



Photos by Bill Gove

ROSS Model 240

Simple, affordable and manual all the way, the Ross fits a weekend sawyer's bill.

By Bill Gove

One of the great things about the multitude of portable sawmills now on the market is the variety of sizes and capabilities. Not only are most of the makes well built, but there is a mill for about any function the purchaser has in mind. For many it is not high production or speed of sawing or maximum profit from a weekend's efforts; it is the joy and satisfaction from processing their own logs and building structures with their own home-made lumber. And this with an investment well under \$10,000.

With such happy sawmillers as these in mind, I chose to look at a portable sawmill brand which features simplicity

and affordability, the Ross Bandmill. The Ross mill was one of the first mills to appear in the surge of portable sawmills that have come on the market in recent years. Made in New Hampshire for many years, Ross has now been purchased by Outback Industries of Prospect, Maine. Outback has come out with an improved version which still retains the simplicity preferred by many buyers.

The sky was threatening rain on the day I headed for the picturesque village of Schroon Lake on the eastern edge of New York's Adirondack Mountains. I had heard about a happy sawmillier there who spoke highly of his Ross bandmill. Knowing that these small mills are frequently set up

in an open area, I dreaded the task of trying to obtain the photos and interview in the rain.

But one should never underestimate a happy sawmillier. Upon arrival at a neat lumber yard located under some tall pines, I found Dennis Martin and friend Roger Sachleben busy at the task of making lumber. And over them, shielding them from the rain I was sure would soon fall, was a substantial roof.

Dennis bought the Ross mill last October, motivated to set up a small mill because of the abundance of smaller logs available from his land clearings. What better salvage use, he reasoned, than fence and construction material provided for another major interest, his horses.

The initial appeal of the

Ross mill to Dennis was the simplicity. The 9 HP Honda engine is mounted on an 8-inch channel iron carriage which travels through the log and is light enough to push easily.

The setworks differs from many mills in that the saw is not adjusted, the log is, by being raised up manually. But it isn't difficult. A crank on each end of the log-holding frame will raise the log supports in one-inch increments. Metal spacers of 1, 2 and 3-inch thicknesses are also used under the log ends to raise them, especially useful with a tapered log.

While sawing the first two faces the log obviously has to be dogged in place, driving in a dog at each end and securing it to the log holder. After two adja-

At left; Dennis Martin (left) and Roger Sachleben work a log onto the Ross log holder.

cent faces are flattened, the side and end rests of the log holder will keep the log stationary while being sawn. Edging is accomplished by clamping the boards upright against the log cant before the log is completely sawn. With the board edges vertically above the sawn cant, squaring the edges is a simple and quick process.

The saw blade is a standard 98 1/2 inch band, 1 1/4 inches thick. Lubrication must be done manually, and Dennis uses a squirt gun to lubricate about every fifth pass. The saw tensioner is located next to the operator. A blade scraper is permanently mounted to clean the inside surface of the band saw. The feed rate varied considerably because of the type of logs Dennis saws. With

the small logs he was easily sawing 1 1/4 feet per second but had to slow down to almost a half a foot per second with large logs. The largest log the mill can handle is 24 inches in diameter.

Accuracy of lumber sizing appeared to be satisfactory, provided that the log rest and the spacers were continually kept clean of sawdust. Dennis was meticulous about this, and his lumber showed little variation. Since the log is supported only on each end while resting on the log holder, there is the problem of sag in the material being sawn as it becomes thinner. This is overcome by placing an upright movable support under the center of the material being sawn. The company supplies an adjustable support, but Dennis had



The Ross saw head is light enough to push easily.



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Dennis Martin cranks up the log for his next cut. Note the 2-inch spacer used to set taper.

made his own set of supports in lengths of one-inch variance. A support of the needed length can be quickly placed under the center of the timber being sawn.

When asked what improvements the Ross mill needs, Dennis couldn't think of much at all. He would like to see an automatic oiler, but conveniences such as that would obviously add to the cost of a low-priced mill that the manufacturer wants to provide. Dennis would also like to have a way of preventing the build-up of dirt and sawdust in the groove of the wheels on the saw carriage.

