



Upper Puget Sound

## Jack & Lois Sutherland

John (Jack) and Lois Sutherland met at a mixer dance at the University of Illinois. As a member of the Horse Cavalry ROTC, Jack was called to active duty the day after he graduated in 1941. He was assigned to the famed "Buffalo Soldiers" of the 10th Cavalry Regiment, one of the few remaining horse-mounted Army units. Four months later, after riding across much of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas he was transferred to the Army Air Corps.

He and Lois married on October 5, 1941. Ten weeks later, Pearl Harbor was attacked and Jack was reassigned to a unit en route to the Southwest Pacific Theater, where he spent the next three years. During Jack's absence, Lois worked as a grade school teacher in a one-room country school. The school had 20 students and was located on the Mississippi River bottomlands in Illinois near her parents' home.

One of Jack's fellow officers in Australia had worked on a mink farm in civilian life and made a good case for the outdoor lifestyle, physical work, and other rewards of animal husbandry. After receiving his military discharge, Jack found the curriculum he wanted at Washington State College (WSC). He attended WSC long enough to qualify for a master's degree in animal husbandry and then took a job on a mink farm in Edmonds, Washington.

Jack, "I had been on the job a very short time when the first sale of mink pelts for 1948 took place at the Seattle Fur Exchange. The price of pelts was so low that my employer couldn't afford to hire anyone. I was out of a job. With a wife and two young children to feed, I looked around for a very long four weeks until I was hired by Boeing."

One reason the period of unemployment seemed so long was that Jack and Lois had spent their savings on 20 acres of woodland near Bothell for their planned mink farm. Jack worked full time at Boeing and Lois stayed home, caring for the children and their 60 mink. Lois, "At one point we had nearly 200 of the animals." They lived in a 25-foot house trailer with no running water or indoor plumbing.

Because Jack was in the Army Reserve and on call, they phased out of the mink business during the Korean War and turned their attention to their growing family, their woodland, and gardening. She describes her early experiments with rhododendrons, "I would plant 200 seeds in a tuna fish can and, after they sprouted, I'd transplant the tiny seedlings into larger containers with tweezers." She also planted tree seeds including dogwood, fir, and Norway spruce. Jack,

"The Norway spruce is the one we remember best because they grew and grew and grew! One of them must be five feet thick at its base now."

In 1958, the Sutherlands bought another 80-acre parcel of forestland east of the town of Snohomish, Washington. It contained a mixed stand of second growth fir, hemlock, cedar and alder, although they were not fully aware of the potential of their forestland beyond its recreational value.

In 1976, Lois read a newspaper article about a farm forestry start-up group led by Dr. Hinton Baker. She became involved with the group and soon Jack joined. Jack, "When we went to see how other tree farmers did it, we found a broad spectrum. Most of the tree farmers were really, good land stewards long before it became popular. They were taking care of the land by replanting as soon as possible after a harvest and by making sure that the seedlings got off to a good start."

Lois shares her impressions of Dr. Baker and the Farm Forestry, "Hinton Baker was a great one for trying different things. One I remember is that he planted some black walnut seedlings. I came from black walnut country, so I was interested. Another thing we liked was the educational aspect with lectures presented by forestry specialists from Washington State University (WSU), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the counties."

Building upon their interest in planting trees and as long-standing members of the Upper Puget Sound Chapter (UPS) of the Washington Farm Forestry Association (WFFA), the Sutherlands have become advocates and activists for family forest owners. Jack served as UPS president for two years and as chair of the chapter nominating committee for many years. He also represented family forest owners on the Forestry Advisory Committee during preparation of the Comprehensive Plan for Snohomish County in the early 1990s. Both Jack and Lois have been members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee of the Snohomish County Tomorrow organization for a number of years.

In 1993 the Sutherlands harvested 132,000 board feet of timber from 15 acres of their home acreage without opening the canopy enough to require replanting. However, they under planted several hundred shade-tolerant conifer species to fill noticeable gaps in tree spacing.

Subsequently, the couple attended "Coached Planning" courses and prepared a Forest Stewardship Plan for their land. In 2002, DNR foresters John Keller and Jim Bottorff recommended that the mature alder on their 80-acre parcel be harvested, so Jack and Lois bought a cutover 20-acre parcel nearby to provide access. Three months later, with invaluable assistance from consulting forester Ron Munro, they signed a logging contract to harvest alder from 56 acres and replant to conifer in the spring of 2003. In 2004, they had the newly purchased 20 acres scarified and prepared for planting. Planting was completed in March of 2005.

The original tree farm was established as a "Pioneer Tree Farm" in 2002 by the Society of American Foresters and as a "Certified Tree Farm" in 2003. The UPS Chapter of WFFA honored Jack and Lois as "Tree Farmers of the Year" for 2004.

They believe continuity of management is important for long-term projects such as a tree farm and have transferred their property into a Family Limited Partnership. They are gradually transferring ownership to their children without incurring taxes and, as general partners, they can continue to manage the forest for the foreseeable future.

Jack retired from Boeing in 1984 and embraces the opportunity to devote more time to tree farming. He and Lois are currently working with the local Conservation District and the Adopt-a-Stream Foundation to make available cottonwood whips, alder seedlings, and other items for use in stream restoration activities.

Jack and Lois acknowledge that recent stiffening of governmental regulations make it costly to maintain a tree farm, but agree that forest stewardship is a worthy cause and a fulfilling adventure.

*"After 25 years, I'm completely convinced that Washington tree farmers who live on their land are the best environmentalists in the state." – Lois Sutherland*

#### PANTHER LAKE TREE FARM

John (Jack) Sutherland, born February 12,

Lois Larner Sutherland, born May 13, 1921

Upper Puget Sound (UPS) Nominating Chairman, 1996-2004

Upper Puget Sound President, early '80s

Currently serving on the Snohomish County Citizens' Advisory Committee