



## *Harry E. Morgan*

1889-1961

Harry Ethan Morgan was born September 2, 1889 in Lynden, Washington to George William and Mary Elizabeth “Molly” Morgan. He was eldest son and second eldest of nine children.

Several months after Morgan’s birth, his family moved to Atlanta, Georgia. There, his father entered the ministry, which required frequent family moves to small towns throughout the state. Despite the regular uprootings, Morgan early on displayed the ambition and leadership abilities for which he became known. At age 12 he took up a paper route and made it a regular business, handling the collections himself and organizing other boys his age for deliveries. More notably, it was then that Morgan developed a passion for team sports. He began organizing baseball games and managed the team on which he and his brothers played. Encouraged by a mild Georgia climate, the teams played nearly year-round.

Morgan attended and completed grade school in the South. Shortly afterward, however, his family returned to Washington State and settled in Whatcom, now Bellingham. There, bolstered by his competitive drive, Morgan excelled in high school sports. However, the financial burdens of a large family proved too demanding and Morgan left school during his sophomore year to help support his family.

But his education did not lag. In later years, his brother Paul recalled that Morgan was intelligent, ambitious and a voracious reader. In adulthood, Morgan displayed a notable understanding of history, possessed a remarkable memory, and readily debated issues of national and international concern.

At age 16, Morgan found work as a timekeeper with a Bellingham lumber mill, starting a career that would last a lifetime.

In 1911, while working in Portland, Oregon, Morgan met and married Ethel Matheson. The newlywed couple moved to Astoria, Oregon, where Morgan took a position as timekeeper for Hammond Lumber Co. In time, Morgan's family grew to include a daughter, Dorothy, born in 1913, and a son, Harry, Jr., born in 1921. While in Astoria, Morgan in quick succession worked his way through various production jobs including yard foreman, mill foreman, and, at age 28, assistant plant superintendent. In 1920, Morgan became plant superintendent of Hammond Lumber Co.'s operation in Mill City, Oregon. There he was in charge of the mill and office personnel.

On the mechanical end, Morgan was credited with a number of advances in lumber manufacture. He devised a setting ring for sawmill carriages, which allowed for improved accuracy in headrig settings. The element was soon employed by nearly all sawmill carriage manufacturers. In addition, he furthered the use of band-type edgers. These helped increase production and made a superior product.

Morgan also pioneered eased edges or the slight rounding on high-grade dimension lumber. The technique, which ensures safe lumber handling, has since become a universal practice in lumber manufacture. And, for the automated lumber stackers, Morgan fashioned a sticker dropping device, for which he held a patent. Furthermore, he constantly pursued the development of wood by-products and specialty items such as edge-glued and end-glued lumber. Yet above all else, Morgan was "more interested in the development of the planing mill than any other particular part of the plant," as he noted in a speech to the Weyerhaeuser Club in January 1934.

Beyond the mechanics of production, however, Morgan had an intuitive sense of human nature. He had a genuine concern for his employees, a trait that earned him a high degree of trust.

By 1922 he moved his family to the Oregon coastal town of Garibaldi where he became general manager of the Whitney Lumber Company's mill and woods operations. Five years later, in 1927, Morgan joined Weyerhaeuser Timber Company and spent four months at the company's Snoqualmie Falls division. Later that year he was named assistant manager to the Longview Branch, which was then still under construction. In 1939, Morgan was named manager of all Longview forest products operations, a position he held for the next 15 years. At the time, Longview was the largest forest products operation in the world.

It was during his years with Weyerhaeuser that Morgan gained universal respect throughout the industry. He mastered both the technical side of production and the human side of working with people.

"He was the happiest man in the world when he was at the mill and when everything was going just perfect; you couldn't have found a happier man." said Sam Whyte, a former Weyerhaeuser employee. "And he wasn't a stranger to the people. When he'd go out there and walk down to the green chain, or anywhere, he'd call them by name and talk to them. They appreciated that."

He was adept at sizing the capabilities of his men and matched them exactly to the most appropriate task. Morgan managed his staff firmly, but fairly and often backed individuals on difficult decisions. He

fostered a rapport and high morale among his supervisory staff by inviting them for long weekends at his summer home. He also did so because he genuinely savored their companionship. Such companionship, too, was rooted in a keen sense of humor. Morgan continually was quick with a story or joke and would often instigate a harmless prank among his unsuspecting staff.

In addition, Morgan encouraged training programs for his personnel and willingly spent time with his younger men, advising, encouraging, and developing leadership qualities. He took particular pride in developing a first-of-its-kind lumber manufacturing class for Weyerhaeuser. The course, held twice annually, soon became the standard for aspiring Weyerhaeuser employees in both the sawmill and sales.

Indeed, Morgan's managerial talents were continued through the men he had hired and trained. Several of them later excelled in their own right as executives and supervisors within the Weyerhaeuser Company and with other firms throughout the industry.

Eventually, Morgan's combined superior production and managerial skills gained him national recognition. In 1943, his lumber crew was awarded an Army-Navy "E" Award for outstanding production. It was the first time ever that a Pacific Northwest lumber operation had received such recognition. The Longview Branch in 1944 received a second Army-Navy "E" Award. Furthermore, in October 1948 *Life* magazine named Morgan as one of the 12 top "production geniuses of the U.S. industry."

Accomplishment also ran deeply through Morgan's immediate family ties. Of his five brothers, four became career lumbermen,

three of whom excelled in top managerial and sales positions with lumber firms throughout the Pacific Northwest. His brother Tom owned the Columbia Lumber Co. in Alaska, George became an accomplished salesman for Weyerhaeuser, and Paul rose to mill manager for Willamette Industries' Dallas, Oregon plant. Indeed, Morgan's son Harry, Jr. recounted that family gatherings became an environment rich in lumber and sawmilling talk.

Despite the increasing recognition and ever pressing demands of his career, Morgan actively sought involvement with community events and organizations. He served on several boards and was also president of the YMCA, Rotary Club, and Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau (PLIB). In addition to recognizing his ongoing work and interest in highway beautification, the Weyerhaeuser Company renamed the first of five parks on the Spirit Lake Highway the "Harry E. Morgan Park." And, a highway bridge over the Cowlitz River was given his name by the State of Washington.

In 1954, Harry Morgan retired from Weyerhaeuser Company after 27 years of service. In that same year, he was appointed to the Washington State Highway Commission and served with distinction until 1961.