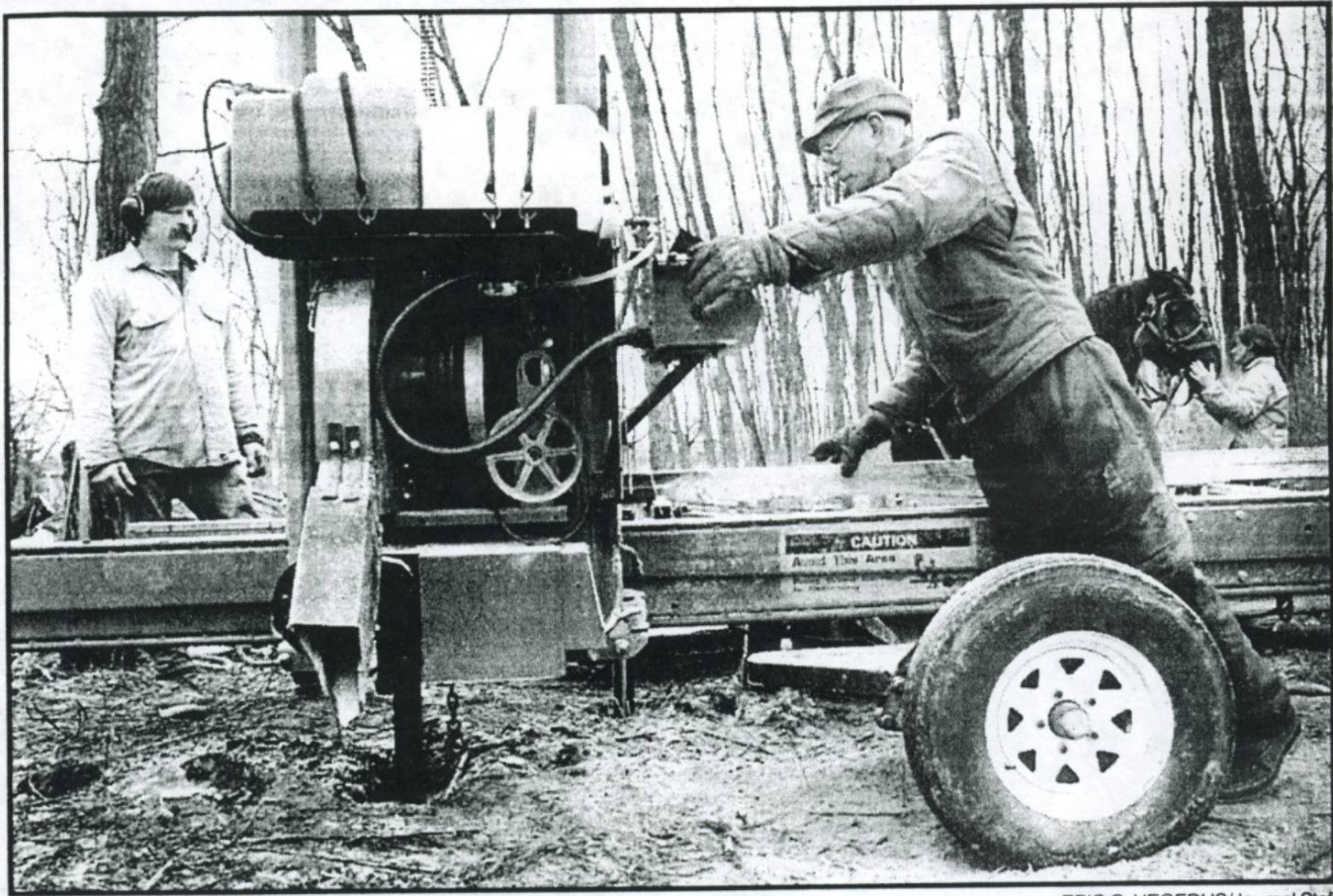


# Among the black locusts



ERIC C. HEGEDUS/Journal Staff

**GOOD WOOD:** Dave Gell, left, watches as Dierk TerLouw right, Carolyn Touryniere tends to Miss, who is used for moving cut trees.

## T-burg forester selects his cuts with environmental care

By ERIC C. HEGEDUS  
Journal Staff

TRUMANSBURG — By all appearances, Dave Gell's low-impact logging operation seems somewhat outdated.

After all, how many lumber mills employ an 18-year-old horse named Miss to move cut wood from one area to another?

But Gell's simple formula has the distinction of producing high-quality, toxin-free lumber that leaves the forest better off than when he arrived.

"We're using it in the same application as pressure-treated wood, but this doesn't have the arsenic and chromium that pressure-treated wood has," said Gell. "We're not putting toxins into the environment."

His harvest is black locust wood from a 10-acre parcel in Trumansburg. This particular species has proven more superior than many others at adding nitrogen to the soil,



Neighbors

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— Dave Gell,  
of Trumansburg

which stimulates the growth of other trees in the immediate area, he said.

Many locusts tend to be crooked, partly due to genetics and branching habit. Gell and his team — which includes Miss and Ithaca residents Dierk TerLouw and Carolyn Touryniere — cut the less-perfect trees into small logs for fence-building material.

This leaves behind the nitrogen-rich soil and, just as important, growing room for straighter trees. "We are selecting the trees that have little potential to grow into good timber logs, and we're using them now, giv-

ing more room for trees that show potential to grow," Gell said.

The Trumansburg resident has been doing about two portable mill jobs a year for the last decade, usually finding them by word-of-mouth.

The final product of their most recent efforts will be 2,000 board feet of wood for an 8-foot-high by 180-foot-long fence. Not to mention a healthier tract of land.

"We're looking for long-term benefits in the woods," Gell said.

Additionally, many seedlings planted for later use as lumber are dying because of poor soil quality. Logging operations and lumber companies have been "making money at the cost of environmental degradation," Touryniere said.

"I'm choosing toward sustainable forestry," Gell said, "not the big buck."

'Neighbors' is a weekly Journal feature focusing on the unsung people of Tompkins County. If you have a suggestion for a 'Neighbors' profile, drop a note to The Ithaca Journal Photo Department, 123 W. State St., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850; or call 274-9211.