



## *Rees Andrew Stevenson*

1924-

Following a family tradition, Rees Andrew Stevenson became a successful Northwest lumberman whose career runs from before World War II into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rees knows the timberlands of the Columbia Gorge exceptionally well, and as a nationally ranked skier, he came to know the Northwest's mountains as well.

Rees was born on September 30, 1924, in Portland, Oregon, the youngest of Angeline Williams Stevenson and Donald McCornack Stevenson's six children. Rees' name came from his mother's side of the family; his maternal grandfather, John Rees Williams, also bore this family name.

Donald Stevenson had been a successful general contractor for more than 15 years, but the year before Rees was born, he had entered a new line of business. In 1923, he had become an active partner in the newly formed Broughton Lumber Company of Underwood and Willard, Washington. Unknown to Donald Stevenson, he had launched a family tradition.

Rees' father spent weekdays at the Willard mill and weekends with his family in Portland. The family had settled in Portland in about 1920, in the Overlook neighborhood on the east side of the Willamette River. During the summer and holidays, the family made Willard a second home. At first, the Stevenson family camped out in a tent, but Angeline Stevenson demanded a real wood floor instead of a dirt floor once Rees was born. When Rees was still a toddler, Donald Stevenson, with the aid of his older sons, finally built a permanent house at Willard. Eighty years later, Donald's descendents still use the house as a vacation retreat.

Like his older brothers—all three of whom became lumbermen—Rees took on jobs around the mill. The Broughton Lumber Company had an unusual configuration. The rough sawmill in Willard was connected by a nine-mile long lumber flume to a refinishing mill in Hood (part of the town of Underwood), on the Columbia River. From his youngest years, Rees took an interest in the workings of the mill, the mill pond, and the flume.

Rees would have taken on greater duties at a younger age, as his brothers had, but in 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act placed new work restrictions on youth—even for family-owned businesses. Rees did have the opportunity to work as a whistle punk—the person who sounded a whistle for safety as logs were felled and skidded—but he could not be on the company payroll. When he was 16, he finally took his first official job at the mill as a truck driver.

Rees acquired a new interest in 1937, which he has pursued ever since. His brother Wally and sister Jean took him up to Mount Hood to ski. The threesome skied in the vicinity of the famous Work Projects Administration Timberline Lodge, which was under construction at the time. This outing was the start of a lifelong passion. That same year, Jean also introduced Rees to a young skier named Bill Healy. Rees and Bill started a long-term friendship and later teamed up to launch the Mt. Bachelor ski resort, which has become one of the Northwest's premier ski destinations.

Rees rapidly acquired expertise in both slalom and downhill racing. The Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland gave him an athletic membership so that he could represent the club in racing events. Rees also raced for Portland's Jefferson High School.

At Jefferson High, Rees added another interest when he became friends with 15-year old Eloise Mulhausen, who was born on August 1, 1925. Sixty-five years later, Rees fondly remembers when the two first met, by the steps of the school's center hall. Like Rees, Eloise had enjoyed sports since she was a youngster, especially skiing and tennis.

Rees graduated from high school in January 1943 and entered the University of Oregon, where he pledged Beta Theta Pi fraternity, which his father had helped found at U of O. In summer 1943, Rees enlisted in the U.S. Navy, which sent him to the University of Washington as part of the World War II V-12 program that provided college education to recruits. Rees was soon called up to active duty, which placed him on the U.S.S. *John Blish*, a National Geodetic Survey ship. This vessel played a critical role in the Pacific Theater, where it plotted the shoreline of islands slated for invasion. As a seaman first class, Rees was responsible for the accuracy of charts used by naval forces that invaded Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

After the war, Rees returned to the University of Washington to complete his college degree. He spent most weekends driving from Seattle to Portland in a military surplus jeep to court Eloise. She had attended the University of Oregon during the war, as well as working as a volunteer bus driver. After graduating from the University of Oregon in June 1946, Eloise taught history at Portland's Franklin High School. Rees and Eloise wed in Portland on August 6, 1947.

While Rees was completing his college education—and racing for the University of Washington ski team—he and Eloise welcomed their first child, Thomas (“Tom”) on October 16, 1948. After Rees received his B.A. in Economics, his young family moved to Willard and then White Salmon, Washington. Rees' older brothers, Wally and Bruce, along with partner Frank Daubenspeck, had started the SDS Lumber Company in nearby Bingen, Washington, in 1946. Rees' father Donald and oldest brother, also

named Donald, ran the Willard mill and logging operation of the Broughton Lumber Company. It made perfect sense for Rees to join the industry, though he needed to find an opportunity of his own.

Rees soon discovered that the owners of a mill in Husum, Washington, just north of White Salmon, wanted to sell. For the 1949 asking price of \$12,000, Rees was in business. He knew a good deal about operating a mill from his years spent around the Broughton sawmill. He also knew enough, as he put it, “to stand aside and let the mill’s experienced hands do their best work” without his interference. The Rees A. Lumber Company produced rough-cut lumber, which it sold to SDS and other customers.

Since the war’s end, Rees and Eloise continued to ski whenever they had the chance, and both raced. Rees’ skill on the slopes helped the University of Washington’s ski team win two collegiate national championships. He was also an alternate to be on the U.S. team at the 1948 and 1952 Winter Olympics. As Rees and Eloise’s family grew, they also placed their young children on skis. In addition to Tom, they had five children: Amy (b. October 1, 1950), Martha (b. September 16, 1952), John (b. April 27, 1954), Dean (b. May 8, 1956), and Angeline (b. May 1, 1963).

While winter recreation often took the Stevenson family to the mountains, they spent several memorable summer vacations in the 1950s and early 1960s cruising around Washington’s San Juan Islands and along the coastline of Alaska

and British Columbia in a 104-foot cabin cruiser, the *Black Prince*. The boat had originally been a wartime air-sea rescue boat, which Rees’ father purchased from military surplus. Rees described the boat “as filled to the gunnels” with his parents, siblings, children, nieces, and nephews.

Rees operated several other mills in the Columbia Gorge region in the 1950s through the 1980s. In 1962, in a joint venture with brothers Wally and Bruce, Rees bought the Paulson Lumber Mill, which became the Mt. Adams Timber Company. Located east of Bingen, the Mt. Adams’ mill specialized in processing cedar. Rees oversaw improvements and expansion of the operation, which ran until the mid-1980s. Like many companies in the industry, Mt. Adams ceased operations in the face of a dwindling supply of logs from public forests.

At about the same time, the Broughton Lumber Company ceased mill operations as well, but Rees took on management of Broughton’s timberlands. Today, he still serves as president of Broughton, whose 14,000 acres produces a sustainable annual yield of 4 million feet of timber. Rees’ son John is Broughton’s forester, handling timber permits, reforestation, log sales, and other duties.

Though Rees still stays involved in the lumber industry, he never forgets to enjoy life. Now in their 80s, Rees and Eloise continue to downhill ski, with Rees yelling after his wife, “Slow down, Eloise.” His love for the outdoors also translates into his continuing support for sustainable forestry practices.

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