

Harry V. Wiant, Jr.

Stand Up for Forestry



A compilation of articles written by Harry V. Wiant, Jr.

“Stand Up for Forestry,”

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Cover Photo

SAF Bluegrass Band -- Richmond, Virginia Convention, 1992
(Left to right)

Front row: Harry V. Wiant, Jr., Ray R. Hicks

Back row: Mitch Flinchum, Guerry Doolittle, Mary Ann Fajvan,
Charlie Webb, and Pete Hannah



Foreword

This booklet, while not my idea, is a wonderful gesture. I thank Jack Winieski, and his daughter, Catherine Carter, for putting it together. I wrote most of these columns while Chair of the Allegheny Society of American Foresters, and they, along with a talk I presented on ecosystem management at Penn State University, were responsible for "propelling" me to Vice President and President of SAF. I hoped my columns presented wisdom (no snickering you detractors!) with enough wit to make for enjoyable reading. The title is taken from a talk I have given at numerous forestry functions. It emphasizes my belief that foresters should stand tall as members of the world's most successful conservation organization.

Harry V. Wiant, Jr.

Biography

Harry V. Wiant, Jr. received his Ph.D. in Forest Ecology from Yale University in 1963, M.F. in Silviculture from the University of Georgia in 1959, and B.S.F. in Forest Management from West Virginia University in 1954. He worked as a forester for the USDA Forest Service and was a faculty member at Humboldt State University, Stephen F. Austin State University, and West Virginia University. He has published over 200 professional articles, dealing mainly with forest inventory and silviculture, and two books. He has been active in the Society of American Foresters, including Chairman of the Inventory Working Group, Chairman of the Allegheny Society, and is presently Vice President of the National, approximately 20,000 member, organization.

Foresters, Come Home to SAF

It is generally estimated that about half of the foresters in the U.S. are members of SAF. That is a loss to SAF and, indeed, to all foresters. You're right, this is going to be a hard sell, and here's why:

There is only one home for foresters, and that's SAF!

Oh sure, there are some other fine forestry organizations, but those are either too specialized, too general, or too regional to represent professional foresters nationwide.

Some foresters do not belong because they do not agree with some policies or stances of SAF. You have probably detected that I don't agree completely either, but...

That is the worse excuse for not belonging!

You can influence the direction of SAF as a member, but your opportunity to do so is practically nil if you don't belong. And while we're at it, if you are a member and don't vote, as is usually true for a majority of eligible voters, you have no one to blame but yourself and others like you if the organization does not meet your expectations.

Most Americans have never met a forester, and citizens ill-informed on forestry issues are voting in some terrible laws. We are too few in number to divide our forces. We must develop better means of communicating to a propagandized public, to inform law makers, to provide continuing education for our members, and to support research on which science-based forestry depends. It is a gigantic task, even if all foresters join together, but we must succeed,

I am asking every reader of this column to copy it and give it to a non-SAF forester. Tell him/her if they join and attach a copy of this article to their application, I will send them a collection of the more-or-less philosophical writing I've penned over the years. If they don't like them, they're great for wrapping fish.

Changing Horses During Flood Stage

Although I wouldn't claim to be a great horseman, I suspect changing horses is never an easy maneuver, especially in the middle of a stream, and particularly during a flood stage. That is where our Allegheny Society and our profession finds itself. Bob LaBar has done a fine job, and I hope to do as well. But the forces bearing upon us are great, and to be honest, we old-timers find it difficult. When we were in school, the most complicated question we were asked by the public was, "What does a forester do, stay in a lookout tower?" Now everyone is an environmentalist, everyone is an ecologist, and most everyone is suspicious of our profession.

I came in on the tail-end of a session at the San Francisco convention last year which evidently had several papers deriding the practice of forestry in one way or another. A well-respected old-timer stood up during the time allocated for participation by the audience and said something like, "I'm tired of hearing all this self flagellation by our profession. You young fellows don't know how much we have of which we should be rightfully proud." He went on to describe the sorry condition fire protection was in at the turn of the century compared to today, the millions of acres that have been replanted to forests, and the general fine job we have done with our forest resources. I wanted to say, "Amen!"

Perhaps I'm overreacting, but I fear for the future of our profession if we as individuals do not do our part to inform the public of the "forest facts". We produce all the wood our country needs, and can continue to do so if too much of the resource is not set aside for single (or no) use. Every American uses the equivalent of one good size tree each year of their life. Conversion of wood to useful products is less energy demanding, in most cases, than any conceivable substitute. We know all this, John Q. Public does not.

