

Along Electric and Telephone Utilities' Rights-of-Way Grew

ASPLUNDH



THE LARGEST TREE COMPANY in the world couldn't have a better name: Asplundh Tree Expert Company.

"In Swedish, *asplund* means 'grove of aspens,'" explained Lester Asplundh, chairman of the board and chief executive officer.

What's the "h" for? His answer will provide a quick chuckle and an insight to the Asplundh wit.

Without question, it took a great deal of that kind of wit, along with the necessary other talents, to bring the company to where it is in 42 years.

A grove of Asplundhs are active in the company—eight altogether. They are one founder, his sons,

and the sons of the other two founders.

Asplundh Tree Expert Company has pioneered time and again, establishing a string of firsts, produced from the experience of having constantly to develop and improve equipment. Self-initiative to innovate has been a family tradition, almost by necessity.

Lester, one of eight children, was two years old when his father died. Yet, all but one earned a college degree. The one that didn't gets credit for planting the seed that grew into Asplundh Tree Expert Company.

"O. E. started trimming trees," recounted Lester Asplundh. "Later he added a nursery. All the As-

plundh men learned tree-trimming from him."

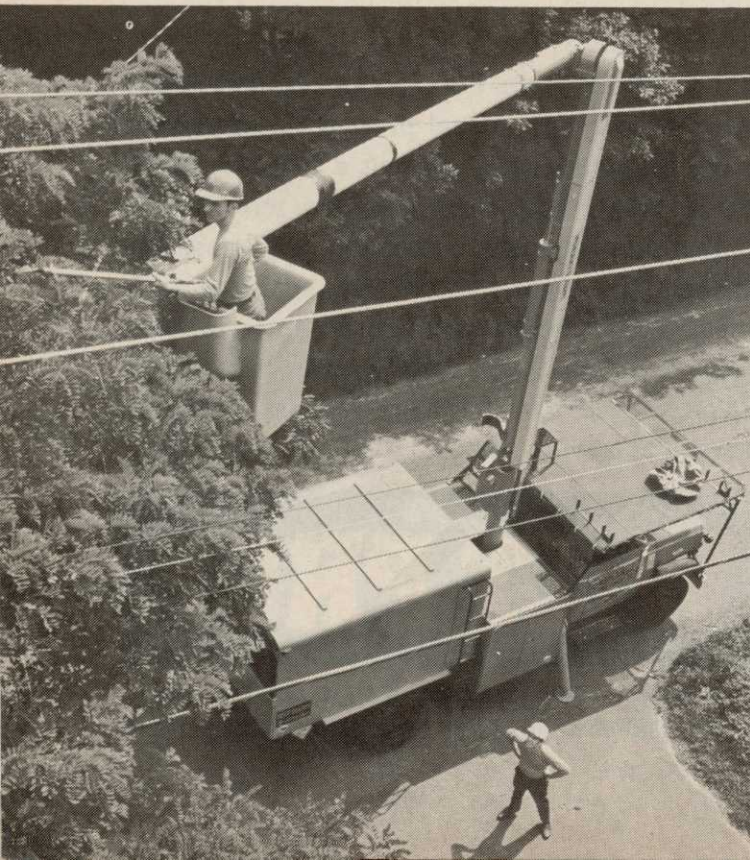
A misunderstanding with a property owner over whether permission had been obtained to trim his trees led to the actual formation of the present company. Because of that incident, "we decided to form a new company to serve only utilities."

He was talking about Griffith Asplundh, whose degree was in forestry, and Carl, whose degree specialty was finance. Lester's is electrical engineering. Griffith died in 1948 and Carl in 1967.

"We felt our training made a good combination," he said.

