

Shelter Forest International: Offering Solutions With TigerPLY[®]

By Wayne Miller

Portland, Ore.— Shelter Forest International (SFI) manages production for six Hardwood plywood mills that produce the company's newest product, the TigerPLY brand of Hardwood Plywood.



SFI's president, Ryan Loe, said the engineered plywood, TigerPLY, is manufactured primarily from poplar veneers that are grown on sustainable, and environmentally friendly plantations. "When we looked at global resources for building our products we found a large sustainable supply in Chinese poplar plantations," he explained. "The cost is low, the forests sustainable and the trees can be harvested on a 10-year rotation. That makes it one of the most sustainable resources in the industry."



Matt McCoun- Inspecting final packaging TigerPLY's C9 Core, Birch Plywood

Loe said the development of the TigerPLY product began at the request of customers. "We started out at the request of customers with whom we had done business for many years," he said. "As import plywood became a bigger factor in their requirements, we decided that we could bring some solutions and solve some problems for our customers to keep costs minimal and achieve the quality level they want at the same time."



Plantation nursery, One year old poplar trees, Scheduled for harvest September 2019.

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“We spent several years developing the product,” he continued. “It was just in the past year that we’ve achieved the consistent quality at the production volume that we were seeking. We’ve accomplished that through partnerships with manufacturers around the globe.”



Ryan Loe noted that his brother, Rod

the highest quality of any production around the world.”

Among the many products manufactured by SFI under the TigerPLY brand, one recent offering is TigerLITE. “TigerLITE comes with an 18 mm, ¾-inch, 4x8 panel which is an ultra-light 46-pounds per panel,” Ryan revealed. “These are primarily used in RV, aircraft and marine applications. Due to the ultra light weight, we get more panels on a truck and therefore we can offer our distributors higher quality with lower cost. It’s just one of the many items we’ve developed to bring some value to the marketplace.”



Our most recent product catalog features our 2010 ‘Core Options’. Core Options offers customers a set of core grades and thicknesses. “We’ve developed Core Options for 2010 to define how we build a panel,” Ryan explained. “We have a variety of products. We manufacture lumber cores, we do some all-Birch panels, some Eucalyptus panels, and combination cores. We have a product that we developed called C-9, which is a thick veneer. Actually, we’ve

installed machine core composers to build a panel with the least amount of overlap or voids in the core.

“We’re coming out with a new panel, which we call XTR. This hybrid combination core has MDF cross bands for high-end finish work such as cabinetry and furniture. Those applications need an ultra smooth face and we’ve established that by putting the MDF cross bands on our thicker machine-composed cores. Developing this set of cores has been the foundation of our business.” TigerPLY is available in face species of White Birch, Natural Birch, Okume, Obeche, Red Oak, White Maple and Pacific Red Alder. Optional face grades are BB/CC, C-Plus, C, D, and E.



Oregon State University’s Department of Wood Science & Engineering tests the TigerPLY products. “We work with Oregon State University and TECO, a third party testing and certification organization headquartered in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin,” Ryan Loe said.



TigerPLY's newest Mill / R&D facility that came online in September 2009:

has used his 30 years of experience in the plywood industry to help foster this effort. “We have utilized the knowledge of my brother Rod, who’s been good enough to give us his time and energy,” he said. Rod spends about half of his time in the company’s production office located in Xuzhou, China, continuing to manage the production and build quality control teams. “Our goal is to build a top-notch, high quality, first rate product,” Ryan said. “When you build a brand, you’re making an investment of all your time and energy to say, we’re signing something that goes in the marketplace. By putting our brand on it, it’s our signature that we’ve put in all of our energy and all of our efforts to be proud of what we made, we’re not just trading a commodity. As a result our product is comparable with



TigerPLY's Machine Core Composer used for C9 and TigerLITE Cores

While SFI has a primary focus on TigerPLY, the firm manufactures many other products. “Shelter Forest International is not just TigerPLY. We do a lot of different things in addition to TigerPLY. A great deal of our focus is in domestic Hardwoods. Our goal is to identify any product that we can source globally to bring value to our customers,” Rod explained. “TigerPLY is one of our main thrust because we have applied so much energy and effort, with the whole team involved in it’s development,” Ryan added. “A lot of blood, sweat and tears have gone into bringing high

quality to the international level, to building this brand.”

In fact, Rod Loe said they often ship mixed containers spanning the range of SFI’s panel production. “We’ve got clients in China that may need Alder or southern yellow pine and we have the ability to manage the logistics of all the products in any direction. We have a number of warehouses with a broad spectrum of products, from which we can mix and match loads, which just adds to the efficiency,” he added. SFI ships products through the Chinese ports of Qingdao and Lianyungang; and primarily to the ports of Portland, Ore.,

Houston, Texas, and Savannah, Ga., in the United States. Canada is serviced through Vancouver, B.C.



High end furniture manufacturer chooses TigerPLY for drawer sides.



“There are a lot of facets that contribute to our market strength, but the key that ties everything together is state-of-the-art information management, coupled with well-managed logistics and supply chain management.

Supply chain management is absolutely essential, especially in developing markets. As our customers are working on smaller inventories today, our service needs to increase. We do more with less, which requires really good information.”

Ryan Loe, President
Shelter Forest International

This year, SFI developed service teams made up of key employees. Ryan Loe explained, “We actually divided the U.S. into five territories and we’ve got account management and territory managers for the entire country.” These key employees include: West Coast Manager, Glen Anderson; Midwest Manager, Monica Davidson; Northeast Manager, Whitney LaRuffa; Southeast Manager, Mike Stringfellow; and South Central Manager, Matt McCoun.



“We’re heavily focused in the retail markets, the big boxes and on distribution partnerships around the country. That’s one of the reasons we divided marketing into regions, to ensure our customers get the quality and service they expect and deserve,” he said.



“We meet with our managers to discuss any problems that our customers may have,” he said. “We deal with highly technical issues that change on a regular basis, so it’s important to discuss issues daily. We’re making improvements and strides every month. We were the first company in the world to get a No Added Formaldehyde (NAF) exemption from the state of California for the production of Hardwood Plywood, and we’re one of the first to invest in small chamber air tests so that

we can test for formaldehyde emissions in our labs in China. We’ve really set some benchmarks in quality, sustainability and environmental stewardship. It’s much, much more to us than selling materials. It’s about sustainable environmentally friendly products. We’re trying to make a difference with what we do.”



As for what the future holds, Ryan Loe said, “Our goal is to have steady growth. We’re not interested in uncontrollable growth; it’s really important to maintain the culture that we’ve established, maintain the value, and maintain control over the brand management. Certainly we have ample opportunity as we grow for good international traders, and good domestic traders to fit within our team. We have plenty of room to grow and we enjoy the financial strength to support and cultivate growth.”



Shelter Forest International is part of The Shelter Group. The Shelter Group is an umbrella company for Shelter Products Inc., Portland, Ore., Gulf Coast Shelter, Daphne, Ala., and Shelter Forest International. For more information and to view Shelter Forest International’s current catalog visit www.shelterforest.com.



Ryan Loe, Glen Anderson, Whitney LaRuffa, Rod Loe, Monica Davidson, Jock Vondeling, Mike Stringfellow