

Lewis County

Doug Stinson Fae Marie Beck

“At the tender age of 14, I asked my parents if I could plant some trees on our farm, and they said yes. Ever since, I’ve been interested in trees,” recalls Doug Stinson. This natural inclination for tree farming began on his family’s farm in Missouri. Later he encouraged his dad to find and purchase land while he was serving in the U.S.



Marine Corps, which led to his first tree farm investment of 200 acres in 1957.

Doug graduated from the University of Missouri in 1955 with a degree in forestry. He went on to join the Marine Corps for four years where he met a like-minded colleague. After they were discharged the two decided to make their fortunes in Alaska and homesteaded two adjacent sections of land, until they realized one crop of anything would flood the town of Anchorage, a population of 25,000. Coupled with the fact the distance for shipping was prohibitive, Doug rethought his Alaska homesteading dream and decided to take a job as a forester in Alaska. Soon after he met the love of his life, Fae Marie.

Fae Marie comments on the move from her hometown in Perryton, Texas, to Alaska. “Texas was flat and dry. Ketchikan, where I was going, has 150 inches of rain a year. I loved it.” Doug and Fae married and set off to find the perfect tree farm. Doug sold his Missouri timberland and purchased property around Bonners Ferry in Idaho’s Panhandle. Unable to find work in Idaho’s depressed economy, Doug took a job 700 miles away at U.S. Plywood in Roseburg, Oregon.

Fae Marie, “From 1964 to 1970 we were in Roseburg where we bought tracts of timber.” In 1970 Doug was transferred to Washington, first to Seattle and then Morton to work with Champion International (formerly U.S. Plywood). They had left their beloved Roseburg, Oregon, only to discover that Washington was the place to be for growing trees. Liquidating what they had in southern Oregon, the Stinsons purchased a 230-acre tract in Lewis County, which became their home and final destination. Over the years they have acquired and managed 1,200 acres of timberland.

When Fae Marie was asked if shares her husband’s passion for trees, she responded, “Doug and the children are my passion.” Doug interjects, “Fae Marie is the resident botanist, birder, and our moral support.” From an early age, their children have been involved with tree farming, planting, and management. The tree farm is held as a limited family partnership. Doug hopes that his children’s children will keep the dream alive and that trees will grow on that land for many generations.

Their management plan is a simple one; as long as a tree is growing and healthy, let it grow. When the trees are crowded or sickly with disease, dry rot or insect damage, then cut. Doug explains why he chooses to plant a mixed forest versus a solid stand: “On a mixed stand the

forest is going to be less prone to disease and insect damage. The landscape has changed somewhat from mixed stands to more solid stands and I think that's a risk. You're decreasing your risks with mixed stands and, I think you probably have a healthier forest."

Doug feels that regulatory issues are not encouraging people to hold on to their land. Instead, it's turned over for development. This is not something he chooses to do with his land, but has watched as others have relented to the pressure. The incongruity has led him to the steps of the Capitol with other members of Washington Farm Forestry Association (WFFA) who are working to create change that will save what forestlands are left in the hands of individuals. One of the biggest issues is the difference between tight regulations on small forest landowners and how loosely developers are regulated. Doug says, "It should be that we all want to take care of this resource. The regulations should be distributed evenly across the board, but that's not the case."

Fae Marie is sympathetic to the intent of the regulations; to preserve the environment, ensure we have clean water, clean air, healthy fish, and make sure all the creatures can live, but she feels the regulations have backfired, causing people to sell out.

Doug notes the gap between urban and rural societies and, through example and education, is working to counter what he considers to be misleading information. Their property is used as a stage for the public to experience the benefits of the forest. Doug asks students and visitors to see past the clear cut into the future. "Which would you rather have: this land logged and planted back to trees, or logged and developed into houses?" Their first desire is they don't want it logged. "That isn't the choice," he clarifies, "The choice is between logged and planted to houses or trees. They say, 'We'd rather have it planted to trees.' That's part of the balance. This land isn't going to be just locked up, it's going to be used some way. I'm much more in favor of it being used wisely as forestland than being developed."

When asked to define a stewardship, Doug responds, "I look at stewardship as nurturing the hen that laid the golden egg. You don't want to do anything to destroy that. It's love of the land." His daughter Ann Marie sees describes the family tree farm as the happy medium between the extremities – wilderness and development.

"Doug asks students and visitors to see past the clear cut into the future." Fae Marie Beck

COWLITZ RIDGE TREE FARM LIMITED FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Douglas Stinson, April 13, 1933

Fae Marie Beck, born February 19, 1934

Lewis County and Cowlitz County Farm Forestry Associations

President Lewis County Farm Forestry Association 1990-1991

Lewis County Tree Farmer of the Year 1993

Washington State Tree Farmer of the Year 1993

Western Regional Tree Farmer of the Year 1994