

Northeast

Maurice Williamson

“I thought I was going to be in a lookout tower with a collie dog at my feet and me driving around in a pickup. Fresh out of college with a degree in Forest Management from the University of Missouri, Maurice Williamson describes how he envisioned his new career. His first job with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in Omak, Washington turned that fantasy into a nightmarish reality when he was sent out on fire patrol.



Maurice, “I hadn’t been working for the DNR for two weeks, when the Omak bust happened in 1970. I believe there were 120 some odd fires. Oh, it was horrible. My first fire, they held me in because I hadn’t had any training. They ran out of people, so they finally had to send me someplace. I may have been out of school about a week. Oh, I was a pussy – an out of shape, fat, college kid. Now, I’m a typical fat, old man.

“Anyhow, three of us went to this fire on the Okanogan on Shilo Mountain. We marched up to the top of that thing. I started out with a half a gallon of water. I didn’t even get half way there and all of my water was gone. We got just about to the top and here came these forest service guys, three of them. About that time we heard – like I said it was my first forest fire – what sounded like a freight train. That fire had blown up and was coming up the hill. We ran all the way back down to the pickup. That was my first fire fighting experience.”

Despite a harsh first impression, Maurice stuck it out and is now a timber-savvy forest consultant. He is also the father of two and a partner in approximately 300 acres of land. His offbeat sense of humor and forest expertise has earned the respect of the community as he continues to help people with their forest management issues.

Maurice was recruited into the Washington Farm Forestry Association by Bill Jolley in the early 1980s and has remained an active participant through the years filling in where he’s needed. When asked why he stayed, Maurice replies, “It’s a way of life, depending on how much you get into it. Trees don’t talk back. If you enjoy being outdoors and watching things grow, watching the relationship between various living things, it can be rewarding. It can be, and I think it probably will be again, somewhat financially rewarding. Overall, it’s a great thing.”

NO NAME TREE FARM

Maurice Williamson, born December 28, 1946

Donna Williamson, born June 13, 1946

President Northeast Washington Farm Forestry Association, 1982

WFFA President, 1993-1997