

## Spoo Family Lumber Operations

By: Arthur (Bud) W. Spoo, Loma Linda,  
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**E**dward Henry Spoo was born in St. Cloud, Minnesota, on October 7, 1888. As a young boy of 6 years, he moved with his father and mother to Moses Lake, Washington. After a short time there, they moved to Lebanon, Oregon. Later, as a young man, he moved to Sisters, Oregon, where he worked for various people. As soon as trucks were available, he drove trucks and then entered the trucking business. In 1915 he married Hazel Mae Templeton of Sisters and they lived in Sisters until they moved to Bend in 1922.

Edward and Hazel had three sons:

Willis Edward Spoo, born January 29, 1916,  
in Bend, Oregon;

Arthur (Bud) Willard Spoo, born October 24,  
1918, in Corning, California;

Robert LeRoy Spoo, born February 3, 1922,  
in Sisters, Oregon.

All three of the Spoo boys graduated from Sisters Elementary School and Sisters High School. Willis in 1934, Arthur in 1936, and Robert in 1940. Arthur graduated from Walla Walla College with a B.S. in Business Administration plus course work for his Master's Degree in 1949.

In 1923, while living in Bend, Oregon, Edward Spoo started a mill 4 miles southeast of Sisters. This was a circular sawmill with a production of 25,000 board feet per shift. The mill consisted of not only the sawmill but also a log pond, planer, steam power plant and a camp. All of the logging for this mill was done by the company with Anthony Roach as logging boss. The timber was purchased from local farmers and Bureau of Land Management at an average cost of 25¢ per thousand board feet.

The mill sold their lumber—either rough or planed— for \$10.00 per thousand average for rough lumber and for \$13.00 per thousand for planed lumber.

The mill camp had seven houses and some cabins for single men. Hazel Spoo ran the cookhouse for single men. The crew averaged about 24 men.

In 1927, the mill was moved to better timber four miles northeast of Sisters at Camp Polk on Squaw Creek. This was a circular mill with a production of 30,000 board feet per shift. This mill also had a log pond, planer, steam power plant and a camp and Anthony Roach continued as logging superintendent. The camp had 8 houses for married workers and cabins for single workers. Hazel Spoo, Ed's wife, ran a cookhouse. Several men lived in Sisters and drove to work. Average crew for the mill and logging was 30-35 men.

Most logs were skidded with horses until 1934 when an RD6 dozer was purchased to assist in the logging. All logs were hauled with trucks.

Spoo sold lumber to Redmond Box Factory, Salem Box Factory, Brooks-Scanlon Lumber Company, local farmers and to retail customers who came to the mill. By the time the mill had been moved, timber prices had gone up to an average price of 50¢ per thousand board feet (technically noted as: MBFD). The timber was bought from local farmers, the Bureau of Land Management, county government, and the U.S. Forest Service.

By 1927 lumber was selling for \$10 to \$12 for rough lumber and around \$14 to \$18 for planed lumber.

Ed Spoo believed in providing employment for his boys. As soon as they were out of the first grade, they were put to work in the mill. There were no child labor laws in those days. Willis graduated to the logging woods at an early age. Bud and Bob worked in the mill during the summer and in the planing mill after school. By 1935 Willis, Bud and Bob had all spent an average of



**Unless otherwise noted, the photographs for this chapter were taken from a company brochure that was found in a box of miscellaneous papers in the basement of the A.R. Bowman Memorial Museum. The brochure was in poor condition and printed on light blue paper. The photographs have been enhanced by fellow history buff John McGhee of Reno, Nevada. John's skill with Adobe *Photoshop* significantly improved the quality of the photos. Spoo's mill east of Mitchell.**

10 years working in the business during the summer months and after school. Due to this arrangement, Ed Spoo took all three boys into the company, and the company was named E. H. Spoo & Sons Lumber Co.

In 1938 a new mill was built one-half mile north of Sisters. This was a band sawmill with a double-cut bandsaw. This was a large mill and cut 70 MBF per shift and operated two shifts. All the logging was done again by the Spoo mill with Anthony Roach as the logging superintendent. It was complete with a log pond, lumber yard, etc. There was no mill camp as all employees lived in Sisters. Total employees were 100. The lumber was sold to Redmond, Prineville and Bend out-

lets. The average price of timber increased to \$2.50 and \$3.00 per MBF and the lumber was selling for around \$15.00 per MBF.

