

ETF News

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• NEWSLETTER OF THE EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION •



Fall, 2009; Vol. 12, No. 4

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A Gift of Ginkgos

By Whitey Lueck

Every living tree has a unique story—when and where it germinated (or was grafted), when or if it was transplanted, the events that have transpired in its branches and adjacent to it, etc. Likewise, each human being has a unique story unlike that of any other person in the history of the planet. But it's the intersection of trees' stories with those of humans that can be especially intriguing.

Such is the case of the two ginkgo trees at the northwest corner of East 13th Avenue and Hilyard Street. Planted nearly half a century ago and spared at the last moment during the redevelopment of the site in the late 1980s, their story is unknown to the thousands of people who daily pass by the trees.

Like the ginkgos themselves, the people who planted them were immigrants to the United States from China. Both Rose Tsou and her husband, Leslie Tsou—whom she met at the University of Washington in Seattle—grew up in China under comfortable circumstances, and attended prestigious Chinese universities where they received their Bachelor degrees. Toward the end of World War II, Leslie was invited to

the U.S. to serve as an interpreter for American troops who were going to be sent to China to help oust the Japanese. But before he could perform that service, the war ended—after the dropping of the atomic bombs—and he ended up staying in the U.S. to attend graduate school.

Meanwhile, back in China, Rose finished her undergraduate degree in journalism and had the opportunity to come to the U.S. to complete a second B.A. in English literature and an M.A. in library science. She arrived in Seattle in early 1947, where she eventually met and married Leslie.

Above, Rose Tsou and Whitey Lueck visiting the two ginkgo trees at 13th and Hilyard on a recent fall day, and discovering, upon seeing the fruits on the trees, that they were in fact females, not males as previously thought. Left, Rose Tsou, whose family planted the trees some 50 years ago, seen here with her beloved ginkgos.

Despite their degrees, the Tsous found it difficult to obtain jobs in their fields—due in part to their limited English, but also because they were Chinese. At the invitation of a Chinese-born University of Oregon professor, whom Rose had known in China, the young couple visited Eugene in 1955 and soon thereafter moved here and found themselves proprietors of a small, but until then poorly run Chinese restaurant in the 1200 block of Alder Street.

Both Rose and Leslie worked energetically to

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Helen Liu



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President's Column



The fall rains have begun, and we move quickly toward our wettest period in the southern Willamette Valley, from mid-November to mid-January. I hope you have a chance to explore our urban forest and enjoy the lovely fall colors.

This October, most of ETF's board of directors will be car-pooling to Portland to learn from Friends of Trees (FOT), the Portland Metro area's large and successful tree organization. Many of you saw the inspiring presentation Scott Fogarty, FOT's executive direc-

tor, gave at ETF's Celebration of Trees earlier this year. At that meeting, Scott welcomed ETF leaders to come to Portland to learn from FOT about fundraising, their planting program, and building a tree organization. We'll report back to you what we learn. We are grateful for their generous support.

This fall we are also preparing to begin a business membership program and to submit grant proposals to raise money to expand ETF's planting program. Many thanks to Jonathan Brandt and Mary Sharon Moore for all their contributions to this project. We wish to continue our successful collaboration with the City of Eugene, while also building an independent ETF planting program with a paid planting

coordinator. In addition to planting in the public right-of-way "park strip," as we have for years, we also need to expand our plantings to yards and other public and private areas in the city, working closely with homeowners, neighborhood groups, businesses, campus groups, local government and others. If you know of a local business that you think would be a good fit to invest in ETF's future, please let us know.

Happy fall!

Erik Burke
President

Recycling Trees

By Alby Thoumsin

Happy Fall, everyone! I'm enjoying the gorgeous fall colors this year as well as the drop in temperatures. After 17 years here in the Willamette Valley, this was my first summer when temperatures reached triple digits twice! In addition to record temperatures, this year's precipitation is once again far below average for our area.

The consequences of these circumstances for trees can be dramatic, depending on the species. Pacific madrones and Oregon white oaks sailed right on through the heat and the drought, but trees such as bigleaf maples really "felt the pinch" this year.

Trees lose water via their leaves by a process called *evapo-transpiration*, and can reach a critical point during exceptionally dry summers. Once a tree runs out of available water, it reaches what is called the *permanent wilting point*, which is often followed by death. This past summer, I saw many

trees that reached that point or got dangerously close to it. A tree that did not make it needs to be removed, of course, and a new tree planted in its place, which leads me—finally—to the subject of this article.

