



## Some may be wondering “Why isn’t Asuka taking it over

*Asuka Barden (pictured above) posted this candid and heartfelt statement about the sale of Barden Lumber on Facebook on Sept. 29, the day the sale to Preston Feather was announced:*

Some may be wondering “Why isn’t Asuka taking it over from her father Paul as the 5th generation of the 103-year-old family business?”

This is my statement, exclusively for Boyne City News and Buzz. This is a picture of my father, Paul Barden. Every morning, he opens up the store long before most are even awake. He vacuums the rugs, empties the trash, and fires up the cash registers... just for starters. He jokes that he only works half-days: 12 hours. As a guy who grew up with multiple injuries from playing in the neighborhoods up on Lincoln Street, crashing his sled at Barn Mountain, serving honorably in the United States military, and 40 years working down at “the shed,” he’s ready to give his body a break. He is ready to retire.



This is a picture of the dedication and grit that it takes for a small business owner to run a successful independent business. We truly have been a small business of only 12 employees, and his role has been far more than a full-time responsibility. It's a responsibility that I decided I do not want.

When I started at Barden Lumber in 2013, I was single with no kids. It was one of the hardest experiences I've ever gone through, but eventually, as that transition smoothed out, I was able to convince my grandpa Ed and my dad to upgrade our old-fashioned business with the technology needed to compete in the modern age. I worked hard, never shying away from any task. I was inspired and driven to take the torch.

Then life happened: I was blessed with the most beautiful baby in 2019. And in 2023 diagnosed with cancer. I am now cancer-free.

I hope the community can understand that life is precious, and that my daughter deserves to have a mother who's there in the mornings before school. And does not deserve to be the last kid picked up from daycare every day like I was. Her father deserves a partner in life that can emotionally invest in our family. I have to make every

day count as her mother. You just never know when it will be your time to go.

I also have other passions in life that keep me busy (and often spread thin). Some of these things have been a point of controversy with my father, as the daughter of the owner who carries the same last name. I'm eager to break free of these constrictions. I'm eager to get back to the creative pursuits that make me who I am.

Bottom line, I cannot give 100% of myself to run Barden Lumber the way our incredible customers and builders expect and deserve.

It was important to our family that our customers will have the same small-town lumber yard available to them, with minimal changes. This acquisition has been a huge undertaking with talented professionals working hard on both sides to make sure our customers feel little to no change. We value conserving the history of Boyne City, and preserving the small-town charm that makes Boyne such a highly desirable place to be. Selling our big, downtown property to some random developer was never even a consideration. It had to stay an independent lumberyard.

Preston Feather Building Centers was an ideal match to continue offering the same products and services that builders in Charlevoix and Antrim county need. Preston Feather is an independent family business, but has a bigger team and infrastructure to handle keeping their new Boyne City branch thriving. Rachel Huntman, the president of Preston Feather, is a bright young star and I'm energized and inspired to join her team. Paul will stick around for a little while to make sure Barden's transitions smoothly.

To my dad: I am forever grateful for our relationship that has grown since moving back home and working with you everyday. You and I are so much alike - the good, bad and the ugly. Thank you for your life's work of providing for our family and being my closest confidant. You're my rock. I hope you can actually settle down and stop lifting heavy shit! Congratulations on your retirement.

I cannot express enough to my fellow Barden Lumber employees that we are in really good hands with Rachel. You guys and your families were a top priority in all of this, and I'm sorry that I've had to be secretive. That part really sucked for me, as we've always been close and open with each other. I hope you can understand and forgive me. We are in great hands.

This news may bring mixed emotions to those who cherish Boyne City and its history, like myself, and those who value preserving the things that make Boyne City a great

place to live. I've had a front row seat watching many locals cash out of their high-value properties in town, to see a big-city retiree move into their new quiet, safe town. (Remember: It's quiet, clean and safe for a reason.) One business isn't going to make a difference. Everyone who values keeping our Boyne heritage alive must actively engage in the effort if we want our kids to have the same blessing of being brought up in the Boyne City that we were brought up in.

This process has been emotional at times for me. Flooded with memories. Thinking about my grandparents. Worrying about people's disappointment. Worrying about the future of Boyne. But I am proud of this decision and the course of action we took to give everyone the best possible outcome with longevity in mind. I hope you'll understand and continue to support this lumberyard and the amazing locals who will still be working here. I'll still be here for now, working at Barden's, raising my kid, still being the flamboyant Asuka I've always been. Just a little more free.

- Thank you to everyone in this community who believes in shopping local and NOT cancel culture.
- Thank you to the builders, especially those I've gotten to know with your daily trips to our store.
- Thank you to all those who gave me a chance when I started designing kitchens, especially Brandon Hejka.
- Rest in peace to the builders who always brightened my day: Randy Fiel, Greg Gerling, Carl Buck to name a few.
- Thank you to Robert for all your love and support and for being an amazing father.
- Thank you to my mother, the engine in our family, whose sacrifices cannot be appreciated enough.
- Thank you to Marissa, for being a rockstar.
- Thank you to my haters for keeping me energized.
- Thank you to my friends and colleagues of various organizations for being patient with me - now you know why.
- Thank you to my friends all over the world who bring me joy during this stressful time.
- Thank you to the entire transition team.
- Thank you to my baby girl and your unconditional love, and thank you to her teachers and caretakers over the years.
- Thank you. President Trump!
- Above all: thank you, God!