In 1938, when the new mill was built in Sisters, Willis Spoo took over the running of the mill at Camp Polk. That was a good operation and a wonderful place to live along the Squaw Creek. Willis continued to operate the mill until 1944 when he moved to Mitchell.

In 1940 the C.G. Hitchcock Lumber Company wanted the Sisters sawmill and it was sold to them as the Spoo's had the opportunity to move to Mitchell, Oregon, where there was much better timber. As soon as the Sisters mill was sold, Ed, Bud and Bob moved to the Clay Shown ranch area 11 miles east of Mitchell and built a 7-foot



**Part of the Spoo fleet of lumber trucks.**

band mill complete with steam power, electric generators, log pond, mill camp with 25 residences, bunk houses, cookhouse, logging operation, lumber yards, etc. It was named the Mitchell Pine Lumber Co. and was owned by Ed Spoo and sons Bud and Bob.

The timber for the Mitchell Pine Lumber Co. was purchased on the Shown ranch and other ranches in that area. It was an exceptionally high grade of timber and was purchased for an average price of \$1.00 per MBF in 1940. The lumber was sold to Pine Products, Corp. in Prineville. The green lumber was sold for \$20.00 per MBF delivered in Prineville and the dry lumber was sold for \$24.00 per MBF mill run. (All dried lumber was air dried.)

All of the logging operations were done by the Spoo company. They used Allis-Chalmers equipment for a few years and then changed to Caterpillar cats for all of the skidding and road work. Most of the logging trucks were Internationals. This was also the time period when the fallers and buckers in the woods changed to power saws.

In 1940 when Ed, Bud and Bob moved to Mitchell and established the Mitchell Pine Lumber Co., The State Highway Commission had given a contract for the first quarter mile of a new highway from Mitchell to Prineville. This quarter mile started about 7 miles from Mitchell where the new highway was to take a new route over the Ochoco Mountains slightly north of the old highway. This new, proposed highway was one of the encouraging reasons for the Spoo's to move to the

Mitchell area as the new road would reduce the cost of hauling the lumber to Prineville. The war started in 1941 and the highway construction stopped. It never started again after the war. The old, narrow, crooked, rough road was dangerous with all the truck traffic on it. It was also costing the company a lot of money as lumber truck couldn't haul large loads due to the weight restrictions the highway department placed on the road.

In 1947 Bud Spoo endeavored to do something about the matter. One day he flew his plane to Prineville. As he was having a milkshake in a drugstore, an individual sat down beside him and the conversation gradually turned to the road problem. The fellow (who was probably the president of the Chamber of Commerce) invited Bud to the Chamber of Commerce luncheon which was being held at noon that day. As part of the business after lunch, the highway problem—and particularly the Ochoco Mountain new road—was discussed. In summary, a campaign was organized to work with the Chambers of Commerce and all other organizations and individuals, vitally interested in improving the road from Ontario, Oregon, to Prineville and beyond. Special emphasis was to be placed on the Ochoco portion, as a lot of timber was being removed from the national forest with a substantial portion



**Although the photo leaves something to be desired, you can see that some nice lumber was produced here.**

of the revenue from the timber sales earmarked for highway construction within the national forest.

A meeting was arranged with the State Highway Commission which held regularly scheduled meetings at the Imperial Hotel in Portland. Representatives from many Chambers of Commerce and other interested parties from Ontario to Prineville were invited to attend. Four were scheduled to speak on assigned topics at the meeting. So many interested and concerned people from Prineville and all the areas extending to Ontario came to the meeting that the meeting area was filled and the crowd spilled out into the hallways and into the streets around the hotel. The Highway Commission was “dumbfounded”. After listening to the speeches, the commissioners asked for a recess so they could have an “executive session” to discuss the matter.

As a result of this meeting, the commission gave serious consideration to the presentation and demands of the timbermen. In short order contracts were let starting work on both the east and west ends of the Ochoco Mountain pass. What had once been a serious problem, became a very beautiful highway and mountain pass. The commission also extended the new road east of Mitchell. The Prineville Chamber of Commerce was very happy with the results. So happy, in fact, that they made Bud Spoo an honorary member.