The Society of American Foresters, with all its real and perceived defects, is the best vehicle we have to assist us in taking the truth (we don't need lies) to the public and the decision-makers of our nation. Our country can't afford for us to fail.

Silviculture Revisited

Have you noticed the disappearance of articles in our SAF and Forest Service publications demonstrating the positive results of clearcutting? It appears that such research is not politically correct today, and unfortunately forest scientists must be cognizant of political realities. Perhaps the problem could be resolved if we revisited our terminology. My suggestion for common reproduction methods follow.

THE "LET'S-BE-HONEST" METHOD

With this method, all trees are removed from the site. Not very pretty, you say. Well, you should see how Mother Nature does it with devastating fires, terrible storms, or floods. (Face it, as a newborn baby you weren't much to look at, but look at you now!) This method produced most of the productive pine forests, and many other species that have furnished our timber needs since settlement. It encourages sun-loving, fast growing species.

THE "PLEASE-DON'T-REMIND-ME" METHOD

Here we take all the trees except for a few, theoretically to furnish seed, but often to meet the requirements of some ill-conceived state law. With many species there is no real need to leave seed trees. I suspect they serve mainly to remind non-foresters of the size of the trees that were harvested, making them even more antagonistic toward our profession.

THE "AM-I-LOSING-MY-MEMORY" METHOD

This one is real sneaky. We slip in one night and take about half the trees, hoping you won't notice. After regeneration is established and we have a stand of young trees, we hurriedly remove the rest. When you come by on your next outing, you'll probably say, "I would have sworn there were big old trees here."

THE "LET'S-PRETEND" METHOD

With this one we pretend we are starting with an unevenaged stand (which is almost never the case), that we want to reproduce with slow-growing, tolerant species (a rare occurrence), and that we have the expertise and money to collect the field data and keep the records necessary to do all this (don't we wish?). Again, we assume you won't see us grab a tree every now and then.

If a change in terminology won't help, maybe we should just keep insisting that we use the system that is best from an ecological and economic standpoint. We may be forced to utilize less desirable alternatives, but when a roll of toilet paper cost \$20 a roll, we can always say, "I told you so!"

A Different Breed?!

My association with foresters and forestry students for over 40 years has convinced me that we are a different breed. Professional psychologists or sociologists might disagree, not to mention some of our readers, but I believe I have identified the trait that sets us apart. First, the critical reader might ask, are foresters different from other professionals? They are different enough that a landlady in Morgantown would rent rooms only to forestry students. She had found that they were better (nicer) than the general student population. Different enough that they endure four or more years of rigorous studies to enter a profession promising only hard work, modest pay, little prestige, and today, a public who at best has little appreciation of their function and, at worse, considers us rapists of the forest as pawns of a greedy timber industry.

What, then, would entice reasonably bright students to chart such a course for their professional lives? The standard answer is that foresters are introverted people seeking an escape into the forest, the outdoors they learned to love from hunting, fishing, and camping experiences in their youth. That answer contains just enough truth to sound plausible, but it misses the mark. The key trait is idealism! Foresters truly believe that they manage renewable resources for the good of present and future generations. They establish plantations they will never see mature, fight fires to save homes they could never afford, and practice an applied ecology that few others can appreciate or comprehend. All this gives foresters a sense of continuity, of history, that serves to reinforce their idealism.

Oh sure, you will assume I'm biased, but I agree with the Morgantown landlady. Foresters are "nicer," on the average. They are members of a unique brother- and sister-hood, whether in the U.S., Canada, Australia, or any other part of the world. Our idealism unites us in a world with too few good causes.

A Gem in Richmond!

My observation over the years is that about 10 percent of our membership attend the national conventions. I wish all of you could have joined me at an inventory meeting at the Richmond convention which, unfortunately, attracted only perhaps 40 of the 1600 total attendees (you'd think everyone would be excited about complex growth models, sampling schemes, and the like). Douglas W. MacCleery of the USDA Forest Service presented a paper, *What on Earth Have We Done to Our Forests?*, which should be required reading for anyone interested in our nation's forests.

