

IN MEMORIAM

Robert W. Chandler, Bend, Oregon, July 1996.

Mary Cooper Jewett Gaiser, Spokane, Washington, December 1996.

Ruth Desjardins, Vancouver, British Columbia, February 1996.

George S. James, Sonora, California, April 1996.

Jack C. Zalaha, Port Ludlow, Washington, June 1996.

Charles O. Minor, Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 1997.

Hans Schneider, Hammond, Louisiana, April 1997.

Kenneth V. Thimann, Haverford, Pennsylvania, January 1997.

Armin T. Dressel, Camden, Arkansas, February 1997.

Kenneth W. Ford, Roseburg, Oregon, February 1997.

Mark LaHue Townsend, Stuttgart, Arkansas, February 1997.

Stephen Halsey Conger, Augusta, Georgia, February 1997.

Carl A. Weyerhaeuser, Boston, Massachusetts, October 1996.

THE REAL VALUE OF HISTORY

Only being on board a few months, I have been surprised at the divergent views about our new journal *Environmental History*, published jointly with the American Society for Environmental History. While some of our members are lamenting the loss of *Forest & Conservation History*, others are finding new and exciting reading in the new journal. One member recently told me that he looked at the April 1997 issue which contained the article "The Plow and the Forest: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia" and wondered "now why would I be interested in that?" After the first page he was intrigued and by the end of the article he exclaimed "this should be standard reading for any forestry student."

The article examines the historical basis for the statistic that the amount of forested land in Ethiopia has decreased from 40 to 1 percent during the last four decades. Albert Gore cited this statistic in his 1992 book *Earth in the Balance*. The author, James C. McCann, proceeds to evaluate original writings of European travelers about the forests of Ethiopia. In two case studies, it is shown that Ethiopia's "forest cover was already an ancient memory by the time the first records of its landscape appear." In this way the author uncovers how an unsubstantiated assumption became a statement of fact that is now being used as a "pretext for environmental policy."

This member just found out about the real value of history and how it can apply to current issues. And just as we can apply

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the lessons from an international context to forest and conservation history, we can look for lessons in related fields contained in the broader field of environmental history. While some of us do miss the articles and photographs in our previous journal, more popular versions can be found in our annual publication *Forest History Today*. We are currently searching for opportunities to expand *Forest History Today*. In the meantime, don't miss the jewels in *Environmental History*. It is another way in which we can study the past to affect the future.

Steven Anderson
President