

# Wood-Mizer LT35HD

When Dan Wakefield of Republic, Missouri, decided to build a house on the family farm near the small southwest Missouri town of Republic, there was no question in his mind that he would cut his own logs and mill the lumber.

**T**he farm has a long history, going back three generations to a time when his great-grandfather raised cattle and Tennessee Walkers. Dan wanted his children to grow up on the rolling hills of the farm to continue the family tradition. With a good resource of trees, the missing link was, of course, a sawmill. “I decided to get one because I liked the idea of milling the lumber for our house myself,” he said. “I have plenty of trees to mill, and after I’m through, I’ll still have the sawmill.”

Having previously worked in industrial manufacturing, Dan had a pretty good idea of what to look for. He started out by looking at sawmills at different shows and fairs. After narrowing the choices down to two manufacturers, he chose the Wood-Mizer LT35 Hydraulic—a decision made easier by the fact that there is a dealer just 30 minutes away. “I definitely wanted hydraulics,” he recalled. “It was quite a bit more money, but I do a lot of work by myself and, as my wife pointed out, I wouldn’t be doing much sawmilling if I hurt myself trying to lift a log.” Other features that he liked were the heavy frame, the fact that it could handle a 21-foot log,



The claw turner automatically lifts when it contacts the log, making it easy to operate. It had no problem turning and holding this honey locust log. Meanwhile, the log lifters hold boards for edging.

and the 32-inch-diameter capacity. “I would love to have a bigger one, but the prices go up, of course. I may have a few larger logs, but this will take care of most of them.”

Although the mill is portable, he says he plans to use it as a stationary unit for now, and has built a rock base for it. Once the house is finished, he says he may do some portable sawmilling for others, so it was good to have the portable option. Weighing in at 3,800 pounds, the mill meets DOT standards for the hitch, lights, and brakes. Dan has had it on the road a couple of times, and says it tows easily, and is fairly quick to set up, “I’ll have to get a bigger truck if I move it much,” he noted.

With the purchase of the mill, the local Wood-Mizer dealer took Dan through its maintenance and operation. Although he had never operated a sawmill before, Dan’s background in setting up manufacturing equipment proved useful. He immediately took to the mill, though he experienced a few of the same “initiation” issues that most sawmill operators know all too well. “I did roll a big log off the side of the mill when I tried to turn it,” he admits. “And I forgot to put the toe roller down after turning a log and wound up with a long, tapered board.”

## How It Works

The LT35 lacks the usual flexible hydraulic and electrical control lines associated with hydraulic sawmills. Electric motors power the carriage functions (carriage height and feed), which allows operation without running the engine. Another 12-volt motor turns a hydraulic pump for log handling (loading, turning, clamping, and toe rollers). This motor connects to the 105-amp alternator by means of an electrical connection between the carriage and a conducting bar mounted on the track. While this arrangement is simple and effective, the hydraulics can only be used when the carriage is all the way back in the starting location. This arrangement eliminates the need for flexible hydraulic or electrical lines. All cables and hoses are well protected and tucked out of the way. Hydraulic controls are a bank of hydraulic levers placed in a well-protected area



Wakefield keeps an eye on the cut and listens for changes in the motor as he keeps a hand on the electronic feed speed control. The speed control is smooth and precise, and automatically stops the carriage if it encounters resistance.

on the right. The levers are so low that Dan has to kneel down to read the labels, though he believes that it will not be an issue once he has enough experience to operate them by feel.

Dan had a 15-inch-diameter honey locust log on the loading arms for a demonstration. After allowing the engine a minute to warm up, he activated the log lifter, which effortlessly set the log on the mill. The claw-type log turner uses a clever combination of springs and pivots. A single lever moves the turner to the log and then lifts the edge to rotate it. If it is necessary to get another bite on the log, it is a simple matter to move the clamp under the log and either turn the log with it, or hold the log in place while the operator resets the turner claw. Compared to a manual mill and cant hook, this system appeared to be very quick and easy to use.