You might be surprised to learn, as I was, that until the middle of the 19th Century, next to energy, which had depleted forests around our major cities, the most important use of wood on a volume basis was for fences. "In 1850, there were 3.2 million miles of wooden fences in the U.S. — enough to circle the earth over 120 times." As cross-ties were not treated until about 1900, ties had to be replaced on over 50,000 miles of track annually, requiring in 1900 between 15 and 20 million acres of forestland. In the 60 years from 1850 to 1910, the nation's farmers were clearing forest at an average rate of 13.5 square miles per day!

MacCleery compares conditions in 1900 to today: wildfire consumed 40-50 million acres annually compared to 2-4 million acres (in bad years) today; harvest exceeded growth until 1940, since then growth has continually exceeded harvest nationally; and many species of wildlife including deer, turkey, pronghorn antelope, and moose were severely depleted or near extinction then but have increased to problem levels in many areas today.

In his conclusion, MacCleery points out:

"Somewhat ironically, it has been the success of the scientifically based, utilitarian-oriented forest management concepts advocated by Fernow, Pinchot, and other forestry leaders at the turn of the century that has, to a very large degree, provided society with the forest abundance that has allowed it the luxury, unique to only a handful of other nations, of deciding how much of John Muir's brand of forest conservation is appropriate. The fact that this nation now has the resource wealth to consider such choices is itself a clear and positive sign of the success of its past conservation policies."

If you would like a copy of the paper (27 pages) — every forester should have it and give copies to politicians, critics, etc. — write Douglas W. MacCleery, USDA Forest Service, Auditors Building, 14th & Independence SW, Washington, DC 20250. We hope to have him participate in one of our Allegheny Society meetings in the near future. You won't want to miss it!

Who's Right About Property Rights?

Foresters are assailed by one issue after the other (maybe we'll develop an immunity), and one of the big ones today involves property rights. If you are like me, you have some internal conflicts with this one.

It does not take a genius to see that private ownership and the free market system work better than communism or socialism, although this may be due to the innate selfishness in each of us rather than a higher moral principal in one system than the other. I'll leave that though to greater intellects than mine. A simple test of private versus public or company ownership can be seen by how and where company vehicles are driven compared to how we treat our own. Be that as it may, the trend we see towards more and more regulation of private lands is worrisome when we consider the inefficiency and fiscal irresponsibility all too common in governmental organizations. Big Brother may not be able to balance a checkbook but will decide what is best for the masses, for industry, for each of us!

On the other hand, I can visualize a time when all private land will be posted, and urban dwellers will be forced to overcrowded state or federal properties for any type of outdoor activity. The great Indian chief Tecumseh said something like, "How can we sell the land any more than the air we breathe?" In Germany and other countries, free access to private property for hiking and the like is required by law. If we can't adopt a similar philosophy, perhaps property taxes should be higher for land owners who want it all for themselves. A poem, "Song of the Mountain," by Bliss Carman has stuck with me over the years. A few lines:

*You may come with rod and level, with compass and with chain,
to parcel me for profit and barter me for gain . . .*

(The last lines of the four verses are especially meaningful to foresters, I believe)

*But you'll never, never know me till you come without a guide.
... till you learn how I abide.
... till you watch me wonder-eyed.
... till you love me as a bride*

Who knows how these issues will be resolved? The recent court decision concerning the compensation of landowners when private lands are "taken" through legislative restrictions on uses permitted will have far-reaching consequences. The "Duluth Manifesto" as reported in the November 1992 *Journal of Forestry* states it well, "Landowner rights must be based on responsible stewardship." In other words, we can't parcel up the earth and destroy it a parcel at a time.

Is There Wood In Your Future?

Predictions of a coming timber famine were common a generation ago, and those cries of "wolf" spurred a great conservation effort. Fire control and reforestation among other factors turned things around. Perhaps, however, we have become too complacent (the wolf has been biding his time and is even now licking his chops). A few simple calculations indicate to me that this may be the case. Here are a few facts on which I'll build my case:

1. The average American uses each year the equivalent of one tree 100 feet tall and 16 inches in diameter, or roughly 60 cubic feet of wood.
2. The U.S. has approximately 483 million acres of timberland available for the harvesting of trees (that amount decreases with every chartreuse-eyed vireo put on the endangered list).
3. Net annual growth on this land is about 40 cubic feet of wood per acre. With full stocking and some management, we might realistically increase this to 60 cubic feet per year (perhaps I'm being a bit too optimistic).
4. The present U.S. population is about 260 million and increasing at about 1% per year.

