

Cowlitz County

Richard & Leslie Woods

The typewriter was a clunky, manual model that had been stored in Dottie Burton's basement for many years. During the Burton's interview for this book, Dottie resurrected it from her basement to be returned to Richard and Leslie Woods. The relic was the perfect visual aid as they recounted their first Washington Farm Forestry Association meeting.



Leslie, “We had not been in Longview very long and Dick was working for the Washington State University Co-operative Extension. We had moved into a rental and we didn't have furniture, not even a chair. He came home from this forestry meeting and the first thing he had to do was buy a typewriter. We didn't have money to buy a typewriter and that's what we bought instead of a dress for me, so, I could type the minutes.”

Richard, “I was elected secretary at that meeting. They nominated me from the floor and voted me in. I had no expectations when I went to the meeting that I would be involved.”

Leslie, commenting on her unexpected involvement, “Not only did I get the minutes, but he was delivered a big package from the previous secretary's stuff. This all had to be gone through, organized, and brought up to date.”

Richard, “Leslie's work experience was in office management and she was an excellent typist and very good organizer. Anyway, I became secretary in 1964, then second vice president, then vice president, and then president in 1974.”

Richard and Leslie Woods go hand in hand. He was the mover and shaker of Farm Forestry affairs. She was the organizer and grease that kept the wheel moving.

Richard learned to love the outdoors while scouting, fishing, camping and hunting on his father's farm in Omak, Washington. Richard, “He didn't recommend that I go into the apple business, which is what he was in. He said there's not much of a future in it, although it was farming and there's a lot of future in farming. He recommended that I go to school and get a degree in forestry.”

Richard graduated in 1958 with a degree in forestry from Washington State University (WSU) and then worked for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Richard, “My first assignment was in Okanogan Ferry Country with the DNR. It was the early years of DNR. Burt Cole was commissioner. I was with them for five years, and then went to work for the Co-operative Extension Service in Kelso, Washington under the auspices of WSU.”

Staying in Kelso, he worked as a regional forester for the Federal Land Bank of Spokane, covering Washington and Oregon. Richard, “We were encouraged to be involved with educational activities within our field.” Richard is cited in interviews for his ability to motivate individuals to take farm forestry to the next level. Richard, “That's really what WFFA is, an

organization to promote forestry on small, non-industrial tracts. We have annual meetings, a newsletter, all geared towards educating the small landowners (SLO). It's just been rolling steadily ever since. Leslie was secretary and we put on this big membership campaign. We got it up to 300 members. We thought that was wonderful." Leslie adds, "The dues were only \$3."

Richard, "When I was president of WFFA in 1974, I was appointed to the first Forest Practices Board. The first rules ever implemented by the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) were done during that first term serving on the board. The second time I served was 1984 through 1987. It was quite frustrating. I wouldn't serve if they asked me now, it's too demanding of a job."

Legislative work was voluntary, time consuming and sometimes productive. Richard comments on the issue of industrial timberlands changing hands, "Every time somebody buys it and pays a big amount of money for it, they hit the timber hard in order to pay for it. And the timber just takes a beating every time that happens. Now the SLO, by and large, are doing an excellent job of management. I think we're doing the best job of anybody, I really do, better than industrial owners by far. You go out here and look at these practices, that's the proof of the pudding."

In 1990 Richard was elected president of the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF), a national organization headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. He was recently given the honorable title of "FELLOW" with the Society of American Foresters. Locally, he has been involved with being on the Kelso City Council for 18 years and served as the mayor of Kelso for 8 years.

Richard has made a career out of consulting with property owners and tree farmers on how to manage their timber. Richard, "Kind of made a political animal out of me, but I've always understood politics. People want to do things within the forestry profession and would come to me and ask how to deal with it politically."

"It's been a learning process. I didn't know much about the practice of forestry until I got out of college. You just went to school, got a degree and went to work. Then you start really learning about the field. You just get that necessary credential to get a job, then you start learning."
Richard Woods

BARKER TREE FARM

Richard Irvin Woods, born October 9, 1932

Leslie Hlushko Woods, born March 20, 1932

President WFFA, 1974

President Cowlitz County Farm Forestry Association, 1973

President ACF (Association of Consulting Foresters of America), 1990

Fellow Society of American Foresters, 2001