

Forest Giant

When forester Carl Alwin Schenck arrived in America in 1895, lumberjacks had just started felling one of the country's vastest stretches of virgin timber, the pine forests of Minnesota. Their methods were simple and brutal. They hacked down acre after acre of trees, leaving the earth behind them bare and vulnerable to soil-robbing wind and rain.

Conservationists of that day, led by Gifford Pinchot, later to become first chief of the Forest Service, cried that the lumberman was a criminal who could not be trusted among posterity's forests. Lock up what remained of the virgin woodlands, they demanded.

But Schenck at 27 took a more serene view of the future. The history of silviculture in his native Germany proved to him that "between the primeval forest and the cultured forest there always is devastation." As soon as timber became scarce, he predicted, the lumberman would find it worth-while to conserve and even rebuild his resources. Meanwhile, the main task of conservation was not to whip up indignation among nature lovers but to educate the capitalist in preserving his timberland investments.

Vindication: This Fabian forest philosophy earned young Schenck many bitter enemies, among them for a time Pinchot. But this week Schenck knew that half a century had vindicated him. In 1918 American lumbermen were cutting 5.8 board-feet for every one that grew. Today the ratio has shrunk to 1.53 to one, and the gap is steadily closing. As he predicted, enlightened lumbermen have come to realize that they must cut selectively, leaving enough trees to reseed the earth, and when necessary replant burned or overcut areas.

In mid-May the American Forestry Association started Schenck off on a triumphal national tour. In New York he was welcomed by 40 alumni of the Biltmore Forest School, the country's first forestry school, which he had founded. In Philadelphia, fellow Quakers honored him. Then followed receptions and forest inspections in Staunton, Va., Aiken, S.C., and Pisgah National Forest, N.C. (site of his old school).

The high point of the tour occurred last week in Prairie Creek State Park, north of Orick, Calif. There 100 persons, including a dozen BFS alumni, gathered to dedicate to him a 40-acre grove of lofty redwoods purchased through the Save-the-Redwoods League. His 6-foot-4-inch figure as erect as any of the trees, the 83-year-old forester looked around at the alumni and muttered: "I love these damn boys so much."

As his eyes filled with tears, he boomed: "If you want to raise a crop for one year, plant corn. If you want to raise

a crop for decades, plant trees. If you want to raise a crop for centuries, raise men. If you want to plant a crop for eternities, raise democracies."

Looking back, the men who knew him could testify that Carl Alwin Schenck did more than his share of raising crops for decades, centuries, and eternities.

Love's Language: A thin and fortuitous line led Schenck from his native Darmstadt in Germany to America. In his college days he fell in love with a fellow student, a British girl named Dolly, who taught him English using Shakespeare's "Richard II" as a textbook.

When later he was studying forestry at the University of Giessen, Schenck's peculiar knowledge of English qualified him to welcome a British visitor, Sir Dietrich Brandis, then the world's foremost forester. Sir Dietrich took a liking to the young man with the strange Elizabethan vocabulary and he asked Schenck to join him on a tour of German, French, and Swiss forests. For five summer vacations thereafter the young man kept company with the master, learning the best of old-world forestry.

Across the ocean, in 1891, George W. Vanderbilt had started reforesting old fields on his 130,000-acre Biltmore Estate near Asheville, N.C. Interested in the European brand of planned forestry, unknown then in prodigal America, he hired as forester another Brandis pupil, Gifford Pinchot.

By 1895, however, Pinchot was so involved with other consulting jobs and with his crusade for public forest reserves

(forerunners of today's National Forests), that Vanderbilt had to get a new timber manager. At the suggestion of Sir Dietrich, he hired Schenck at a salary of \$200 a month, later raised to \$300.

The assignment was overwhelming. Schenck not only had to deal with problems of reforestation involving soils and trees unfamiliar to him, but he had to select trees for lumber, float them down the French Broad River to the mill, lay out logging roads, and learn how to deal with local laborers who were haughty mountaineers very different from humble European peasants.

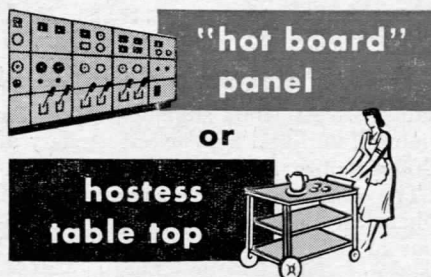
School Starts: His greatest need was for competent assistants. Since America had no schools of forestry, none was to be found. So with Vanderbilt's encouragement Schenck started the Biltmore Forest School in 1898. That was his greatest contribution to American forestry.

The school offered a concentrated twelve-month course to men only. Its avowed purpose was to "fit young men for employment by lumbermen and owners of timberland." Classes were conducted in a shack provided by Vanderbilt, who collected half of each of the 25 to 40 pupils' \$200 fees, thus making a small profit from the school.