## Wood-Mizer LT35HD

<b>Manufacturer</b> .....	Wood-Mizer 8180 West 10th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46214 Phone: 317/271-1542 • Toll Free: 800/553-0182 www.woodmizer.com
<b>Log capacity</b> .....	32-in. diameter, 21-ft. length
<b>Power options</b> .....	25-hp gas, 17-hp diesel
<b>Weight</b> .....	3,700 lbs.
<b>Towing package</b> .....	Standard
<b>Hydraulics</b> .....	Log lifter, turner, clamp, log stops
<b>Carriage feed</b> .....	Electric with speed controller
<b>Setworks</b> .....	“SimpleSet” computerized auto-height setting
<b>Options</b> .....	Toe boards, track extensions, debarker, additional log stops

The aptly-named SimpleSet setworks allows the operator to program in the desired board thicknesses. The operator uses the manual mode to move the blade to the proper height for the first cut, and then switches the setworks to automatic. After each cut, Dan pulls the lever to lift the head to a safe height, returns the carriage, then nudges the carriage height lever forward. The SimpleSet automatically lowers the blade to the proper height for the next cut. What this system lacks in full programmable features, it makes up in ease of use. Dan appreciates the user-friendly system. "I think the setworks is great. It remembers where you made the previous cut. Just bring it back, and it automatically drops down where it needs to be for the next cut."

### Trying It Out

With a push of a lever, Dan engaged the idler pulley and throttled up the engine. The 25-hp Kohler went from a purr to a roar, and he entered it into its first cut. After cutting off the top slab and one board, he turned the controls over to me. My first rookie mistake was trying to turn the log without releasing the clamp (much to Dan's amusement). The claw turner engaged the log solidly and held it against the stops while I moved the clamp into place. When I disengaged the log turner, it slid back and tucked itself down and out of the way. It only took a few cuts to get the knack of it. I found it worked best to set the feed rate to zero,

engage the feed, and then use the speed control to ease the blade into the log and set the cutting speed.

The 25-hp Kohler is a good match for this machine. While I didn't push it hard, it cut at a good pace and had no tendency to bog down. The LT35 is a walk-along mill, though all I had to do was watch the blade and listen to the engine. The speed control was very responsive, the chain feed was smooth, and the blade cut straight through the tough wood. There is no need to keep a hand on the control while the mill is cutting, so it is possible to attend to other tasks, such as stacking boards, while the mill is cutting. Anytime the feed meets with much resistance (such as reaching the end of the track), the carriage feed automatically stops.

After lifting the blade clear of the log, I put the lever in the "return" position and the carriage returned at a brisk walking speed. There is no speed control for the return, so it is important to keep the walkway clear. Like everything else about the mill, it took only a few cuts before it became second nature. A nudge forward on the carriage height dropped it down for the next cut, and the mill was back to making sawdust.

### One of the Bestselling Machines

Will Baugh runs the Wood-Mizer dealership in nearby Monett, Missouri. According to Will, the LT35HD has become one of his bestselling machines. Dan is a typical customer. "Most of the people who buy this

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machine use it to build their homes, provide material for a woodworking business, or for farm use,” he explained. “The SimpleSet setworks is very popular,” he told me. “Customers learn to use it very quickly, and it is accurate and reliable.” Picking up the mill from his dealership gives him the opportunity to go over the operation of the mill, and he allows the customer to mill a couple of logs just to make sure they understand how to run it.

Since purchasing the mill about a year ago, Dan says he hasn't run a huge amount of wood through it, mostly cutting for himself and a little for a friend. Once the house is built, he plans to change that. “I'd definitely like to start a sawmilling business as soon as the house is finished,” he said. “I'll need a little more equipment.” Dan has a good start, with a pickup truck and a four-wheel-drive Kioti tractor that is almost an exact color match for the sawmill. Dan is very pleased with Wood-Mizer's blade-sharpening service, though he says he'll likely sharpen his own blades when he starts milling more for other people. When asked about Wood-Mizer's customer service, Dan just shrugged. “The mill works great. I haven't had to call them about any problems.” ■

*Dave Boyt has a BS degree in Forest Management and an MS in Wood Technology. He manages a tree farm (2006 Missouri Tree Farm of the Year), and operates a band saw sawmill.*

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