



J.P. Weyerhaeuser, Jr.

1899-1956

During a career that spanned nearly four decades, John Philip Weyerhaeuser, Jr. was one of the strongest leaders of a dual revolution within the forest products industry.

One part of the revolution occurred in forest practices, as the industry turned from the timber-cutting orientation of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the timber-growing, sustained yield orientation of modern times.

The other phase of the revolution occurred in manufacturing: From the narrow, single-product orientation of the old-line pulp or lumber companies, the industry began turning to the concept of integrated manufacturing, geared to utilizing as much wood fiber as possible from each tree that is cut.

In part, this dual revolution was a product of society's demands on the nation's forestland and timber resources. But to take form, this revolution

depended on farsighted leadership within the industry.

In his calm, pragmatic way, "Phil" Weyerhaeuser was one of the most farsighted leaders. Phil was born in Rock Island, Illinois on January 18, 1899 – one year to the day before his grandfather, Frederick Weyerhaeuser, was to found Weyerhaeuser Timber Company of Tacoma, Washington. By the time Phil was a teenager, his family had moved to Tacoma, where his father, John P. Weyerhaeuser, served as president of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company from 1914 to 1928.

After attending the Hill School, Phil graduated from Yale University in 1920. True to family tradition, he went immediately to work in the lumber industry.

Despite his youth, he was already well-schooled in many phases of the industry, thanks to a family

practice of training successive generations to go into the business. While in school, Phil and his older brother Frederick had spent much of their summers working at various jobs in the woods or mills where their father had thought they would learn something about the industry.

After college, for his first full-time job, Phil went to the Edward Rutledge Timber Company in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Phil and Frederick, along with other members of the third generation of Weyerhaeuser-associated families, continued to receive training in the business. George S. Long, the extremely knowledgeable first general manager of Weyerhaeuser Timber, trained them. They studied timber cruising, log transportation, the shingle business, and other phases of the timber industry.

On October 25, 1921, Phil married Helen Hunt Walker of Seattle, then returned to Idaho, where he became sales manager of Rutledge. In 1925, Phil became general manager of Clearwater Timber Company. His first task was to supervise construction of Clearwater's first sawmill in Lewiston, Idaho.

It was quite a task. The mill at Lewiston was the largest pine sawmill in the world at the time. Its construction was complicated by many technical problems in design and planning.

By the time construction was completed, and logging operations to feed the mill had begun, Phil Weyerhaeuser had emerged as a man of recognized executive ability. Not yet thirty, he had already developed the leadership style that was to make him a guiding force in the forest products industry.

He was not the kind of "logging boss" who shouted commands, a contemporary recalled later. Instead, he would have ideas, then lead others to share them through quiet suggestions and casual hints.

Within four years under Phil's leadership, Clearwater Timber Company was moving ahead in forestry as well as sawmilling. Phil received many of his ideas about logging and forestry from his association with the forestry consulting firm of Mason and Stevens. David T. Mason, a distinguished professor at the University of

California and leading expert in Western forestry, contributed many ideas that were of great help.

In 1929, Clearwater applied for enough national timber cutting rights to round out its own holdings into a cooperative, sustained-yield unit producing about 200,000,000 board feet yearly. It was the first major program of selective logging on private land in the inland forests – and the first program of forest management for timber as a crop.

This was a new concept for the timber industry – to combine conservation and utilization in a way that made economic sense. Phil Weyerhaeuser explained that it began at Clearwater because "we thought we ought to prove out our methods, at least as far as we could, while our operation was still fairly new."

What he did not say was that the new method was inaugurated at Clearwater in part because of his own willingness to try something new – and his own vision of timber as something more than a resource to be "mined."

The early years with Clearwater became more difficult as the depression deepened. Nonetheless, Clearwater's experience with selective logging led the Weyerhaeuser-associated companies in the Inland Empire to expand their forest management projects. This was an important factor behind the 1931 merger of the Clearwater, Potlatch, and Edward Rutledge companies into Potlatch Forests, Inc. As president now of the combined operation, Phil Weyerhaeuser could develop the forestry methods started by Clearwater Timber – with the result that Potlatch Forests soon offered one of the best examples of forestry in the West.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Phil and his brother Frederick began trying to sell the concept of sustained-yield to the management of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company itself. In the Douglas-fir country, of course, it would be based on clearcutting, since Douglas-fir occurred naturally in even-aged stands, and required direct sunlight for maximum growth.