Using facts #1 and #3, we can conclude that it takes about an acre of forest to continually supply the wood-product needs of each American. Facts #2 and #4 — with a \$2 calculator and a compound interest formula — show we can expect population to equal our timber production capacity in about 60 years. That is about the length of one more sawtimber rotation.

All this ignores the export/import picture (timber is one of the few bright spots in our balance), changes in the use of substitutes which might place more pressure on wood resources, possible population growth rate increases, etc. Nevertheless, I think there is reason to be concerned for the future unless society is convinced that wise-use conservation, not New-Age preservation, is the sensible course our nation must follow.

Computer Mania or Computer Phobia?

Foresters, like most of the rest of the professional world, can be placed in one of two groups, those who love computers or those who hate them. While I must admit I belong to the first group, I (by virtue of age) can relate to the second. Both groups may cause problems for our profession.

Let's take on the haters first. You probably remember the good old days when the Monroe electric or hand-crank calculators, if you had access to one, provided the answers you needed for cruises or surveys. If not, you may even recall how to get the square-root by the longhand method or the thrill of slide-rule jockeys mysteriously deriving an answer after several seconds of sliding those complicated scales back and forth. There was a certain amount of security back then. Actually, we had progressed little from the tools and techniques available to our grandparents. Those days are gone (good riddance, I say, as I never learned to use the slide rule... the trick is to outlive the technology!). The haters' problem is they have lived too long or not kept up (chose the answer you prefer). Few are naive enough to ridicule computers, but secretly you'd be pleased if they disappeared by morning. The cure for haters is simple, tackle those PC's and learn how to use them. You'll enjoy it, I guarantee it, or your money will be cheerfully refunded (just try to catch me!).

Now for the lovers. Your problem is a bit more subtle; you have been seduced by these one-eyed beauties. They may have increased your productivity, although for some that is questionable, but I'll wager you have wasted a lot of your employer's time playing with your PC (they are more fun than electric trains, I admit). In addition, too many researchers are spending too much time with their binary concubines (or gigolos if you're female) and too little time in the field. You can only massage that old data so long until you pass the point of diminishing returns. Also, I worry some that we are developing magnificent black boxes, e.g. decision-making and growth-projection programs, which produces impressive printed output giving us unwarranted confidence in the meager or poor data we input.

Now that I've straightened all this out, back to my PC to play around a bit!

Words That Impact

Foresters tend to speak and write using old and tried terms such as "board feet," "acres," and "silviculture." Oh I know, we love those comfortable words, but face it... the average non-forester's eyes glaze over and a state of semi-consciousness is reached within five minutes of that kind of talk. Our worthy adversaries, on the other hand, come up with such attention-grabbers as "ancient forests," "pristine streams," and "sustainable forestry" ("sustainable" implying that what we've done in the past is non-sustainable, short-termed, narrowly focused pillage). To be against their warm and cuddly terms would make a mass-murderer look benign in comparison.

I purpose we beat them at their own game. Instead of talking about so-many million board and cubic feet or acres tied up by the northern spotted owl (like the national debt, none of us can visualize astronomical figures), we indicate how many "owl-killed" homes will not be built for young American families. Point out that the acres to be set aside would make a strip of timber four miles wide clear across the U.S., or that the "owl reservation" is larger than the area we designated as reservations for all of our native Americans.

Using impact words is not the same thing as changing definitions as frequently practiced in the political arena. It takes a citizen with an IQ barely above that of a road-side possum to recognize that "government investments" and "shared sacrifice" really means taxes. That is not our game. We must present the facts, but make them interesting and meaningful.

If we don't get our message out in a manner that John Q. Public will actually hear, the mining, agriculture, and forest industries are going down the tubes. I'm told the BAF-10 prism has some wonderful mystical properties when used as a New-Age crystal ball. Perhaps we can all meditate and chant with our New-Age friends while we starve and freeze.

Revelation in Indianapolis

The mention of Indianapolis does not generate shouts of joy to adventurers seeking exciting vacation spots, but they just might be surprised. It was a great location for the 1993 SAF National Convention, as I suspect any who attended will attest. At that meeting, I got a real revelation.