To illustrate how terrible the road conditions were, for awhile—before we were able to do anything about the new road—Bud made several trips to Salem to discuss the lumber hauling problem with representatives of the Highway Commission. One concession they permitted the Spoo company was to construct special hinge-type tongues for connecting the full trailers to the Kenworth trucks that transported the lumber. These special tongues were constructed with a hinge arrangement in them that enabled the tongues to be shortened to about 6 feet while traveling the crooked, mountain portion of the road. When the trucks reached the pavement east of Prineville, the tongues were lowered thereby lengthening the truck and trailer combination about ten feet. When the trucks went across the scales near

Prineville, they were 10 feet longer than when crossing the mountain and thereby got to haul a larger load in accordance with the total length of the truck and trailer. This is one of the difficult problems the Spoo family and other area lumbermen experienced along with the rough roads that ruined tires and damaged the Spoo company’s trucks. As others can attest, that old road really gave the company some problems.

In 1942 the mill was shut down in the late fall and installed all new equipment. This consisted of a new 7-foot band mill, edger, carriage, trimmer, filing room, log turner and shotgun feed for the carriage. It was all Klamath Machine Works equipment from Klamath Falls. All the motors, saws and miscellaneous equipment was purchased from the Prineville Machine Co., a company owned by Johnny Hudspeth.

Johnny had a mill about two miles southeast of the Spoo mill. He also had a section of timber called “Section 36” that was surrounded by Spoo timber. We negotiated a purchase of half of Section 36 for a cash consideration in 1942. This gave the Spoo family some additional excellent timber and gave Johnny a lot of cash that he welcomed.

When the war came along, deferments were available for most men employed in the production of lumber. Both Bob and Bud Spoo were not bothered about induction and probably could have stayed out of the service. However, so many others were going into the service that they both joined the Navy. Their brother, Willis, shut his mill down in Sisters and moved to Mitchell to help Ed. One of the hard parts about going into the service at that time was the leaving of families; both of the brothers were married and had small children.

While in the Navy, it came to Bud’s attention that the additional timber in the area was being purchased by other lumber companies. Paul Kelly had a mill about ten miles west of Mitchell near the Ochoco pass. He was looking for more timber and contacted the Collins family that had a large body of timber about ten to fifteen miles north of the Spoo mill. Jack Collins contacted the Spoo family to see if they were still interested in their timber. Bud immediately got an emergency leave and in a

meeting with the Collins family they were able to arrange the purchase of their timber. There were also several other timber ownerships mixed in and around the Collins timber. The Spoo's were able to arrange for the purchase of all the timber in that area. The price was based on cruises at an average price of \$3.70 per MBF.

Both Bob and Bud Spoo returned from the Navy in 1946 and became very active in the lumber business again. Bob took charge of the logging operations and Bud ran the production end along with the business office. 1946, 1947 and 1948 were very good years in the lumber business.

As mentioned earlier, Willis had moved to Mitchell to help his Dad while Bud and Bob were in the Navy during 1944, 1945 and early 1946. He had discontinued his operation at Sisters. In 1946 as he was leaving Mitchell he moved most of the machinery from Sisters to Post where he built a mill. This was a circular mill complete with a pond, and logging operation. It was located on what was known as Riverside Ranch.

When Willis Spoo was able to leave Mitchell Pine, He moved to Redmond for a short while but later purchased a home in Prineville. All this time he was operating the Post sawmill, which he did until 1950. He sold his lumber in Prineville. Also in 1946 and 1947 he built and operated another

small mill about 10 miles west of Mitchell and north of the Ochoco Highway. By the early 1950's, Willis had cut all of his timber at Post and he sold the mill equipment to John White. John converted the mill into some sort of portable outfit and took it up Newsom Creek. From there, no one seems to know what happened to John White and his mill. It is interesting to note that at about this same time, Elton Carey had a small operation on Crooked River just about due south of Eagle Rock. This was what was referred to as a "stump jumper" operation and never amounted to much.

In 1953 Willis had the opportunity to buy a large band mill and complete lumber operation in Elgin, Oregon. He purchased that facility and operated it until 1955 when it was destroyed by fire. Rather than rebuild, he sold out everything that remained and moved to Colorado where he bought some timber and built another lumber operation. All of his mills were operated as the Willis Spoo Lumber Co. Willis died in June 1989 and was buried in Redmond, Oregon.

Now, let us go back to Mitchell Pine with Ed, Bud & Bob Spoo. In 1948 Bud was one quarter short of getting his college degree. Due to the war and lumber business his college education had several interruptions. In late 1948 he returned to college and received his degree. Instead of going for the one quarter, however, he stayed for a full





**This photo shows the housing area in addition to the sawmill. The road is now U.S. Highway 26. North is about the direction the light-colored road follows from the middle of the photo upward; north towards the Ochoco Mountains and the national forest.**

year and graduated with not only a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration but also all the course work required for his Masters Degree.