At first, the management atmosphere at Weyerhaeuser Timber Company was not at all sympathetic to sustained-yield forest management. However, the Weyerhaeuser policy of retaining cutover lands gave the two brothers some

foundation for their argument, and by 1931 the Timber Company began a small trial study of forest management near Longview, Washington.

In 1933, Phil moved to Weyerhaeuser Timber Company as executive vice president – in effect, chief operating officer – a post he held until assuming the presidency itself in 1947. Phil stayed with Weyerhaeuser Timber Company until his death in 1956, and it was during these 23 years that the concepts of sustained-yield and maximum utilization became firmly a part of company policy – and slowly began to take hold throughout the industry.

The year after his arrival in Tacoma, Phil inaugurated the company's first sustained-yield program under Article X of the Lumber Code, established under the National Industrial Recovery Act. The program covered the Longview unit, spanning 481,455 acres in five counties, of which 72 percent was owned by Weyerhaeuser. The cut was to be limited to 325 million feet annually, the equivalent of growth based on the 100-year harvest cycle used at that time. Even after the Recovery Act as declared unconstitutional, as the depression eased, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company retained general compliance with the sustained-yield emphasis of Article X.

1934 also saw the beginning of construction of a sulfite pulp mill at the Timber Company's sawmill complex in Everett. This project, strongly endorsed by Phil Weyerhaeuser, was a major step in timber utilization, because it provided an economic use for the large volumes of hemlock in the Puget Sound region, which had historically been ignored as a "weed species."

From the mid-1930s on, Phil Weyerhaeuser's influence can be seen in a number of major developments that have since become benchmarks for the forest products industry:

By 1937, the Timber Company had adopted a complete forest management policy on all its lands. A year later, it began to hand-plant seedlings on cutover lands where the natural seed source had been destroyed.

In 1941, Phil Weyerhaeuser helped dedicate his company's Clemons Tree Farm – the nation's first

tree farm managed to grow wood as a crop forever, and the prototype of an industry-wide movement that now covers thousands of forest "plantations."

One year later, again under Phil's leadership, the company formed two important research units: one in forestry (the industry's first), and another in manufacturing and product development. The former would eventually develop High Yield Forestry, an intensive agricultural approach to tree growth that has shortened growth cycles to 30-50 years. From the latter would come such manufacturing innovations as making bleached Kraft paper from Douglas-fir sawmill residues (developed in 1948).

And finally, throughout his career, Phil continued to champion intensive utilization of each log to stretch the forest resource. Under his guidance, more and more usable wood flowed to mills from each harvest acre, and more of each log found a profitable end use. The company built mills and developed markets for plywood, hardboard, particleboard, pulp, Pres-To-Logs, bark products, and a host of other materials – many of them made from the slash, chunks, mill trimmings and sawdust that had always been burned as waste. Nor did Phil Weyerhaeuser overlook the company's responsibility to the people and communities around it. Under his guidance, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company opened its lands to hunting, fishing, and other recreation; developed a system of company-maintained parks on its tree farms; established a Foundation to support scholarship programs, educational workshops and community projects; and, in 1945, inaugurated a retirement plan for salaried employees.

Through all of these activities, and more, Phil Weyerhaeuser pulled together a collection of forestlands and manufacturing facilities into a mature, integrated corporation, capable of flowing each piece of wood to its highest and best market use, with a minimum of waste and maximum assurance of future timber supply.

Between 1934 and 1956, through expansion, consolidation and acquisition, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company's annual sales rose from \$21.8 million to \$324 million. Its land holdings nearly doubled, from approximately 1.5 million acres to 2.8 million acres – including some timberlands in

the South. The company built or acquired some three dozen manufacturing plants, and took major steps into paper and packaging.

Yet, under Phil Weyerhaeuser's leadership, the company was always responsive to more than just current dictates of its business. Phil also kept his eye on the company's future needs – and society's. Using the same elements of management style that had developed at Clearwater – a foresighted outlook and calm, persuasive manner – Phil helped guide the forest products industry onto the path that still leads from the exploitation of the past to the increasingly efficient, scientific resource management of today and the future.

On the occasion of Phil Weyerhaeuser's untimely death from leukemia in 1956, the board of directors of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company summed up his contributions this way:

“Phil has been, and rightly, characterized as a business statesman.”

“His leadership has resulted in improved forest practices throughout the industry.”

“His insistence on intensive utilization has created values where they did not exist before.”

“The benefits of all of these developments have inured to the industry and to the whole economy of the country.”

It was a fitting statement about a giant of the forest products industry.