Almost every time a tree is removed, the wood ends up as just firewood. I want you to know about another alternative: the milling of urban trees. Our Newsletter editor did it last year when his double-trunked coast redwood was removed. The trunks were removed from the site and custom-milled, and all the wood chips—four truckloads of them—were donated to neighbors. The milled wood was then returned to his property and was used to build raised vegetable beds, a boardwalk entry, and a very stout fence with 6-inch by 6-inch posts and 8-inch by 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch boards! How about that for sustainability?

I know of two local people who salvage wood by making dimensional lumber from it: Seth San Filippo and Pony Gilbert. When I stepped into Seth's Urban Lumber Company store in Springfield, I was astonished by the quality, the beauty, and the variety of

the wood that was available. Almost all of the boards I saw came from local trees. Folks interested in cabinetry and other fine wood work should pay him a visit. On the other hand, Pony—of Long Tom Custom Saw Mill—does not own a store, but in most cases, he is able to mill on-site, allowing you to store your wood instantly. Both companies own trucks to haul away trunks in large sections, if you don't have reason to keep the wood.

So, in the sad event that your precious tree(s) did not survive this hot and dry summer, I invite you to consider this interesting alternative and give these gentlemen a call. Seth is at 988-9663—and his store is located at 2440 Main Street in Springfield—and Pony can be reached at 935-1289.

My tip this time? Even large trees appreciate a drink on very hot days. Remember to water deeply and infrequently—never more than once a week. Until next time!

Alby Thoumsin is a certified arborist.

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A Gift of Ginkgos

turn the restaurant into a profitable business, and in 1960, with the help of the Calkins family, regular customers at the restaurant, they were able to purchase at a very favorable price one of the Calkins family's houses at 13th and Hilyard, where the Tsous then lived until they had enough money to demolish the house—which was in poor condition—and build their own restaurant, since they had been renting the space on Alder.

The Tsous hired Chinese-born Corvallis architect, Edith Yang, to design the building in classic Chinese style, and Dick Chambers—another loyal restaurant customer—to build it. They decided to extend the building's Chinese motif to the landscape around it, and heavily planted the entry to the restaurant with plants native to China.

Although many kinds of ornamental trees that grow well in our area are

immigrants from China, Leslie decided to plant ginkgo trees in front of the restaurant along Hilyard Street. It was not easy at that time to find ginkgos in local nurseries, but he eventually acquired four young trees and planted two of them—the ones we still see today, both females—in front of the restaurant. (The other two, both males, were planted at the Tsou family's residence at the corner of East 29th Place and Elinor Street, where they continue to thrive.)

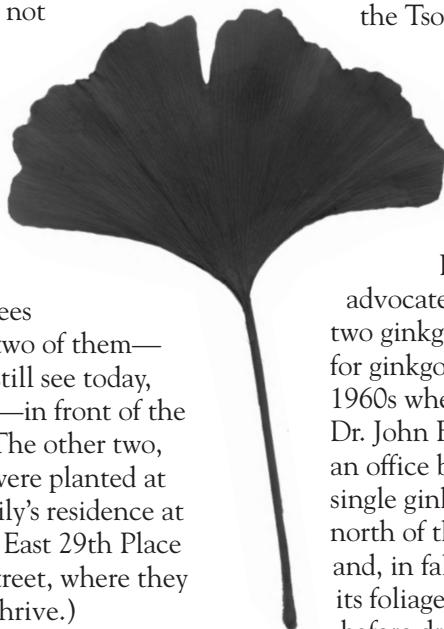
The Tsous owned Leslie's Mandarin Restaurant until 1980, when they sold it. Then, in the late 1980s, the entire city block where the restaurant was located was to be redeveloped.

All of the buildings were slated for demolition, and all of the trees—including the two ginkgos planted by the Tsous—were to be cut.

At that time, Eugene had a Tree Commission—an advisory group that worked with City staff to promote trees. One of its members, former

Eugene mayor Ruth Bascom, advocated for the preservation of the two ginkgos. Ruth's special fondness for ginkgos had begun in the early 1960s when her physician-husband, Dr. John Bascom, had his practice in an office building at 10th and Mill. A single ginkgo grew in the parking lot north of the building (and still does) and, in fall, delighted everyone when its foliage turned brilliant gold just before dropping. The Bascoms had also become good friends with the Tsous; in fact, over the years, three of the four Bascom daughters worked for the Tsous as waitresses.

