

Grays Harbor

James Stewart

James Malcolm Stewart uses the birth name from both his grandfather and father, and with pride. His grandfather, James Stewart, immigrated from Perthshire, Scotland to America in 1860 at the age of 20. After serving in the civil war, he married Jean Stewart (of Aberdeen, Scotland) and moved west to establish a homestead on the Wishkah River in Chehalis County (now Grays Harbor).



Malcolm Stewart, Jim's father, was one of eight children born to James and Jean Stewart. Malcolm grew up in the woods and worked in a family logging camp where his mother was camp cook. At the age of five, he was paid ten cents a day to grease the cross rails for the oxen skids. At the tender age of 11 he was in charge of rafting logs down the Wishkah to the port dock to meet the log buyers.

Jim was born in Aberdeen, Washington on May 8, 1915. This was when Aberdeen was being carved out of big stands of timber by adventurous men with handsaws and oxen-drawn wagons. Prior to graduating from high school, the depression hit and Jim's father lost everything: their home, their property and their business, which consisted of four automobile agencies in Grays Harbor.

To avoid a similar fate, Malcolm encouraged his son to become a lawyer. With no money, Jim had doubts about coming up with the tuition to pay for college. So he devised a get rich quick scheme, which was to log the 25 acres left from his grandmother's property. He hired a couple of school friends to help, but the venture did not prove fruitful. Then, against his mother's wishes, he landed a job at Posey Manufacturing, a mill in Hoquiam where he worked his way through college.

But the hazard of the job, which promoted his mother's protests about taking the job in the first place, cost him the tip on one of his fingers. While working on a machine, a fellow crewman called out, "My god Jim, you've lost a finger." Although he lost the tip of a finger, he maintained his sense of humor. In the aftermath of the accident, he purchased a bottle of liquor and invited the mill crew to a burial ceremony for his finger.

The sacrifice paid off. Jim attended Grays Harbor College and then went on to the University of Washington, graduating in 1941 with a law degree.

Upon graduation, Jim returned to Montesano, Washington to work as an assistant prosecutor for Grays Harbor County. But in two months, Jim was recruited into the U.S. Navy and sailing on foreign seas to fight in WWII. It may have been the close encounters with kamikazes or the shipwreck rescues that prompted Jim to write home to his college sweetheart, Vera Gilardi, for her hand in marriage. Because he had not been in contact with her, the proposal was a bit out of the blue, but she agreed.

Meanwhile, Vera had also joined the navy with expectations to see the world, only to be dispatched back to Seattle. When Jim's ship sailed in to port, he was escorted by boat to shore, then to the fourth floor of a big building. There he found Vera waiting for him.

The newlyweds returned to Montesano to raise a family. During the two years as a prosecuting attorney, and living on the edge with a monthly income of \$199, Jim made his first tree farm purchase. His strategy involved buying forestland that had been logged and was considered worthless. Over the years he built a sizable base of timberland. In 1950, he was called back to duty with the U.S. Naval Reserves and sent off to serve in the Korean War until 1952. Between the two wars he earned a Gold Star and Silver Star. Once again, Jim returned home from the war to Montesano, this time starting a private law practice.

Jim Stewart's passion for forestry is reflected in his lifelong commitment to tree farming. He became involved with Washington Farm Forestry, the American Tree Farm Family, and the Weyerhaeuser Tree Farm Family to benefit from the resources offered by the farm foresters. Because the Stewart's tree farms are heavily affected by the riparian regulations, Jim has actively protested violations against landowners' rights.

Jim believes in planting a diverse body of trees to maintain a healthy forest. As you drive through a recently planted meadow, there are red flags hanging off the young sprouts. Jim notes that the flags mark the redwoods that were planted by his son. Proudly, he describes the different stages of thinning and the positive affect it has the various groves.

Jim has planted thousands of acres of timber. Jim, "All three of my children have been out planting trees." Until recently, the family held their annual Christmas tree cookout in the woods at "Wynooche Willies" for family and friends.

Contributing to future generations of tree farmers, Jim and Vera established the Stewart Education Fund, a scholarship program that benefits Grays Harbor Community College students who are interested in forestry. The fund was started with thinning proceeds and has grown to over \$200,000.

"Not an acre of tree farm land have I ever turned into commercial zoning." – Jim Stewart.

"We love our tree farm. The tree farm to me is one of the finest things that you could have." – Jim Stewart.

WYNOOCHIE WILLIES TREE FARM

James Malcolm Stewart, Born May 8, 1915

Dorothy Vera (Gilardi) Stewart

Family timberlands in Western Washington and Northern California

Member Grays Harbor Farm Forestry