

EDITOR'S NOTE

by James G. Lewis

I just returned from the annual conference of the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH). The Forest History Society copublishes the journal *Environmental History* with ASEH, and every few years we cosponsor the meeting. Every year, our president, Steve Anderson, meets with the journal's editorial board; we exhibit our publications and hand out information about the organization; we host either a breakfast or luncheon meeting that gives us the opportunity to recognize award winners and update members on business affairs at FHS; we attend panels and papers and field trips; and we have individual—often impromptu—meetings with FHS board members or potential authors.

Usually three of us attend because there is so much going on that it takes that many people to execute what amounts to a “divide and conquer” strategy—Cheryl might be at the exhibit table while I attend a panel and Steve is in a meeting. Given the average attendance of about 350 people, it is all we can do to make that strategy work. Personally, the whirlwind of activity over the four-day period leaves me both exhilarated and exhausted. I tend to judge the success of the meeting by how tired I am when I board the airplane to return home. The more conversations I have had, the more spent I am by the time I get to the boarding gate. Four days after my return, I'm still trying to catch up on rest. In other words, it was an outstanding meeting.

The number of forest history papers given at the conference tends to ebb and flow over time. Two years does not make a trend, but I would bet that the number of papers increased from last year. What impressed me, though, was the diversity of topics. Scholars are looking at familiar topics through very different lenses or writing about faraway places and distant time periods. One presenter looked at the history of timber estimating in the United States and another at the development of the log rule in the Philippines as ways of examining the professionalization of forestry. The panel I chaired on trees and woodlands in pre-modern Europe looked at management and ecological issues in Italy, France, and England. Other papers discussed mahogany depletion in Brazil and the battle between unions and corporations over conservation practices in early-20th-century Pacific Northwest. (And those are just the ones I heard.) In addition, I had discussions about the unlikely ways that military and environmental history intersect; the difficulties of researching the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Northwest Forest Plan; and, of course, recent and upcoming books that may aid my own research.

In short, the conference is like a three-day-long cram session—

I'm learning more than I can absorb at the time. That is why I ask presenters to share their papers with me. Reading the papers at my leisure also affords me the opportunity to assess the topic or paper as a potential article for *Forest History Today*.

Sometimes a serendipitous conversation can lead to the submission of an article for the magazine. Such is the case of a conversation I had with Byron Pearson. When he wrote his book on the fight over the Grand Canyon in the 1960s, he could not fit in the story of **How the Forest Service Saved the Grand Canyon** in the 1910s. A conversation about our mutual interest in Henry Graves led to his submitting this article because I thought others might want to know about the topic, too. It may not have fit in his book, but it fits perfectly in our magazine.

Serendipity had a hand in bringing us other articles in this issue. When Steve Anderson was talking with leaders at the American Tree Farm System about how the Forest History Society could preserve their records, he asked whether they also wanted to contribute an article about the history of their organization. The result is Brigitte Johnson's **The American Tree Farm System: Growing Stewardship from the Roots**. Another time, a conversation between Steve and the president of the World Forestry Center about one thing led to their providing a **Biographical Portrait of Charles S. Cowan**.

When Harald Fuller-Bennett was doing research for an article on **Woodsy Owl at 40**, he asked our librarian, Cheryl Oakes, for research assistance. When told that he had not decided where to submit it, she suggested that he consider sending the article to me. Initially he couldn't meet the deadline. But when our publication schedule for this issue changed because of the production schedule of the previous issue (the serendipitous hand intervenes again!), Harald could meet the new one and the history of Woodsy took flight (sorry—I could not resist).

In Harald's hands, Woodsy becomes a new lens through which to view the history of the past 45 years of the environmental movement. Claire Williams was also handed a new lens—possibly by serendipity—to view a topic quite familiar to her. She has spent a decade of her career studying the Lost Pines in Texas. But when fire swept through that outlier forest of loblolly pines last year, what initially seemed a loss gave her the opportunity to reexamine assumptions about the pines, which she thoughtfully does in **Replanting the (Really) Lost Pines of Texas**.

And so I ask you, dear reader, to take note of the serendipitous hand when it presents you with forest history topics you would like to read about and encourage authors to submit those articles. □