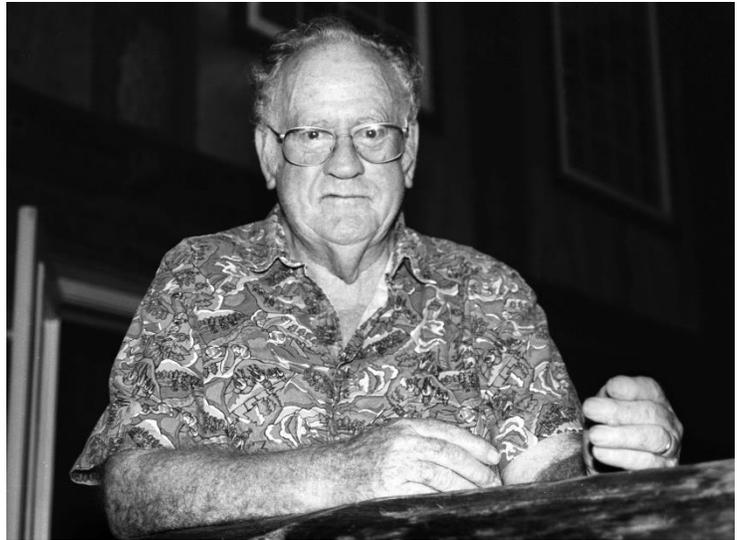


Clark County

## Fred Pratt

Fred Pratt is known for his pranks and can wile away the hours with story after story. This one involves the formation of the Clark County Farm Forestry Association (CCFFA). Fred, “There was an idea to form an organization. Other people were doing this in the state and they put the pressure on me, that I better get something going down in Clark County. So, I put up about five or six of the tree farmers that I



worked with and had them come down to the Experiment Station for a meeting. I told them that we needed to form an organization here called the Farm Forestry Association of Clark County. Walter Ek, Paul Kullberg, and Roy and Clarence (the Strom Brothers) were present. Three of the original members are no longer living.”

The founding members began meeting at the County Extension office and discovered the art of fundraising. Fred, “We decided to start a tree sale; buy some trees and put them out for the public. We bought 1,000 or maybe 2,000 at the most. We decided to make some money so that we could buy things, a booth at the fair and newsletters.”

They called their sale the “Experiment Station.” Fred describes the venture, “We opened our gates up at 8:00 am and by 8:30 am we were sold out. We made about \$400 on that first episode. That was in 1955.” To this day, CCFFA uses their annual tree sale funds to help with administrative costs, educational programs, and grants.

Raised in Eatonville, Washington, the son of a railroad worker, Fred decided railroad work was not for him. Fred, “Gandy Dancers they called them. My father and my brother worked on the section gang. They wanted me to get a good job working on the railroad. I did a week or two of that hard work and said. ‘That’s not for me, I’m going to go to college.’ – and I did. I became a forester.”

Fred graduated from the University of Washington in 1954 with a degree in forest management. Later that same year, he took a job in Vancouver, Washington as a farm forester, working with private landowners by helping them with their management plans.

Upon moving to Vancouver Fred purchased 80 acres of forestland, which he uses for experimentation and forest theories. Fred cites his favorite theory, “One, Two, Three, Chung is a magic number. If you had a piece of ground, and you wanted to plant a tree, you take ONE, TWO, THREE steps and CHUNG! That is where the plant goes in to the ground. You go three more steps and CHUNG. You do not need all this data and silver culture. If you maintain a stand of trees on a One, Two, Three, Chung principle, and manage it above the browse height, in 30 years, even a native tree stand – as we had here – will do well. You can thin them out to the same principle and you are doing the best that you can for the tree to grow at its optimum rate. You do not need all that scientific stuff.”

Fred, Walter Ek and other tree farmers spent time on Capitol Hill to change ad valorem tax law. Their work had a major impact on the future of tree farming, preventing premature harvests.

On the local level, Fred campaigned to change the name of the Yacolt Burn – a burn infamous for its extensive fire damage in the early 1900s, claiming that it was "all growing back and no longer a burn." He failed to change the name but the effort was successful as a promotional stunt, boosting their chapter membership.

Fred was perpetually seeking ways to improve the process, encouraging experimentation with aerial seeding using helicopters. He faulted hand seeding as the "miserable way" and he was one of the first to try machine plantings in his area. Fred, "It was just an acre or two. We got hold of a cabbage planter and it didn't do very well. The machine was not adaptive to Douglas fir. It would J-root the trees and many didn't make it."

Home from his winter hideaway in Arizona, Fred reflects on the development taking place, "It's kind of a shock to go around and see some of the places that are no longer in trees. Neighbors down here sold out and built houses all over their lands, it's kind of a let-down. I bought this farm, managed it, and did what I preached."

Fred's exuberance for forestry and tree farming is contagious. He takes pride in being a part of something big and his enthusiasm has rubbed off on Charlotte, his wife of 12 years who shares his passion. Fred claims to have found Charlotte by putting out a bulletin to all women, that whoever could make the best gooseberry pie would get the grand prize (being himself). Dishing out warm gooseberry pie, Charlotte comes back with, "I told him, marry me, get baked pies and fly free!" Her daughter worked for an airline.

Fred sums up his life work with a comment made about their Chapter by Walter Ek. "He called me up one day and said, 'You never know how successful some of your things might have been. If you look back when we started this thing to now, there's over 300 people in it – and they have got big programs going on.' We never even thought of doing things like that. It's something to be proud of."

#### FORESTER FRED TREE FARM

Frederick V. Pratt, born April 6, 1928

Charlotte Brown Pratt, born September 15, 1934

Founding Member Clark County Farm Forestry

*"He did the first machine plantings; that means he was around when dinosaurs were on the earth." – Linda Melton (stepdaughter)*

