



Frederick King Weyerhaeuser

1895-1978

Frederick King Weyerhaeuser was a man whose heritage shaped not only his own life, but the direction of a family company whose history spans two centuries and a myriad of change in the American forest products industry.

His father and his grandfather, a founder of what is now an international company, passed on to Weyerhaeuser the reins of responsibility for ushering the enterprise into a more modern day.

Weyerhaeuser began his life's work as a salesman of wood products, but before his death in September 1978, at the age of 83, he had served several years as president and chairman of the board of Weyerhaeuser Company. His years of tenure were an era of expansion, growth, and new discovery which resulted.

With his brother, J. Philip Weyerhaeuser, Jr., he began in the late 1930's to operate the company's forests on a perpetually sustainable basis, a revolutionary concept in those days that was later known as "tree farming." In addition to his corporate duties, F.K. Weyerhaeuser was a forest historian, a youth club director, a supporter of the arts and a political activist. His interest in the woods went beyond corporate goals. He was responsible for creating a number of public education fire prevention associations and helped integrate them with the Forest Service's popular "Smokey the Bear" campaign. In a day when wildfire was a major threat to timber, fire prevention was an important goal.

The son of John Philip and Nellie Anderson Weyerhaeuser, Frederick King Weyerhaeuser was born in 1895 in Rock Island, Illinois. He was the first grandson of Frederick Weyerhaeuser, a founder of

the company and a leading figure in the forest products industry. After being graduated from Yale University in 1917, he enlisted in the Army, becoming a bomber pilot and a First Lieutenant. He served on the Italian front with the Italian Air Force from September 1917 until the end of the war.

Following his discharge from the Army in 1919, Weyerhaeuser went to work for Potlatch Lumber Company at Pullman, Washington. A year later he joined Weyerhaeuser Sales Company of Spokane, Washington. The company sold products from a number of regional wood producing outlets. In 1924 he became manager of the company's Minneapolis office.

That begun a long residency in neighboring St. Paul, Minnesota. Through his wife, the former Vivian O'Gara, he became interested in and helped to support the Red Cross, Minnesota Historical Society, and the Metropolitan Opera Council. The couple also raised two daughters, Vivian O'Gara Weyerhaeuser (Mrs. Frank N. Piasecki) and Lynn O'Gara Weyerhaeuser (Mrs. Stanley R. Day).

In 1929 Weyerhaeuser became president of the Weyerhaeuser Sales Company. He was responsible for the operation of the company for more than 30 years until it became part of Weyerhaeuser Company in a merger completed in 1959. While he was busy operating the sales and marketing arm of the family company, his younger brother, Phil, had become executive vice president of what was then Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, a major wood products supplier. Together, the two brothers had a substantial impact on introducing new practices to the wood products industry.

Phil Weyerhaeuser became a chief proponent of forest renewal and of new

technological advancements to prevent waste and develop new products. F.K. Weyerhaeuser was instrumental in selling the new concepts to customers and the industry as a whole.

During the first stages of the "tree farm" innovation, Weyerhaeuser was a director of the National Lumber Manufacturers Association and took an active part in kicking off the program in 1941. He served on a committee that operated the program when it became a responsibility of the American Forest Products Institute.

One of Weyerhaeuser's fondest interests was the history of the forest products industry and the leaders who shaped it. Fearful that the records of these men and their deeds might go unnoticed or, worse yet, be mislaid, he was a considerable force in founding in 1946 what became the Forest History Society. A long-time member of the society, a director for 23 years, and a Society Fellow, he supported research and the writing of the history of the conservation movement and industry giants. He wanted others to share in the history of his profession. As he said in a 1951 speech:

"The story of trees and men is romantic... a story of men meeting the challenge of floods, snows, and droughts; of driving logs down swollen rivers; and of battling forest fires. I hope that I can bring you a little of the aroma of Wisconsin pines, a vision of great horse-drawn sleighs piled high with logs traveling the iced roads of northern Minnesota, the faint far cry of 'Timber' on the slopes of some deep canyon in the Cascades, the chug of a steam skidder, and a picture of the snowy peak of Mount St. Helens towering above the heavily forested foothills against the deep blue of the western sky."

The story may have been a romantic one, but in the day-to-day affairs of the industry, events often were not so kind. In December, 1956, Phil Weyerhaeuser died suddenly after serving as president and chief executive officer of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company for nine years.

It was a critical time for the rapidly-growing company. F.K. Weyerhaeuser had become a director of the company in 1946 and was elected chairman of the board in 1955. He remained president of the sales company, which was soon to be incorporated as part of the long-planned merger. Weyerhaeuser Company had expanded its operations to include production and sale of plywood, hardboard, particleboard, pulp, lineboard, and specialty wood products. It had purchased timber lands in the south in anticipation of expanding its operation.

It was also a critical time for F.K. Weyerhaeuser – he was only three years from retirement age. The board of directors turned to him for leadership and he responded. He resigned as board chairman, restructured his sales company and made it the marketing division of Weyerhaeuser, then moved his home from St. Paul to company headquarters in Tacoma, Washington. For the next three years as president and chief executive officer, he guided the expansion in the south and began to explore the international market.

He continued to serve as one of the industry's chief spokesmen on forestry and conservation matters, becoming chairman of the Committee for the Forestry School of the Yale University Council and a member of the Conservation Foundation.

Weyerhaeuser retired from the presidency in 1960 and returned to St. Paul. He became chairman of the Board of Directors

once more and continued actively in the company until 1966 when he reached the age of 71. That year he received the Franciscan award for a career of “outstanding service in the field of conservation.”

It was one of many awards he was to receive during a lifetime of public involvement and philanthropy. He was a national director of the Boys Clubs of America and a director of the Big Brothers of greater St. Paul. That organization, in 1972, gave him its Distinguished Service Award. He was the recipient of the National Big Brother of the Year Award for 1966 for his “deep interest in helping boys and fostering of the belief that business executives have a responsibility to serve humanity as an inseparable part of their private corporate interest.”

During his lifetime, Weyerhaeuser's influence and service spread to many interests. He helped found one of the first business political action committees in the 1930's. He later served as a trustee of the Robert A. Taft Institute of Government and as a member of its advisory committee. While his professional career began its most productive years, he was elected president of two affiliates, General Timber Service, Inc. and Allied Building Credits, Inc. He was a trustee of MacAlister College in St. Paul and served as a director of the First National Bank of St. Paul, The First Trust Company of St. Paul, the Great Northern Railway Company, and the Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Co.

Following his death, the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation announced the endowment of a chair for public policy research at the American Enterprise Institute. The one million dollar grant was made without restriction as to the area of research to be supported.

The gift will aid research in any number of social, governmental, and scientific areas, an idea that Weyerhaeuser, a lover of history and a realist about the future, would no doubt approve. As a man who told colleagues that the past holds the key to the mysteries of the future, Frederick King Weyerhaeuser said in 1960:

“The greatest dividend...received from research is the realization of how little we really know and how much we have to learn.”