

ELECTRONIC KNOTHOLE NEWS

WALTER R. BRIGGS OLD GROWTH FOREST

JIM CREEK NAVAL RADIO STATION

JULY 22, 2006

EAST OF ARLINGTON – Across the river and through the woods we went, but this was no trip to grandmother's house. We were venturing into a remarkable stand of old growth timber along the Twin Lakes of Jim Creek Naval Station, guided by Walter Briggs, the forester who spent 20 years coaxing and cajoling the Department of Defense into setting aside the woods that stretch around the lakes.

The forest is host to Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, western red cedar and western hemlock, some specimens reaching 11 feet in diameter. The details of how the forest of Jim Creek was preserved were in an Electronic Knothole News of last year, so I will not try to repeat Bill Woods' account. But it should be noted that Walter saw just what was at stake in these few remaining lowland giants and took steps to preserve them. The Defense Department wisely named the forest for the man who fought for its preservation, and it remains there for generations to enjoy.

Getting to some of the bigger trees is where the fun comes in. Much of it is along a well-used trail, along the east side of the southerly member of the Twin Lakes. But then comes the beaver dam, which gives that lake at least some of its depth. We were a bit timid in clambering over the logs and through the soggy underfooting at first, but it was soon evident no one was getting across with dry socks. So we plunged across (some in knee boots actually did keep their socks dry!) and all 15 or so made it to the other side. There were some complaints to Walter by those who made the hike last year that the beavers were falling behind in their duties.

The Jim Creek facility (which primary purpose is to maintain a huge antenna system that communicates with submarines) doubles as a recreation area for Navy personnel and families. So our wading and jumping was observed by families doing a little fishing or just out boating on the lake.

Immediately across the dam we entered a grove of giant trees and spent some time admiring them. We lunched under the canopy and then Walter took us further uphill to his favorite cedar—a tree worth trying to wrap your arms around.

While the outing was to enjoy the forest of huge old growth, there might have been a grandmother's house in the forest at one time. Walter talked about his "finds" while rambling in the area—including a cast iron stove sitting on its own. He said an old map showed a black dot that could have been a cabin in the woods nearby. He also pointed out a cedar whose bark had been stripped many, many years ago by Indians. The practice was to pull a wide strip upward. The strip would get narrower as it was pulled up the tree, so it would come off in a wedge shape. The tree was not fully stripped, so the wound grew over—leaving a faint but telltale mark of its history.

After getting back to the parking lot (and rustic lodge) Bill and Erin Woods pulled out a cake and Bill's famous berry juice (patent pending) for a snack before we had to tread back into civilization.

To show our appreciation for Walter's taking the time to show us this special forest, we presented him with a copy of the WFFA book ``Stewards of the Land'' and a bumper sticker.

A trip to Jim Creek is truly a trip to remember. Thanks not only to Walter, but also to our chapter Treasurer, Chuck Holland, for arranging this year's outing. It was great to go along for the ride!

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P.S. A couple of reminders:

August 19, 10 a.m.—Educational field trip at Duane Weston's 46-acre tree farm, 24821 59th Ave. NE, north of Arlington. Topics include critter and vegetation control, thinning for forest health and to get the type of tree you want, fire protection, and adding tree farm income by providing recreation opportunities (and how to protect yourself from liability). Bring lunch and lawn chairs. Drinks provided. Directions: Exit 208 east off I-5 onto State Route 530, left on SR 9 for 2.1 miles, left on Kackman Road (252nd St.), left on 59th Ave. NE.

Sept. 16, 8 a.m.—Forest Owners Field Day, hosted by WSU and others. A full day of educational topics presented by a variety of speakers. It will be held at Pilchuck Tree Farm, north of Arlington. There is a fee to register. Check out www.familyforestfoundation.org for information and a registration form.

THE UPSFFA CHAPTER HAS AGREED TO HELP WITH THIS EVENT, PROVIDING BEVERAGES, HELPING PARK CARS AND POSSIBLY STAFF THE MAIN BOOTH. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO REACH OUT TO POTENTIAL MEMBERS. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS IN THIS ENDEAVOR. IF YOU CAN HELP, PLEASE E-MAIL OR CALL JIM (SEE E-MAIL ABOVE). THANK YOU.