

Sawing Lumber for Floating Homes - Family Investments Inc

By Meg Bull

In Battle Ground, Washington, you'll find the well-established, successful Family Investments Inc. Started in 1994, and headed up by Derek Morrell, Family Investments makes use of their two LT40 Hydraulic mills, one extended to 45 foot long the other modified to saw 60" wide and 78' long!

The company manages an average of 8,000 board feet a day. "I cut railroad bridge timbers 8"x20" 30' long free of heart center beams select strut. I also cut timber frame beams for various companies including Arrow Timber framing. I can produce beams up to 36"x36" 76' long." The sawmill actually started as a tool for creating his homes. "I bought a Wood-Mizer to produce long timbers for under my floating homes when I build them." What used to take Derek 3 weeks now only takes him 4 days! Derek was working at a sawmill at the time, but the economy took a swing. "The economy put the sawmill out of business so I moved [the mill] home and now I am swamped with orders!"

With perfection in mind, Derek turns to Wood-Mizer to maintain his own company's quality standard. "They are a super precision sawing machine. If it ever breaks down you can get parts almost overnight. I looked into select sawmills brand, but no comparison. Wood-Mizer can handle large logs, and my average log on my small sawmill is 28-30' on the scale end and 36' long." The average day at Family Investments Inc starts at 7am and with 2-3 log trucks. Two wheel loaders load the two mills and both mills run for approximately 10 hours.

In addition to his company's success, Derek was able to create a beautiful home. "I make my own material. My house and attached apartment is over 11,000 square feet and paid for my using my Wood-Mizer. This summer we are adding a 2,800 square foot indoor timber frame swimming pool room." Currently, Family Investments Inc services the railroad and Timber framers in the area. According to Derek, "The railroad and Timber framers...only want the best possible products."

Despite the recent economic challenges facing most of the nation, Derek has fared well. "Yes, it has [been affected.] I have to be more competitive on pricing and delivery time. But, if you make a great product and deliver, you will never be out of work. I would not want to do anything else. The American dream of being self-employed is still out there, you just have to work hard and take pride in your work. I live in timber country and it is hard to find jobs now, but everyone needs wood products always."