Reminiscences

In this memoir, Dr. Harold T. Pinkett, President of the Forest History Society, traces for our readers the story of his involvement with our field. You will see how the seed of his career, an early assignment to the records of the Forest Service, led to his current position as Chief of the Natural Resources Records Branch of the National Archives. - Ed.

I WAS INTRODUCED to the world of forest history early in my career as an archivist. Soon after I had been appointed in 1942 to the staff of the National Archives (Division of Agriculture Department Archives), I was asked to prepare a preliminary finding aid for records of the U. S. Forest Service and predecessor organizations. Their volume amounted to more than 1400 cubic feet (roughly equivalent to the contents of 700 legal-size file drawers) and covered the years 1886 to 1940. My descriptive task involved the identification of groups and series of records in terms of their administrative origins and the presentation of data concerning their chronological span, volume, arrangement, and subject matter.

In this work I soon became much impressed by the figure of Gifford Pinchot that loomed on the horizon of scientific forestry in the United States, dominated the events leading to the creation of the Forest Service, and stood forth in the vanguard of the early movement for the conservation of the nation's forests and other natural resources. Prior to this archival assignment my graduate study in history at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University had given me only glimpses of Pinchot primarily as a friend of Theodore Roosevelt and a foe of William H. Taft. The assignment, however, combined with collateral study of the rise and growth of the Forest Service, stimulated my interest in research concerning the basic ideas, methods, and achievements of Pinchot as a forester. Further interest in this direction was aroused when Pinchot's book, Breaking New Ground was published in 1947. To me one of the most striking statements in this work was his expression of dedication to forestry in these words: "I have...been a Governor, every now and then, but I am a forester all the time."

By this time I had returned from military service in Europe and Asia, resumed work at the National Archives, and begun to ponder continued graduate study. My decision to continue was encouraged by my wife, Lucille, whom I think did not wish to see me assume the posture of a contented and uninspired government employee with veterans preference. In any event, when I resumed graduate study at American University in the late 1940s, it was not difficult for me to choose a doctoral dissertation topic. I selected the topic, "Gifford Pinchot and the Early Conservation Movement in the United States" and completed the research and writing on it in 1953. Shortly thereafter, my dissertation came to the attention of Elwood Maunder, then Director of the Forest History Foundation at St. Paul, Minnesota. He provided suggestions and encouragement as I began to seek a publisher for my study.

Meanwhile in 1957, I had become a member of a forest history committee for the District of Columbia, one of several area and state committees that were being established by the Forest History Foundation. Other committee members included foresters or historians such as

"Expect to be of more help later in life—enjoy the journal and appreciate the importance of this work."

President Pinkett
Solon J. Buck, Ovid Butler, Fred E. Hornaday, Charles E. Randall, John Shanklin, G. H. Collingwood, and Ernst Posner. The committee was established to provide assistance to the Foundation in its effort to locate and preserve documentary materials useful for research in forest history. Early in the 1960s I began to write book reviews and articles for *Forest History*, journal of the organization re-designated as the Forest History Society. During this time also I began to revise my doctoral dissertation and eventually submitted it in a book award competition sponsored by the Agricultural History Society. My manuscript titled "Gifford Pinchot: Private and Public Forester" won the award in 1968 and was published by the University of Illinois Press in 1970. The reviews of this work in the nation's leading historical and conservation journals, several newspapers, and the prestigious *Saturday Review of Literature*, and a discussion of the book in a television interview brought me an unequaled sense of professional satisfaction.

The months immediately following the publication of my Pinchot book brought other satisfying experiences. In August 1971, I was appointed to my current post. In October of that year, I was elected a member of the Board of Directors of the Forest History Society. Thus as the decade of the 1970s opened, the association with forest history that had marked the beginning of my archival career showed promise that it would continue in the years to come.

"LIKE A TREE planted by the water...", a memorial gift to the Forest History Society continues to grow for years to come. All such gifts in memory of a friend or relative who cared for FHS and for forest history during his or her lifetime are placed in the Society's Endowment Fund. The income provides steady support for our work, and the Fund perpetuates the memory of our friends.

A Busy Staff...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Woody Haunder is presently engaged in one of his tours about the country on FHS business. Watch for him during August in Oregon and Washington. Then he goes to Bloomington, Minnesota, where the Society's Executive Committee meets on August 26. Following that meeting he and Elly go to northern Wisconsin for a tour of five logging museums in that history-rich area of the state. They will be accompanied by Board Member Jacques Vallier, Director of Menominee Logging Camp Museum, and his wife.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR for Research and Library Services (Harold K.) "Pete" Steen and his staff recently converted half of the FHS garage into a library annex in order to carry out the expanded cataloging activities Librarian Mary Bedford will write about in the next issue of this newsletter. Eight years' worth of accumulated impediments had to be removed and adequate lighting installed, but we now have some additional badly-needed working space.

NEW TO THE Forest History Society staff is our Oral History Coordinator Ron Larson, who brings to his new job five years of experience in oral history research, interviewing, and editing. He was Co-director of the Japanese-American Oral History Project at California State University-Fullerton, where he will earn his MA in History in September. Ron and his wife Tonja are settling into a 60-year-old beach house in Santa Cruz, nautical in motif, with ships wheels, anchors and seagulls molded into the plaster.

RON'S OFFICE NEIGHBOR is our other new staffer, Sophia Gorham, Associate Director for Development. Most recently Executive Director of the Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation in Los Angeles, Sophia is in reality a happily-transplanted Midwesterner, whose background includes eight years of administrative experience with grant-making foundations in Michigan. She and her husband Lew, Sales Representative for Packaging Corporation of America, live now in Capitola, near Santa Cruz, with their two college-student sons and an English Pointer.