

Wally Smith L.Trucking, Inc.

1947—1996

(as told by Yvonne Smith)

Wally Smith got his start right after World War II when the Hudspeth brothers opened up logging at Camp Watson. He started with one old worn out lumber truck. He was an independent trucker, hauling lumber and logs for Hudspeths for 31 years. He worked another 19 years doing road work for the Forest Service and various logging operations, racking up a total of 50 years of trucking before his death at age 77.¹

Wally was born in Carterville, Missouri, February 24, 1919. He moved with his family to Bend, Oregon, in the spring of 1936. They came looking for work. His mother had friends living in Bend who had written to say there were jobs there. She was a cook. She cooked at the old Oasis Cafe down by the mill, at Suttle Lake Lodge and at the Pine Tavern.

Wally was only 17. He couldn't find steady work so he was taking any kind of job he could find. He worked in a men's wear store, delivered papers for Les Schwab, and worked at Eddie Williamson's car dealership across the street from the old Pilot Butte Inn. He even tended bar. He had eleven years of schooling and when he tried to get a job driving a truck or a bus no one would hire him without a high school diploma. He went back to school and graduated from Bend High School with the class of 1941.

He had met and become friends with Fred and Speck [Lloyd] Hudspeth. They came from Kiowa, Oklahoma in the mid-1930's. They had met at one of the local bars which seemed to be their favorite gathering spot. Speck worked at Ray LeBlanc's Men's Wear with Wally. They got to be good enough friends that he was best man at

both men's weddings; Speck married Telia Ann Houk and Fred married Margaret Harlan. Speck and Fred were living in Bend with their parents J.D. and Minerva. John Hudspeth had his own house for his family. Speck, Fred, John, Clarence and Claude were the children of J.D. and Minerva Hudspeth. When they opened up logging at Camp Watson, John and his family moved to Prineville and J.D. and Minerva moved to Mitchell. Wally and Irene were married in 1942. They were living in Portland and he was working as a pile driver during the War when the shipyards were being built. In 1943 they moved back to Bend and Wally went to work for Mt. Hood Stages which shortly afterwards became Trailways. He drove bus for Trailways until he was drafted into the Army in 1944.

For a while all of the bus drivers were deferred from draft call. But when the ticket agent at Trailways asked one of the bus drivers to watch her cash register and sell tickets while she went in next door to have coffee with a friend, \$400 or \$500 was taken from the cash drawer while she was gone. She was accused of the theft and got fired. At the very next draft call every available bus driver who was not 4-F, including Wally, was called. The girl's mother was on the draft board and it was believed she was getting even with Bill Niskanen, owner of Trailways, for firing her daughter who, in fact, did not take the money.

Anyway, Wally was drafted into the Army in 1944 and got out in 1946. He spent two years, two months and two days in the service. Before being shipped overseas all he got here was his basic training and one little short leave. Overseas,

1. From an interview with Yvonne Smith conducted October 26, 1996.



Wally Smith's first lumber truck, Camp Watson.

after his group finally caught up with the unit they were supposed to join, Wally went to driving truck. He transported ammunition and fuel to the front lines in truck convoys that went out at night to avoid the daily bombings and shootings.

While overseas, Wally made some extra money. He and some of the other truck drivers brought food from the mess hall and kitchen to French families in exchange for cognac, then sold the cognac to the officers. The French people were hungry after three years of German occupation. He sent his money to his mother for safe-keeping and when he got home from the War, he had a little nest egg with which he planned to start a business.

There was enough cash for celebrating, too. When he got home, he celebrated with Speck and Fred Hudspeth. They took him out, got him drunk, and three days later, when they all sobered up, they had his money and he had an old worn out lumber truck. Meanwhile, while he was overseas, Hudspeths had opened up for logging at Camp Watson. They asked Wally to come and work for them hauling lumber. Wally was looking for a job anyway so he went to work with that old lumber truck. In time he bought more trucks.

First, he bought two used trucks from Whitehurst and, later, John Hudspeth financed him for three new trucks out of Portland.