The critical issues forum on Monday evening was advertised as "A moderated discussion of the Task Force Report on Sustaining Long-Term Forest Health and Productivity." The interest in this subject was obvious from the large crowd that gathered, not to mention the high-voltage of electricity which vibrated through the air even before the meeting started. Once the preliminaries were over, the audience had the opportunity to give two-minute soundbites. Each speaker started by stating their name and location, and it was obvious that location explained 50% of the variation in opinions, with those from the solid South opposed to the report and its implications. That is no surprise. What I did not expect was that perhaps another 40% of the variation in opinions could be explained by age, with the younger generally in favor and the older usually opposed. Either there are a lot of people a whole lot smarter than I am (not unlikely, I admit), or my 30-year-old PhD in silviculture is completely outmoded. Honestly, I don't grasp "ecosystem management," and all those who seem to understand do an awfully poor job of explaining how it will work. All this led me to the following revelation (I hope this isn't sacrilegious).

In the latter days an anti-wise-use force will arise and will deceive many. It will reign for one generation. Mills will be closed, prices will rise, and once-productive forests will be filled with dead and dying trees. The sound of the saw and the axe will be heard no more. The woods will be the habitation of agitators, negotiators, and commentators. But this too shall pass. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. The people will cry, "Why are we wasting this renewable resource? We cannot afford homes as our fathers before us, and lowly paper is beyond our means. Ecosystem management is a false god which none can comprehend. It is used by those destroying our means of production." And a new generation of foresters will come forth, once again guided by science-based reason and the knowledge that the stand has always been the basic silvicultural unit, and timber the most important product of the forest. It will be understood that man cannot live by bread and shelter alone, but he surely can't live without them. At that time, the 150-year-old SAF will:

(1) be greatly favored by all for having stood firm for wise-use conservation, while other organizations were led astray by the sirens of feel-good forestry; or

(2) be assigned to the ash-heap of history for having led the people into a false forestry, full of words but devoid of meaning.

Which will it be?

What is Bad Press Doing to Our Profession?

The forestry profession has received so much bad press that many of us are almost immune, having moved from anger, to disgust, to resignation.

Twenty years ago most of the general population did not know we existed, but I suspect most of those who did would have pictured us as part of the white-hat crowd. Today we are blamed directly or indirectly for dead fish from clearcutting in Idaho streams (the press put out a correction, but corrections get little press), the loss of animal and plant species (can anyone point to the demise of even one species in the U.S. that has resulted from logging, whether done wisely or recklessly?), global warming (perhaps the tough winter of '93 and the record cold temperature readings of the winter of '94 will quiet that crowd for a while), and dozens of other suspected crimes.

We old timers have dug in and figure this too will pass. But there are serious consequences of this bad press, some of which we may be unaware.

It seems obvious to me that support for timber-management-oriented research is seriously impacted, yet our need for wood will continue to increase. Funds for more exotic environmental projects may actually increase, but that will do little to increase timber production (if anything, it will bring forth more bogeymen warning of dire consequences resulting from commercial forestry).

As an educator, I am also concerned about the quality and quantity of young people who will be attracted to forest management and wood science. A few years ago my forest mensuration class had about 30 percent female enrollment; that has dropped to 3 percent today. Total enrollment in forest management had dropped also. Has bad press caused this? I suspect it has.

How can we stop bad press (in contrast to the crude saying, "Bad breath is better than no breath," no press is better than bad press)? I'm not certain we can. Any positive steps taken to improve our image is helpful, but good deeds do not sell newspapers or capture TV sound-bites and their audiences.

In addition, our funds are very limited. Maybe I'm just becoming pessimistic with age, but again I believe we'll just have to ride out the storm. Maybe the press will find more controversial whipping boys.

In the final analysis, the versatility of wood compared to its substitutes will become obvious, and once more society will let us put on our white Stetsons and ride off to the forest (with reloaded silver bullet solutions) to bring back "those thrilling days of yesteryear . . . HI, HO! FOREST MANAGEMENT!"

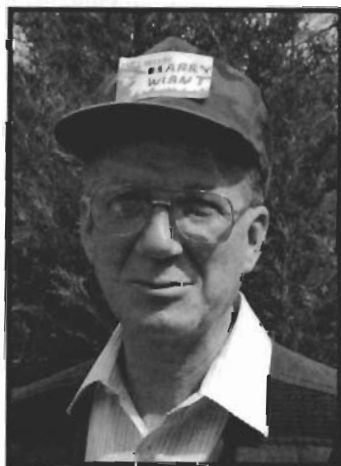
Revelation, Chapter II

I appreciate Mr. Nowak taking the time to explain his reservations about my "Revelation in Indianapolis" in the Spring 1994 issue of *Allegheny News*. I sincerely hope he is right and I am proven to be a false prophet. However, it is far too early to erect the stake and gather the tinder.

