

On October 14, 2001 a tree planting ceremony was held in memory of Bob Wood, a very well known and respected British Columbia forester. It was sponsored by the Tree Canada Foundation, the Town of Ladysmith, BC Hydro, and Weldwood of Canada. Born in Ladysmith, BC in 1931, Bob made a profound contribution to forestry in Canada. The address below was adapted from the presentation made by his daughter Tina Oliver on behalf of her "Uncle Jack" (John Spence Wood) during the ceremony.

ROBERT (BOB) SELKIRK WOOD, RPF

BY TINA OLIVER

Our Uncle Jack Wood, Dad's cousin who was like a brother to Dad, and who grew up in Ladysmith with him, has asked me to offer these words on his behalf as he is unable to join us today. We know, like Dad, he is here among the trees and ever in our thoughts.



COURTESY OF TINA OLIVER

Robert Selkirk Wood

Robert Selkirk Wood's family sincerely

appreciates the great honour bestowed today, by the enduring memorial plaque to their noted native son and forester, and wish to extend their thanks to all the citizens, family and friends involved.

Uncle Jack would like me to extend our heartfelt thanks, and acknowledgement of this successful effort, to the Ladysmith Green Streets Committee and Tree Canada Foundation for the Arboretum renovation and the Millennium Tree Planting Project, and also to Mike Apsey and Grant Ainscough for their diligence in honouring their dear friend Bob.

Bob's heart never left Ladysmith as he pursued his forestry education, subsequent career and family life, and this acknowledgement has enormous significance to his lasting memory of the home base he so dearly loved.

The highlights of his forestry career, spanning more than forty years, include the position of Chief Forester for Weldwood Canada, Vice President of Forestry for the Council of Forest Industries of BC, the co-founder of Rim Forest Products and the establishment of a successful sawmill and logging company near Hazelton BC and his distinguished career as a noted forestry consultant and co-founder of the Sterling Wood Group, which provided his special expertise of re-writing the Forest and Range Legislation for the Ministry of Forests some 25 years ago.

Bob was awarded the "Distinguished Forester Award" in 1980, by the Association of Professional Foresters of BC, and continued over the following years to assist the industry and governments as a forest policy consultant. His expertise and leadership in helping solve earlier "Softwood" disputes is sorely missed today.

Who was this Robert Selkirk Wood— noted forester—when he was a juvenile resident of Ladysmith? Born on July 4th 1931, as the "new addition" to a Canadian-Scottish family with a coal mining background, he started life as the coal mines were closed down and when, in 1935, the forest industry moved into Ladysmith for a major expansion. This was a result of disastrous windstorms in 1934, which blew down huge areas of mature forest behind Ladysmith. The "wind-felled" timber had to be harvested or lost—and Comox Logging and Railway Company arrived with logging equipment and, more



STEVEN ANDERSON

Tina Oliver, Bob Wood's daughter provided the address at the tree planting ceremony.

importantly, many new logging families to take their place in the community, which had been suffering from the "Great Depression" blues.

The arrival of logging trucks and later logging railways, along with log dumping booming grounds and tug boats, were the things of wonder for small boys, and Bob was no exception. Also, the wonderful new citizens that arrived, with logging and forestry skills that quickly permeated the atmosphere of Ladysmith, created a learning environment that thrilled and excited the minds of the younger generation of that time.



The plaque created in honor of Bob Wood.

Bob grew up to enjoy all the wonderful things and natural assets that Ladysmith had—and continues to have today—to provide play areas and recreation—there were no video games or television to provide Saturday morning cartoons! The “Creek”—the “beach”, and the “bush” were the playgrounds of young Ladysmith. At the time we did not realize the influence that these natural geographic features and our resultant adventures had in forming our development as citizens of this wonderful area of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, and then Canada, and later, even the world.

In Bob’s case, the bush seems to have provided the overriding influence, and he wisely chose forestry as his career.

The Ladysmith school days also influenced Bob—and many others—as we were blessed with many wonderful teachers who helped launch many “wet behind the ears” students into the waiting world of citizenship and commerce. An important guide to our “budding forester” was his father, Robert Selkirk Wood Senior—the Senior was a well known and respected citizen of Ladysmith—a long time columnist to the “Chronicle” newspaper, a librarian, police court magistrate and City Clerk—Bob’s father instilled an intense love of learning, reading, writing and history which was to serve Bob well in his life and career.

Bob’s university days were provided with summer opportunities to work in the logging industry near Ladysmith. He gained a first-hand awareness of just how hard, dirty and dangerous the logging work was—and unfortunately still is—and it uniquely prepared him for a career in forestry. Bob thoroughly enjoyed his three

summers of logging and recalled in his writings the sense of pride, importance and good humour that the loggers possessed.

Bob’s working career after graduating from the University of British Columbia in 1954 with a B.S. degree and Syracuse University with a Master of Science in 1956, began as a resident forester at the UBC teaching forest in Haney, BC. He then joined Weldwood Canada in Quesnel and rose to the position of Chief Forester for Weldwood by 1965.

He then accepted the position of Vice-President of Forestry for the Council of Forest Industries of BC, aka COFI.



Michael Apsey and Chuck Geale, FHS Board members, help plant the cedar tree in honor of Bob Wood.

Following his work there, he and Bill Sterling formed Rim Resources and Rim Forest Products to establish a sawmill and logging operation in the Hazelton area. The “resources” part of Rim provided consulting services to industry and government. Bob was a “Senior Consultant” to the British Columbia government on forest policy and worked directly with Tom Waterland, the Minister of Forests, as the head of a special committee that prepared the new Forest and Range Legislation, accepted by the Legislature in 1978, and which still endures today.

He also represented Canada as a forestry expert—in Canada, the US, Japan, China, South America to name but a few regions of this globe—on senior forestry issues, so his mark is global to be sure.

After 1980, Bob was a leading member of the Sterling Wood Group, a highly respected forestry-consulting group, which continues to do good work and enjoy success today. Bob continued his chairmanship of the company after his retirement.

On behalf of Bob’s family, I would like to again express our gratitude for the significant honour bestowed today by the Ladysmith community and friends. Our memories of his life and career can never be separated—and will always be enhanced—by the memories and regales of his adventurous life in Ladysmith. □