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NEW TRICKS FOR OLD "DAWGS"

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks," or so the adage goes. Some days it certainly seems that way, especially with this old "dawg." When the *Wood and Fiber Science* Editor said that he thought it would be a good idea for the outgoing Past President to write a "swan song" editorial, I reluctantly agreed. What on earth could I say that would be new, refreshing, or challenging? I must have believed the old adage. All the good stuff had been addressed. In recent issues, Paul Winistorfer talked about passion and vision in research, and Frank Beall discussed housing research (durability being a particular interest of mine). Bob Youngs talked about communications and good writing (scratch another pet topic of mine), while Bob Rice discussed Societal vision and mission. Alas, topics seemed few and far between.

Then in casual conversation with a colleague, it struck me—what is the glue that holds all of this together, including who we are, what we do, and where we are going? One concept, one word—LEADERSHIP! We all have seen good and bad examples of leadership, and my purpose is not to cite examples, but rather to suggest feasible concepts. First, a title does not inculcate one with leadership. More often than not, titles just get in the way. Second, one can lead regardless of one's level of hierarchy. I am reminded of an active duty staff sergeant in my ROTC corps during college who illustrates both of these points. As cadets, we thought Sgt. Lewis had a lot more on the ball than most of the cadre officers. He would discuss leadership with us and give tips that weren't in any of the books. He was given a parade as part of his retirement. As the cadet units marched by the reviewing stand, no one could see Sgt. Lewis, but in his place was a Lt. Col. Lewis with more decorations (including several for valor) than I had ever seen. You see he retired at his highest rank, which he attained through a battlefield commission. Truly, his was leadership from the bottom up.

Third, there are tried and true skills of leadership which, when applied properly, help accomplish the main task of leadership: achieving the goal while keeping the group together. Doing one at the expense of the other is not leadership. It amazes me that when people move into leadership positions, they often forget why they wanted the position in the first place. The "Peter Principle" takes over. Good leadership means that one knows the needs and characteristics of one's group, the resources available to the group, and fosters good communications skills among group members and with stakeholders. Good leadership means knowing how to share leadership with others while being a good representative of one's group to the upper administrative body, be it in industry, academia, or government, and from the administrative body to the group. Planning and evaluations skills are a requisite for good leadership as is controlling group performance.

What does all of this have to do with the Society of Wood Science and Technology? Many perceive a crisis for our Society and profession—industrial movement offshore, shrinking enrollment in academic programs, reduced budgets for research, member apathy, etc. WE are the Society, and if WE fail to provide the leadership for our profession, WE will become an anachronism, an old "dawg" who cannot change or learn new tricks. Dynamic leadership is required from us all. We cannot stand around and wring our hands; we must lead our profession and industry, whether it is at the Society committee level, the research bench, the corporate boardroom, or the university classroom. Remember, *there is no limit to what we can accomplish if we don't care who gets the credit*. What kind of "dawg" are you?

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