

C Iredell CITIZEN

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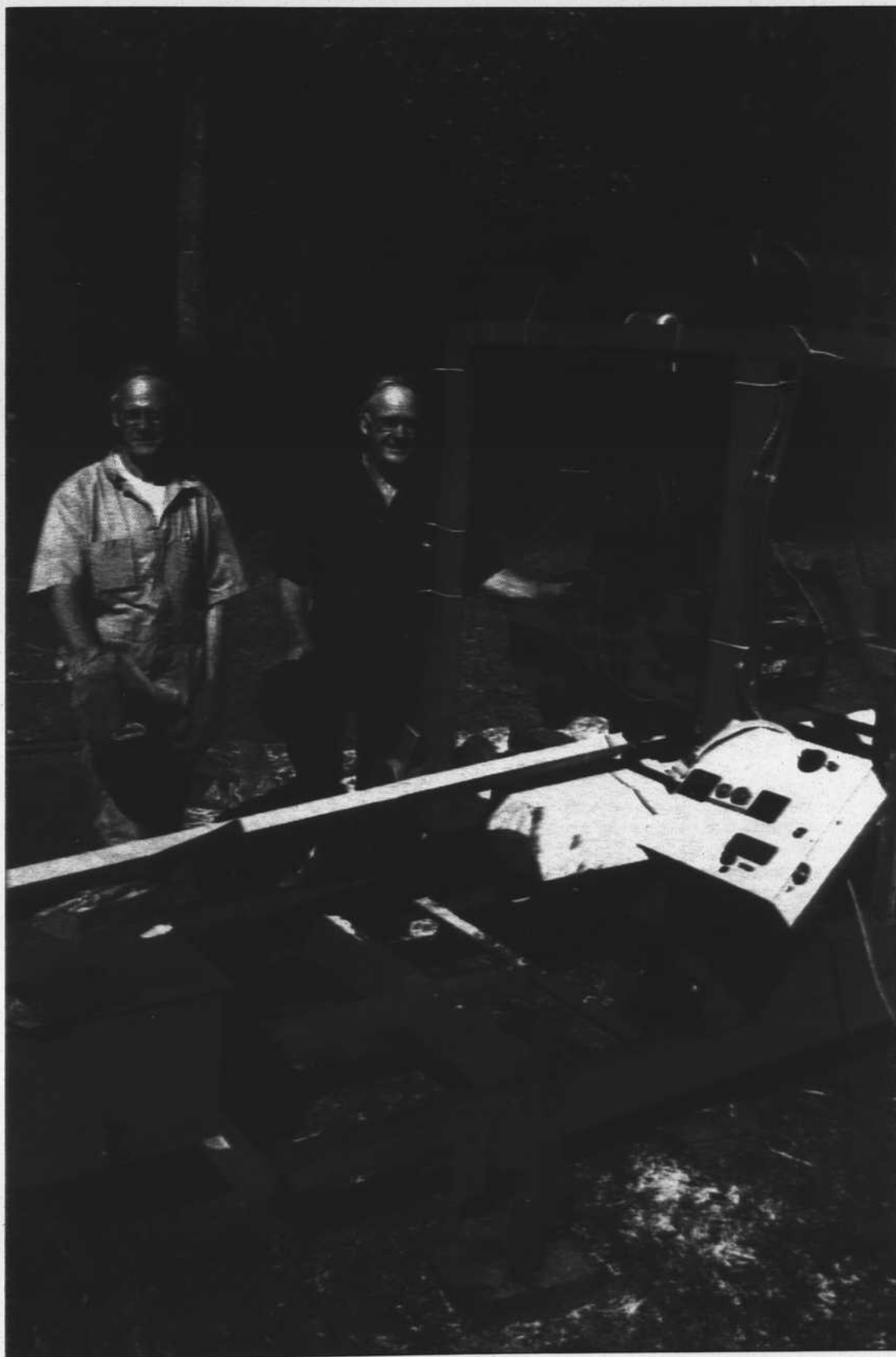
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Ray and Jay are the...

SAWDUST TWINS



Bob Plyler/CITIZEN

JAY AND RAY ready to cut

Bob Plyler
IREDELL CITIZEN

MEN HAVE A LOVE FOR WOOD that women find hard to understand. Some work it, some finish it, some build with it. Jay and Ray Wilhelm, of Statesville, just enjoy sawing it.

You see, Jay and Ray are twins, which doesn't have anything to do with the story except we thought it was interesting and we threw it in.

Anyway, they retired from Dana Corp. in 1999. Since then they've been piddling around the house and in their "spare" time they've taken in a lot of old machinery shows like the Southeastern Thrasher's Reunion in Denton.

But, it was last year's old-timey machinery show at Turnersburg that really got them hooked. There, an old saw mill was sold, but not before the boys took a good look at it and figured right away they wanted to make one for themselves.

Now, they didn't try to buy a sawmill kit, as if you could find such a thing. No, they did what men who make things do, they scrounged in their workshops off the Amity Hill Road.

They found steel girders, gears, switches, motor, wires, just the kinda stuff most people throw away but people like Ray and Jay pick up, put up and use later on.

For one of the two power supplies, a neighbor came up with a Gilson engine that long since had given up, sighed and died. They cleaned it up, tore it down, rebuilt it and put its "putt-putt" back in. This engine supplies the sawing power.

A DC motor, converted to run on AC power provides the powerful slow-pulling torque necessary to ease the heavy logs under and through the continuous band-saw cutting blade.

It took about a year, they said, "working off and on," and they finished it off with a bright coat of Allis Chalmer orange. The whole unit can best be described as a big band saw lying horizontally instead of sitting upright. There's more to it than that but you get the idea.

Keep in mind that, cut with a fine-tooth blade, lumber comes off the log with a smooth surface. Fine adjustments on the saw can turn out a board as small as an eighth of an inch thick.

A thin blade, yields more usable boards per log. This is important when you consider a thin blade cutting an expensive walnut log could yield a hundred dollars of more usable lumber.

Building it was a challenge just to see if they could, and they did. Is it a money-maker? Well, it could be but the boys just do sawing for their friends. Why do they do it? Well, it could be the fun of operating a machine they created in their workshop out back. Could be the smell of new-cut wood. It's probably both.

Ask their wives and they would probably shrug their shoulders and laugh while telling you they don't know why they built it—but it keeps them out of trouble.

See What the Twins Saw on page 16