The first driver Wally hired was Calvin Dunaway. Calvin was a truck driver Wally had met overseas. He was discharged two or three months after Wally but they kept in touch. When Calvin

got to his home in Arkansas he didn't have a job, so he came out here to Prineville and went to work for Wally.

After the War, there was a housing shortage in Prineville. Wally and Irene rented an old house behind what Texaco Station downtown. It was in back of what use to be Jean Mays' grocery store. In later years it was used as a Senior Center. The two families, the Dunaways with their two children, and Wally and Irene and their son, Bill, all lived in that house until Wally could save enough money to put a down payment on his house on Ochoco Highway.

Camp Watson was still going some but in 1948 or '49 Hudspeths moved the operation to Bridge Creek and they had to have more trucks. John Hudspeth co-signed for Wally to purchase three new trucks. Through the years Wally probably had forty different trucks. The trucks were always kept in good condition. When he was getting started Wally worked on the trucks all night and drove all day or vice versa. When he could, he hired a full-time mechanic. Wally hauled lumber and logs from Camp Watson into Prineville, from Bridge Creek into Prineville, and from Hudspeth's Blue Mountain Mills into Prineville. Wood chips were hauled round the clock from Blue Mountain Mills to Pilot Rock. He also hauled lumber from Prineville to millwork plants in Bend.

**Wally's truck, 1958.
David Jones was driving**



When Wally and I were married in August of 1972 we started the chip haul from Blue Mountain Mills in John Day to Pilot Rock. He had nine trucks, including one log truck, a water truck and two chip trucks in John Day. There were eleven employees. I worked in the office.

We quit Hudspeths in July of 1977, before the mill shut down in 1981. Our fuel and other expenses kept going up. To cut costs, we were piggybacking the trucks back and forth to John Day—hauling one truck and trailer on another truck and trailer. One driver drove one way and two drivers drove back. The next day the other driver would drive. We were saving on one driver's wages, the fuel and PUC's from here to John Day, and wear and tear on the tires.

We had done every conceivable thing we could to cut our costs. We could no longer continue without a raise. Wally had tried several times, and failed, to negotiate a raise. He gave Hudspeths a week's notice before pulling off the trucks. That gave them time to bring in their own trucks from Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

Our agreements with Hudspeths were always verbal—there was never anything in writing. Once John Hudspeth was real pressed for money and got in debt to Wally for over \$80,000. But when Barry Hudspeth took over as Comptroller it was all paid back within a year.