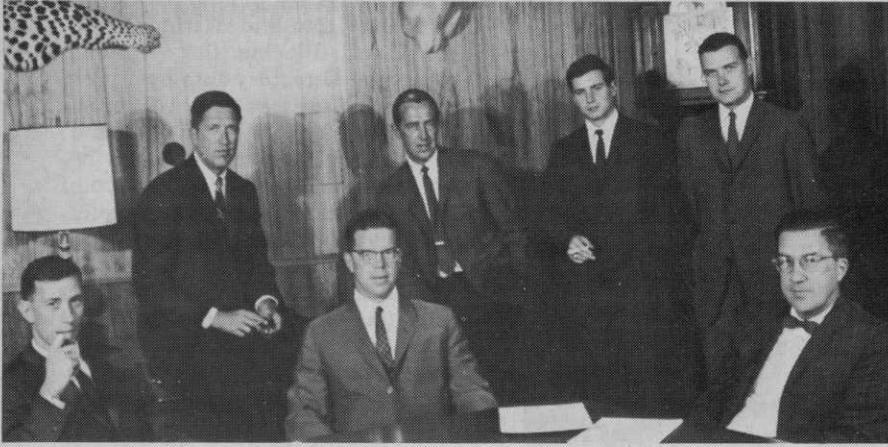
It apparently did; although Lester Asplundh cited another major factor behind the company's good

Three Asplundh firsts can be seen here: the insulated Spiralloy upper and lower boom, the boltaron covering on the upper boom, and the polyethylene insulated basket liner.



A pioneer in chemical brush control, Asplundh uses equipment that ranges from helicopters to rugged terrain vehicles to this backpack unit for selective basal stem spraying.





Lester Asplundh, on the preceding page, is the present chief executive officer. He is the co-founder with Griffith and Carl, Sr. Lester Asplundh was president from 1949-52 and has been board chairman since 1963. The grove of Asplundhs active in the business are, from left Carl, Jr., Robert, Paul, Barr (President since 1968), Christopher, Edward and Boyd. Bob and Boyd are sons of Lester; Barr and Paul, sons of Griffith; and Christopher, Carl, Jr., and Edward, sons of Carl.

By GENE INGALSBE

fortunes, writing in a brochure a couple of years ago.

"There is no doubt this spectacular growth has been inspired by our close association with two of America's most dynamic industries: The electric and telephone utilities, whose progressive programs have been a challenge to us."

The need for service in 1928, he said, was "to keep tree limbs from brushing lines. It created static on the radio sets, and people complained. Another need was to trim so limbs wouldn't knock down street lights during a storm."

What Asplundh Does

The Great Depression was the company's first birthday present

("so we didn't eat very well for a couple of years"), but then as utilities' needs multiplied, so did Asplundh operations. These now include:

—**LINE CLEARANCE**, accounting for 80% of the total sales volume, and fastest-growing operation.

—**RIGHT-OF-WAY CLEARING**, conducted through a subsidiary, Asplundh Brush Control Company.

—**HELICOPTER SERVICES**, through affiliate, Asplundh Aviation, Inc., established in 1966, to include helicopter spray service and "Thermovision" (an industry first), an infrared system of detecting hot spots, and deteriorating and faulty installations along transmission lines:

—**MANUFACTURING**, of line lifts, tree-trimming trucks, and brush chippers; tree wound paint, pole-treatment compound, and a weed and grass killer.

—**SERVICE CENTERS**, 16 of them across the nation, to provide maintenance and parts for Asplundh's own vehicle and equipment fleet and utility customers.

—**ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE UNDERGROUND**, a service inaugurated about six years ago, recognizing the industry trend toward going underground with new construction in urban areas.

