

Wayne Giesy

Biographical Sketch, Tuesday, March 19, 2013

Wayne Richard Giesy was born in Aurora, Oregon, on March 14, 1920. He is the grandson of the Aurora Colony's first physician and pharmacist, Dr. Martin Giesy (1834–1916). "Dr. Martin" was an Oregon Trail pioneer, arriving in Willapa Bay, Washington in 1856 with his parents, Andrew and Barbara; Andrew died shortly thereafter and is buried nearby. The family soon moved to Marks Prairie, Oregon where they were among the Aurora Colony's principal founders. A trilogy of popular historical novels has been written about another Aurora Colony member, Emma Giesy, Dr. Martin's sister-in-law and Wayne's great-aunt. Dr. Martin married Martha Miller (1835-1916), and they had seven children, including youngest child Grover Cleveland Giesy, born in Aurora in 1884. Grover married Ethel Armstrong in 1916 and they became the parents of Grover Cleveland, Jr. (1917), Wayne (1920), Marjorie (1921), and Morton (1923), all born in Aurora. Wayne is now the family's only surviving sibling.

When Wayne was about 8 years old, near the beginning of the Great Depression, the family moved to a few locations in California, and then to The Dalles, Oregon, in an attempt to have a positive effect on Morton's health, who suffered from asthma. His younger brother didn't seem to improve with the changes in geography, though, and by the time Wayne entered high school the family was firmly established in Amity, Oregon. By this time Wayne's father had left, and he was given the added responsibility of working to help feed and care for the family.

While the family lived on a small farm on the outskirts of Amity, and while he was still in grade school, Wayne cut and sold firewood to help make ends meet. When they moved into town he got an Oregonian newspaper route that paid \$10/month, and worked on farms during the summer. When he was 13, he spent the summer working on his grandfather's farm along the Wilson River in Tillamook County, Oregon. There he helped his grandfather fell a 5-foot diameter redcedar on the property by using a springboard and a crosscut saw. He then spent a good part of the remainder of the summer learning how to cut bolts and make shakes and shingles from the tree with a hand froe.

Wayne was a star athlete at Amity High School, lettering in football, baseball, and basketball during his sophomore, junior, and senior years. He was quarterback on the school football team, catcher on its baseball team, and guard on the basketball team. During that time Amity teams won 27 separate championships, including State "B" league basketball champions in 1938 that also finished second to Baker in the "A" League championship game. Wayne made both Oregon "A" and "B" League basketball All-Star teams that year.

Wayne also graduated from High School in 1938 and was offered a basketball scholarship to Gonzaga University – however, his mother was forced to leave home to care for her ailing parents and Wayne was left with the decision to either attend Gonzaga, or stay in Amity and help his younger brother and sister complete high school. Wayne rented a house and, with his older brother, Grover, took a job with Burlingham-Meeker Co. at the Amity Feed Store to support the family. Grover soon got married and moved out on his own, leaving Wayne to care for Marjorie and Morton until they, too, graduated.

In 1943 Wayne enlisted in the US Army and was sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, where he was selected for parachute troop duty. However, a slight seeing problem in his right eye kept him from becoming a parachutist and in 1944 he was assigned to the 325th anti-aircraft battalion in Oahu, Hawaii instead. While in Hawaii, Wayne was promoted from private to technical sergeant and was on his way Okinawa when he learned he had qualified for Officer Candidate School (OCS) and was immediately returned to the States to attend training. Wayne graduated from OCS as a Combat Engineer and was given the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. He was then assigned back to Fort Lewis where he continued to serve until the end of the war

and was honorably discharged in 1946. He then returned to Amity, Oregon and went back to work for Burlingham-Meeker Co.

In 1947 Wayne Giesy and Burlingham-Meeker Co. purchased the Monroe Feed Store, and Wayne moved to Monroe, Oregon to run the business. This signaled the beginning of a 50-year friendship with Ralph Hull, of Hull-Oakes Lumber Co., in Dawson, Oregon. Ralph came into Monroe on a daily basis to get the mail, eat lunch, and attend to business as needed. The two young businessmen often ate lunch together and soon formed a fast and lasting friendship.

On June 23, 1956, “on the only sunny day of the month,” Wayne married his wife of nearly 60 years, Betty Jo Reid, in the backyard rose garden of her parent’s home in Monroe. They soon had a girl and a boy of their own.

In the early 1950s Wayne became interested in politics and often traveled to Salem, Oregon and even took a few trips to Washington, DC to promote his business interests and those of other Benton County residents. In 1954, he bought out Burlingham-Meeker Co.’s controlling interests in the Monroe Feed Store and became sole proprietor. In 1955 and again in 1957 the citizens of Benton County elected Wayne to be their State representative in Salem, Oregon, where he served in the legislature until 1959 with State Senator Mark Hatfield, future Oregon Governor and US Senator, and with Bob Packwood, future US Senator, who served as a page at that time.

During the early 1950s, two big political issues in Oregon were management of the State’s timberlands – which were primarily created to help fund Oregon schools and roads -- and wildfire protection practices via the Oregon Department of Forestry. It was during this time Wayne first became acquainted with Bill Hagenstein and developed a friendship and working relationship that has continued to this day.

