



Volume 21 Number 1 January 2006

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www.bearcreeklumber.com



**Happy 30th Birthday
Bear Creek Lumber**

How was Bear Creek Lumber started?

The lumberyard was started back in 1977 at Cloud & Ela Bannick's home in Winthrop, Washington. Before moving to Winthrop, they lived in a grass thatch hut in Hawaii. They had trouble finding work because the sugar mills had shut down just before they arrived, and there wasn't a lot of construction at that time. Soon thereafter a letter came from the Forest Service offering Cloud a job in the Methow Valley, working in their fire suppression crew. Cloud decided to take that job and began their move with a 20 year-old car, two children, a teepee, and a few hundred dollars.

After moving to the Methow Valley, the Bannick family's home was a teepee on a five acre parcel of land. Cloud, who had experience as a carpenter, was approached by the woman who owned the land they were living on. She wanted Cloud to build her a house, in exchange for ownership of the 5 acre piece of property.

At that time Cloud and Ela were down to their last \$400, when they came across an opportunity to purchase an entire truckload of lumber for \$250. Cloud bought that truckload of lumber, along with some logs, and built two houses. He built one for the neighbors, and one for themselves. Cloud sold the unused building materials to local builders and homeowners. As a side job, Cloud would take down old barns and other structures, and sell the salvaged lumber. He would also bring home the salvaged nails, hammer them straight, and reuse them. That was the beginning of Bear Creek Lumber.



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Cloud and Ela Bannick are shown above. Below are our first two salespeople, Dick Garing and Cloud Bannick. Also shown below: two different angles of the first lumberyard, at the original location. All of these pictures were taken circa 1980.



Sales Staff: Cloud Bannick and Dick Garing



Early Memories Recounted by Ela Bannick

When Bear Creek Lumber was started the majority of the sales were local. There wasn't much construction going on in the Methow at that time, but there also weren't any other lumberyards which really helped in getting the business started here. We were available, open and knew many of the contractors. They'd come in, even though we were so off the beaten track. Because we were working out of our house, the local contractors knew that we would be open 24 hrs a day 7 days a week, and they literally would come at that level. Eventually running the business out of the house got really tiring. Many times a customer would show up while I would be trying to give the little kids a bath, and all the kids would go "oh good we have an excuse not to have to take a bath!". Then they would all scatter. I would go out and sell the customer the wood, and I'd come back in just freezing cold (because it was wintertime). The house would be warm, but I would have to re-heat the water on the woodstove, and then chase all the kids down and get them into the bathtub again. This was not easy at all!

The other reason we decided to move the lumberyard away from our home was that we were operating in a residential area. The business was expanding to the point where we had constant traffic in and out of our driveway. We were running out of space to store lumber on our property, as well as running out of room for our sales/advertising/accounting office in our home. With different business activities, and the normal chaos of family life all under one roof, we had a state of controlled craziness at all times. The kids were school age, so they wanted to have friends over. Omaste and Sage started complaining that their friends were not allowed to come to our house. Our home was considered an industrial area, with forklifts running, lumber trucks loading and unloading, and customers coming and going.

In the mid 1980's the business was expanding, and we were shipping lumber not only in the Methow Valley, and Washington State, but to remote locations such as Bimini in the Bahamas. We then decided to move the lumberyard to its current intercity airport location. We continue to ship lumber world-wide, and enjoy working with our customers. - Ela Bannick



The picture on the left is the front of the original lumberyard warehouse/sales office. You can see Cloud leaning in the sales window.

Shown to the right is the back side of the warehouse/sales office. In the upper left corner of this picture, you can see Cloud & Ela's house.



In the beginning it was Cloud & Ela advertising, selling, loading, delivering, and invoicing lumber. The first two full-time employees were Ralph Austin, and Dick Garing, then Mike Bame, and Mike Pilkinton were hire to help part time. When BCL moved to the intercity airport we added Jim Austin, and Mary Bjornsen to our staff. We were then a full-time-crew of six. Shown to the right, and starting on the left are Cloud, Ela, Mary, Ralph, Jim and Dick. Not shown are the Bannick children who were pressed into service any time they were needed. This was mostly, but not exclusively, helping to process the newly established Timberline Newsletter.



The original warehouse at our current intercity airport location is shown to the left. This picture was taken before the first office was built. The picture directly below was taken after the first office space was built, but before our remodel. Our remodel added more office space, as we continued to grow our business, and our staff size.



The picture directly below shows the office remodel, and the bottom picture shows how our building, and warehouse look today. Directly below to the right is a picture of our staff, minus a few employees who are not shown. Present day, we have a staff of twenty full-time employees and four part-time employees. From the left, the back row shows Pete, Mike, Jennifer and James. From left, on the ground, are Jim, Jake, Omaste, Justin, Sage, Joe, Melissa, Merle, Mark and Karen.



Bear Creek Lumber Online : www.bearcreeklumber.com

In the mid 1990's Bear Creek Lumber went online, and was able to grow the business even more. In August of 1996, we started our 12 page website. There was a page for each species of lumber we sold, a page for our milling patterns, and a page for our Timberline Newsletter. Over the years, we have been expanding the site to include many more pages and features; including an online catalog, online quote request page, a list of services we offer, as well as product pages for each of the products we offer. Another addition was many many pictures of our products, both in raw lumber form, and finished project form. One of the "fun" things we have done is to add monthly pictures of the Methow Valley. Check monthly for updated pictures at <http://www.bearcreeklumber.com/monthlypics/monthlypics.html>. Our employees take turns taking pictures from around the valley, and we post these pictures on our site to let our customers see the beauty of the area that we operate out of.

We encourage customers, and others, to come and visit us. We love to show people around our operation and our valley.



Shown to the left is our lumberyard in November 2003.

Shown to the right is Doris Lake, deep in the Pasayten Wilderness. Picture by Merle Kirkley



Now that we have had a website up and running for the last ten years, we decided to redesign it. A major part of the redesign process was to hire a new webmaster, Hector Bianchi. He has performed a facelift on the old site, and we added a few new features.



Celebrating 30 years in Business and 10 years Online, we look back at our first home page (left) and forward to our new homepage for 2007 (right). Unchanged has remained our commitment to supply the highest quality lumber products to our valued customers. We look forward to the next 30 years!



Beginning in January of 2007, we will be launching our new website. The new site will include an improved search function, improved and updated featured projects, easier access to monthly pictures and customer comments, specific pages for contractors, architects, manufacturers, and homeowners. One more idea we have been tossing around is to have a company blog? Visit our website and see how it all turns out. We will be launching our new website on January 1st 2007.

Keep checking back with us over the next year (and beyond), we will continue to add useful, interesting, and informative content to our site.

Please email either Hector hector@bearcreeklumber.com or Omaste omaste@bearcreeklumber.com, if you have questions, comments, or would like to see specific content on our site, or if you have ideas as to further improvements.

