

Ed Lester: Biographical Sketch

Edward L. Lester, M.D. (b. 1934) grew up in Port Angeles, WA, spending his pre-school years in Clallam County logging camps where he developed his lifelong affinity for trees, forests and the people who live amongst them. Claimed by both Cougars and Huskies, Ed received a B.S. in Zoology from WSU followed by medical school at the UW. After stops in Santa Rosa, CA, a stint in US Air Force in Georgia, and a brief return to Seattle Ed settled in Spokane and developed a practice in orthopedic surgery, eventually serving as Chief Surgeon at the Shriners Hospital for Children.

Ed is a long-time member of the Washington Farm Forestry Association (WFFA) and has a 320 acre tree farm in Stevens County and a smaller parcel on the Olympic Peninsula. Lester's tree farm goals are "to manage the land for sustainable forestry, allowing for periodic harvests, while maintaining sustainability by protecting the resources (water, soil, air) and providing wildlife habitat and even some recreational usage." Groups that have used and learned about forests on Lester tree farms include WSU Master Gardeners, the Native Plant Society, ecology students from WSU, and Future Farmers of America. One very special use of their Stevens County Tree Farm was the annual dogsled ride for the young patients at Shriners Hospital in Spokane he and his wife Kay hosted.

Since retirement Lester has been involved with Master Gardeners, served on the board of "Friends of Manito Park" and is an integral member of the Citizens Advisory Committee to Spokane's Urban Forestry Program, serving as Chair of the Heritage Tree Committee. Ed's work with the Master Gardeners piqued his interest in the trees growing in Spokane, both native and introduced. Upon discovering that no comprehensive tree list existed for Spokane, he solved this problem by writing a 601 p. book on the subject that includes a regional inventory, specimen locations and plant identification keys adapted to the inland Northwest and the trees and shrubs he found to occur here.

Dr. Lester has been important to Small Forest Land Owner groups in Washington, being among the earliest of its members to advocate for sustainability and owning land for the sake of living trees, forests and all that live in them. In the city, Dr. Lester has brought attention to the urban forest and has converted its citizens to appreciate them as he does, one tree and one landowner at a time. Dr. Lester's advocacy for trees and forests has been contagious. As more of us revel in the beautiful, diverse, multi-functional urban forest we have in Spokane one wonders where we and our urban forest would be without him. Spokane has been proud to have Ed Lester and Kay, his wife of 57 years, in our community for all they have done for our urban forests. It is the Inland Empire Society of American Foresters turn to appreciate all he has done bring attention to all that small private forest landowners do for the public good. We are honored to have him with us as a respected member and colleague in the Society of American Foresters.