



Leo Anthony Isaac

1892-1970

Leo Anthony Isaac, internationally recognized authority on Douglas fir silviculture, was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, September 12, 1892.

A keen observer, personable, enthusiastic and friendly, he effectively advanced the science and the practice of forestry in the Douglas fir region and far beyond.

Isaac learned to love the forest in his native Wisconsin. Here also, he decided to study and to understand the forest; he attended the University of Minnesota, and was awarded the Bachelor of Science in Forestry degree in 1920. His forestry studies were interrupted by World War I when he served, during 1918, in the U.S. Air Force at Fort Vancouver, Washington.

Following this introduction to the Northwest, Leo decided to base his career there. He joined the U.S. Forest Service as Junior Forester on the Chelan National Forest in 1920, where he served for four years in the National Forest Administration.

In 1924 his talents in developing new knowledge were recognized by his transfer to the Forest Service Research Branch, which later became the Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station. Isaac spent his next 32 years in Forest Service research, conducting studies, analyzing and reporting results. During that time, he authored more than 50 publications, which are widely accepted as basic guides in regeneration management of Douglas fir.

In 1946, Isaac was awarded the Agnes Healy Anderson fellowship at the University of Washington. At that time he wrote "Better Douglas Fir Forests from Better Seed," a bulletin summarizing knowledge gained from several decades of heredity investigations in the Forest Service.

In 1951, Leo received the Outstanding Achievement in Silviculture Award at the 100th anniversary of the University of Minnesota. This award is reserved for alumni who have attained distinction in their field of work.

The following year Isaac was presented with the Western Forestry and Conservation Association Award for outstanding achievement in the field of forestry.

In 1953, at the request and expense of the West German Government, he attended the Forestry Congress of Western European countries as advisor on reforestation of European Forests. The same year he was elected a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters, and received the Nash Motors "Award for Exceptional Services to the Cause of Conservation."

In 1954, Isaac received the Superior Service Award of the U.S. Department of Agriculture "for research that has gained for him worldwide recognition as the outstanding authority on Douglas fir silviculture."

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Weyerhaeuser Company honored pioneers in forestry in the Northwest by commissioning artist Fred Ludekens to paint portraits of each. Leo Isaac was so recognized, again as "world authority on Douglas fir silviculture."

In 1956, he received the Society of American Forests "Award for Outstanding Achievement in Biological Research of Benefit to Forestry." Also in 1956, following retirement from the U.S. Forest Service, Isaac accepted a 2 ½ -year assignment in Turkey with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Here he advised the Turkish Government on all phases of planting trees, summarizing his recommendations in a comprehensive report.

Following his service Isaac traveled through Western Europe on a special tree seed-use assignment. On his return to the U.S. he was named visiting professor at Oregon State University.

Isaac's important publications also include the U.S. Department of Agriculture bulleting, "Factors Affecting Establishment of Douglas Fir Seedlings," and a booklet published by the Charles Lathrop Pack Forestry Foundation, "Reproductive Habits of Douglas Fir," and a FAO Report No. 932, to the Government of Turkey on Reforestation." In collaboration with pathologist, Dr. Ernest Wright, Isaac co-authored "Decay Following Logging Injury to Western Hemlock, Sitka Spruce and True Firs."

In 1964, Isaac became the first Executive Secretary of the joint offices of the Columbia River and Puget Sound Sections of the Society of American Foresters and Editor of the periodical "Western Forester." He served in these two key assignments in his profession for the next four years. Leo was also a member of the Ecological Society of America, Northwest Scientific Association, Oregon Academy of Science and of Xi Sigma Phi honorary forestry; Sigma Xi, honorary research and of Phi Sigma honorary biological society.

Leo Isaac was a sensitive, thoughtful man. He was at ease with children, with his peers, with everyone he met, because he liked them. He knew and valued the forest, not only as the source of wood products and employment for mankind, but also for its great variety of wildlife, inspiration and beauty. He was a skillful woodman, hunter and angler, and he generously taught others about these important aesthetic and recreational values of the forest, too. He accumulated a lifetime of fascinating experiences relating to both work and play in the forest. In addition, under favorable conditions, he related these with exceptional humor.

Leo Anthony Isaac applied his many talents to the development of knowledge about trees and forests – especially the Douglas fir forest. He communicated his findings generously and effectively – orally, by demonstrations in the forests, and in his publications for the written record. Thanks to his devoted efforts, broad expanses of growing forests across the land are far more productive than they otherwise would have been. Moreover, the lives of those who knew him, and many who did not, were inspired and enriched by his accomplishments.

Leo Anthony Isaac died in 1970 at Portland, Oregon.