The timber in the Mitchell area was almost all owned by several lumber companies including the Spoons and the Hudspeths. The Spoo company had enough timber to last about 7 years, until 1955. Rather than compete for any remaining timber, the Spoo plans were to move their operations to Eureka, California where they had information that there was a lot of reasonably priced fir and Redwood timber. This impending move was one of the reasons Bud took the time off to finish college. Everything was going very well

and the plans for the future were changing; the college education—with a degree in business administration—would come in handy.

In 1951 and 1952 the Spoons purchased a large amount of timber north and east of Eureka. As the purchase of this timber was definitely going to alter future operations, it made it possible for Bud to accept a change of his own plans for the future and that of his family. Due to his educational training and the extensive business background received in the lumber business, he was offered the position as vice-president for finance at Walla Walla College. He accepted that offer in February 1952 and moved to Walla Walla College located in College Place, Washington.

Due to the large increase in enrollment, due mostly to the returning veterans, the educational program of the college was expanding rapidly. This also created a demand for an increase in the educational plant and facilities. During the next 14 years Bud helped to rebuild the campus including many new and expanded facilities.

In 1965 Bud accepted the offer to become one of the vice-presidents of Loma Linda University, in Loma Linda, California, and retired as controller of that institution and Medical Center in 1984. His wife and he still live in Loma Linda.

Let us go back again to the lumber business. All the time Bud was working in education, the Spoo family continued to operate the lumber business as a family business. In 1954 they purchased the Bayside Lumber Co. four miles north of Eureka, California, to cut the timber they had purchased and were continuing to purchase. Bob Spoo moved to Eureka in 1954 and took over the management of the lumber operation that had been organized under the name of Precision Lumber Co.

Ed Spoo continued to run the Mitchell Pine Lumber Co. that was processing the remaining timber. In 1955 as the last of the Mitchell timber was cut, The Spoo family sold the Mitchell operation to Walt Lindstrom, of Midstate Lumber Co., who had some timber holdings in the area. He wanted to cut this timber and his purchase of Mitchell Pine Lumber Co. gave him the means to accomplish that. The Spoo family lost track of their former mill after it was sold, but heard that it burned in 1956 or 1957.

Ed and Hazel Spoo bought a home in Eureka in 1955 and were moving their belongings down there from Mitchell. On a trip returning to Mitchell to finish their business, they stopped in a motel in Grants Pass, Oregon. The next morning, as they were getting dressed, the motel room exploded from a leaking gas heater line. Ed died

that afternoon in the hospital. Hazel lived for ten days before dying. They both were buried at Redmond, Oregon.

Bob continued to operate the Precision Lumber Co. which was a large band mill complete with planers and chippers for making chips for the paper industry. In 1957 the Spoo family purchased the Bay Lumber company in Eureka. It was also a complete lumber operation with planers, dry kilns, and a dock for ocean going ships. After selling all the lumber operations in the Eureka area, Bob moved to Gerlach, Nevada and later retired in Sparks, Nevada. He died October 14, 1995, and was buried at Redmond, Oregon.

**Author's NOTE:** For some time I have been attempting to locate information about a sawmill called "The Slab & Knot Hole Company." In a telephone conversation with Bud Spoo I learned that this was sort of a "term of endearment" that the Spoo family used for their operations. They also sometimes called their company "The Chip & Sliver Factory."

### **A note from Arthur Spoo:**

All of the above was put together rather rapidly. I talked on the telephone with several people to try and get the facts and history straight. Some of these people with whom I spoke were:

Edna Spoo, wife of Bob Spoo, now living in Sparks, Nevada

Beverly Danielson, daughter of Willis Spoo, living in Mississippi where she is married to Harry Danielson, a neurosurgeon. She remembers a lot about living in Prineville.

Jack Nunnellee, who worked for the Spoo family for many years beginning in 1936. He married Nell Roach, whose father logged for us for many years. He and all his family were very special friends of ours. He worked for Willis in Post, Mitchell, Spray, Elgin and Colorado. He lives in Salem, Oregon.

Another wonderful sawmill operation and family not covered in *Green Gold* if that of C.G. Hitchcock. Their tale around here begins in La Pine around 1930, later moved to Sisters where it became quite large, then moved to the Indian Reservation at White Swan, Washington. Here are some random photos of the Sisters operation.



An early drawing.



**THEN**

**NOW**

