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Helping the Environment, Providing Jobs, by Grinding Out Success

The acorn was planted in a tiny blacksmith shop in 1957. Mr. Norval Morey and two other men developed and patented a portable pulpwood debarker. From that small beginning a mighty oak of a business has grown into a manufacturing complex of over 1,250,000 square feet and 600 employees. All of the company's products deal with processing of trees and tree remnants, including debarking, cutting, grinding, chipping, and mulching. Mr. Morey, President and CEO of Morbark Industries, Winn, Michigan, still guides his firm. Employees applaud him as a leader and an imaginative innovator.

There's no product idea Mr. Morey and his employees won't have a crack at. If a customer comes in with a problem he thinks will be solved with a new piece of equipment, the Morbark R & D group, usually with a basic idea from Mr. Morey, start sketching, drawing, cutting, and welding. They invariably develop a dependably performing product or they buy it back and give the customer an improved model.

Solving a customer's problem is substantially responsible for their current rapid growth—almost a doubling of sales in the past five years. Builders and developers, when clearing areas for construction, must remove huge mounds of tree trunks, stumps, and branches. Many landfills no longer

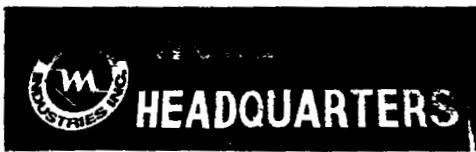


Tim Hurley, Lincoln Technical Representative, Larry Graves, Michigan Air Gas Sales Representative, Dan Haenke, Morbark Vice President, Building Operations, and Dave Boerma, Store Manager, Michigan Air Gas, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. (Left to right)



The Liberty Bell Story

accept unprocessed tree remnants. So Morbark developed a line of wood waste grinders and chippers at the request of customers facing heavy disposal costs. Tree stumps, wood debris, and branches from cleared building, pipeline, fire break, and other sites, are ground and chipped, suitable for



The sprawling complex of the Morbark Industries facilities in Winn, Michigan.



A Morbark Industries' equipment system clears tree waste and grinds it down for landfill acceptance or a biotherm energy system.

acceptance at landfills. Whenever practical, equipment users sell the chips as mulch and finely ground material for compost. Morbark's newer wood waste disposal, reduction, and recycling machinery has been leading the recent surge in company growth.

Trees, Tree Waste Removal

Morbark Industries makes a full range of tree and tree waste removal and disposal equipment and systems. Tub grinders chew up tree wastes and the grindings are fed by way of augers or conveyors to a screen. The screen then feeds chips to one area and finely ground material to another—by way of Morbark conveyors or blowers. Small mountains or truckloads of mulch or chips are made rapidly.



Tree trunks and branches are processed and chips are blown or conveyed into trucks for removal.

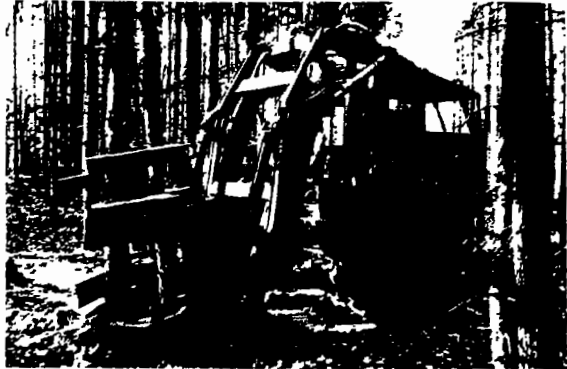


Morbark disc saw shears a tree off at ground level

Semi-trailer loads of processed wood waste can be dumped with a Mor-Lift Dump. Combinations of their equipment can cut down and grind trees, stumps and all—at the rate of hundreds per hour. Morbark Industries still produces debarkers, both stationary and portable. Saw mills, saw heads (for cutting trees down at ground level), and disc and slasher saws are also manufactured. Handling equipment includes Morbark brush buckets to lift stumps, loads of branches, and logs, log forklifts, and log loaders and grapplers. All are ruggedly, powerfully built.

Morbark employees take

pride in the sturdy construction of their products. "Sometimes the final design of a product is simply the last prototype that doesn't fail," said Dan Haenke, Vice



Taking trees down two at a time.

