# and many climbing ropes that are much stronger than the minimum. With the introduction of Arbor Plex in 1979, tree climbing entered it's Modern Age. There are several products, events or inventions that have become markers for arborists. Starting in 1979 we left the age of Manila and entered the age of Plastic, just like what was forecast in the movie "The Graduate".

INTRO TO GROUND UP

Understanding and supportive employer, cranky at times. Supports the time and expense of learning progressive climbing skills.

Traditional vrs. Progressive

-Definition Trad-Learned what was needed to move into the crown of a tree some time ago. Not a hard and fast date. Learned an adequate amount and has not moved forward with technology. Learned once and repeated for twenty years

-Signs Uses body thrust to enter tree. Maybe ladder. Worst case, pruning with spikes. Traditional climbing closed climbing system. No false crotch. Works only the inner two thirds of the tree. Carries two sections of pole saw around ALL of the time. Sits in the saddle most of the time, Rarely works with the climbing rope at more than a 45 degree angle. Clunks when they walk from the steel gear, if any.

-Analogy Cane pole fishing. Works OK but isn't very productive. The fish must be enticed to come to you. Cheap, low tech. Generally a low success rate. Can be fun but generally quite sedate.

-Prog Learned what was needed to move into the crown of a tree and then kept moving forward. Always searching out new, easier methods for working in the tree. Learned once and modified every year for twenty years.

-Signs Uses throwline for setting line high in the tree. Footlocks into tree. Uses a split tail with a high performance climbing hitch. Climbing line NEVER touches bark, always uses a FC. Works out to the tips of all the limbs and prunes with a handsaw in the outer half of the crown. Chainsaw is used only on the inner half or two thirds of the crown. Pole saw is used occasionally, if ever for pruning. Climbs the tree and relies on the rope to catch them incase of a fall or as a balance. Works most of the time with the rope at angles greater than 45 degrees. Jingles when they walk from the aluminum and alloy gear, sometimes too much.

-Analogy Put the cane pole between the studs in the garage, bought a rod, reel and tackle box. Started to attend seminars, watches fishing shows on TV, buys videos, plans family functions around Opening Day. Goes to where the fish are. More expensive, high tech. Generally a higher success rate on a given day compared to cane pole. Can be extremely fun and hardly sedate.

SLIDES

From Sebastian Junger's book FIRE:

It should be pointed out that people whose lives are inherently dangerous, like coal miners or steelworkers, rarely seek "adventure." Like most things, danger ceases to be interesting as soon as you have no choice in the matter. The fact that someone can free-solo a sheer rock face or balloon halfway around the world is immensely impressive, but it's not strictly necessary. And because it's not necessary, it's not heroic. Society would continue to function quite well if no one ever climbed another mountain, but it would come grinding to a halt if roughnecks stopped working on oil rigs. Oddly, though, it's mountaineers who are heaped with glory, not the roughnecks, who have a hard time even getting a date in an oil town.