



Glen E. Park

1911-2001

During a career that spanned little more than a half-century, Glen Park demonstrated an energy and determination that propelled a small independent sawmill into a world supplier of specialty wood products.

Born September 5, 1911, near Estacada, Oregon, Glen E. Park got his first job in the forests when he was 16 years old, falling and bucking timber. In 1943, at age 32, he bought his first small sawmill located on Fir Creek south of Estacada. At the time, he also owned and operated a trucking company in Sedrow Wooley, Washington, and ran a poker game at a local tavern.

Glen Park's Oregon roots go deep. Both his parents were born in the Willamette Valley, his father near Oregon City and his mother in Salem. His father was both a schoolteacher and owner of several small mills in northwest Oregon and southwest Washington.

Early in his career, Park had his share of setbacks. His first plant was destroyed by an arson-caused fire in 1946. Though ever resilient, he sold his trucking company and used the \$44,000 in proceeds to rebuild the mill on property he acquired near Estacada. In that same year, after the end of World War II, the demand for housing-and studs was enormous and many mills prepared for the expected boom in business. But instead of building a stud mill, Park equipped his new plant to produce specialty lumber, including select structural, scaffold timbers and dimension lumber, from 1-inch by 3-inch to 20-inch by 30-inch sizes. He also supplied lumber to the railroads, providing them with ties and stringers. During its first year of operation, Park Lumber Co. produced about 40,000 board feet per day.

From the beginning, Park always planned for the times ahead. During the next 23 years of operation, Park Lumber Co. continually replaced, updated and modernized whenever faster and more efficient equipment became available.

In 1959, he revamped the entire mill in a \$250,000 expansion and modernization program to increase efficiency and take advantage of a growing lumber market. He also kept an eye on material use and was one of the first in the industry to sell rather than burn chips.

By 1969, Park Lumber Co. was producing 200,000 board feet per shift and running two shifts daily. Producing such volumes required many skilled hands and for several years Park Lumber Co. was Estacada's largest employer with 210 employees at its peak, including those at G.E. Park Logging Co.

In addition to modernizing, Park's housekeeping standards around the plant were legendary. Buildings were always freshly painted, floors swept clean, lawns carefully trimmed and everything was kept in its place.

"If a man can't keep his mill looking good, then he's got no business in the lumber industry," Park maintained. "Good housekeeping assures responsible handling and better quality lumber."

Indeed, Park's drive for quality filtered through every aspect of the operation. A typical example is reflected in a 1958 letter from a U.S. Forest Service official, complimenting him on a "clean and efficient job of logging and on an excellent job of road maintenance...the best condition I have seen in several years."

Park's attention to quality paid off. For a small, independent sawmill, Park Lumber Co. was involved in some highly visible projects worldwide.

In the mid-1960s, Park was asked to supply the timbers that would serve as masts for the newly restored USS Constitution in Boston. The ship, built in the 1700s, was undergoing a major renovation. The project required eight timbers, each 30 inches square and 35 feet long. The Estacada mill had one of the few planers in the country that could handle timbers that large.

Park Lumber Co. also provided lumber products for the Aswan Dam, a major construction project on the Nile River. Working with the prime contractor, Park sealed the deal with a handshake.

Park embraced his avocations with the same zeal and determination that made his lumber company a success. His first love was flying which he approached with self-confidence.

Although he had never flown, he bought a plane in 1946 and eventually became among the first in the industry to recognize the advantages of aerial timber spotting. After less than four hours of dual instruction and two practice landings, his instructor cleared him for his first solo flight, which he passed with ease.

Shortly after receiving his private license, Park flew to White Salmon, Washington, where he picked up a friend who wanted to visit Red's Horse Ranch in eastern Oregon. His friend assured him it was easy to find: "It's just two peaks north of La Grande," he said. After Glen brought the plane down with seemingly practiced precision, the ranch's owner told him it was the best landing of the day—on a strip that was considered difficult for fledgling pilots. When he called his instructor to let him know where he was, the instructor was astonished.

It also was on this flight that Glen Park began to realize the wealth of opportunities that were awaiting him in this new world of aerial timber spotting.

A few days later, on one of his first aerial scouting missions, he spotted an exceptionally rich stand of timber. After locating the stand on a map, he made a quick call to the owner with an offer. Park made enough on this one spotting trip to pay for the plane many times over. With that experience, the plane became an indispensable part of the Park Lumber Company operation.

Park also used the plane to deliver men and equipment to distant logging sites. On one occasion, the plane served as a medical airlift for a severely injured worker.

During a lifetime of flying, Park logged more than 5,000 hours of flight before he stopped counting.

In 1963, on his "first vacation in 20 years," Glen Park found his second passion: big game hunting. He hunted worldwide, from India to Africa, Alaska, Siberia, British Honduras and Tibet, and even bagged a few world-class trophies along the way.

Park's collection, which consists of 165 life-size trophies, was valued at more than \$1,500,000 when he donated it to a logging museum in Tillamook, on the Oregon coast. The Safari Club, a restaurant in Estacada, also features a large display of his animals.

The huge collection did not come together easily or without risk. On one of his many adventures, Park was invited to India to hunt "killer tigers" which were threatening the villages and had already killed several people. In one village alone he killed five "man-eating" tigers.

In another incident, in 1967, Park nearly died when he was run over by a Land Rover at a camp in Rhodesia. The accident crushed the left side of his body, seemingly beyond repair. After an agonizing 18-mile trip by Land Rover to the nearest airstrip, he was flown 300 miles to the closest, and by chance, the finest hospital in southern Africa. Doctors gave him a seven percent chance of surviving. However, after months in recovery, including a bout with gangrene, Park miraculously survived.

Shortly afterward, in 1969, Park sold his sawmill to Crown Zellerbach Corp. However, as part of the deal, he agreed to manage the plant, but eventually he found the paperwork overwhelming.

In 1972, after a career that spanned 52 years, a career that led him to pioneer new timber spotting methods and continually improve his product quality, Glen Park retired from the wood products industry for the second and final time.