

Firs thrive in Pacific Northwest

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Contributing Writer

One can hardly hold a discussion on conifers without addressing their most prominent member here in the Pacific Northwest. Douglas Fir, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, is the one conifer that practically outnumbered all other trees west of the Cascades, and its range throughout the western United States is rather immense. Ranging from the subtropical high mountains of Mexico, across the lower and central Rockies, into central British Columbia, and densely populated throughout much of the lower Pacific Northwest, the Douglas Fir commands our respect and attention.

Two recognized varieties exist within its massive range, meaning the same plant has adapted to different environments. The Douglas Firs found growing in the Rocky Mountains have adapted to a higher, colder, and drier climate, only reaching heights of around 130 feet. Contrast this with the ones growing west of the Cascade crest, which are better adapted and suited for a mild, moister climate. One particularly massive Douglas Fir, found in the hills outside of Coos Bay, Oregon, was measured at 302 feet tall and 13 feet thick.

Douglas Firs can easily be differentiated from other conifers, first of all by their distinctive cones. Douglas Firs produce a bulky, papery cone, with a "three-pronged bract"; flaps with three protruding points from the cone scales. Douglas Firs also have a rather thick, corky, dark-brown bark, which becomes furrowed and rough with age, and its needles arrange themselves in a bottle-brush fashion, each leafy needle singularly fixed to the stem. These features combine to make Douglas Fir an easy tree to identify when strolling through the woods.

Being able to sprout and grow in the open sunlight has proven advantageous to Douglas Firs in the wake of their European arrival. They actually prefer an area that has been disturbed or cleared of

vegetation, which would otherwise shade-out its young seedlings.

Prior to humans shifting the balance of nature, Douglas Fir shared its habitat more equally with other native trees, such as The Western Hemlock and The Western Red Cedar. Another factor contributing to Douglas Firs current dominance is that they grow rapidly in their youth. By the age of seventy, the trees can reach heights of over 150 feet.

These trees slow in growth as they reach a mature age, and to many this is not considered economically viable. Although the Douglas Fir can live to be older than 1000 years, in our present era of "profits above all else," Douglas Firs are being harvested on a rapid 70 year cycle; that's one fourteenth of their life span.

Since they are tolerant of even appreciative of, open sunlight, modern forestry has taken to replanting only Douglas Firs after an area has been clear-cut. This practice thus excludes almost all other forest trees.

All of this commotion around Douglas Fir is of no fault of the tree, though. It is a beautiful and majestic tree, worthy of our admiration. Behind the Pauling Center there is a small grove of native trees, including Doug Firs. Remember to look for their distinctive cones, often found lying on the ground directly below the tree. These are a favorite of many forest critters, including Douglas squirrels, chipmunks, shrews, and deer mice. Have a look and give 'em a soft pat on the trunk. Enjoy.



Graphic from *Forest Trees of the Pacific Slope* by George B. Sudworth

Poet to read

Poet Henry Carlile, recipient of two Pushcart prizes, will give a poetry reading at 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 26, in the Gregory Forum.

Carlile was born in San Francisco but grew up in the Pacific Northwest. He attended the University of Washington and since 1967 has taught at Portland State University.

Carlile's publications include *The Rough-Hewn Table* (1971),

which won the Devins Award, *Running Lights* (1981) and *Rain* (1993).

Carlile has also won the 1988 Poetry Award from *Crazyhorse Magazine* and has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ingram Merrill Foundation.

The reading is free and open to the public.



Photo Contributed by: GENEVIEVE LONG

Oregon Senator debuts 'pursuit of happiness' series

JANOS J. PLESKO
Staff Writer

Oregon State Senator Gary George was the speaker at a forum held in M204 at noon on Tuesday, Feb. 16 entitled, "The Pursuit of happiness: Conflicting Views and Values."

Senator George outlined historically the events leading up to the creation of the U.S. Constitution, for the protection of our rights. "Our founding fathers were farmers, but very well educated. Thomas Jefferson was selected to write the Constitution, because he was a thinker and a writer. We need to look back to our history, because if you don't learn from history, then you are liable to repeat the same mistakes," said George.

Thomas Jefferson borrowed ideas from John Locke: Every person has the natural, God given rights to Life, Liberty, and property, the pursuit of happiness was added later. No government should take away these rights from you.

"The first property you own is yourself. That's right; no one has the right to violate your body. The government can't take away your property, unless you are justly compensated for it," said the Senator.

Based on history, we can suspect that the government might not want to grant our rights, so, George contended, we should be prepared to watch its activities.

One very controversial issue is prayer in public schools. The government in this instance took our right to freedom of speech and expression.

"I think it is the violation of the Oregon State Constitution," George claimed.

The government should ensure equal justice for everyone, George continued. You are innocent, until you are proven guilty. We can't allow presumption of guilt, he said; we have a judicial process to sort this out.

"We have so many infringements of our constitutional rights under the drug laws, like 'Driving while Hispanic.' This law means that the police can pull you over and search your vehicle based on the way you look," said the Senator. "I was so much against this bill, yet it passed. Search and seizure is



TIMOTHY A. BELL / Clackamas Print

"Senator Gary George talks to Phi Theta Kappa representative Becky Russel prior to his *The Pursuit of Happiness* lecture on Feb. 16."

legal, but it has to be reasonable."

The Senator warned that if we don't defend our liberty, our liberty will go away. Justice must be fair; no person is above the law.

"It is critical that we feel secure in our home and in our person. I can only feel happiness when I am secure and have no fear of government or of my neighbor," said George.

The government can't guarantee your happiness, but the role of the government is to protect our freedom, and allow you the right to pursue your happiness, give you equal chance and protect you from undue force and fraud.

"Anything government gives you, they took away from you. For example, we spend \$9,200 for every man, woman and child in Oregon state," said the Senator.

"In every religious doctrine the Creator says; 'Do good to people, not harm,' he continued. Part of justice is the fact that you don't get away with crime. If you commit crime against the rights of others, then you pay the price."

Over the years as the government gets involved in benevolence, George said, there is a corresponding decrease in private benevolence. Our government is very generous; we supply money to many organizations to help people, yet it doesn't help them in pursuing happiness.

"A person needs to analyze where they are, what are the potentials, and to be happy with that," said the Senator. "I knew a lady, she was extremely poor, and

had dirt floors in her house, yet she had a happiness level that I couldn't comprehend: She was trying to serve others, plus her religious philosophy gave her happiness."

Senator George, when interviewed after the lecture, added that "Happiness in yourself and being you is the key, owning your property, taking care of it, nurturing it, and enjoying it. Part of it is just knowing that you are truly free; that will provide inner peace" he said.

Happiness should come from within, he claimed, not from material possessions. We also know that we will never reach the level of material possessions that will satisfy us.

"The concept of happiness is community, family, life, children. How fortunate we are in this country to have liberty," concluded the Senator, emphasizing the importance of being a concerned and critical thinker. "Stand up for your freedom and for your rights, and be very vigilant for freedom. If you don't, the next generation could lose all the freedom."

Quality Control Strip



For Returning Students Early Spring Registration

Register in person—no appointment needed

February 23 – March 7
Community Center, CCC Main Campus
9 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday – Thursday
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Friday

Or register by phone, FAX or mail.

Open registration begins March 8

View the Schedule online: www.clackamas.cc.or.us