



## *Frank Middleton Crawford*

**1910-1966**

Think about the woods, when the loggers have all gone home for the day...quiet...hushed...silent. That was the manner of Frank Middleton Crawford. Quiet, for sure, but like the sturdy trees which grow in those forests, Frank's roots were firmly planted in the good earth from the moment he saw the light of day on December 10, 1910, one of eight children of Ada and William Crawford.

His beginnings in the lumber business came with marriage as a fresh-out-of-school young man to Vivian, daughter of C.G. Hitchcock who owned a sawmill in LaPine, Oregon. Frank took to the business immediately and moved easily, just as he had as a small child from his birthplace in Pocatello, Idaho to Bend where he attended public schools in Oregon's desert country. When the Hitchcock family sold their mill and moved from LaPine to Indian Ford near Sisters, Frank and Vivian struck out on their own, purchasing the first of the many mills they would own over the next 26 years.

The world was at war in 1940 when Frank Crawford started his own enterprise in Spray, Oregon, which he operated until 1947. He then took his growing family to Willits, buying his first California sawmill at nearby Longvale. In 1945, the nation's demand for lumber had risen to its highest level in 40 years after being pent up for more than a decade due to the Depression and World War II.

Crawford was a smart businessman, sensing when markets were good and borrowing the money necessary in order to purchase timber and timberlands when values were proper. He recognized quality in timber and purchased plants in remote areas because of their geographic location to healthy timber stands. By 1950, Frank had California mills at French Gulch and Hayfork and a remanufacturing plant in Anderson. Crawford was apt to do most business with a handshake and once after buying a large tract of timber, the agreement was found written on a napkin. Frank kept things simple but common sense played a big part in his success.

In 1956, when many of the mills on the Northern California Coast were changing ownerships, Crawford sold to Shasta Plywood and moved to Ukiah. During the next decade he acquired mills at Ukiah, Willits, Alderpoint, Dinsmore, Potter Valley, Covelo and a remanufacturing plant at Calpella. Frank visited all his plants regularly and often would be seen pulling lumber on the green chain. He looked after his employees and, if his operation enjoyed profits, he'd give out bonuses two or three times a year. A man who encouraged the learning process, Frank also knew the value of bringing youth into his organization.

The plants and mills of the F.M. Crawford Lumber Company produced pine, Douglas fir, white fir, redwood and cedar, serving all U.S. markets. From 1964 to 1967, the company was the largest independent producer of lumber in the country. During the Viet Nam conflict, it was not unusual for Crawford's Humboldt County mills to ship one to two million board feet per month to Saigon and other ports. Other plants in Mendocino County supplied much of the timber that temporarily covered the streets of San Francisco when excavation took place for the Bay Area Rapid Transit.

Frank had a deep love for his family, enjoyed a few close personal friends and was admired by all who knew him. An extremely private person, he contributed to many charitable activities, always forbidding recognition. His wife Vivian was everybody's All-American mother, hostess and the perfect wife for the quiet man. An excellent pilot, she flew Frank and other employees in the company plane to plants and mills and also to various meetings and favorite fishing spots. It was on one of these fishing trips to Canada that Frank and Vivian were tragically killed in an airplane accident in 1966, prematurely ending the career of a great lumberman.

Subsequently, the F.M. Crawford Lumber Company was sold to Georgia-Pacific and those operations spun off to Louisiana-Pacific in 1973. Members of the family still have strong ties to the industry today and many of the Crawford employees are now running facilities for L-P. And, those folks who are still around – the young ones Frank had such faith in – remember Frank Crawford as honest and always a man of his word...a constant reminder to all that hard work, by itself, can make for success.