Both Dennis and Roger spoke repeatedly of the simplicity of the mill. The mill can be dismantled into five pieces and transported in the back of his pickup. Almost all of the parts can be obtained locally, if necessary. Neither of these two friends are machinists or mechanics by trade: one is an accountant and the other a foreman in a cinder block plant. Sawing on weekends, they salvage logs that would have little value otherwise and in addition, do some customer sawing for the neighbors at \$150/MBF. They call themselves the Adirondack Rough Cutters.

Well, the rains did come

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ROSS MODEL 240 SPECS

NAME & MODEL NUMBER

Ross Model 240

MANUFACTURER & ADDRESS

Outback Industries Inc.
RR 1 Box 3330
Prospect, ME 04981
207-567-4182
rossmill@earthlink.net

MILL OVERVIEW

Band or Circle Mill: Band

Stationary or Portable: Portable

Standard Equipment:

6 blades, 2 dog spikes,
1 long and 1 short
Peavey, blade sharpener

Cutting Capacity:

24-inch diameter and 16-foot length

Weight: 1,250 pounds

Length & Width: 20 feet
one inch x 45 inches

FRAME & CARRIAGE

Size and Construction of

Frame: 8-inch heavy
channel iron

Tracks are Made of: 4 x
4 x 1/2-inch angle iron

**Are the Tracks
Replaceable?** Yes

Wheels are Made of:
Cast Steel

Carriage Bearings:
Greaseable roller bearings

Carriage Support Sys:
8-inch channel iron

SAWING HEAD

Wheel Diameter:
14 inches

Wheel Face: 2 1/2
inches with 7/8 inch band
surface

Wheel Construction:
Machined Cast Steel

Wheel Shaft:
1 1/4 inches

Wheel Speed (RPM):
1,200

Saw Speed (SFPM):
4,050

**Recommended Saw
Blade:** 1 1/4 x 98 1/2 x
.042 inches

GUIDES AND STRAIN SYSTEM

Type of Guides: None
needed

Strain System Used:
Compression spring

Wheel Tilting System:
Adjustable bearings on
one side

NETWORKS

**Method of Setwork
Drive:** Crank

Set Display: Rulers

Automatic Sets? No

ALIGNMENT

**How is Alignment Done
at Factory?**

Precision jigs

POWER PLANT

Standard: 9 HP Honda
gas

Optional: 11 HP Honda
gas, 8 HP Lombardini
diesel

LOG TURNER

None

LOG LOADER

None

LOG DOGS

Two, manual spikes

CARRIAGE FEED DRIVE

Type (hydraulic, electrical, mechanical, or manual): manual

TOWING

Towing package
available soon

WARRANTY:

5 year warranty on all
components; 2 years on
engine, blades guaranteed
by manufacturer

OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Different track lengths,
rain cover

BASE PRICE

\$6,450

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A covered sawing station keeps out the rain for Dennis and his Ross bandmill.

down, in buckets, but not on the happy sawyers under their sawmill shelter. The yard suddenly got muddy enough that I had to have help getting my car out. I had enjoyed my visit with a small portable bandmill that obviously fills a strong niche in a market of weekend sawmillers. I was impressed with the simplicity and ease of the operation for such an inexpensive mill. As I drove out of the yard, I noticed the two of them busy again with their Ross Bandmill. ■

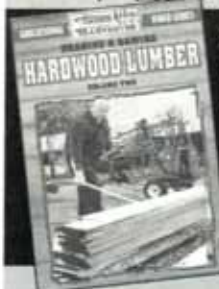
Bill Gove is a retired forester who last worked for the Vermont Department of Parks and Forests.

MANUFACTURER'S COMMENTS

When the Ross Bandmill went into production in 1978 there was nothing like it on the market. Our goal was to design a simple, dependable portable sawmill that one person could use to make consistently first-rate lumber.

While we've refined the details of our patented design over the years, we have never strayed from our original purpose. Massive, rugged construction assures consistently-dimensioned lumber. Logs are loaded at ground level and carriage is gravity-assisted for ease of use. Few moving parts make the Ross virtually maintenance-free. Finally, we have the only 5-year warranty in the industry.

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 Lake States Logging Conf: Escanaba, MI— September 9-11
 Paul Bunyan Show: Nelsonville, OH— October 1-3

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