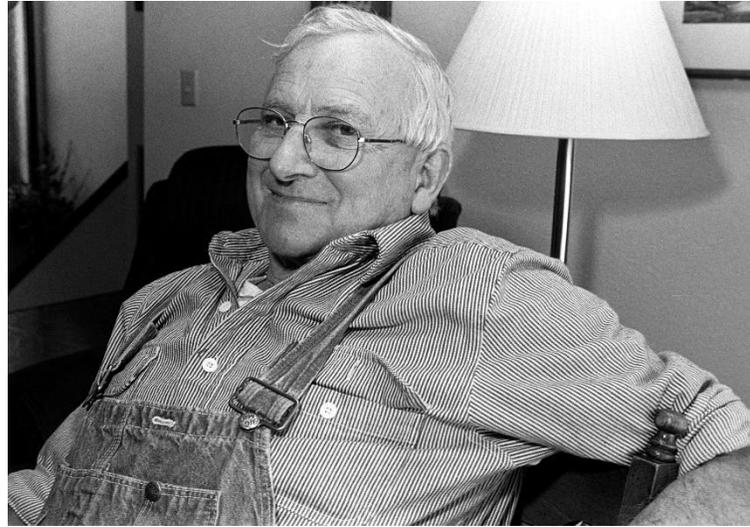


Clark County

Jack Schumacher

“When I was seven or eight years old, my family was cutting fir trees this big around,” Jack Schumacher measures a 15-inch distance with his hands. “They’d slash the brush then fall them on top of the brush, then burn it so they’d get more pasture, more cattle, more clearing ground. One day my grandfather, being from Germany, told me that bothered him. He said, ‘That timber is going to be valuable, especially a tree that size. This is not right.’ He couldn’t believe they’d destroy a good stand of timber to get more agriculture ground. So he says, ‘When you get to be old, there will be a lot of value in that timber.’ I listened to what he had to say, ‘cause in Germany they pretty well used it up.”



Jack’s family were dairy farmers, and he was considered the rebel in his family because he decided to grow trees instead of cows. Jack, “It was good for Dad (Ralph Laurence Schumacher). I was comfortable with it, until it started tramping up all my trees. Some of these fields started coming into trees out here and the cows were very hard on them.”

Jack’s grandfather, Ferdinand Schumacher, set up a 160-acre homestead in the late 1800s in Moulton, Washington, an area that later became known as the Yacolt Burn. When the infamous fire of 1902 broke out, their homestead was consumed. Ferdinand sold enough of the standing timber that was left from the fire to purchase farmland nearby in Heisson. Using the trees on the property, he built the house that the next two generations of Schumachers would call home.

Jack was living as a dairy farmer when he met his future wife Sylvia Prater. They were attending a basket social at the Rock Creek Grange in 1947. Having been enlisted in the U.S. Navy, Jack left for Korea in 1949 and returned in 1953. The couple married in the spring of 1954. While maintaining the family tradition of dairy farming, Jack was looking into alternative ways to work the land. Being a businessperson, he saw the costs of dairy farming rising as technology advanced. Jack, “It was all bucket milkers. That’s what you call a dry barn, and they were all going to wet barns. You see, we’d sell our milk to the city of Portland and we had to go with their rules. It was a pretty good debt we were looking at and I decided I wasn’t all that interested in sticking to dairy.”

In 1959 they purchased 87 acres in Yacolt, Washington as a tree farm investment. The land consisted of quarter-century trees and brush. Jack said, “Dad was interested in the trees. He bought in with me on the first piece. Around the same time, Jack was inspired by a young farm forester named Fred Pratt to get involved with the Clark-Skamaniam Farm Forestry Association (CSFFA). “We learned a lot from Fred,” Jack points out. Both Jack and his father attended meetings and actively participated in CSFFA programs, learning what they could about tree farming and teaching what they learned.

Jack and Sylvia continued to make investments in timber property, purchasing 120 acres of overstocked, 40-year old trees that required immediate management. Today they own 900 acres that are spread across Southwestern Washington in four separate counties. As they look into the

future of their legacy, the Schumacher's have created a Family Tree Farm Limited Liability Corporation out of 527 acres with their three daughters.

But managing the timber did not come easy. As the laws affecting timberland and private property owner's rights became more and more frustrating, Jack became politically involved. Jumping in first on timber tax laws, Jack says, "Here they were, picking and choosing who they were going to tax or not. We went to fight at the state level for this harvest tax. There was no way a person could survive on that timber tax. Weyerhaeuser cut all their big stuff east of Yacolt because of that. And then they went to the harvest tax."

When the buffer zones along the creeks were created in the 1990s, Jack and Sylvia felt pressured into cutting trees they had no intention of cutting. Jack, "The Department of Natural Resources said if you're going to cut this, it has to be cut now on this permit because you are not going to get another permit to cut where you want to cut. Well, we managed this ground since 1963 for all these years, and had a little bit of a feeling that it was supposed to have been ours. I mean, it was really, really nice. We didn't want to cut it. We kept the 100 plus acres and traded the value of the timber from that property for 440 acres of reproduction from Weyerhaeuser."

Jack served as president of the CCFFA in the 1970s, and the Schumacher tree farm was one of the first to receive the Tree Farmer of the Year award from the American Forestry Institute in 1977. They were first runners up for the Western Region of the United States. Sylvia recalls their moment of fame, "There was a television crew that came out and took pictures. We were in parades and everything else. It went up to the governor and Jack was acknowledged."

Jack has a simple philosophy on timber management, "We took what we had to take to live on for the quality of life that we needed to live. We cut enough, but it was usually a corner here that had been burned or something. In the second growth if it's pruned and thinned and opened up where it isn't so thick, if it's a good healthy stand, then a fire will run through it. I cut a lot of timber a fire's gone through and scarred the butts of trees, but never killed them."

The Schumachers are concerned that future generations won't be able to afford and maintain a tree farm. They feel that the regulations are destroying the incentive of younger people, but are reassured about their own legacy at least for this generation. Jack points out that Sylvia won't let him attend more meetings because they get him "riled up." Instead, they are satisfied with the view out the window and managing forests for their children's children. Sylvia reflects on their efforts "I'm proud of my farm, how it is and how we're not destructing the world."

"I think we're like the dinosaurs, an end of an era, because less and less people are making a living on their tree farm." – Sylvia Schumacher

FAMILY TREE FARMS, LLC

Jack Schumacher, born March 2, 1931

Sylvia Prater Schumacher, born May 23, 1933

Member Clark County Farm Forestry

Tree Farmer of the Year, 1977