

Pacific County

## Joe Drazil

Joe Drazil was a high school basketball star who dropped out his senior year to work in a lumber mill. His father had pneumonia, so Joe took the job to help support his family. Joe, “I worked about three days a week at four dollars a day. In those days, when you had pneumonia you were laid up for about three to four months. I worked at the mill for about two years.”



Joe’s parents came from Czechoslovakia. His mother’s family settled in South Bend, Washington, in 1910. His father came in 1914. Joe, “They went from one ocean to the other and couldn’t go any farther, so they stopped at South Bend. Dad had two brothers with him here. Then one left and went to Oregon to farm while Dad stayed in South Bend.”

In 1924 at the age of seven, Joe’s parents bought three 40-acre parcels in Green Creek. They paid 50 cents an acre. Joe, “My grandpa from my mother’s side bought a place and our family bought a place next door. That’s where we grew up. I never knew my grandparents from Dad’s side because they were in Czechoslovakia.”

After working at the mill for two years, Joe bought his first 160 acres at the age of 23. It was 1940. Joe joined the service when the war broke out but was rejected and labeled as 4F, unfit for service. This suited Joe. He had plenty of plowing and planting duties at home. It was so much work that Joe quit his job at the mill. That’s when the draft notice came in the mail. Joe, “It was in the fall and I had to do a lot of plowing. And you don’t go very fast with horses. I needed time. We were planting wheat and oats, so I took the time off from work.

Joe, “It so happened, that the superintendent of the mill was on the draft board. Just as soon as I told him I quit, I got a notice the next week. When I went for my exam they said I was fine, and my 4F status went down the drain. I was banking the season of work on not being drafted. Since we had a government loan, I went and talked to the banker and told him I was being drafted and that I couldn’t make payments. He said, ‘Your payments are frozen until you get out.’ I didn’t make payments for four years. When I got out, I started making payments.

“At the time, I had a bunch of calves started, so Dad took care of them while I was in the service. When I got out in the middle of 1945, he was already milking them. I had a whole herd. That got me started. Jobs were easy to get at the mills, so I worked for a while, then came back and started farming.

“In 1947 I met my first wife, Anna, and got married. I was working at the mill and she was playing around with the cows and chickens. A couple times the cattle got out and she says, ‘I’m not going to chase cows so you better stay home. I’m going to work.’ She went out and worked; it turned out to be to our advantage.”

When Joe became a full-time farmer he began to see the potential of the trees on his 160 acres. Joe, “It was second growth in its 35-year stage when I bought it. I sold that timber in 1955. That gave us the best break we ever had. We did a clear cut on two thirds of it. We left the front ridge.

“At that time the railroads were burning coal cars and every once in a while they would burn your land. Nobody paid attention to it in those days because timber wasn’t worth very much. We’re talking probably \$10 to \$20 at that time. I sold when stumpage was \$20 a 1,000. It was big money in the ‘50s. We sold that, then turned around and replanted everything the next year. That was 1956.”

When asked to join the Pacific County Farm Forestry Chapter in 1965, Joe signed up. He was already a tree farmer and was closely involved with land stewardship. In 1970 the Chapter named him “Pacific County Tree Farmer of the Year”.

Over the years Joe has planted more than 90,000 trees, primarily Douglas fir with a slight mix of cedar. Seeing the advantage of diversity, he started planting mixed stands on his “plantations.” Joe talks about the ins and outs of growing and harvesting timber, “It’s a 40- to 50-year deal. Once it’s gone, one lifetime won’t make it. Me, I just take little chunks at a time when prices are good or when I needed it. But I never need it when prices are low.”



#### DRAZIL TREE FARM

Father: Louis Drazil, 1889 – 1957

Mother: Mary Doubeck Drazil, 1899 – 1977

Joseph Drazil, born September 23, 1917

Ruth Drazil, December 28 1929

Walter Drazil (brother), January 14, 1930

Frank Drazil (brother), 1918 – 1997

Lilly Drazil (sister), May 9, 1922

Pacific County Tree Farmer of the Year, 1970