



Louis W. Hill, Jr.

1902-1995

Louis Hill (pronounced Louie) loved the forest and visited the West as often as he could. He was an energetic, enthusiastic forester and a businessman who dedicated himself to preserving and managing forest properties. He realized a future vision in reforestation, and throughout his life, he energetically pursued active forest management. Louis was a spark plug to the industry and a man who stimulated others to combine good forestry practices with high expectations.

Louis Warren Hill, Jr. had many names and titles during his active life, from May 19, 1902 to April 6, 1995. One of his earliest names was Ot Que Kaitsip Imo (Little Pinto Pony Rider), given to him in 1914 when he was accepted into the Blackfoot Nation. He spent his summers in their territory and explored western Montana with his family and new friends. In the West, he learned to hunt and fish and even tell Blackfoot hunting stories in sign language. He went for moose-hunting trips, traveling on horseback beyond the known trails. He connected with the West, and was proud of his association with that part of the world. During the twenties, his mother took his two brothers and his sister (Jerome and Cortland Hill and Maud Hill Schroll) shopping to the conservative men's clothier Brooks Brothers in New York City. In the elevator, Louis turned to his younger siblings and said: "Now kids, act as Western as you can!"

Louis loved all the aspects of the West. It was no surprise that after his formal education "out East," he returned to work for his father's company; the Great Northern Railway (1926-1929). He worked as an extra gang member, a section hand, a timekeeper, an accountant, a trainmaster, and an odd jobber. He knew early on that as the boss's son he had to work twice as hard as the regular men. While working at the Railway, he claimed he never had a full night's sleep and consequently learned to sleep sitting up. "The secret to doing that," he later said, was to "wear good shoes, sit straight, and keep your feet spread evenly on the floor."

When Louis attended Yale University (1921-1925), he had taken forestry courses at the renowned Yale Forestry School. One of his favorite sayings was, "The best thing about trees is that they grow while you are asleep!" After he married Elsi Fors on May 23, 1943, in Seattle, Washington, he took his young bride to reside in Sweet Home, Oregon. He lived with Forester Eugene Ellis, where he literally learned the forestry business from the ground up while working at his father's timber business. This small group of employees and directors managed over 100,000 acres of Douglas fir forests in Linn County, Oregon. Between Eugene and Louis, they covered almost every inch of the property, from Green Peter's

heights to the Santiam River. The first timber sale occurred in 1935 and by 1942, the Timber Service Company was born. The average price of logs in that year was \$6.50/M for Douglas fir delivered to the mill. The primary advisor, Dr. David T. Mason (currently Mason, Bruce and Girard of Portland, Oregon), was also a Yale graduate. He was hired in 1938 to advise the Hill timber interests. Dr. Mason was known as "the father of the sustained yield concept" (annual growth approximates the annual harvest). Louis and Eugene embraced this concept. The Hills grew trees and that was the core business. Louis and Eugene were proud of it.

After the war, in 1945, Dr. Mason negotiated the first long-term harvesting contracts for the Hill timber with Willamette Industries. They agreed to take all the old growth timber off designated tracts. This contract lasted until June 1986 and when it terminated, Timber Service Company began making all of the Hill timber sales.

One of Louis's favorite projects was implemented by Jack Barringer. In 1959, Jack, who graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in forest management, established the Mason Seed Orchard. This 75-acre grafted Douglas fir orchard represented three elevation zones suited to the Hill property. Today, this seed orchard is one of the oldest consistently operating seed orchards in the Pacific Northwest. It is on its second generation of seed and has consistently produced genetically superior seed for Hill's reforestation effort for 37 years. Its progeny grace experimental plots in numerous plantations around the world in China, New Zealand, and Canada. Over the years it has produced 3,583.67 pounds of seed. This translates to 50-60 million seedlings, 25 million planted on approximately 50,000 acres representing about one third of the Hill property. It is hard to imagine how much wood and wood fiber has been sourced from this project. Who could ever forget Louis wearing his funny green felt hat, walking under the now majestic trees, saying: "Gee, Jack, this is swell!"

Louis returned to live in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and visited Oregon regularly until a year before he passed away. He always attended the annual Oregon "timber" meeting with its blue book agenda and meeting schedules. He often commented on the management of the forest and studied the financial projections and expenses while considering the use and practice of fertilization and reforestation. He saw to it that the Hill property was consistently reforested after harvest, long before this practice became Oregon law.

But Louis' vision went far beyond the forest boundaries. Always a champion of many, he encouraged others to participate in their communities and exchange ideas. Louis was a charter member of the Japan-American Society and fought successfully to establish sister-city exchanges, particularly between Saint Paul, Minnesota, and Nagasaki, Japan. He sponsored East Asian studies at various institutions and collected and contributed to Asian art collections at diverse cultural institutions. Louis was awarded the medal of "The order of the Rising Sun" from Japan in 1987 for

his educational and cultural contributions to U. S. and Japanese relations. In 1972 he was awarded the title "Honorary Swede of the Year" by the Svenskarnas Dag Committee. In 1956 he was presented with the "William Stillman Award" by the American Humane Association for saving a horse from certain death by drowning in a North Dakota river.

This is a portrait of an unusually energetic and forward-thinking person. Louis cherished the natural world and responded to it by emphasizing environmental ideals. He personally designed and developed his own village community north of Saint Paul, Minnesota, which is now known as the City of North Oaks (The North Oaks Company, est. 1950.) He served the business community by participating politically in local government as an elected member of the Minnesota House of Representatives (1937-1951). He was a director and trustee of The First National Bank of Saint Paul (1926-1975), The First Trust Company of Saint Paul (1930-1995), and The Great Northern Iron Ore Properties (1948-1981). He established The Grotto Foundation in 1964 and sat on the boards of The Jerome Foundation and The Northwest Area Foundation (1964-1995). He continued his work with charities through the American Cancer Society, The Red Cross, The Better Business Bureau, The United Way, The Family Welfare Association, United Hospitals, and numerous other not-for-profit organizations in the Midwest.

Louis was fun and funny. He could recite Robert Service's "Cremation of Sam McGee," and he wrote limericks and rhyming couplets. He could command attention or alternatively be a quiet listener. He loved walking and touring his property. He was skilled with a scythe and he worked ferociously to rid his property of noxious weeds and Box Elder trees. Louis enjoyed every breath he took. His enthusiasm was infectious. John Driscoll, the great grandson of Frederick Weyerhaeuser, describes Louis as follows: "He was one of those people who, when he saw you, would light up like a Christmas tree. He made you feel like you were the person he most wanted to see, right at that moment. It was unbelievable. He was remarkable in that way."

Louis' role in the creation of the World Forestry Center's "Talking Tree" was pivotal. After the first unsuccessful attempt in 1971, a second, much more realistic "Talking Tree" project was supported by Louis in 1972. It is 5 feet in diameter and 60 feet tall. It makes a truly inspiring introduction to the World Forestry Center.