



Upper Puget Sound / Grays Harbor

Jean Bolton

“At the annual meeting in Spokane, I was in the hallway walking rapidly in order to get some exercise one night and I ran into Nels Hansen. Nels said to me, ‘In our board meeting today I asked about people that might have some time on their hands and Bill Woods (who had been UPS President at the time) suggested your name.’

I’d just gotten married, so it must have been 1984. Nels said, “I have two jobs, one is to help out by going to meetings about regulations and the other is to organize something.

“I thought about Frank and me and the things we wanted to do. So I said, ‘I don’t think I want to do anything that is high intensity. It would drive me crazy.’ And I said I’d take the other one. I got involved with the regulatory process just when it was heating up.”

Did Jean Bolton realize what she was getting into when she spoke up at a chapter meeting 25 years ago? Perhaps not, but she took the torch and ran. A member of the Grays Harbor Chapter and Upper Puget Sound (UPS) Chapter, Jean went from being a casual member to vice president of UPS and eventually served as president of the WFFA.

Jean’s love and commitment to forestry is generational. Her great-grandfather George Emerson moved west from Chester, New Hampshire, eventually settling in Grays Harbor in 1881. George was sent by Asa Simpson to establish the first sawmill. He also spoke on the necessity of fire control in order to continue having viable forests in the Pacific Northwest, perhaps influencing the mindset of the group that established the Washington Forest Protection Agency (WFPA).

George died in 1914, passing half of his legacy on to his daughter Alice Emerson Lamb and her husband Frank. Taken under the wing of George Emerson, Frank Lamb, a botanist, became a forester. Frank also invented forestry equipment, including the Lamb Block. Alice and Frank created a company, which Florence Lamb Free (Jean’s mother) served as president. In 1969 the company was dissolved and shares of land were evenly divided amongst the siblings.

Her father, Alonzo Knighton Free, was an electrical engineer. As a Northwest native, he understood land use and forestry and provided his wife support and advice in her forest management activities. They belonged to Weyerhaeuser’s Tree Farm Family, and were awarded its Tree Farmer of the Year award in 1984. They also belonged to Washington’s Farm Forestry Association (WFFA), beginning in the late 1960s.

Jean graduated from Stanford University and settled in California. Due to family ties, she stayed informed on forestry issues and frequently traveled to Washington to work on her parent’s tree farm. In 1978, after spending two years in Sitka, Alaska as a librarian, Jean moved to

Seattle, Washington. She was encouraged to join the WFFA by Dr. Hinton Baker, then the president of Upper Puget Sound.

Jean spoke up at the UPS meeting concerning a legislature bill for 70-acre land allotments for eagles. Jean, "Eagles roosted in downtown Sitka. I mean, we were parking cars under them and talking around them. When the salmon were running, they were sitting right there on our doorstep. I thought giving them 70 undisturbed acres was unnecessary and said so at the meeting. That's the first time I remember speaking up. About a year or two later I was asked to be vice president of UPS, that was the early '80s."

In 1984, Nels Hanson approached Jean and asked for her help on regulatory matters. "It was the beginning of the riparian zones. The Timber Fish and Wildlife (TFW) regulations were codified around 1986. I started going to sub-committee meetings that Nels couldn't attend in 1984. By the time the TFW process was ratified, I was doing this work right alongside Nels.

"He was going to the meetings where the Washington Forest Protection Act (WFPA), the tribes, and all the government were present. That was the big negotiating table. I was working on the background committee with the WFPA on what landowners needed. They would take the package to the big meeting. I started sitting in on the final negotiations.

"As a result, I was assigned to go to Olympia to help in a rule-writing process. I became acquainted with the rank and file of the DNR and all the people that hadn't been involved with the negotiating process but were in charge of translating ideas into regulation."

Jean sat on the Forest Practices Board (FPB), while working her way through the ranks from secretary to president of WFFA. When Jean joined the FPB, the TFW's regulations were in place and working, but new issues were mounting in the background.

Jean, "By then, the whole thing was really going strong. The 1986 TFW rule package was supposed to be the beginning and end. We had a lot of groups like the Washington Environmental Council, the Audubon Society, the tribes, and all the state regulatory agencies also involved. They each understood where the forest industry and the tree farmers of the state were coming from, what we could and could not do, what the land was good for, and so on. When I joined the FPB, one of the first things I realized was that these people had done their job, were tired and educated, but there was a new group in the background that didn't think enough had been done. They hadn't sat in on negotiations and they were going to press for more.

"The process started to change so that by 1990 we were involved with what became known as the 1992 rule package where WFFA was not listened to at all. We had turned out as many as 400 people to the hearings. We'd been given packets of information but the state had no easy way at that point to get a viable small business impact assessment, so the state didn't recognize the things that were really affecting the small-acreage tree farmer. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) did not go out of its way to do what it could have done. As a result, WFFA sued. At a point I was in the uncomfortable position of serving on the board being sued, and serving as president of the organization doing the suing."

When asked how she handled the conflict of interest, Jean responded, "By having a firewall in my mind, when the subject of the suit came up in any direction I simply closed my mouth until it went away."

Jean's frustration with the 1992 rule package for the Sustainable Forestry Round Table, came from newcomers to the state who enjoy the great outdoors but didn't understand this area's ecology or the underlying issues. Jean, "Some of them had never been here before and they were walking into our negotiations [as participants in some group] and telling us what we were

supposed to be doing.” Her belief that the WFFA was the only viable organization for keeping tree farming alive in Washington state sustained her active involvement.

Having three fish-bearing streams on one of her parcels, Jean feels that two-thirds of her tree farm will be developed in the next generation and that the rest may disappear from the family. The thought of development due to regulatory issues is a distressing one.

FREE-BOLTON TREE FARM

Jean Free Bolton, born March 21, 1936 (Tacoma, Washington)

Frank Koerner Horton, January 8, 1936

Vice President Upper Puget Sound Farm Forestry

Vice President WFFA

President WFFA

Member Forest Practices Board



“I think we’ve inherited not so much the fire from Grandfather, but the dedication of looking out for the next generations of the family. That’s something we really do owe to him. He was never going to see the harvest on some of the acreage he bought. He bought it, because you did that for your family. “ – Jean Bolton