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The Amazing Ginkgo



The modern ginkgo is an extraordinary tree that has changed little since its ancestors first graced the planet more than 200 million years ago—tens of millions of years before the advent of conifers (pines, spruces, etc.) and more than a hundred million years before broad-leaved trees (oaks, maples, etc.) became abundant. Although ginkgos have “broad” leaves, they are more closely related to conifers, as their seeds are not borne inside a “fruit” in the strictly botanical sense of the word.

Fossils of ancient ginkgos have been found in central Oregon, and in Washington, there's even a Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park northeast of Yakima. But over many millions of years of changing climates, shifting continents, and the expanding ranges of other trees, ginkgos slowly disappeared until (apparently) they grew only in part of present-day China. Even there, they eventually became extinct in the wild—perhaps several thousand years ago—but have lived on as cultivated and often much-revered trees. The oldest living ginkgo in China is thought to be possibly 4,000 years old (!).

Ginkgos are dioecious, with male trees bearing only pollen and female trees producing the yellowish “fruit” inside of which is a white nut that encloses the actual seed. (The Chinese word for ginkgo is *bái guǒ* 白果 or “white fruit.”) Although the seeds do not have much flavor, they have long been harvested and eaten in China, Japan, and Korea—and this writer has

seen them for sale by the bushel-basket in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Although ginkgos grow in Eugene, they are uncommon and their growth here is slow compared to regions of the U.S. such as the mid-Atlantic states where the climate—with colder, drier winters and warmer, more humid summers—suits them better.

Toward the end of the 19th century, ginkgos were planted by the thousands in New York, Philadelphia, and other East Coast cities, because ginkgos, unlike most other trees, were tolerant of the then-severe air pollution afflicting those urban areas. Alas, as those trees reached “breeding age,” thousands of female trees were cut down when they began dropping large quantities of slippery, smelly fruits onto those cities’ sidewalks.

These days, all ginkgos sold by nurseries are grafted males—but mistakes happen, so there will probably always be a few girls around for all those lonely guys.



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**EUGENE TREE
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Support ETF's efforts by purchasing a beautiful handmade holly wreath this holiday season.

Thanks to generous donors, ETF has been able to significantly improve our urban forest in neighborhoods, parks, commercial districts, and wild areas. As a pledge of support to ETF, the Bennett family of Holly Ridge Farm will donate \$5.00 from each wreath purchased by members of the foundation.

Holly Ridge Farm, located near the base of Mount Pisgah, was established in 1950 and continues to operate as a family farm today. They grow both green and variegated holly and their handmade holly wreaths are full of bright red berries perfect for the holiday season. A large 24-inch wreath is offered at \$40.00 and a smaller 20-inch size at \$32.00. Wreaths are pre-ordered to be made fresh from November 15th through Christmas. Your order will be available for pick-up at the farm or delivered priority mail with an additional shipping and handling fee.

You can reach the Bennett family by e-mail at sustainableearthworks@gmail.com or by calling 541-746-4887. Remember to say you support ETF. Wreaths can be shipped throughout the U.S.

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A Gift of Ginkgos

Thanks to Ruth's advocacy on behalf of the two ginkgos, the developers of the new Physicians and Surgeons Center agreed to spare the trees. Unfortunately, however, the trees were not protected at all during construction activities, but they managed to survive despite the damage done both to their trunks and to their roots. (On the west side of the trunk of the southernmost ginkgo, one can see the remains of a large wound that, even 20 years later, has still not closed over completely.)

4 Eugeneans who have lived here

for an extended period are linked in countless ways to one another and to the wondrous landscape that surrounds us. And the longer we live here, the more intricate and complex those connections become. For most people, the intersection at 13th and Hilyard is like any other: You arrive by car or by bike or by foot, you wait for the green light, and you move on. While you wait, you might notice the greenery at the northwest corner, but it's just a backdrop to the hustle-bustle going on around it. From now on, however, when at least some of us pass through that traffic intersection, we will be reminded of the intersec-

tion of the lives of Ruth and Rose and the two ginkgos.

Whitey Lueck served on Eugene's Tree Commission with Ruth Bascom in the late 1980s, and he and Rose—who live just a few blocks apart in Amazon Neighborhood—have become good friends in the past few years.

Letters to the Editor Write to us at www.eugenetreefoundation.org, or at P. O. Box 12265, Eugene, Oregon 97440.