



South Sound Chapter

Charles & Margaret Chambers

“The Farm Forestry is trying to keep the rules and regulations to work for the small land owner, to get a person to be able to manage their property as a resource, instead of turning their property into a parking lot.”

Charles “Chuck” Chambers has spent his life working in forestry for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). A Los Angeles native, he tries to recall when his interest in forestry started. “Back in those days, I kind of had the idea that foresters were the good guys. I never really worked in forestry – not even as a boy scout, but I camped out in the mountains a little bit. When I came up to Pullman, I’d never been to the state of Washington except for about five hours once. I knew no one.”

Chuck moved to Pullman in 1955 to attend Washington State College and graduated with a degree in forestry in 1959. Shortly after graduating he started working with the DNR and stayed until retiring in 1994. Chuck’s early role with the DNR was a farm forester under the guidance of Mike Webster.

To help close the gap between private landowners and forest experts, Mike encouraged his employees to own forestry land as a way to understand the issues timber growers face. “I bought my first property in 1962, in Vader, Washington – 10 acres, cut over brush pile. There were some young trees on it and some big vine maple. I just started to clean it up, plant it up, and do whatever I could. From that time on I started buying and selling forestland ‘til I had about 425 acres in Mason, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis and Cowlitz Counties.

“You’re always hearing about how much volume you can grow on Washington land. Unfortunately, other detours come in and needle you. Trees are not easy to grow. You have insects, bugs, small animals, medium sized animals. When you thin a stand, it opens it up and the bears rip the bark off. That doesn’t even include weather conditions. The ice storm in ’97 just broke the tops out on all the trees. It was like artillery out there.”

Chuck was instrumental in the development and success of the Lewis and Cowlitz Counties Farm Forestry. “When you took the job as farm forester, you knew it was part of your responsibility to work with the local chapter more than the state. But you did get involved with the state chapter by going to the meetings. The local chapters were really supported by the backing of the farm forestry. Here, there were agency people that had the time to do a lot of legwork for the Farm Forestry Association and the local chapters. At the time, they were officers, meaning you did a lot of legwork, setting up the meetings and what have you. Farm foresters were very involved in the WFFA.”

By the early 1970s, the DNR’s farm forestry program was eventually phased into a stewardship program. Chuck had already moved on to other positions within the department, but remained active as a tree farmer. He points out the differences between forest practices in the early half of the century and current regulations, noting that as policy started becoming more restrictive it ignited more political involvement with independent tree farmers. (*See WFFA history and regulatory history.*)

Charles and Margaret Chambers have been involved with Arbor Day celebrations, outdoor field classes, and were recipients of the Washington State Tree Farmer of the Year award in 1978.

CHAMBERS TREE FARM

Charles Chambers, born August 1, 1936

Margaret Chambers (Hofmann), born May 17, 1939

Washington State Tree Farmer of the Year, 1978

Lewis County Tree Farmer of the Year, 1994

Candidate for the Washington State Tree Farmer of the Year, 2005