

# A Sawmill on Wheels

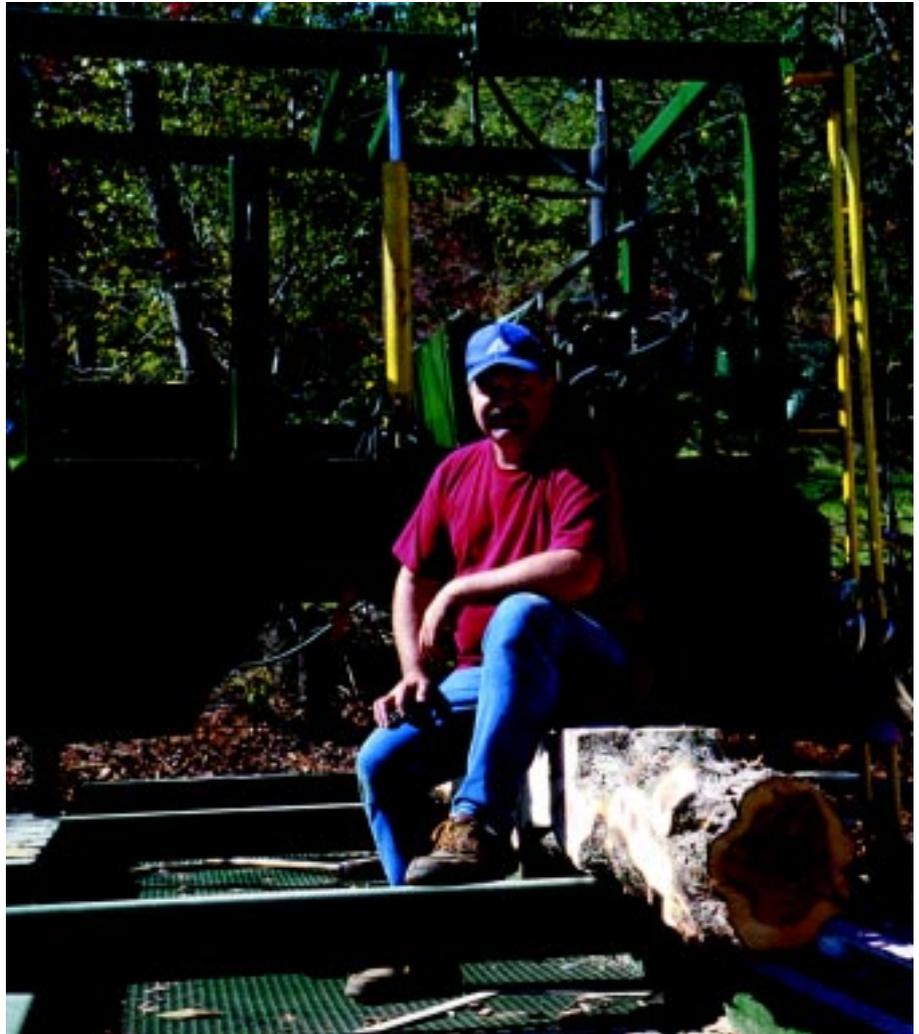
Written & Photographed by: Lance C. Bell

James Hunt, a man of the mountains and a skilled craftsman. When James Hunt needed a stack of lumber the only natural thing for him to do was build a saw mill. James is a quiet, gentle man and a master machinist with a genius for invention. He can build and fix anything from water wheels, driving generators to textile manufacturing machinery, to airplane parts and anything that moves.

The “James Sawmill” as I like to call it was not built from a package or kit or copied after one. With extra parts and a few bought parts, James set about to build his portable sawmill. After about a year the mill was completed and put into operation. It had to have a few bugs ironed out but was soon running “as slick as a hound’s tooth.” The mill on wheels can be hitched to a truck and taken any place the truck can go.

Once in place and leveled up it’s ready for operation. The mill is powered by a two cylinder diesel engine. The engine came out of a “retired” road packer. The engine drives a band saw blade up to 6” wide by 17’-10” long, at a speed of 4000 fpm. If you look close you can see two tires on rims that the blade rides on. The mill cuts up to a 30” thick log.

Logs up to 24’ long are placed on the bed by a loader and secured in place with cleats and instead of the log passing through the blade, the blade moves back and forth slicing the log. The log is squared up first and then slices are made at any thickness needed. The boards are then stacked for air drying or taken to a kiln for drying. Building the kiln is next.



James is “right proud” of his handy work and when someone drops by he always stops what he is doing to show them the mill. At times he helps them with something that needs “fix’n” or even “invent’n”. It’s said you “never know what’s going to roll out’a these hills”. That couldn’t be more true knowing James Hunt.

*Top photo: James sits on his handy work—the James Sawmill.*

*Above left: James saws boards from a cedar log.*

*Above right: Overall view of the sawmill. The Bobcat is used to load logs onto the mill where they are secured, and then the entire saw, as shown here, moves back and forth over the log to saw it.*

