



Donald Williams Stevenson

1912-1995

Lumberman Donald Williams Stevenson followed in the footsteps of his father, Donald M. Stevenson, as the co-owner of the Broughton Lumber Company of Willard and Underwood, Washington. An engineer by education and an athlete by nature, Donald had the intelligence and stamina to succeed in the woods and at the sawmill.

Born on May 27, 1912, in Salem, Oregon, Donald was the eldest of Donald McCornack Stevenson and Angeline Williams Stevenson's six children. Donald's parents were both Oregon natives who had graduated from the University of Oregon. Before raising her family, Angeline Stevenson taught English. D.M. Stevenson was a successful general contractor before entering the lumber industry.

In the early 1920s, the Stevenson family settled in Portland, in the Overlook neighborhood on the east side of the Willamette River. Once Donald's father became a partner in Broughton Lumber in 1923, he spent the week in Willard, Washington, returning to Portland on the weekends. The family also spent summer vacations and other holidays in Willard. At first, the family simply had a tent at

Willard, but when Donald was 14, his father decided to build a permanent house for the Stevenson family. Donald spent that summer working long hours, helping to build the house. As a teen, Donald also took on tasks in the woods and at the mill for the lumber company.

Donald attended Jefferson High School, and he was an outstanding competitive swimmer as a teenager and young man. After graduating from Jefferson in 1930, Donald enrolled at the University of Oregon, where he began his studies in engineering. He also became a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. Two years into his college career, the Engineering Department relocated to Oregon State Agricultural College (now Oregon State University) in Corvallis. A loyal alumnus of the University of Oregon, Donald's father had a strong antipathy to what he called "OAC" (for Oregon Agricultural College), so Donald completed his college education at Washington State University in Pullman. In 1934, he received his B.S. in Civil Engineering.

Donald swam competitively at both Oregon and Washington State. He won the Northwest Regionals to qualify for the

national Olympic trials; however, he recognized that he could not devote himself to his training and fulfill his responsibilities, so he reluctantly stopped competitive swimming. But later in life, he became a world-class Masters swimmer.

Fresh out of college, Donald worked surveying on Mt. Adams—a White Salmon, Washington, businessman was considering developing a mine there. The mine project did not go forward, and Donald went to work at Broughton Lumber's Willard mill, under his father. When Donald joined Broughton Lumber, he took on the responsibility of overseeing the company's timberland operations. He cruised for timber, negotiated purchases, and supervised logging.

Founded in 1923, the Broughton Lumber Company had an unusual configuration. Its facilities included an upper sawmill in Willard and a lower resaw and planing mill at Hood (part of the town of Underwood), next to the Columbia River. The two mills were connected by a nine-mile long lumber flume, which was the last of its kind in the U.S. when it ceased operations in 1986. D.M. Stevenson ran the operation at Willard, and Harold J. Broughton split his time between the company's Portland sales office and the Hood mill.

When the nation went to war after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Donald received his commission as a lieutenant junior grade in the U.S. Navy. His engineering expertise was greatly needed, and without any officers' training, Donald was directly assigned to the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco. At this enormous facility, encompassing hundreds of acres of San Francisco Bay waterfront on the southeast side of the city, Donald served for the duration of the war leading crews that mounted guns on ships. After the war, Donald returned to Broughton

Lumber, where he continued to oversee logging operations.

In 1947, Donald's sister Elinor married John McGuire, and her close friend from the U.S. Navy, Jean Wynkoop, traveled across the country to be the maid of honor. Both WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), Elinor and Jean had met at the officers' training school for women at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. Born on October 16, 1921, Jean was a native of Philadelphia who had graduated from what is now West Chester University. Her teacher training was put to good use for the Navy at Pensacola, Florida, where, as a commissioned navigator, she taught celestial navigation to naval aviators.

After the war, as a skilled mathematician, Jean completed calculations as part of the design for the rotor blades of an early twin-rotor helicopter developed by the then Piasecki Helicopter Corporation. This aircraft became today's Chinook helicopter, much used by industry and the armed services.

Donald and Jean met on the occasion of Elinor's marriage, and about two weeks later, he proposed. The two wed the following year in San Francisco on January 14. Jean had been accepted into Stanford Law School—the gender barrier had closed off opportunities for her to pursue engineering—but she decided to marry and raise a family instead. Jean joined Donald in Willard, a relatively rugged and isolated place in 1948, and set up household there. She recalled terrible winters in the first years of their marriage. “In January 1950, we were snowbound for two weeks. All the county and state equipment had broken down, so Donald had to clear roads with a company grader.”

Donald and Jean raised five children: Joan (b. November 11, 1948); Barbara (b. May 11, 1950); Scott (b. September 24, 1952);

Dwight (b. December 16, 1956); and Ellen (b. November 26, 1958). Though Donald worked long hours for Broughton Lumber, he was always a dedicated father. For many years, he went to the woods almost every day and usually took one of his children with him.