His statement that ecosystem management "...does not shut down mills or prohibit logging..." would sound awfully hollow to the 72,000 who are losing their jobs due to the work of the Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team (FEMAT) in the Pacific Northwest. Multiply that number by the dependents, and we're talking about a major economic disaster.

I'm afraid a great number in our profession, academicians, bureaucrats, and foresters (especially young ones), have made a pact with the devil; those who would drive the timber industry completely off our shores. Organizations once leading our nation in wise-use conservation have become as involved as instruments of social change (balkanizing our country by emphasizing our diversity rather than our communality, or developing strength through diversity, depending on your viewpoint) as in providing a basic human need (shelter).

Rest assured that our adversaries will not stop with locking up the federal and state forests. The curtailment of private commercial forestry is on their agenda, and they are making significant strides in that direction. I'll make a deal, Mr. Nowak. Judge my prophecy after 40 years of experience. I hope I'm still around to either accept your apologies or confess my errors.



A Little Dirty Linen

Most families have a little dirty linen stuck away somewhere and hesitate to put it out on the line where it can be "aired." The forestry profession, defining "forestry" broadly, is no exception.

I'm talking about the strain I perceive in the relationship between some first cousins, forest managers and wildlife biologists. We all trace our lineage through the same family tree. The success of wise-use conservation is a source of well-deserved family pride, but fussing among relations is embarrassing and detrimental to our cause, especially in an increasing hostile neighborhood. Neither cousin should take secret joy in the discomfort of the other when attacked by those strange animal-rights and anti-utilization neighbors next door.

I would not hope that our family will agree on every issue (what family does?). However, when our relatives are lambasted with poor-science or no-science camouflaged as "ecology," and delivered with mean-spirited fanatical emotionalism, we should unite. (As they say, blood is thicker than water, but we've lost so much blood recently that we've become easy prey).

Part of our problem is historical. In the early days, most wildlife management programs included a number of forest management courses. With time, there has been more and more specialization and the family has sort of drifted apart. Also, for many years forest managers called the shots, and wildlifers were viewed as a not-very-useful luxury by some. That has and is rapidly changing, leading quite naturally to some individual hurt feelings and jealousies.

With more and more of our neighbors thinking that hamburgers come from McDonald's, not once-living cows, and paper from recycling bins, not trees (if they have an inkling it comes from trees, they assume old-growth redwoods), forest managers and wildlife biologists cannot afford this family fuss. More importantly, our nation and the world cannot afford it!

Both professions continue to mature. Why not all of the individuals?

Don't Say That in Front of the Kids!

Foresters tend to be a conservative lot (probably the understatement of the year). There are worse things than being conservative, however (who said, "Like being liberal?"), but there is one place I believe we should bite the bullet and change a whole word (I know it's early in the year for such a drastic proposal). You guessed it! The word "mensuration."

Surprisingly, it is in the dictionary, "the act of measuring... geometry applied to the computation of lengths, areas, or volumes from given dimensions or angles." Time for a little test!

1. Have you ever heard the word used by anyone other than a forester? (I'll fill in your answer, NO).
2. Have you ever been embarrassed when you had to use the word in mixed company? (YES).

The state of West Virginia, in its continual effort to have complete honesty in government (no snickering, please), once required the faculty at WVU to indicate if a book they authored was being used in their own course (guess they figured a prophet is without honor in his or her own class). I provided the information requested for my course FOREST MENSURATION. A local news reporter, ever alert for earth-shaking revelations, published a list of these dastardly criminals in the paper. There for all my friends to see was my name (Dr. Harry Wiant, Jr.) followed by my course, FOREST MENSTRUATION! It seemed to me a few eyebrows raised whenever I passed neighbors on the street after that.

Now you'll ask, "What can we call it?" Perhaps, "FOREST INVENTORY" which is at least more decipherable by the layman, or "FOREST BIOMETRY," which sounds awfully sophisticated. Maybe we need a profession-wide contest to come up with a (politically-acceptable) winning term. I doubt that the winner can be worse than MENSURATION!

