



Loran L. Stewart

1911 -

He has many names. Most call him Stub. Some call him Mr. Stewart. A few call him Loran. By whatever name he's referred, he's known to be Mr. Oregon State Parks, the man who has guided, advocated for and sustained the magnificent state park system that graces Oregon. There is much more to this living legend than Oregon State Parks, however. Stub Stewart's firm hand has guided governments, charitable organizations, corporations, trade organizations and myriad institutions in Oregon and beyond. He is more than a man who has distinguished himself as an Oregon leader. He is a unique Oregon product.

Stub Stewart is a natural leader because of his intelligence, work ethic and commitment to the ideals inherited from generations before him. His grandfathers, strong Oregon pioneers, instilled in Stub the virtues of hard work and economy. His father's wisdom and strength profoundly influenced Stub's development. The genetic imprint of these strong Oregonians who lived, worked and played hard are manifested in the man who has eclipsed previous generations.

Loran LaSells Stewart was born in 1911 in Cottage Grove, Oregon, the first child of LaSells and Jessie Stewart. Never to be tall, he acquired the nickname "Stub" early in his wanderings through his father's logging camps. The name stuck for a lifetime and is familiarly used by those who hold great affection for Stub, by those who know him only slightly and by those who wish to know this legendary man.

A brother and sister followed Stub in the Stewart household and together the children enjoyed the Oregon outdoors with a sense of exploration and adventure. Under the nurturing eye of their mother, camping, firearms and horses were part of expeditions into the Bohemia Mountain country and Oregon's great outdoors.

Stub's father served in France during World War I. Upon returning from the war he became a partner in the Bohemia Lumber Company, a three-year old operation born in the mountain country east of Cottage Grove. Through his teen years Stub worked for his father's company in the mill operations and in the woods. Mill and logging crews did the boss' son no favors and Stub learned the workings of the company through hard wrought experience.

Upon graduating high school his parents insisted that, unlike previous generations, Stub would attend college. Then known as Oregon State Agricultural College, now Oregon State University, the institution with arguably the best forestry school in America attracted Stub. He emerged in 1932 with a degree in logging engineering. In the bleakness of depression era Oregon jobs were few. He worked for a year as a tutor for the young grandson of a prominent Oregon author, Elizabeth Lambert Wood.

When a job opportunity came with the U. S. Forest Service, Stub launched his career with distinction. He engineered a particularly difficult road crossing of a section in the Cascade Range. Over the next nine years he moved through a succession of Forest Service assignments in Oregon. Intelligent, knowledgeable, often brash, Stub's penchant for direct action and speaking his mind struck sparks in the bureaucratic environment of government service. To this day Stub remarks that he might have been better off to have heeded his father's admonition, "you'll never learn anything with your mouth open." He was no career bureaucrat.

In 1942, the U. S. Army claimed Stub for service in World War II. His education and his experience as a tutor cast him as an instructor in field artillery. He spent 23 months in China training America's allies there. At war's end Stub left the army as a

Lieutenant Colonel.

He returned briefly to the employment of the U.S. Forest Service, restlessly moved into private industry and then, upon learning that his father's Bohemia Lumber Company was for sale, chose to make a play for the company. Partnering with his brother Faye and his brother-in-law Larry Chapman, Stub persuaded his father to sell the run-down sawmill with its questionable timber supply to the three. LaSells Stewart reluctantly made the sale, shaking his head and exclaiming, "those damn kids!" During the next 45 years, first with Stub as the innovative president and later the board chairman, the company grew to become Bohemia, Inc., a publicly held company with 2,700 employees and operations ranging from British Columbia to central California.

From the beginning the company displayed a penchant for innovation and diversification. Stub acquired a reputation for being a creative leader whose thinking was not limited by traditional timber industry ideas. Soon Bohemia branched into the plywood business, introduced new designs for logging equipment, was a pioneer in particleboard manufacture and, by 1960, was steadily acquiring mills and timberland.

Under Stub's guidance Bohemia embraced maximum resource utilization and inventive logging operations. The company pioneered efforts to route sawmill and veneer plant waste back into production. For years, the company was fascinated with possibilities of producing usable products from bark, historically a waste product. Ultimately, Bohemia embraced a technology to extract industrial grade wax from bark and operated an award-winning plant that operated for a decade and achieved numerous environmental awards.

