

## ATLANTA REVISITED

In 1978 the Society of Wood Science and Technology held its annual meeting at the Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. An amazing structure! It's over 70 stories tall, is made mostly of glass, and is topped with a revolving restaurant. As you leave the restaurant, your money rushes to the cash register—you descend in the elevator and the blood rushes to your head! Marketing science and engineering technology at work.

About 30 years ago, (as a mere lad of course!) I recall the Prudential Building being the tallest structure in Chicago. And you could observe the glass-enclosed workings of the fully automated elevator system that dispensed with the need for operators. Marvel of marvels, but nowadays, of course, all this is quite commonplace. The point is, many things can change dramatically in a relatively short period of time, and often without our being aware of what is happening.

The 1978 annual meeting program held in Atlanta was entitled "Education in Wood Science and Technology." Why this topic? Because its time was perhaps long overdue. The one and only comprehensive study of this subject was completed by Everett Ellis in 1964. The book, *Education in Wood Science and Technology*, contains the following quote: "This study arose from a concern and belief on the part of members of the Society of Wood Science and Technology that education and related matters in their profession were in need of analysis and direction." Appropriate words for then, but no less appropriate for now.

The Atlanta program was well attended, with broad participation and spirited involvement. The speakers, whose talks are published in this issue, basically addressed the educational questions of where have we been, where are we now, where do we need to go, and how are we going to get there? A panel-audience discussion followed their presentation, and a condensation of that dialogue is included in this issue.

Also included are a thought-provoking editorial by Frank Kaufert, "Accreditation and SWST," and a report by John Howe entitled "Forest Products Technician Programs in the United States and Canada." These items, along with all others in this issue, should be read and studied by each member of the Society. They contain considerable food for thought.

It is a tried but true statement, "Times change and so do needs." Therefore it is hoped that the meeting at Atlanta, plus the material published in this issue of *Wood and Fiber*, will serve as catalysts for further activity. What kinds of activities? SWST is now firmly established in the business of putting on symposiums. Should there be a symposium in the near future that is devoted to education in wood science and technology? The professional pages of *Wood and Fiber* are available for, and are an appropriate place to publish, comments, ideas, and different points of view in regard to educational matters. There is the Education Committee of the Society to use for the translation of ideas into action. And of course there is also the Newsletter. It can be used for keeping the membership aware of various items that are considered to have educational impact. The Visiting Scientist Program can and does serve as a medium of exchange between government, industry, universities, and individuals. But is this enough? For example, are we adequately educating the public? Like it or not, we need to

be concerned about identity and image to gain the necessary political support and take our rightful "place in the sun." There are probably no easy answers, but that does not mean we should ignore or avoid the questions.

Education is obviously a dynamic process. It needs periodic inputs from various levels and sources so as to anticipate rather than simply react to change. And in this regard we may have been delinquent. In looking through the specific recommendations under "Continuing Study" from Ellis' book, I discover that some recommendations are just now being addressed while others still await their turn. Can we afford the luxury of such leisurely neglect?

ROBERT ERICKSON

*Chairman, Annual Meeting Program 1978  
Atlanta, GA*