



Geo. S. Long

1853-1930

“The alarmist need have no fear...of the timberless age, for it will not arrive; he should direct his thought and energy to the same conservation of what we have; to the reproduction of forest growth and encourage economic conditions that will prevent forest waste.” These words are from an address in Portland, January 26, 1914, by Geo. S. Long, then general manager, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company (now Weyerhaeuser Company). Words of portent they were, from the dean of American lumbermen who in that long-ago era, when abundance of old-growth timber blinded so many, saw permanence for the industry through new timber crops.

Geo. S. Long was a man of enormous influence in the forest industry. He had learned the business from the roots up in Indiana, the South, the Lake States and West. At the time of the Portland speech, he had been a lumberman for 45 years; he lived to make it 60.

The measure of the man is covered by his deeds. He fathered the first softwood lumber grading rules in the United States. He was first to suggest uniform grading of logs. He was among the first to use topographic maps, which soon became a necessity in logging. He initiated the first forest fire legislation in Washington and Oregon. He helped organize the Forest Protective Associations and was president of the one in his own state 21 years. He helped found the Western Forestry and Conservation Association.

When Mr. Long came from Wisconsin in 1900 to take the helm of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, he tackled the biggest timber job in history. The company had just purchased a million acres of West Coast timberlands and was organizing to operate it. Mr. Long inherited no office, no personnel, only a suspicious public and distrustful industry. His job was to develop and run an orderly plan for using the timber and win the

confidence of other lumbermen and the public.

Geo. S. Long was born December 3, 1953 at Claremont near Indianapolis, Indiana. His father, Isaac, was a lumberman in a small way. He bought a sash mill when the boy was 10, moved it up to nearby Tipton County (Ind.) where there was plenty of hardwood timber and malaria, which caused him to send the family back to Indianapolis. George had just finished his second year in high school when the father met reverses and lost the mill. The lad had to quit school and get a job.

For four years, Geo. S. Long worked in real estate; then the building boom collapsed and the firm folded. After this he obtained a job as a tallyman in a wholesale yard, but that concern soon went into receivership. Then he went to work for a hardwood operator named H.C. Long (not a relative), under whose tutelage young Long learned the business fast. His boss sent him out to buy standing walnut, oak and yellow poplar in several states and Indian Territory, log it, saw it and sell it.

In 1884, at age 31, Geo. S. Long was hired by the Northwestern Lumber Company of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to take charge of shipping at a wholesale yard. Within a year, he was sales manager for five big sawmills. In that post, the man's ability truly surfaced. He was chairman of an industry-wide committee to develop a standard system of grading lumber. He and his committee grappled with problem ten years, finally evolving a satisfactory basis of grading. This was the first standard softwood grading system perfected in America and was the model for grading rules later adopted for other regions including the West.

In 1899, Mr. Long looked about for a new connection. He signed a contract with

Brittingham & Hixon Lumber Company, of Madison, Wisconsin, to manage that company. However, in three weeks after Long had started work, there came an offer from Weyerhaeuser to go West and become resident agent for the big timberlands property recently purchased. Long decided he could not in conscience accept. However, he did tell Mr. Brittingham about it, and the latter said, "Take it; it's the chance of a lifetime."

The magnitude of the job at Tacoma was literally beyond belief. Commenting on problems faced, Mr. Long later said: "I had not comprehension whatever of the job before me. By neither training nor experience was I equipped for the things that had to be done. The first thing I realized was that...I was in an empire instead of a bailiwick." His chore, as he saw it, was "allay suspicion, make friends and to be a constructive force in assisting the industry, thereby in the best way was assisting ourselves." The company bought a small cargo mill at Everett in 1903 in order to learn first hand the sawmill business in the fir district. One of Mr. Long's first acts was to institute an easier, orderly right-of-way policy for the company's lands so other operators could reach their timber. Then he began selling timber to them, in large volume, while he was formulating a master plan for building mills at locations backed by company timber. Twenty or more major operators got much of their stumpage from Weyerhaeuser. It was 15 years before the first mill was built at Everett, and the company continued to supply other mills even after that, until, by the late '20's, Mr. Long had supervised the sale of some 27 billion feet of timber.

Meanwhile, the company had added to its manufacturing facilities with mills at Snoqualmie Falls, Longview and Klamath Falls, and a farsighted plan for further expansion and new purchases of timberlands were under way. In 1929, the company

acquired a majority interest in the White River Lumber Company operations and arranged consolidation of some six companies into what became Willapa Harbor Lumber Mills with mills at Raymond and South Bend, Washington. With patient skill, Mr. Long chose mill sites correlated to the company's vast timber resources; he laid out access routes, set up eastern distribution yards, organized steamship companies to insure the delivery of timber to these yards and urged entry into the pulp business. He was in the forefront of improvements in logging techniques; safety in the woods and mills and better conditions in the camps. His creed was that the wheels of industry must be kept turning and the men employed, and he stuck to this in the difficult post-war recession of 1920-21. Dependable operations became a company tenet even in the depths of the great depression.

Mr. Long recognized he had a big job and he loved it. Once he remarked: "The job was so alluring to me that I never allowed anything else to be considered by way of investment that would possibly call for one iota of my time or thought or effort, and instead of having regret I have gotten more out of the accomplishment than could be represented by dollars and cents."

Mr. Long was a staunch believer in what he called "free use of forest growth," reforestation and protection from fire. He emphasized, "Favorable economic conditions are the greatest of all factors in preventing forest waste."

On Saturday afternoon, August 2, 1930, while on a visit to Klamath Falls, Mr. Long was stricken with a heart attack. He was 76 years old.

Geo. S. Long was more than an expert lumberman. He was, to quote contemporaries, "A foremost leader and

counselor, broad and exact in knowledge, genius in foresight and organizing skill, patient and tolerant, easily approached, a businessman revered by his colleagues and respected by the public at large." His influence will permeate the industry as long as it exists.