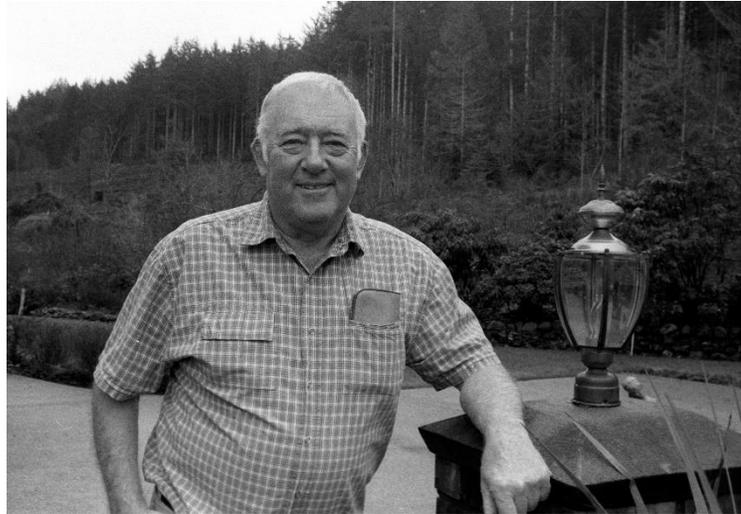


South Sound

Tom Wynne

Tom Wynne is famous for his tree farm tours. Tom, “I’ve had Evergreen college students, farm forestry tours, and people from the Society of American Foresters (SAF). One of the things I do for our school’s PTA fundraiser is to offer a tree farm tour that people bid for. They come up and I give them a private tree farm tour.



Tom’s grandparents, Dominic and Lena Wynne, came from Tacoma to Thurston County in 1916 and purchased the 80 acres of land that Tom and his wife currently live on. Tom, “At that time, the area was being logged for the first time. Two or three logging camps were in the valley that the tree farm encompasses.

“Grandma and Grandpa had quite a few children. Grandpa built a big barn, had cows, set up a garden and supplied milk, cream and vegetables to the logging camps. In 1930, and again in 1933, the whole area burned, and that pretty well took care of everything. There was no more logging until the new crop came on.”

Tom grew up on the family farm. After graduating from Olympia High School in 1955, he attended St. Martin’s College for two years and then went on to Washington State University (WSU), graduating in 1963 with a bachelor of science in forest management. Tom paid his way through college by raising turkeys and cows and logging in the summer.

While still studying forestry, Tom had begun to create management projects for his parent’s farm. Tom, “My first WSU student project was to set up a management plan for the tree farm. They [my parents] let me do that. They were raising cattle and hay and weren’t really doing much with the forest. There was no tree planting or thinning. That came after my management plan.”

After graduating, Tom took a job in construction as a timekeeper on the gas line from Olympia to Bremerton. He eventual became a foreman, but his interest in the land never waned.

His grandparent’s land was passed on to Tom’s parents Dominic and Marian Wynne in 1945, and then to Tom and his wife Charlene who added 120 acres of adjoining land owned by Tom’s mother’s family. Tom, “In those days they fenced everything and ran cattle in that area. After we purchased it from them in 1958, we went in and planted trees on the old fields and took the cattle off everything else, letting it grow back into a natural forest. It took about five years to naturally convert back into looking like a forest again.”

Much of the property was inaccessible so Tom began to focus on creating better access to its remote sections. Tom, “One of the first things I did was set up a road system. Then we started cleaning up the land and replanting it. We had to clean up and replant a lot of trashy, rotten trees. It took me 25 years of cleaning stands and replanting to get to the point that I could clear cut six acres every year and never run out of 70-year old timber to cut. We have a 70-year rotation.”

Located on the east side of the Olympic Peninsula, the Wynnes have just less than two miles of a major headwaters stream running through the property. Tom takes pride in being a steward to some important creeks that have both coho and chum salmon. And he has spent numerous

hours and large sums of money on stream improvement. “My feeling is that our forests are very much a filter for the water we have. We had a lot of gravel and silt coming in off the hills around us that filled up the channel. We dug in about 1,000 foot of channel and put it back to the depth and width where it should be. One tributary stream was filling up the channel. We probably spent about \$60,000 on stream work in the 1990s.”

Tom was red tagged by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) after a hired tree cutter left tire prints near a Class 4 creek. Tom, “Red tagged means you can’t do anything until you get this squared away with DNR. At that time I hired a forester to come in so I’d have someone else’s point of view and had him classify all of my streams. Then they turn their report into the DNR.”

All of Tom’s streams are now classified and approved by DNR specifications. He sees the validity of current regulations, but also feels that overregulation creates an unreasonable burden on tree farmers. Tom doesn’t see development as an option in his lifetime and hopes that his nieces and nephews will carry on the legacy that was started by Dominic and Lena Wynne nearly a century ago.

“I wanted to be a farmer and we had more land in forest than agriculture – and there was nothing being done on it. I used to experiment growing trees in the garden when I was a kid. They grew and I just carried it on.” – Tom Wynne.

“One time, the top people from China came out for a tree farm tour. Another time a DNR person called me and said, ‘I have a bunch of foresters in here that are going nuts. They’ve spent two and a half days here in the building and they want to get out and see some trees. Can we bring them out?’ We went up into the woods and you never saw such a change in people. Those guys were just like little kids. They were so happy to get out and see trees.” – Tom Wynne.

WYNNE FARMS: GENERATIONAL

Dominic & Leena Wynne

Dominic & Marian Wynne

Thomas Lee Wynne, born June 21, 1937

Charlene Elizabeth Wynne, born April 11, 1941

Washington Tree Farmer of the Year, 1972

Washington Farm Bureau Forestry Committee, 2002 - present

American Farm Bureau forestry committee, 1997 - 2000

South Sound Farm Forestry Association