President. Building Operations. But, of course, plenty of know-how and experience goes into the initial design, development, and manufacturing of Morbark products. Nearly all of upper management came up through the ranks. Most started out at entry level (as many new employees still do) and learned welding, layout, and other manufacturing procedures. "There's low turnover here," said Mr. Haenke. "Many employees have 28-30 years or more at Morbark."

Teams Work

Work is usually done with teams of two, three, or four employees. They supervise themselves primarily and are responsible for their quality and production volume. "Minimum supervision works well here because our



Whole trees are cut, picked up, and chipped with Morbark heavy equipment.

employees have a rural, farm work ethic," Mr. Haenke said. "In fact, many still operate farms." Winn, in central,



Welder at work with Lincoln power source and LN-8 wire feeder.

rural Michigan has a population of 250, less than half the number of Morbark employees. Mr. Morey likes to create jobs. We were told that he feels it a personal responsibility to create more and more jobs by continually expanding the business.



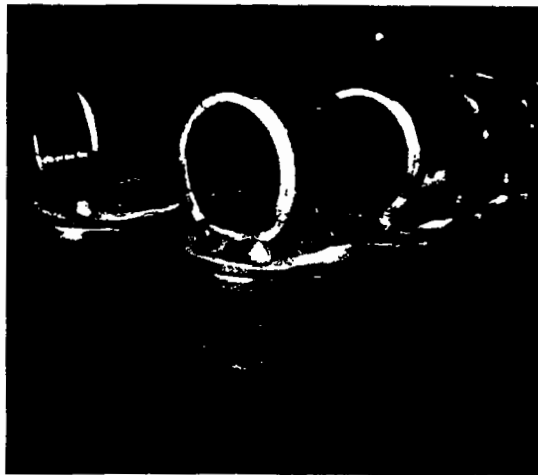
Cylinder manufacturing with subarc welding process.

Increased sales have developed by contracting with major heavy equipment dealers across the country. International sales have risen, also, with sales to Russia, Australia, and South American countries. Extra jobs have been created because Morbark produces a substantial number of their equipment components. For instance, they produce their own hydraulic cylinders, fabricate hydraulic hoses to size, and make larger components such as augers for feeders. A huge warehouse area is dedicated to just hydraulic fittings.

Moving Steel

When it comes to steel, they move it—100,000 lbs. a week

through their huge plant. Most welding is done using flux-cored Outershield[®] or solid wire for MIG welding and, of course, shielding gas. Morbark has 400 Lincoln power



Cylinder attachment rings welded to cylinder body.

sources and LN-8 wire feeders at work. "Lincoln products have an excellent national reputation. They're very durable. We have machines that are over 20 years old and still working hard—no LN-8 failures. We've used Lincoln products almost exclusively since 1967," said Mr. Haenke. "Haven't had one Lincoln motor burn out." Tim Hurley, Lincoln Technical Service Representative, Flint, Michigan, is at their shop whenever needed. He works closely with Larry Graves, Michigan Air Gas, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, a Lincoln distributor. Of the 525 production employees about 70 know how to weld. The



Lincoln motors power debarkers and pole peelers

company has an aggressive program for them to learn and to keep improving their skills. The size, complexity, and diversity of the Morbark product line requires employees to be versatile—prepared for several types of jobs. Products are fabricated in groups of five or 10 and built from the ground up week to week. So employees learn the different production requirements for most of the Morbark line. "We have really great people here," said Mr. Haenke.

Good Work, Good Pay

Morbark employee wages match or exceed wages of other jobs in the surrounding area. And they have been enjoying plenty of overtime recently. All raises are merit raises. When individuals are recommended for increases, they are seldom, if ever, turned down we were told. And advancement opportunities are abundant since promotions are from within. A key employee benefit is a very organized, detailed safety program. Employees enjoy health care and retirement programs and a bonus program that is awarded in terms of extra weeks of pay. The company participates extensively in civic activities in the area, especially with the schools and a local community college that

helps with welder training. The type of training offered is often coordinated with Morbark's anticipated job opportunities.

Morbark Industries has a reputation as a leader in the manufacture of quality products—building the strongest of any tree and tree waste removal products on the market. We saw nothing to dispute that during our visit. The skills and the work ethic of Morbark employees can only bring continued expansion and success.

Randy Glassburn,
Editor



Lincoln DC-400 supplies the power for component fabrication at Morbark Industries, Inc.



Chip chute being fabricated.



These Morbark tub grinders ready to shred stumps and trunks