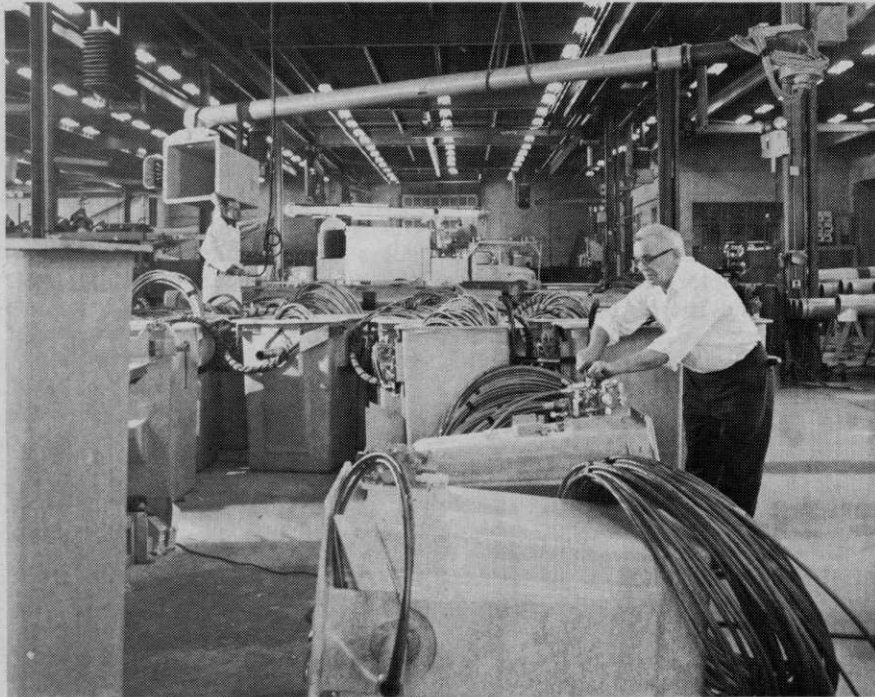
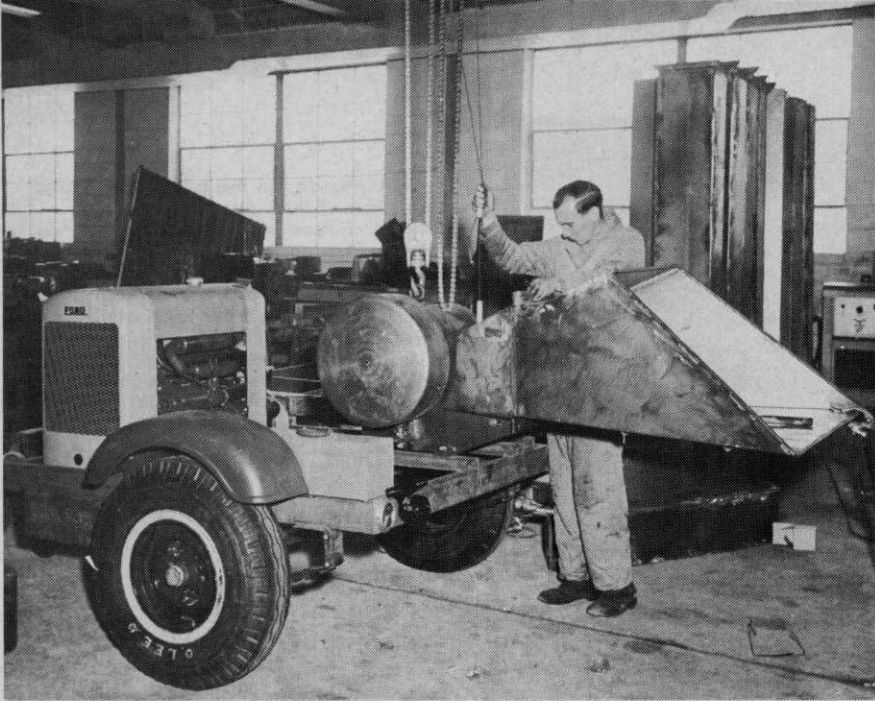
—**CABLE TREATING**, a method of sealing lead cables with a plastic coating to prevent deterioration.

—**EMERGENCY TREE SERVICE**, demonstrated most recently when

Perhaps no other single picture illustrates better the capability of Asplundh Tree Expert Company. Line clearance, rather than right-of-way clearing, however, is Asplundh's forte.

Asplundh's fleet of helicopters includes this FH1100 jet helicopter. Air services, such as line inspection and right-of-way spraying, are conducted through a subsidiary, Asplundh Aviation, Inc.





Hurricane Camille flattened the Gulf Coast. Placing the Asplundh Emergency Directory into operation, the central office had 100 crews (600 persons) from eight surrounding states rushing to the scene before the storm abated. At one point in Louisiana, 96 pieces of equipment and 87 power saws worked around the clock.

Asplundh provides training programs for all aspects of field work; public relations programs, for employees in the form of "The Asplundh Tree" magazine, and material for the general public, a most recent example entitled "We're Partners in Environmental Management" to counter critics of pesticides; a national advertising program, including multiple-insertion, four-color page advertising.

A billing department that processes about 2,000 invoices per week, 60% on IBM machines.

Summed up: "75% people and 25% machines."