By 1958, Wayne had expanded the Monroe Feed Store to include international markets, necessitating several sales trips to Europe and other locations. In 1968 he moved to California with his young family to pursue other business options. The family soon returned to Oregon in 1971.

In 1977, Wayne established a gyppo alder logging business, Midas, Inc., and began logging alder on Hull-Oakes properties for his old friend, Ralph Hull. Hull’s practice was to log off the stands of alder that had seeded into abandoned fields and old clearcuts and then plant them back to Douglas-fir for future sawmill needs. Wayne paid 25% of the stumpage per thousand board feet (/mbf) to Ralph for the trees, and initially sold them for less than \$100/mbf to Paul Barber Hardwoods in Philomath, Oregon. Midas, Inc. could typically log about two loads (4-6 mbf) of alder a day.

In 1983, following a serious logging accident, Wayne was asked by Ralph if he would like to become Sales Manager for Hull-Oakes Lumber Co. sawmill. Wayne took the job and soon increased annual sales from a previous record high of 18.5 million board feet to 27.5 million board feet in one year, and to an annual average of more than 20 million board feet -- including a remarkable increase in clear lumber sales from almost nothing to an average of \$750,000 a year net profit on clears during his first four years on the job.

In the late 1980’s Wayne helped form and guide local organizations Alsea Valley Alliance (AVA) and Western Oregon Timber Supporters (WOTS) to support Benton County and Lincoln County businesses and landowners faced with burgeoning state and federal land management regulations at that time. AVA took successful leadership in opposing Wild and Scenic River status for Alsea Valley landowners, and initiated contact and then partnered with the Pacific Legal Foundation to win a key decision in Judge Thomas F. “Hogan’s Court” (US District Court for Oregon, September 2001), concerning management of wild and hatchery salmon in the Alsea River. In 1997 WOTS changed it’s name to Oregon Websites and

Watersheds Project, Inc. (ORWW), and was able to obtain 501 c(3) IRS status later that year, under which designation it has continued to the present time.

Ralph Hull reformed Hull-Oakes Lumber Co. in 1990 to include ownership of six long-time friends and family – all employees – under the provision that he (Hull) would continue management of the business “arbitrarily and paternalistically” until the stock had been paid. At that time Wayne became one of the six new owners who agreed to those terms.

Following a serious illness in 1995, Wayne was ready to “retire” from Hull-Oakes Lumber Co. at the age of 75 – although he has continued as a consultant to the company since: regularly attending Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Oregon Forest Industry Council (OFIC), American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) and other trade and professional organization meetings as a Hull-Oakes representative.

In 1996 Wayne was able to place the Hull-Oakes Lumber Co. sawmill on the National Registry of Historic Places with the US National Park Service, and with the Historic American Engineering Record, where its records are housed in the Library of Congress, in Washington, DC. For this work Wayne was given the 1999 Benton County Historic Resources Commission Award for “Outstanding Contributions in Preserving Benton County’s Historical and Cultural Heritage.”

In 1996, Wayne was also selected as “Lumberman of the Year” by the Portland, Oregon Wholesaler’s Club: a prestigious regional award given to, among others, Ralph Hull in 1984; John Hampton in 1993; Al Kirnak in 1994; Bill Swindells, Jr., in 1997; Aaron Jones in 2000; and Bill Hagenstein in 2005. To this day Wayne continues to drive to Portland at least twice a month to visit with Bill, and they have lunch on a monthly basis with Al Kirnak – discussing current forestry problems and possible solutions on those occasions. All three men are now well into their 90s, but their focus remains on the present and on possibilities of a better future.

In 1996 Wayne also helped design and launch Oregon Websites and Watersheds Project, Inc. (ORWW) with Bob Zybach, who subsequently obtained his Master’s degree and PhD in Environmental Sciences from Oregon State University with Wayne’s guidance and advice and with significant financial assistance from Ralph Hull. In January, 1997 the new non-profit organization launched an educational website (www.ORWW.org) dedicated to showing “students how to use Internet communications and scientific methodology to help manage Oregon’s natural and cultural resources.” Within 10 years the website had been visited by more than three million “unique” users, and has remained online continuously from its beginning until the present time. In 2007 ORWW also launched an educational YouTube video channel, ORWWmedia, which is now closing in on its first 100,000 visitors.

In 1997 Wayne became a Director of OFIC, from which time to the present he has missed only four meetings! During his tenure at OFIC he has continued to work diligently for good forestry practices on state, federal, and private forestlands in Oregon, and has consistently been a strong voice for “common good” conservation and wise use of timber resources. In 2003, Wayne was awarded the annual OFIC Ted Young Stewardship Award for “Excellence in One of America’s Most Important Fields of Work, Forestry.”

On February 2, 2013, Wayne Giesy was inducted into the Amity High School Athletic Hall of Fame in a ceremony that he attended that evening. On March 14, 2013 he celebrated his 93rd birthday with his family at a Corvallis, Oregon pizza parlor, following that day’s work. On June 23, 2013, Wayne and Betty Jo will have been married for 57 years.