



Upper Puget Sound
Ron Munro

“One of the women who lives here is a supporter of the tree farm. She said she finds morel mushrooms under a cottonwood tree and asked, ‘Can we leave that tree Ron?’ So now I have the decision, whether to leave that tree and fight the cottonwood seedlings, or cut the tree and never have her show up for another work party. So we left the cottonwoods.” – Ron Munro describes how, as manager for Crystal Lake, a unique tree farming community near Seattle, Washington, diplomacy matters.

The road leading to Crystal Lake began with his grandparents who emigrated from Scotland in 1890 to the west shores of Bainbridge Island. For a young boy, the setting was idyllic. Ron, “I hunted ducks in the winter time and fished for trout and salmon in the summer. I could dig clams year ‘round and beach comb all the time. Those were all things that I loved. Plus, it was a very exciting time to grow up. I was about seven years old when WWII ended and we lived within 10 miles of the Bremerton Navy yard. They brought those big ships back – aircraft carriers and battleships – and moored them right in front of our house. It was pretty exciting for a young boy to find military treasures along the beach.”

After graduating from high school, Ron studied at Olympia Junior College in Bremerton. Ron, “The first year I studied art. I have an interest in art and like to sketch wildlife. The second year I started taking botany classes and liked the professor. He convinced me to take a few forestry classes, so I took Introduction to Forestry. I had no idea I had any real interest in forestry until I took that class.” In 1961 Ron graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in forestry management.

Combining his forestry skills with real estate, Ron supported himself by offering rural land management services. In 1980, Ron and his wife Miriam became residents of a unique tree farming community called Crystal Lake, which is located northeast of Seattle near Woodinville, Washington.

Crystal Lake was created in 1927 by the Seattle Rod and Gun Propagation and Reforestation Corporation. The founders' intent was to reforest its 440 acres of logged land as well as provide a membership-based sports club.

Ron, "After the war, the Rod and Gun Club decided they would do something entirely different. They plotted it into a bunch of lots, selling it off into individual pieces. It had no connection with the Rod and Gun Club. They called it Crystal Lake, Inc. Everybody here owns his or her individual lot. Then they have a one share of stock in Crystal Lake, Inc. They cannot divorce the stock from their lot. If they sell their lot, they have to turn their stock in. The stock goes to the person that purchases the lot by a conveyance."

Ron took on the role as a voluntary manager for Crystal Lake, which currently encompasses 435 acres, including a 40-acre lake and 240 acres of timberland. A sustainable management plan involving a 70-year rotation is set for clearing or thinning a 15-acre parcel every five years. Funds are then placed in an account to pay for general maintenance. In 1986, an electrical fire burned the original sportsmen's lodge to the ground. A plan was formulated for a new clubhouse and in 1988 Crystal Lake residents harvested 133 Douglas fir trees to build it.

Every spring a day is set-aside for community volunteers to come out and work in the forest. Ron, "I'll tell you, there isn't one member of this community that doesn't know how much work it is to plant a tree and grow it above the salmonberry, high enough so you don't have to keep going back to cut the brush. During a work party we cut all the hardwoods out and started a pruning program. The quality of the pruning jobs aren't very good, but I'd rather have a poorly pruned tree by a six-year-old than no pruning at all."

The Learning Tree Program is another community event Ron is involved in and is sponsored by the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA). The program provides local school kids the opportunity to tour the Crystal Lake community. The children bond with the forest by planting trees, taking nature walks and playing games designed to educate them on forestry.

Dave Larsen and Steve Worthington approached Ron about becoming involved in Farm Forestry. His dedication and experience turned out to be a valuable asset for the chapter. He ended up serving many years as chairman for the local chapter and took part in the Growth Management Act, representing the real estate industry in Snohomish County.

With his cool demeanor and straightforward approach, Ron states "It takes just as long to grow a poor tree as it does to grow a good tree."

CRYSTAL LAKE CO-OP TREE FARM

Ron Munro, born August 3, 1935

Miriam Baughman

Upper Puget Sound Chairman, 1975

Washington State Outstanding Tree Farm of the Year 2001