Industry Firsts

Asplundh firsts? Among them:

A brush saw and the brush chipper. Large-scale chemical brush control for line rights-of-way. Insulated upper boom on a line lift, through the use of Spiralloy, then a Spiralloy insert for the lower boom. Insulated polythelene basket liners for line lift bucket. Aerosol packaged tree inhibitor paint with applicator pole. Production of standardized bodies for line lifts and tree trucks.

That's not bad for a company that hadn't intended to get into manufacturing.

The company's line-clearing business grew rapidly on the strength of good equipment and supervision.

"Line-clearing then changed from manual to a mechanized job," Asplundh said. "That was expensive. For example, we once used six-man crews with about \$900 worth of equipment. Now a three-man crew works with equipment costing about \$7,000 per man.

"Fortunately, we stuck to our knitting, kept money where it belonged, and had funds to buy the equipment. Nobody made what we

Manufacturing of wood chippers and lift trucks are being consolidated at Chalfont, Pa., where some 145,000 sq. ft. are under roof. Chippers are powered with four-, six-, or eight-cylinder Ford industrial engines. The lift trucks are built on any truck make a customer wants. Polyethylene basket liners are available for added operator safety. The liners are tested to withstand up to 100,000 volts.

wanted. We decided that if we couldn't buy it we'd build it.

"Tree limbs removed by trimming caused us difficulties 18 to 20 years ago. Even then burning was a problem, and we devoted considerable effort and expense to finding a solution. Eventually, the chipper provided the answer. Production began in 1948, and the plant, now part of 145,000 sq ft. of manufacturing facilities under roof can turn out all the chippers needed for our company and our customers.

"Now we're trying to figure out what we can do with tons of chips a day. Mulch for ornamental plantings has been the best use."

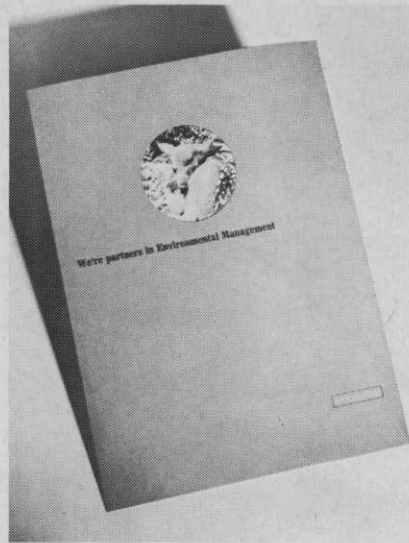
Development of Spiralloy Booms

When the first aerial devices appeared on the market, they had one common and very serious drawback—a lack of insulation.

A few years ago as Asplundh toyed with a glass-like cylinder while visiting with Rex Vogan, executive vice-president of manufacturing, he noticed its apparent strength as he tapped the desk. "What is this stuff, anyway?" he had asked. The material, he was told, consisted of glass fibers wound spirally and criss-crossed in diamond fashion and held together with epoxy. The sample had been left by a salesman several weeks earlier. "Did you think of making a boom for a line lift out of it?" Asplundh asked next. Vogan confessed he hadn't, but the question initiated the search that led to a major industry first—the insulated Spiralloy boom, made for Asplundh by Haveg Industries, a subsidiary of Hercules, Inc.

The upper boom protects the man in the bucket; the lower boom insert, men working around the base of the truck. A boltaron covering, since been developed, made of 1/16-in. of white plastic over 1/32-in. of red. If the boom is hit, the red calls attention to possible damage. While Spiralloy is lightweight and has the strength quality of steel, Vogan explained, if several fibers are severed, strength could significantly be reduced. The insulation quality might also be impaired.

Production of lift units began in 1958, first for Asplundh's own use and then for utility customers. Initially, customer orders for truck bodies and lifts were built to individual specification. Some still are; but to speed delivery and streamline production, the Chalfont, Pa., manufacturing plant began turning out standardized units, designed by the plant's full-scale engineering and design department.



A most recent sample of Asplundh's continuing public relations program is this environmental management folder. Entitled "We're Partners in Environmental Management," it is directed to utility executives and others. The folder contains specially prepared articles by authorities in the field of chemical spraying on rights-of-way, reprints germane to the subject of ecology gathered from some of the nation's top manufacturing experts, and reprints of editorials written by some of the country's leading magazine editors. Copies are free by writing Asplundh.