Always innovative, Stub led Bohemia in diverse directions. The company added value to its own basic products by producing manufactured homes. The company fascinated the world's forest community with its efforts to log with helium filled balloons, lifting logs from difficult and fragile logging sites. Stub's business vision extended beyond the forest. Bohemia operated a tourist railroad, a plastics plant, a restaurant in Hawaii, a campground on the Oregon coast, a country club, housing development projects and a marine construction company.

If Stub Stewart had distinguished himself only as Bohemia's leader, the accomplishment would have been extraordinary. He did much more, however. His civic life, if anything, was more diverse and active than his business life. As a member of the Federal Reserve Board of San Francisco, he contributed to the development of national economic policy. Representing broad interests, he was a principal author of a landmark settlement that ended the worst timber industry strike of the century. As a member of Oregon's Board of Higher Education during the tempestuous Vietnam era, he helped save a university system from those who would have dismantled it. As a loyal alumnus of Oregon State University, he generously supported the efforts of the university and the school of forestry. As a forest products industry executive he served as chairman of the National Forest Products Association. As a conservationist, he served as Chief White Tail of the Order of the Antelope, a group dedicated to the restoration and protection of habitat on Oregon's Hart Mountain National Antelope Range.

Stub served for a time in the Oregon House of Representatives, along with his friend Mark O. Hatfield. To this day, Hatfield comments, "Stub sat a little behind me and considerably to my right!" Hatfield, who would go on to become governor and

Oregon's senior senator, was just one of the governors and senators with whom Stub has been on a first name basis throughout his lifetime.

Stub's legacies are numerous but perhaps none is more significant than the benefits that accrued to the Oregon State Park system and Oregon's citizens during his quarter century of leadership. He proudly decorates his wall with a lengthy list of state parks that were acquired or established during his tenure. There are dozens. Always an advocate for making Oregon's special places available for Oregon's citizens, Stub is broadly credited as the key individual who preserved public access to Oregon's beaches while keeping the beaches in public ownership. Stub's passion for Oregon State Parks is not limited to public advocacy. Quietly he has funded programs that would not otherwise have started and thrived with public funding alone.

Over a lifetime Stub has been tapped for scores of federal, state and local committees, boards, commissions and task forces, often at times of high crisis or great civic need. Always, he has favored definitive action over time-wasting debate. Again and again, his colleagues and contemporaries honored Stub for unstinting service. In response to those honors, Stub always credited his partners in Bohemia Lumber Company, brother Faye and brother-in-law Larry Chapman, for keeping the home fires burning while Stub directed his attention to broader interests.

As chairman of the Western Forestry Center in 1986, Stub partnered with Harry A. Merlo in broadening the organization's name and mission to become the World Forestry Center. In 1999, Stub was presented the Harry A. Merlo Award for a lifetime commitment to producing quality, affordable building products on a sustainable basis. Presented by the World Forestry Center, the Merlo Award is one of many that grace Stub's office, home and mountain cabin. He has been named first citizen of his hometown, Cottage Grove, and of Eugene where Bohemia was based in its later years. More than one editorial writer has observed that if a similar State of Oregon award existed, Stub would be the first to receive it, an observation that underscored by the fact that only two Oregonians have ever received distinguished service awards from both of Oregon's major universities. Stub was one of them. In any discussion of statesmen in Oregon, Stub's name is at the top of the list.

Stub's Bohemia Inc. operated until 1991 when shrinking federal timber supplies led to the sale of the corporation to Willamette Industries. Stub has continued his active civic life, serving often as confidant and advisor to leaders in his industry and state. The governor's door is always open to Stub and he regularly calls with only Oregon's interests in mind.

Appreciably young and intellectually active at age 92, Stub's work is far from finished in Oregon. A recent accomplishment is the placement of a tall flagpole on a prominent point in Eugene where political pressures caused the removal of a cross. Now, Stub's stately flag, permanently lighted, presides over Eugene. But he has Oregon's larger interests at heart. He's currently advocating for and helping to fund necessary tax reform that will assure a better Oregon.

Stub Stewart's life story is far from complete and Oregon will continue to benefit from his firm and selfless vision for his beloved state.

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