Green Forestry Terminology

It is apparent that much of the terminology used by foresters, felling trees, clearcutting, etc., is offensive to our "green" friends. True, they read newspapers, love books, live in wooden houses, and admire beautiful wood furniture, but they try to forget that trees were sacrificed to provide such necessities (or luxuries, if you remember we could live in caves and carve messages on slabs of granite). In my continual effort to accommodate their refined sensitivities, I suggest the following changes:

Use Biomass Reorientation instead of Felling Trees. That has a nice ring to it, sounds more ecologically correct, and is certainly more sophisticated.

Species Revitalization can replace Thinnings. Who could object to gentle foresters striving to provide more meaningful existence to trees in the forest?

Ecosystem Adjustment would be much more acceptable than Logging. Foresters, at rare intervals, help Mother Nature provide a healthy and sustainable (now there is a real "in-word"!) ecosystem.

Climatic Stabilization can substitute for Lumber Production. We do this to store cellulose and keep carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, and incidentally build homes.

Logging Roads become Ecosystem Access Corridors.

I noted the other day that the notice on a brand of the neatly packaged, easy-to-burn "artificial" logs sold in the grocery store says, "No trees were cut to produce these logs. Only sawdust, a waste product, was used." OK, put a message on lumber, "No trees were cut to produce this lumber. The boards fell out while producing sawdust to make composite fireplace logs."

This is just a start. If we put our heads together, we can do what foresters have always done and yet gain the respect of the New-Age, pro-forest, pro-animal (excepting human, of course) greens. Maybe, if we mind our manners, we'll be invited to the winter solstice celebration to commemorate the successful effort to save a sub-, sub-species of the lower Sahara tsetse fly.

Is the Board Foot on the Endangered List?

Some time ago, I attended the National Cubic Volume Measurement Symposium in Spokane, WA. It seems that the USDA Forest Service is determined that cubic-foot volume estimates be used rather than the board-foot measure in timber sales (in some regions almost immediately and in all regions sometime down the road). Over 150 people, many on-the-ground industry types, attended the conference, and there appeared to be little objection to this conversion (it may have been an unrepresentative sample, as those who object did not choose to attend the meeting).

Mensurationists have long cast dispersion on the board foot, pointing out that it is not really a measure of volume but an attempt to predict the product that can be produced from logs... sort of like estimating the apple crop in terms of the number of apple pies that can be baked. Also, there is the illogical fact that if a log is cut longer it may have less predicted board-foot volume, as scaling is from the small end of the log.

The Doyle rule, popular in the East, comes in for special ridicule because of its well-known underestimation of volumes of small logs. A mensurationist friend pointed out to me that the persistent popularity of the Doyle rule may be because the volumes it predicts are more closely related to value than those given by other rules. Obviously, a board foot from a small log, which tends to be of low quality, is worth less than a board foot from a large log, which tends to have higher quality.

It is apparent that this conversion is designed to get us ready for total conversion to the metric system. I well remember a meeting of mensurationists 15 years ago when a panel of experts were urging us to convert to metric immediately. At the time I put up my reputation on the line when I stood to predict that we wouldn't be on the metric system in 20 years (I may go into the horoscope business).

Now, I'll again attract the scorn of my colleagues in the mensuration business by prophesying that we'll be using the old board-foot measure 20 years from NOW, at least in most of the East. After all, the board foot is an American invention, and to many it will be an act of patriotism to see that it is preserved. More seriously, the board foot will hang on because it has served the wood-using industry for 150 years (some would say ill-served), and we're a conservative lot (now there's an understatement)!

You can't expect us to change overnight!

Conversion of an Infidel

One of my favorite stories comes from my days as a professor at Stephen F. Austin State University in the pineywoods of East Texas. The city of Nacogdoches owned a slash pine plantation on an old airfield site, and the stand was ready for a thinning. The city fathers agreed to let my silviculture class mark the stand for the thinning. This was a great opportunity for students to do the real thing, not just mark a stand and pretend it was going to be cut.

One of the students in my class, whom I'll call Clem (a pseudo name just in case the Unibomber reads this) was a card-carrying Sierra Club member. He was also one of the brightest students (subversive-type organizations zero in on them, it seems) in the class, and often challenged me on utilization-type silviculture. It is next to impossible to convert infidels with the "Green Religion" to the true forestry faith, and my powers of persuasion seemed to make little headway. Anyway, back to my story.

