



# Garrett Eddy

1916-2001

A man of science and principle, Garrett (nmn) Eddy pioneered research on thinning forestlands, which helped improve timber industry practices and contributed to the success of his company, Port Blakely Tree Farms. Garrett was an astute businessman, but he felt more comfortable in the woods than behind a desk. Though he had a professional dedication to sound forestry, his greatest personal passion was ornithology. He made invaluable contributions to both areas of science.

Garrett was born in Seattle on June 8, 1916, the youngest of John Whittemore Eddy and Ethel Garrett Eddy's three children. John W. Eddy was a highly successful businessman, originally from Bay City, Michigan, who had purchased the Port Blakely Mill Company in 1903 with partner Ned Skinner. John Eddy's brothers, James and Robert, were also silent partners in the venture. Located on the southeast side of Bainbridge Island, west of Seattle in Puget Sound, Port Blakely had been founded in 1864 and for a time had been one of the world's largest sawmills under one roof.

Just a few years after John Eddy and his partner acquired the business, they sold millions of board feet of lumber to San Francisco to rebuild the city after the devastating earthquake and fire of 1906. In 1923, John Eddy dissolved his partnership with Skinner, and he and his brothers acquired the whole of the mill as well as the partnership's timberlands. The Eddy brothers leased the mill and later closed it to focus on timberland operations.

Garrett spent his boyhood days in Seattle and boarded at the prestigious Thacher School in Ojai, California, for high school. Garrett was studious and athletic. He captained the track team and in 1933 set a school record in the 440 that stood for three decades. In the summers, Garrett joined his family on cruises to Alaska aboard his father's sizable steam yacht. The Eddy family also had a summer home on Bainbridge Island. Garrett enjoyed hiking and backpacking, often in the company of Peter Garrett, his cousin and lifelong friend.

Garrett graduated from Thacher in 1934 and enrolled at Harvard University that fall. At Harvard, he majored in Biology and became a protégé of Ludlow Griscom, one of the greatest American ornithologists. Over the years, Garrett corresponded with Griscom and also collaborated with other notable ornithologists, including the famed Roger Tory Peterson and Dutch Nobel Prize winner Nikolaas "Niko" Tinbergen. In 1937, he joined the American Ornithologists' Union and remained a member the rest of his life. During his college years, Garrett also ran track, rowed crew, and hiked and climbed mountains as a member of the Harvard Mountaineering Club.

Though Garrett's scientific inclinations might have led him into an academic career, he came from a family that valued commercial success. Following his graduation from Harvard College, he remained in Cambridge and attended Harvard Business School.

By the time Garrett was studying for his MBA, World War II was looming on the horizon. Garrett had been a member of the U.S. Navy reserve, and he served on active duty from 1941 until March 1946. His first assignment was aboard the USS *Amber*, an inshore patrol that was a converted yacht. The *Amber* patrolled the waters of Puget Sound and also cruised to Alaska. Garrett served on other ships, including two destroyer escorts, the USS *Key* and the USS *Ulvert M. Moore*. After serving on the *Key*, Garrett took over command of the *Moore* from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr., the son of the President, near the end of the war. Garrett was honorably discharged after the war, having achieved the rank of lieutenant commander.

While Garrett had enormous responsibilities as a naval officer, he also took on new responsibilities on the home front. On February 14, 1942, he married Mary Ford Eddy (née Eddy), a fifth cousin whom he had gotten to know when he was a teenager. Friends and family called her "Mary Ford." The couple had three children, Garrett Edward, John Whittemore II, and Barbara Ethel.

After the war, Garrett returned to Seattle, and he and Mary Ford settled in the city's Magnolia neighborhood. Garrett went to work for what was then called the Port Blakely Mill Company—though the mill was shut down by this time. Two decades earlier, Garrett's uncle James had researched reforestation and, spurred by his friend the great American botanist Luther Burbank, founded what later became the Institute of Forest Genetics in Placerville, California. Garrett immediately set about building on this scientific legacy.

Port Blakely had a reputation for excellent management of its timberlands, and Garrett aimed to bring more precise science to the endeavor. In particular, he was interested in determining best practices for thinning tree stands so that the remaining trees could grow bigger and more valuable. Port Blakely had experimented with commercial thinning as early as 1941, making it one of the first, if not the very first, company to employ this practice. Garrett embarked on a program of carefully measuring plots of forestland that were thinned to variable densities. The results were documented over several decades, and Garrett introduced new practices as a result.

Notably, Port Blakely instituted long rotations between harvests. Douglas fir, for instance, is harvested after a 45-year rotation by standard industry practice. Port Blakely, on the other hand, allowed its Douglas fir stands to grow as long as 80 years, which yielded higher-quality lumber. Through the decades, the stands would be thinned several times, with suppressed and subdominant trees turned to lumber and profit.