Biltmore was the first of a quick succession of forestry schools; the second was founded at Cornell University two months later, Yale's and Minnesota's in 1900. But Biltmore remained unique for its practical training. "My boys worked continuously in the woods," Schenck recalls, "while those at other schools

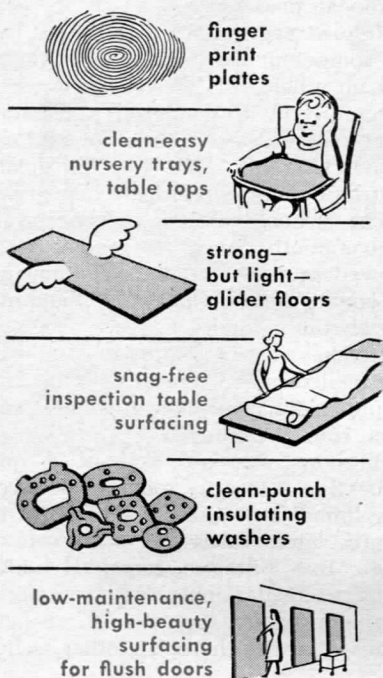


Schenck: The grand old man has planted for eternity



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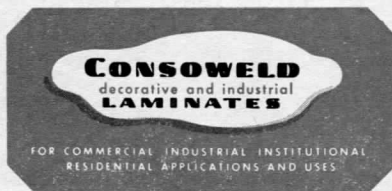


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saw wood only on their desks."

The day at BFS began at dawn when the boys arose to curry and feed the horses. Schenck insisted that every pupil own a horse. Classes from 8 a.m. until noon were profane and pungent, punctuated with chalk flicked at drowsy students. Schenck himself was so carried away during one memorable lecture that he got down on hands and knees and demonstrated the behavior of the pine beetle. After lunch came the daily field trip, a jaunt that often covered 15 or more miles of rugged mountains.

Beckwoods Advice: "Put on the roughest of rough clothes and go to the beckett of the beckwoods and get that grit and determination that will enable you to overcome all obstacles," the professor would urge his boys in his guttural accents. If they were caught in a downpour, he would shame complainers with: "Does your hide leak?" His energy kept two horses, three dogs, and all the pupils winded and heaving six days a week.

Saturday, the only day of rest, was often climaxed by a beer party and songfest, the professor dominating with his mighty baritone. Sunday was reserved for cleaning—horses, clothes, and selves.

In 1909 Schenck left Vanderbilt's em-

with baked apples and brown bread.

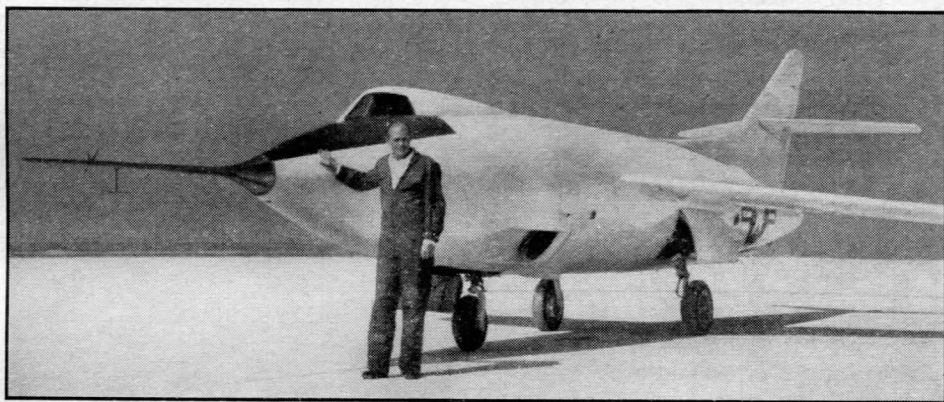
Although loyal BFS alumni and die-hard followers of Pinchot's eternal-wilderness philosophy still keep the old battle alive, the controversy has disappeared as an issue. Pinchot's beloved National Forests—180,000,000 acres of them in 38 states, Alaska, and Puerto Rico—are a cherished part of American geography. But producing through private capital under the scrutiny of the Forest Service considerably more than 10 per cent of the nation's lumber, they fulfill Schenck's ideal of conservation through wide use.

Last week the old man, eager to let bygones be bygones, named one of his redwoods after Gifford Pinchot. But the biggest of all he dedicated to his boys, the Biltmore Forest School Alumni.

Skyrocket Recordbreaker

"You feel like you're going right on out of the world. I never even saw what color the sky is up there. I think it's dark. But you don't notice anything except the instruments before you."

Thus Bill Bridgeman described last week his sensations during an epoch-making Navy test flight on June 11 over the Mojave Desert. Clad in a pressure



On his historic flight pilot Bridgeman never saw the sky

ploy, and the school became a nomad with winter sessions in Europe, summers in the United States. It was finally abandoned shortly before the first world war. Schenck returned to Europe and served as a captain in the German army.

In the '20s and '30s, Schenck several times visited the United States to teach at various forestry schools. (He now lives in Lindenfels in a house built of American wood.) But the BFS was never revived. Nevertheless, in fifteen years it had turned out some 400 graduates, 300 of whom served forestry in government and private industry.

Personal animosity between the two great conservationists, Pinchot the evangelist and Schenck the businessman forester, was dead by 1912, when Schenck's class visited Pinchot's Washington home, topping off an evening's discussion

suit and plastic-faced helmet (with windshield-wiper to clean off condensed breath), the 34-year-old pilot flew faster and higher than any man in history.

His craft was an experimental Douglas Skyrocket, dropped from the belly of a B-29 "mother" plane at 35,000 feet. Turning on the rockets, Bridgeman pointed the needle-nosed Skyrocket up at a 45-degree angle, streaked into the stratosphere, and leveled off. Three tons of fuel lasted three minutes. Then he glided down to a landing.

Beyond saying that every existing record had been broken, the Navy would not reveal exactly how high and fast the plane went. But aviation experts guessed that the Skyrocket had reached an altitude of more than 12 miles and had traveled at about 1,500 miles an hour—more than twice the speed of sound.