At any given time, six to 10 forestry or general service units are parked in line, ready to roll at the jingle of a phone and twist of the ignition switch.

Biggest User of Own Product

Chipper popularity has risen rapidly, and units are sold to tree

men, park commissions, municipalities and others.

Though 80% of the lift truck and chipper production is sold to outside purchasers, "our biggest single customer is ourselves," said Vogan. "So if we have any problems, they come home to roost."

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A new low-cost utility lift and a rugged right-of-way vehicle have just been introduced by Asplundh. The compact utility lift truck falls in the less than \$9,000 price range. It's easily operated by one man. The IL-24 has controls in both basket and at pedestal. The lift can operate at heights up to 24 feet to bottom of basket and inside radii of 14 feet. The boom operates in either direction continuously through 360 degrees. For more information, circle (724) on the reply card.

Mercedes Daimler-Benz AG in Germany has named Asplundh to be its East Coast Sales agent for the all-wheel drive Unimog. The unit is called ideally suited for right-of-way spraying. Independent wheel power is achieved through differential locks on both axles which can be switched on or off, front or rear, as required. For more information, circle (725) on the reply card.

a week with our own units than any one of our customers would in a year," observed Asplundh. "It has to be good. If our equipment stops, we don't get paid."

"In a year's time," added Vogan, "we get two million hours of chipping alone in our own operations."

Behind the Color Orange

Lift trucks and chippers are painted in the color a customer wants, but all Asplundh units are a bright orange—and there's a number of stories behind the color selection.

"Carl's story was that during his football days at Princeton, he noticed how big the Penn State players looked in orange, so he wanted the equipment to look as impressive," said Lester.

Lester had occasion to make the same observation, as an All-American fullback for Swarthmore College. He later played professional football for the Frankfort Yellow Jackets, who became the Philadelphia Eagles.

"Actually," he said, "we recognized the visibility of orange as a safety factor."

On Pesticides and Environment

Lester Asplundh heats up quickly when the subject gets around to pesticides and environmental improvement. The company was a pioneer in using chemicals along rights-of-way.

When 2,4-D was patented as a weed killer in 1944, Asplundh Tree Expert Company envisioned its potentialities as a brush killer and established a research relationship



with its patentee. 2,4,5-T evolved and it has been used by Asplundh for more than 20 years.

Speaking of the herbicide critics, Asplundh charged that "some of them just don't know what they're talking about. We've never encountered any insurmountable problems." Its use is still authorized for rights-of-way.

"We're convinced that we have a responsibility to improve the environment. We trim trees to look as well as we can make them, and still give people electric service. Let a blackout come, and see what people prefer.

"There will be some problems with chemicals. We're doing dormant season spraying to avoid browning of leaves in the growing season. But give us a swath of brown for one year, and that's all that will be necessary. We're convinced that the proper use of chemicals is not going to harm the environment."

What people must come to understand, he concluded, is that society must achieve "a balance between economics and environment."

Objective for the Future

Lester Asplundh agrees with another company man who observed that Asplundh Tree Expert Company is a different company today from 10 years ago. More new operations were begun during the period. Though manufacturing has developed quite rapidly, and "the glamour is in the equipment, the job is still trimming trees, said Asplundh.

"Our primary business was, is, and shall continue to be line clearance. Our aim for the future is to continue to search and investigate other phases of utility functions where we can serve."

Lester Asplundh tells of the change he has seen in another way.

Many years ago at a Washington Christmas party, a utility official sought him out. "Your company is causing me some problems. A farmer-customer says one of your crews dumped brush in his gulley and left it." Asplundh assured him the crew would return and clean up the brush.

Some years later, at a similar Washington party, the same man, then chairman of the board, approached Asplundh again. "Your company is causing me problems again," he said. This time, the cause: "One of my associates says he can't get enough of your chips."



New activities include the service of laying utility and telephone lines underground and detecting trouble spots in lines above ground with "Thermovision." The latter service, an Asplundh first, uses infrared to detect hot spots and deteriorating and faulty installations along transmission lines. Thinking caps are in place now to consider all ways that wood chips might be utilized. To date, the best use has been as a decorative mulch for tree and ornamental plantings where mowing is not possible or not feasible.