In the late 1940s, Port Blakely also began to have its timberlands officially certified as Tree Farms. Owners of certified Tree Farms pledge to institute practices to keep their land productive and prevent forest fires. The legendary forester W.D. "Bill" Hagenstein, one of the founders of what became the American Tree Farm System, recalled how Port Blakely adopted Tree Farm practices. "I was visiting lands in Snohomish County [northeast of Seattle], and there had been a big blowdown of old growth, and a lot of it was bug-infested. I got Garrett out to look at it and convinced him to clean up the area and replant."

Bill said that he earned Garrett's trust in part because Bill's uncle Walter Hagenstein was an amateur ornithologist and had taught Garrett about birds decades earlier. Garrett extended his esteem for Walter to Bill. Garrett later served on the board of the Industrial Forestry Association, which Bill managed and ran for more than two decades.

In the Northwest forest products industry, the Port Blakely name became associated with the quality of its timberlands. Industry magnate George Weyerhaeuser commented that Port Blakely knew how to choose land. In addition to identifying fertile land with healthy forests, Port Blakely also invested in timberlands at lower elevations. When higher elevation land was inaccessible during winter snow, Port Blakely could still cut timber and supply mills.

Ownings and managing timberlands also carried enormous risk, primarily of forest fire. Everyone who worked for the company trained to fight fires, and Garrett spent a lot of effort working with fire departments and the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA) to prevent fires and organize fire fighting crews. Eventually Garrett served as president of WFPA for 12 years, longer than anyone else to hold the office. During fire season, Garrett kept his ear to the fire radio in his car, even if it meant parking the car alongside his house so he could hear the radio through the window during meals. Garrett was also a driving force in improving forest protection in Oregon.

Port Blakely owned timberlands in Oregon, Idaho, and primarily western Washington. While the Idaho holdings were eventually sold, late in Garrett's career, Port Blakely purchased new timberlands on the other side of the world, in New Zealand. His interest in diversifying Port Blakely's operations also led him to pursue the company's first real estate venture in 1962. In partnership with a real estate subsidiary of Puget Sound Power & Light Company, Port Blakely developed Renton Village. Over time, as western Washington became more populous, Port Blakely bought and sold land for development and to extend its timber holdings.

"Garrett invested for the long term," said Jim Warjone, Garrett's cousin and successor as head of Port Blakely. "He had the courage and patience to look beyond a current economic cycle." John Warjone, Jim's brother and a longtime Port Blakely forester, recalled that Garrett could be quite cautious, too. "He was very, very selective."

Garrett could be a man of "gruff leadership," John recalled as well. "He would always challenge you to justify your decisions." Garrett served as president of Port Blakely from 1952 until 1980 and as chairman of the board from 1981 to 1996.

While Garrett remained a dedicated timberman all his life, ornithology remained the central passion of his life. "He always had binoculars around his neck, even at the dinner table," recalled his daughter-in-law Constance Eddy. His scientific principles largely guided his interest in studying birds. Garrett owned a beautiful 36-foot Chris Craft Corvette (Garrett named the craft the *Corvette* after the model name), which he often used for bird banding and counting expeditions in Puget Sound and around the San Juan Islands. Garrett's meticulous records later served as an important resource for Washington State scientists seeking information about bird habitats in the area.

The Eddy family in fact had a history of contributing to the scientific study of birds. Garrett's father had provided more than 800 bird specimens to the University of Washington's Burke Museum, collected during a safari to east Africa in 1929 and 1930. In 1984, Garrett began an association with this museum that lasted the rest of his life, and he became one of the institution's most generous benefactors.

At the Burke Museum, Garrett funded three major endowments, helped establish a molecular lab, and supported several expeditions to Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. He joined students, museum staff, and other scientists on two of these expeditions. Though generous with his donations, he also demanded results in the form of published scientific papers and collected specimens. In the end, his support helped make the Burke Museum one of the most well-respected centers for bird research in the world.

While Garrett was a dedicated scientist, he was also a passionate outdoorsman and hunter. For years, he and a group of friends took an annual bird-hunting trip to Alberta, Canada. He also hunted in Mexico, Scotland, and eastern Washington. Cousin and friend Peter Garrett recalled that Garrett was "very conscientious" and "always played by the rules. We would shoot our legal limit and that was it." Garrett and Mary Ford also kept and showed retrievers, including one national champion Black Labrador. All the dogs were excellent hunting companions as well.

Mary Ford died in 1990. Garrett had also suffered the loss of his eldest son, Garrett Edward, who was killed in combat in Cambodia in 1970. Garrett remained active in Port Blakely, even as he stepped back from overseeing day-to-day operations. Until shortly before his death from lung cancer at the age of 85, on July 4, 2001, he continued to go to his downtown Seattle office two or three times each week.

From the very start of his career, Garrett Eddy recognized that the timber industry could thrive while also preserving habitats that supported wildlife. In this regard, he was ahead of his time in an industry that only later focused on sustainability. Onetime head of the National Wildlife Federation Jay Hair was so impressed with Port Blakely's practices that he joined the company's board. He paid tribute to the company and Garrett, saying, "They have been as environmentally responsible and friendly a company as any in North America. Garrett Eddy's greatest legacy is the values of conservation and sustainable development that the company continues to reflect."