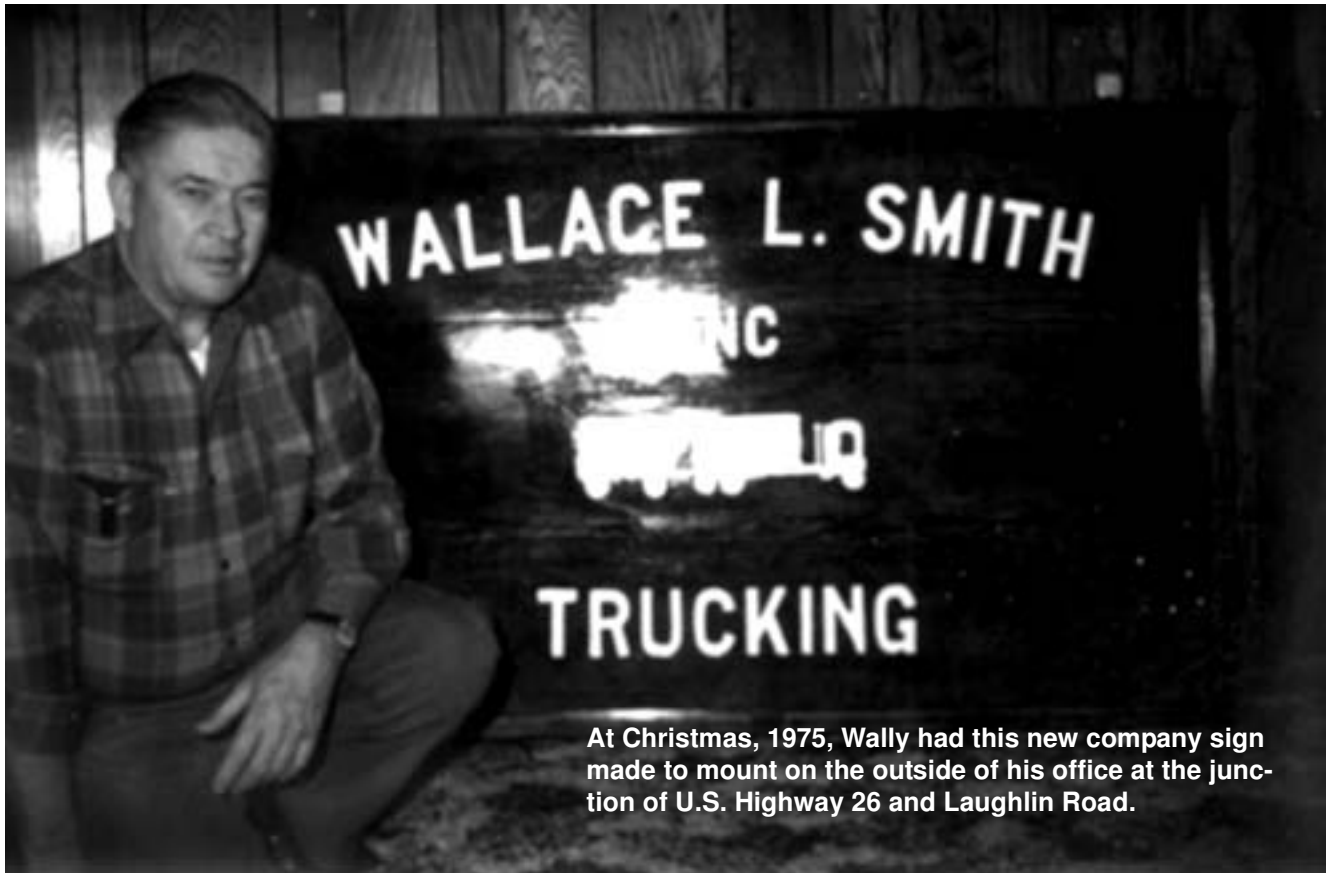
After quitting Hudspeths we bought a roller, belly dumps and other road equipment. We dust-coated roads for the Forest Service, Ochoco Lumber Company, Pine Products and Brooks-Scanlon using *lignin sulfonate* that we got from the paper mills in Lebanon and Albany. One dust coating lasted throughout a logging season.

In 1982 we bought the Cannery Sales next to the Club Pioneer (the building was recently demolished for additional parking space for the Club). We operated Trailways and Greyhound bus depots out of the store. Wally was still doing trucking while I was taking care of the store and the two bus depots. We quit the trucking business in 1996. Wally drove truck right up until he was 77. He was in poor health and his doctor told him he'd better get off the trucks. His last ride was with a trucker who was hauling rock into a new subdivision out at Crooked River. He just wanted to go out in a truck again but it was too rough for him. He had to be taken back to his pickup. He realized then that his trucking' days were over. Wally died August 7, 1996 at the age of 77.

A painting of one of Wally's trucks is engraved on his gravestone along with a plaque that reads “**STILL TRUCKING.**” And I know if there's a truck up there Wally will be driving it.



In 1972, Wally bought these two new Peterbilt cabover tractors from Diesel Service Company in Portland.



By 1977, business conditions—not just in trucking—were getting tight. To bring down costs, truck operators started “piggy-backing”. In the center of the above photo is Wally’s cabover with the conventional ridding on the cabover’s trailer and its trailer on top of the conventional tractor. You can see at right that Wally wasn’t the only one cutting costs. Piggy backing saved on fuel, tires, and most of all PUC road taxes. Wally hauled lumber exclusive for Hudspeth but by the early 1980s he couldn’t get Hudspeth to increase payments. Wally couldn’t break even so quit hauling lumber. Quit hauling lumber and went into other trucking activities.