Boundaries

James E. Coufal

My recent travels across North America showed me some amazing similarities and sparkling contrasts in the ways our profession is changing.

From Syracuse I flew to Banff, Canada, to attend the Canadian Institute of Foresters (CIF) annual meeting. President Evelyn Wrangler of CIF suggested a joint meeting in 2004 between CIF and SAF, the first since Anchorage in 1994. I suggested that we think bigger and hold a joint Pacific Rim meeting. Canada and Mexico were amenable to taking a look-see.

The next stop was Chihuahua, Mexico, for the 17th annual reunion of the Southwest SAF and the Association of Mexican Professional Foresters (AMPF), where we finalized a memorandum of understanding initiated during Bob Bosworth's presidency. It calls for continued and increased joint activities between the groups. M.C. Baldemar Arteaga Martinez, president of AMPF, invited SAF to a one-day technical session at AMPF's annual meeting next August.

Heading north again, I attended the Illinois SAF annual meeting. The opening speaker, Edmond Minihan of the American Farmland Trust, asked for ways to partner with SAF to save forests and farmlands from urban sprawl, and to look at the relationships of forest and farm management. At each of these meetings, a spirit of cooperation and friendship was evident across the board. In many ways, international forestry has taken a back seat during the past decade. Perhaps the point of my trip was to start with our closest neighbors and ripple out.

My plane rides illustrated one reason for such an outreach. The skies were clear, and from my window I could see no political boundaries on the ground. Three great countries and cultures occupy one magnificent continent. The only visible boundaries were ecological; what we do in one system will affect the others.

In Illinois, our host forester proudly showed us their restoration work on actively owned bottomland hardwood forests. Both landowners had opposing interests in tree-cutting, yet we did not look at a harvesting operation. Such a meeting would have been nearly heretical among foresters just 20 years ago.

Add to this Canadian and Mexican model community forests and a Mexican request to help save a pine species down to 200 known trees, and clearly forestry is changing. We can debate the "broad field of forestry," but in fact it is broad, nationally and internationally.

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Education Issue Too Limited

As a 49-year member of SAF and retired technical educator, I have some concerns about "A Contested Past: Forestry Education in the United States" by Char Miller and James G. Lewis (September). It contains material and historic viewpoints within such narrow limits that a more proper title should be "A Brief View of the Development of Professional Forestry Education in the United States."

If the authors intended to give an overview of forestry education in the United States then how could they leave out the education of forest technicians, which takes place in community colleges across the United States? Some of these programs are recognized by SAF, and others need encouragement from SAF so that they will seek recognition. The role of vocational-technical education in secondary schools is one of the feeders where forestry education takes place and encourages students to seek further education in forestry.

The "Guide to Forestry and Natural Resource Education" is also deficient. The first two pages listing accredited and recognized curricula are then followed by ample descriptions of professional programs accredited by SAF and only half of the technical programs recognized by SAF.

Secondary students might really benefit by a guide which gave ample descriptions of all accredited and nonaccredited professional programs as well as all recognized and nonrecognized technical programs. We need to (Continued on page 49)
encourage schools to seek accreditation and recognition by SAF.

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Eric Wurzbacher replies:

As part of developing that curricula and program guide, officials of all SAF-accredited or recognized educational programs were notified about contributing; not all replied in time to be included in the issue. In any subsequent treatment of this subject, the *Journal* will do what it can to ensure a more complete representation.

A Schenck-Pinchot Convergence?

Char Miller and James G. Lewis provide an excellent digest of the contested and contentious past of forestry education thought (September), with emphasis on the polarity between the approaches of Carl Schenck and Gifford Pinchot. I agree with all the authors have to say, but there is increasing evidence of convergence on the basic issues of the past; i.e., “The proper balance between academic and practical training” and “opposing... views of forestry and the profession’s place in society.” For example, Hal Salwasser, in his moderator comments at the 1999 SAF National Convention General Sessions, recognized that session’s focus on the externalities that heavily influence forest management—values, policy, science, owners, and uncertainties. But he took time to ask us “not to forget” the very important role of the foresters in society as integrators of these externalities on the land.

William R. Bentley, of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, in describing professional forestry education in New York (also September), echoes that thought in epitomizing our long-term forestry lesson “that forestry is value-driven first and then science-based” and that foresters “integrate values with scientific facts and know the limits of our knowledge” and “are skilled in manipulating forests and predicting consequences.” He goes one step further in resolving the long-term debate on the “proper balance” of curriculum content. The SUNY program and strategy recognizes that the profession needs both sets of skills and knowledge but that both cannot be provided adequately in a four-year undergraduate training program for individual students, and provides for both emphases.

Other evidence of growing convergence between Schenck’s and Pinchot’s emphasis is how loggers are being taught ecology and silviculture and a more effective implementation of foresters’ management prescriptions on the land.

Such developments reflect the growing wisdom and maturity in the profession which is difficult to perceive in these controversial and contentious forestry times without the careful historical studies such as Miller and Lewis have provided.

John Fedkiw
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FROM THE EDITOR

I’m privileged to be the editor of the Journal of Forestry at this point in SAF history; it’s a unique time for creative change. Throughout the coming year, we'll use the Society’s centennial to reflect on forestry's past and look forward to its future. As have my predecessors, I look forward to hearing what the readers of the Journal are thinking that might guide our work here. Be your ideas in the form of articles or letters to the editor or suggestions via telephone, mail, or e-mail, I welcome them all.

Eric Wurzbacher, Editor
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