I took the class to the plantation, beautiful tall pines fighting for their day in the sun. I handed a paint gun to Clem, emphasizing that any tree he marked was going to the pulpmill. He had undoubtedly seen a log hit the knives at the mill, an awesome sight even for a sawlog forester. Sweat broke out on his brow, his hands trembled as he struggled to squeeze the trigger. When the yellow paint hit the tree he got that feeling of power we have all experienced, the chance to be a god and decide which lives and which dies. He marked another, then another, in rapid succession. I suppose it's kind of like being a mass murderer, it gets easier after the first one. Finally I had to calm him down, "This isn't a clearcut, Clem, just a thinning!"

I encouraged Clem to go to Yale for a masters degree. Years later I received a letter saying that he had turned in his Sierra Club card and was now the vice president of an organization manufacturing pre-cut log homes.

That was my one and only success in converting a lost soul from the very ranks of the infidels. But it proves it can be done. Take up your paint guns and charge the barbaric hordes!

How Hot is That Oil?

Given the choice of being boiled in oil or attending the Seventh American Forest Congress, my answer would have been that given in the title. Nevertheless, my sense of duty led me to the gathering with only a little less enthusiasm than one approaching the 13th step to the gallows. An organizer told me going in that a lot of bonding goes on with the round-table format. Sure, I thought, and I suppose Elvis will make an appearance.

We were quickly assigned tables. I approached mine trying to ascertain which of those seated around it was a tree-spiker, a refugee from the 60s, or a dreaded lawyer/activist hybrid. My heart reached a steady state when I found about half were foresters or closely related resource managers, and one delightful female forestry student from the Midwest. True, our philosophies covered a wide spectrum, but being a completely unbiased and rational participant (no snickering), I could deal with that. Our "environmentalists" included a devoted hiker who came to learn and concluded by the end of the Congress that it was better than a college course. The other was a wonderful resident from Harlem, dedicated to bringing the joys of gardening and horticulture to inner-city dwellers. Miracle of miracles, we did bond, discussing our differences with respect and liberal doses of humor. Some unpleasantness occurred around the fringes of the Congress, and the process was not flawless, but none of that impacted the little Eden at Table 121. Maybe ours was an unusual table, but I don't think so.

I am not certain the statements and principles produced by the Congress will have much impact on forestry in America. But I am convinced that many of us were much the richer for having attended. It was the best demonstration I have ever witnessed of how democracy works when citizens meet in a supportive atmosphere, express differences and concerns openly, and deal in facts and not propaganda. If a congress is held every 20 years or so, and if a similar structure will be used, I plan to attend at least the next five.

Heart to Heart

This, the first of several columns I plan to write for the *Journal*, will be frank and a tad controversial, surprising no one, I suspect. Let me start with two of my rock-solid principles:

1. I love the forest, and I've never met a forester who didn't. It is always irritating to hear our anti-utilization critics talk as if they're the only real forest lovers. Love is based on intimate knowledge, and no one knows the forest better than a forester.
2. I believe in science-based forestry with incremental changes as new knowledge is gained. Switching to a new paradigm (hopefully that buzzword is on the endangered list), especially one as ill-defined as ecosystem management, is foolhardy at best.

I recognize that my election was divisive and a sizable minority was unhappy with the results, **but voter turnout in this election was among the highest in SAF's recent history.** That is a healthy development, although we should have 100% participation. My campaign statement (see below) was brutally frank, with no attempt to garner votes from those who did not concur with my philosophy. The majority agreed with my contention that the profession and SAF were drifting off the solid moorings that made us the most successful conservationists in history.

A few members have tried to convince me that although I ran and won with a well-defined platform, as President I must abandon it and write and speak in a manner palatable to all. That would nullify the meaning of the election and be a disservice to those who voted for me and, indeed, to the profession and SAF, if my contentions are valid. It is my intent to speak at any SAF functions to which I am invited barring scheduling conflicts, and present the facts as I see them. You may not agree with what you hear, but it will be from the heart.

In my "unbiased" opinion, foresters are a special breed with more than their share of idealism and integrity. We are mature enough to disagree agreeably, and in the process make SAF a stronger and more vibrant organization. I look forward to meeting many of you over the next two years.