



Cowlitz County

Edwin Eichentoph

Edwin Eichentoph was introduced to tree farming by Eleanor's parents, Oscar and Frances Sherman. The Sherman's owned a parcel of land north of Stella, Washington on German Creek. Like the surrounding farms, their farm was diversified. Oscar and Frances bought the land from the Eugene Brock family in 1921 and became the fourth owner. It eventually totaled 250 acres.

Oscar was born on the tree farm and worked in the woods from the age of 16. In 1921 he became a hook tender choker in charge of getting logs out of the woods. Over the years he worked for many of the big logging companies.

Compared to his days in logging camps, Oscar felt that farming offered a better way of life for Frances and their children. Because milk and cream provided a major source of income, it was important to have pasture for the cows. The land was cleared and planted to grass to support their dairy trade. In the early 1920s, Oscar and his brother Florence, AKA the Sherman brothers, loaded logs from a landing with their log truck. The timber market was on an upswing, evidenced by the big mills in the area including Eufaula, Mill Creek, and the Longbell mill opening in Longview.

Trees were harvested to help finance the land and sustain the family with fuel for cooking and heating.

German Creek is part of the land and its history. Edwin, "Much of the wood from this valley was cut as cordwood and hauled to Stella by horse and wagon or floated down a flume that had been built on German Creek. This was in the late 1800s and early 1900s when Stella was an important port on the Columbia River. "

Edwin has grown to love nature and the forest. But in the beginning he wasn't interested in trees. He didn't grow up on a farm, but followed in his father Otto's, footsteps as a sausage maker. He graduated from Commerce High in Portland, Oregon, in 1937. Through Peter Peters he met his future wife, Eleanor Sherman, a nurse from Stella, Washington. He was drafted into the Army and a one-year term turned into five due to WWII Yet Edwin and Eleanor maintained their connection, marrying in April of 1942 while Edwin was still in the army.

After his discharge in 1945, Edwin went back to work in his father's sausage business in Portland. In 1957 he purchased the business, then in 1985 sold it to his son Jerry.

When Oscar and Frances moved to town for health reasons, Eleanor's brother Fred took over the farm in 1945. Fred raised beef cows, grew hay in the open fields, logged some of the trees and thinned others. Fred and his wife Audra raised five children and made a living on the farm for over 25 years.

Oscar and Frances' two children, Fred and Eleanor, inherited the land. Because Fred's health was failing, Edwin and Eleanor bought his share in 1972. The purchase agreement didn't allow logging to pay for the land. Edwin, "After the land was paid for I hated to sell the trees because we enjoyed them so much. Until now all the trees were from natural regeneration. We started planting trees in the cleared or brush-covered areas, ordering up to 3,000 trees a year.

"We knew nothing about farming or trees and logging. The Watershed Stewardship in Action Conservation District advised us in planning, especially Mr. Ed Deyo." Later Edwin became acquainted with Dr. John Nelson who encouraged and supported Edwin's tree farming. Edwin, "Joining the Cowlitz County Chapter of the WFFA was another step in the learning process. Washington State University Cooperative Extension Agents Steve Webster and Chal Landgren, and Steve Gibbs from the Department of Natural Resources were all helpful. We've had to call on them for help with diseases, root rot, Swiss needle cast and deer damage. We had to learn the hard way to plant correctly, spacing, thinning, brush control and much more. The trees we are harvesting now are approximately 180 years old and possibly the third generation of harvest."

Edwin created a demonstration for one of the riparian rule packages that showed what wetland looked like and how wide a span it could be. Edwin reflects on a rich life of family and forestry, "We've lived on this land for over 30 years now and have enjoyed the trees, the changing seasons, German Creek that runs through the property, the wild animals, and of course, the farm animals. It's been a place to experience a diversified farm, a place for our two boys to learn how to run the machinery and bring their friends, and for our children to be exposed to this lifestyle. They were all expected to help in the hay fields, which are gradually being reforested, and to help plant new trees where we have done some harvesting."



"He's the embodiment of what tree farmers should be. He's got the equipment, he's got the ambition, the skills and he just goes out and does his work and does it very efficiently." – Chan Noerenberg

EICHENTOPH TREE FARM :: GENERATIONAL

Oscar Sherman, 1883 - 1969

Frances Sherman, 1888 - 1967

Fred Sherman, 1919 - 1973

Edwin Eichtoph, born July 2, 1919

Eleanor Sherman Eichtoph, born November 29, 1919

Vice President Cowlitz Farm Forestry, 1999