Upper Puget Sound

Dan Grewe

Fasten your seat belts; you're in for a bumpy read. As Ellen determined from their first outing, Dan Grewe has a propensity for adventure. Their outing was devised by Dan, a nice picnic in the woods. The setting provided the perfect opportunity for Dan to show off his sprightly tree-climbing prowess. But, it was no picnic for Ellen, who spent the better part of the day waiting for Dan to come down from a 67-foot tree, 3 1/2 feet in diameter and about 120 limbs, some 3 inches in diameter, that he decided to climb and then limb on his descent.

Ellen, "I was in the woods for ten hours waiting for him to get out of that tree." Dan, "I had to cut all the limbs off before I could get to the bottom of the tree. I estimated it would take me two hours. I was up in that tree about five hours. Ellen had to go in to town and get my dad, who returned with a flashlight. I was pretty close to the bottom when they arrived."

After 40 plus years of marriage, Ellen has grown accustomed to Dan's thrill seeking and only hopes when she hears passing sirens they aren't for her beloved husband. Born April 15, 1921 in Arlington, Washington, Dan spent his youth on a dairy farm, tending cows and climbing trees. His father, Charles Grewe, was a pioneer tree farmer who purchased his first parcel of land for a tree farm in 1937, 380 acres in Arlington, Washington. The land had been logged 11 years earlier and had reseeded itself.

Charles joined the Western Washington Farm Forestry Association in1941. Prior to that, he was involved with the Soil and Water Conservation Service. Dan's passion for trees and how to grow them continued to evolve over the years. Carrying this enthusiasm and expertise into the community, he was instrumental in motivating a group of high school youths to plant trees. He also worked with Microsoft by overseeing reforestation of a five-acre parcel of land. Dan, "They bought this land and tore down a house, then wanted it converted back into trees. So I volunteered to help at a cheap price."

As a symbol of their free woodland spirit, the Grewes have an undecorated Christmas tree standing in the corner of the living room in April. And, three trees are planted outside their home in honor of the birth of each of their children. Although Dan is often at odds with the environmental community, he expresses concern about current logging practices, "They log more than they can replenish. There ought to be more old growth stands left for history's sake. You'll never see a stand grow like that again unless it's preserved."

Dan has vowed to never cut down the lone old growth tree on his property. A history aficionado, he has also preserved an area with skid ties and giant stumps. Dan, "It's a real historical thing to go up there and see how skid roads logged some of the biggest timber that was ever grown around here. How they got those logs down to the river, I don't know. It's

remarkable. With just cables, blocks, horses and pulleys, they managed to get those logs out and down to the river.

Ellen never knows what Dan will bring home. Case in point, a large cedar stump logged in 1926 near Lake Cavenaugh. Dan, "I went up there and we had to yard it a quarter of a mile so that we could get it on a truck and bring it home. Cut off at the base, it had 24 springboard notches in it cut off 10 feet above ground, 13 1/2 foot in diameter at the cut. Six big pieces; set them up at the entrance of our farm, west end of Fourth Street, in Arlington, Washington."

On another occasion, Dan nearly drowned while rescuing a tree from the river. Dan, "There was a log floating down the river that landed near the bridges. It was 6 feet through the butt, 4 feet at the top and 70 feet long. This was in December and the river was way up." Dan and a friend managed to jack up the log and roll it in the river. Tying the log to a boat, they attempted to float the log to the island that Dan was logging.

As fate had it, the log went down one side of some pilings, and the boat down the other. This pulled the boat back upstream and caused it to capsize, dumping the men in the river. Dan, "While holding on to the boat, we floated down the river about a mile and a quarter when my coat got hung up on the corner of the boat. I came within about 15 seconds of drowning. My partner was on top of the boat. As he came towards me, my nose kept getting closer and closer to the water, and soon I was underwater.

"My partner went another half mile riding the overturned boat and got off on the other side of the river. County rescuers used a boat to rescue him; he was ok. We never did find the boat we started with."

Dan saw the divine white light, but lived to tell the tale. He somehow maneuvered to shore, where he secured help from a nearby farmhouse. The local paper's headline read, 'The Stillaguamish was Robbed of its Prey.'

Ellen, "I saw the ambulance go down the road, and then saw it head back and wondered if Dan was in it – he was. After that incident, I give him two hours past dark and then send out the troops to look for him."

Not one to be deterred from a mission, Dan later found the near-death-experience log on the island he was logging. Dan, "On a Sunday afternoon I pulled it out of the river to the bank and onto the farm field with a D8 Cat, cut it into 8-peller blocks with a 7-foot, old-time saw." If there was a Dan Grewe Nine Lives Museum, the wood pieces from that log should be featured.

CHARLES GREWE TREE FARM
Dan Grewe, born April 15, 1921
Ellen Hessen Grewe, October 15, 1930
Charles Grewe Tree Farm
Member Upper Puget Sound
Upper Puget Sound Tree Farmer of the Year