When Barbara was about four-years old and her older sister started school, she often accompanied her father on his regular outings to the woods. “I remember once standing beside Daddy, who was just looking out at the expanse of mountains. The mountains of trees rolled into the distance, every shade of green and fading to blue. He had a deep appreciation for what is beautiful, and right there as a young child, I developed that sense of beauty as well.”

Though Donald enjoyed the woods, the work was demanding. His eldest daughter Joan recalled that during fire season, he would be up with the logging crews at three or four o’clock in the morning. “The men would go out ‘hoot owling’”—an industry term for logging before dawn in the months when the use of power saws was restricted at mid-day to prevent fires—“and he would join them or see them off. He was humble in dress and demeanor, and didn’t act at all like a boss.”

Gene Farrell joined Broughton Lumber in 1960 to supervise the Willard mill, while Donald continued to lead timberland operations. By this time, the company had also hired a forester. Both Donald and Gene took on greater responsibilities as D.M. Stevenson reduced his involvement with the day-to-day operations of the business. Company founders Harold Broughton and D.M. Stevenson both died in May 1970, within a week of each other.

Gene remembered Donald as an “honest, reliable, thoughtful, and meticulous” man. “He was very much an engineer. He

would look at a problem from every angle and then make a decision that was efficient and saved the company money in the long run.”

Donald’s youngest daughter Ellen remembered her father to be very thoughtful and fair at home as well, encouraging sons and daughters alike “to use our intelligence and to have high aspirations. Perhaps it was the influence of such exceptional women in his life—his mother, his sisters, and my mother—that molded his thinking. We were all raised to believe we could accomplish anything, and I should not be afraid or limit myself just because I was a girl. This was still rare for men of his generation.”

Scott also valued his father’s “gentle spirit” and acceptance of his children’s individuality. “When I lived alone with him in Willard the summer I worked in the woods, I had very long hair. He consistently accepted my choices, saying he knew they were phases that I was going through.”

Though Donald’s time was dedicated primarily to his company and family, he also took on additional civic and professional duties. In the early 1970s, he worked on Washington Governor Dan Evans’ Alternatives for Washington Project, which required frequent trips to Issaquah for committee meetings. Donald joined a group of lumbermen on a People to People International mission to Russia during the height of the Cold War. He also served his community and industry by testifying as an expert before Congress on the importance of including protections for both nature and economic opportunity in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act.

During the late 1970s and 1980s, timber in U.S. National Forests became less available for commercial logging. This had a far-reaching impact on the lumber

industry. Broughton Lumber's equipment was designed primarily for cutting large timbers, and there was a dwindling supply of this precious raw material. Reluctantly, the decision was made to cease Broughton Lumber's mill activities at the end of 1986. To this day, the company still maintains several thousand acres of forestlands, which are harvested and replanted on a sustainable basis.

In 1966, the family moved to Portland, and Donald began to commute to Willard. Even before Broughton Lumber closed its mills, Donald gradually decreased his involvement with the day-to-day operations of the business. Once their children were grown, he and Jean began to travel extensively. For several years, they joined the Pacific Northwest Ski Association on its annual ski trip to Europe. The two also purchased a motor home and traveled all over the western U.S. and Canada.

While Donald and Jean knew how to enjoy life together, they also greatly valued education, which they saw as one of life's pleasures. Together, they established several scholarships to support students studying math, science, and education. At West Chester University, the Stevenson Prize is awarded annually to the outstanding graduating senior in the Department of Mathematics who is considering a career in pre-college teaching. Donald and Jean also endowed scholarships at the University of Oregon and Clark College in Vancouver, Washington.

Donald also took great pleasure in spending time with his grandchildren. Though he was generally a quiet man, he loved talking with and listening to children. He even coined a special word for the mysterious language of babies, "Yapahoopian."

In the 1970s, Donald also began swimming competitively again through the Multnomah Athletic Club (MAC) in Portland. He swam every day and eventually set world age-group records in a number of events. Even today, 24 of his club records still stand. For more than a decade and a half, swimming was one of his main passions. "Dad modeled the importance of hard work," recalled his son Dwight, "and that carried over to swimming. He wanted to be the best in everything. He worked hard at having fun too in his other passions—snow skiing and water skiing."

Near the end of his competitive swimming career, at a swim meet in Ellensburg, Washington, Donald had a heart attack while attempting to set yet another world record. He won his race—but did not set the world record—and was strong enough to drive himself to the hospital, but he never fully recovered from the incident. He later participated in a few more swim meets, but finally had to give up competing. He controlled his heart disease for many years through determination, diet, and exercise. He continued to swim a mile every day until about six months before his death. In order to keep active—and maintain his friendships at the MAC—he took to walking the club's indoor track every day when he could no longer swim.

Donald's heart disease grew worse, and he succumbed to congestive heart failure on June 8, 1995, just past his 83rd birthday. Donald was a quiet, principled man who was dedicated to work and family. He died quietly after surviving several days in the hospital—fighting long enough so that all his children could visit with him one last time.