

# A Memorial

By Raymond Imus

The snow-capped peaks of Washington look down upon a vast empire of green timber comprising West coast hemlock, Western red cedar, and Douglas fir named after the Scotch naturalist David Douglas who botanized all over the Oregon country in 1825. The Sitka spruce grows abundantly along the Pacific coast fog belt.

The U.S. government owns most of the forest land, having nine national forests in this state such as Mt. Rainier National Park, the Olympic National Park, and the North Central National Park. The 23 Indian reservations in this state own over 2 million acres of forest land.

The State of Washington is the second largest owner of our timber land, the sale of which helps support our public schools. The 16th and 36th section of every township is school land so provided by Thomas Jefferson in the Northwest ordinance of 1787. The state provides fire protection, promotes a reforestation program, eradicates pests, builds fire trails and roads and seeks in every way to promote the conservation of our forests.

One-half of our forest land is privately owned and half of this is owned by large commercial forest pro-

duct companies such as Weyerhaeuser Co. Frederick Weyerhaeuser came to the Northwest in 1897 from Wisconsin where he had been also engaged in lumbering. He came at the invitation of James J. Hill, the railroad builder, who saw the great possibilities of the lumber industry in Washington and a source of revenue for his railroad.

The first sawmill was built by Dr. John McLoughlin in 1827 four miles from Ft. Vancouver. In 1836 Dr. Marcus Whitman built a sawmill in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Eastern Washington. Michael Simmons, who was the first to challenge the authority of the Hudson's Bay Co., north of the Columbia River made his way over the flooded Toutle and Cowlitz rivers to Tumwater where he built a sawmill in 1847. Most of the early sawmills were run by water power such as the Abernethy mill on Abernethy Creek at Oak Point which sawed 20,000 feet per day. Henry L. Yesler started the first steam saw-

timber receded farther back from the waterways the donkey engine improved until by 1894 they were quite general. By 1900 huge steam donkeys were so improved that they could pull themselves up and down mountains and pull themselves across rushing mountain streams even with the fire box flooded as the huge cable wound itself up on the drum to the other shore. The invention of the chain saw and new machinery and loading techniques, so improved the lumbering industry that from 1905 to 1938 Washington led all the states of the Union in lumber production. Oregon is now first with California second. Names of some of these pioneer lumbermen are well known to all: J.H. Bloedel and J.J. Donovan of Bellingham, Roland H. Hartley of Everett, Robert A. Long of Longview, the Weyerhaeuser family of Tacoma, Mark Reed of Shelton, Collins and Byerly of Ostrander, the Simpson Logging and Lumbering Co. at McCleary, etc.

In 1959 this state had 660 tree farms in operation, which is a fine tribute to the foresight of those who seek to maintain for posterity our rich inheritance bestowed upon us by nature.

In 1941 I purchased 140 acres of forest land from King County at public auction for the sum of \$200. This was land that had gone back to the county for nonpayment of taxes during the depression years of the 1930's. It was purchased for the Cleveland High School with student body money for the purpose of developing a Cleveland Memorial Forest in honor of our 28 high school boys who had been killed in World War II and seven more in the Korean conflict and now in Vietnam. The land today is worth over \$400,000. Homes and roads are being built up and around it and it is only a 25 minute drive across the floating bridge east of Seattle.

At the time of purchase 27 years ago a bus load of 32 high school boys armed with axes and shovels went out once a month and rebuilt the old logging roads and trails and planted 10,000 Douglas firs and Port Orford cedars which we obtained from the state nursery at Nisqually.

Today the work is continuing under

mill on Puget Sound in 1852 which was to become the site of the great city of Seattle.

The great demand for lumber by the forty-niners of California promoted the lumbering industry throughout the Northwest. Early pioneers say they have counted as many as 50 ships waiting to be loaded with lumber at Port Gamble in Puget Sound.

The early pioneers cut their timber down with axes. They had come from a part of our country quite unfamiliar with the huge dimensions of our four, six, and eight foot diameter Douglas firs. Ezra Meeker burned his timber down at Kalama in 1853 by boring two holes, filling them with pitch and setting them afire. This almost cost him his life one morning shortly after breakfast when two huge trees fell down at the same time, catching him in between. The invention of the long cross-cut saw with a handle on each end was a great boon to the lumber industry. Oxen in bull teams of from four to 20 were used to haul the logs over skid roads to the mill. Les and Al Imus were using oxen to haul logs to their mill on the Modrow place on Spencer Creek as late as 1905. A small steam donkey engine was put into operation by the Blanchard Co. on Bellingham Bay in 1887. As the

supervision of the Seattle School District. It is now called Project Interchange and is part of the federal government's plan to rehabilitate the high school drop-outs. These boys go to school every other day and work on the forest project the intervening days for which the government pays them a small amount. They have widened trails, built an A frame house, put in septic tanks and water facilities and are making it possible for 6th grade or high school teachers to bring a load of their science or botany classes to the woods where they will pass from teaching station to teaching station and receive first hand information on the trees and

flora of this area.

Many of the drop-outs are now graduating from high school which they would not have done otherwise. We have here a live vibrating living memorial with a delightful small stream flowing through the middle of it over which hang all the beauty and greenery of the forest. I know of no finer memorial to our honored dead who gave their lives in order that we might enjoy the democratic way of life. Here every day is a Memorial Day.

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