

Pacific County

## Wilbur McCollum

Tunny McCollum was born in Everett, Washington and grew up in Pacific County. Before graduating from high school he joined the Marine Corps and found himself in the South Pacific at the age of 17. But, he was wounded in action during the war and sent home, where he returned to school. He graduated in 1946 from Lebam High School.



Tunny's love for forestry began as a compass man for a timber cruiser. Tunny, "My cruiser, Jim Kalich, was about 35-years old. He didn't eat lunch but he did like to nap for 15 minutes to get revived for the afternoon. We were lying under some big fir trees in Douglas County, Oregon when Jim mentioned that he was making \$25 a day. I was getting \$9. Right there I decided that I needed a forestry education and used the G.I. Bill to obtain that end. I went to the University of Washington and graduated with a forestry degree in 1951. I'd also obtained a wife and two sons by then."

After graduating, Tunny worked for Weyerhaeuser as a timber cruiser. Tunny, "We camped in the back woods for one or two months at a time, sometimes with pack horses. We were never home with our families."

St. Regis Paper offered him a job as a forester closer to home. A year later St. Regis merged with St. Paul and asked him to move to Tacoma. "They were a very big group, but my home was Lebam. I told them I didn't care to move there. They said I didn't have any other choice, as they were shutting the office down. I said, 'I'll start a consulting business,' and I did. We also added son number three.

"At about that time, local farmers and loggers were becoming aware of the value of their own properties. The fact made them want to learn more and they came to me asking questions about how they could improve their forests, as they wanted to keep their inheritance intact.

"My work increased from cruising and valuing trees to improving stands and finding their property lines. We were greatly assisted by county and state forestry people and some of the major timber companies who started forestry assistance programs for a period-of-time.

"I started my consulting business in 1956 and it worked fine. It worked for a lot of local people because no one was available locally to do that type of work. That is when we started our farm forestry. I had bought 80 acres on Forks Creek. It was an old farm that had previously been logged but had young growth coming along in seed patches. The alder was left because it didn't have value at that time.

"We never did any logging but spent all our time cleaning up the forest with my boys running wild through the trees. We let it grow and continued our payments on the property.

"We started a 4-H Club and I taught a forestry class. As the class grew, they would come out to the farm and the meetings soon became overnight stays.

"I realized in my consulting business that I needed to be more involved in the community. Cliff Gillies, forester for the City of South Bend, asked me to become the city forester and help

prepare a management plan. In reality it amounted to a timber sale to provide money for their water system. At the same time the City of Raymond requested I set up a timber sale for their monetary needs. This gave me more exposure to people that had timberlands and made them realize they had someone in the county that could assist them.

“After four years, the cyclic timber market had a turn down. This, along with the death of a major client, made me realize I was correct when I graduated with a minor degree in education. I taught at Raymond Jr. High at the science level and interjected forestry to get the students interested enough to become nature lovers in a sawmill community. Along with Mayor Fred Lovins, we established growth plots on a tract of his property near the Willapa River.

“I applied for a National Science Foundation scholarship so I could be a teacher, and was fortunate enough to be selected for a full-year scholarship at Michigan State University. With my master’s degree credentials I accepted a position at Lower Columbia College teaching forestry, physics and assisting in the Pulp and Papermaking program.

“The following year I was contacted by Weyerhaeuser to fill the role of the recently deceased chief cruiser. After a family conference it was another move, this time with three sons and one daughter. I had come full circle and was back with my friends. At that time we didn’t realize Weyerhaeuser’s long-term outlook.

“My role was to verify the timber inventory of forestlands in Southeast British Columbia that would support a pulp mill at Kamloops. Shortly thereafter, I was selected to go to Borneo, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia to verify the inventory of a company they were going to acquire. The next few years were a continuation of this type of work. Some of the countries I visited were Australia, Surinam, Brazil, and Gabon in Africa. The longest time in one place overseas was in Borneo as a forestry engineer. Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and New Britain were places of interest for long-term expansion, but love of family called us back to the tree farm in Pacific County.

“The trees are still beautiful, the river deep and lovely, and the grandchildren now run and play in the forest”

Tunny leaves this bit of advice to the next generation of tree farmers, “In spite of the regulations and everything we’re hampered by, I do feel you’ve got something tangible, and something you can manage and be responsible for yourself. It’s not like taking a hundred thousand and giving it to a broker or a bank. It’s something in hand that you can do something with.

#### PURE FORKS CREEK TREE FARM

Wilbur (Tunny) McCollum, born November 10, 1925

Clarie McCollum, born December 18, 1927

Founder Pacific County Farm Forestry, 1956

First President Pacific County Farm Forestry, 1959