

Northeast

Warren & Edith Bushnell

Warren and Edith Bushnell are the archetypal childhood sweethearts. Both were born in Deer Park, Washington. At the age of seven, Edith's family moved to Warren's neighborhood. Ten years later, Warren married Edith. It was September 15, 1945.

Warren recounts how it all began, "We bought 60 acres before we were married that had a little 12x24 house on it. That's where we started. The day we got married we went through Deer Park and signed papers on another 110 acres."

Both Edith and Warren came from farming backgrounds. Edith, "My parents farmed all their lives. They had a few cows and milked by hand, raised pigs and calves. Mother had about 400 rabbits that she raised. Dad raised all kinds of vegetables. They sold rabbits and vegetables to a restaurant in Spokane."

Their original 60 acres has become 722 acres, with 585 of it in timber consisting of a good mixture of fir, pine, cedar and yew. Warren, "We bought 400 acres of land that the Deer Park Lumber Company had owned. They logged it in 1948 and 1949. We had quite a few head of beef and we wanted more pasture. We never dreamed someday we would have lots of logs on it."

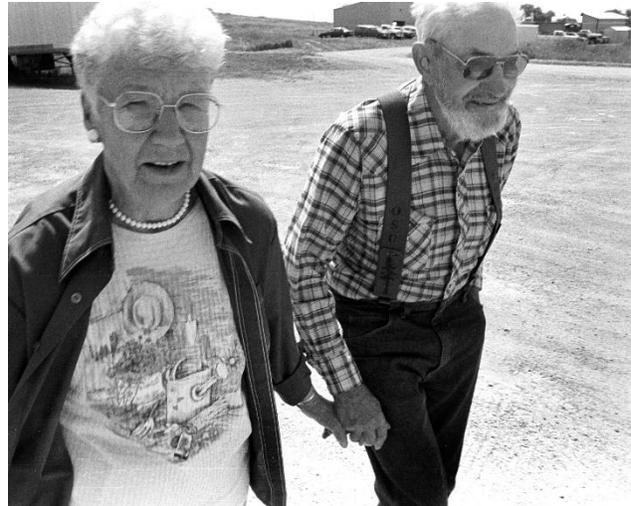
In the early '50s, Warren was introduced to farm forester Elmer Kegel. Elmer encouraged him to attend a meeting in Kettle Falls and signed him up with the eastern division of the Washington Farm Forestry Association. Warren, "We had a beef feed. Governor Langley was there along with other dignitaries. Of course, that's the first time I'd ever seen anybody higher up in office. The thing I remember is that his suit looked like he'd slept in it the night before."

Warren, "When I joined the WFFA, I decided not to clear any more trees for farm land and keep trees on it."

Edith, "We planted a lot of trees, but they either died of drought or the cattle would bite the trees off. We found it best to let them reseed naturally."

The Bushnell's became dedicated members of the Farm Forestry, never missing a meeting and frequently attending workshops to learn more about forest management. Edith and Warren were persistent in making a go of tree farming even though the land was rugged and hilly with no streams, Edith stated, "I don't think we have a level spot on our place. Elmer Kegel came down to look at our tree farm and said, 'My god, that's just about like farming a barn roof.' That kind of explains what our place is like."

To keep up with expenses and stay out of debt, they selectively cut a few truckloads of trees a year. Warren does his own cutting and skidding. Edith comments on her part, "I would start the morning by getting the kids off to school. I'd get my housework done just as quick as I could, then go and set chokers to skid out the logs. We loaded them onto a flatbed farm truck and we would roll them on with a tractor. I'd run the tractor and he'd straighten the logs out. Then he would go back to cutting logs and I would go back to the mill." Warren, "We always worked together. I'd take the trees that had root rot or the bugs to harvest before they died."



Twice fires have swept through their area barely missing their property. On August 9, 1978, a fire jumped Spokane Long Lake. Working through the night with family members on two CATs, they managed to clear a fire path to prevent the fire from reaching their property. The fire stopped at their property line. Warren, “It burned nearly 400 acres before it got to our place. It burned from Long Lake to our land. You can still see where it burnt.”

The second fire burned on August 27, 1985. Its origin was a log cabin over the mountain near their home where some teenagers decided to cook up a porcupine. Warren, “The Department of Natural Resources could go to our place and get ahead of the fire. I took my rubber-tired skidder and opened up the roads enough so they could get up there. When they got up on that ridge, the fire was a long way off. But the heat was so bad we couldn’t stand it. We had to get off there. It didn’t really slow down until they got the PBY retardant on it.”

Since that fire, the Bushnells have carved a road around their property that is big enough for a 4-wheeler to allow for easy-access to ward off fires.

In 2001, the Bushnells sold 194 head of cattle after Warren suffered from an injury. It was too much work for Edith to handle by herself. Now their focus is entirely on the longevity of their trees. Warren advises younger generations to keep a good supply of trees and not to cut too many.

Warren, “We used to take the girl scouts for Arbor Day. They would come and plant a tree and tour our tree farm. They really liked that. We once had a picnic.”

Edith, “Warren showed one scout how to build a fire in the woods. She went on a state tour and came back just bouncing, because she was the only one that knew how to start a fire.”

Warren, “I showed her how to take birch bark, in real thin strips. It doesn’t matter how wet it is, because it has an oil in it. When you get one or two started, you can get more and more. You can start a fire even when it is wet. Her instructor had never heard of starting a fire that way.”

Lessons in life and love can be learned from people like the Bushnell’s who understand each other, the earth, and farming.

BUSHNELL TREE FARM

Warren Bushnell, born March 26, 1921

Edith Jens Bushnell, born July 30, 1928

WFFA members since 1952

