

# WOOD AND FIBER SCIENCE

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## WHO ARE WE?

The question of self-identity is perhaps the most fundamental internal struggle faced by any one individual or group. The question cannot be fully answered due to the transient state of the conditions. Yet the approximation of the answer reveals our successes, failures, struggles, goals, and direction.

I have been a member of the Society for more than 15 years and until recently have pretty much muddled my way through. As a member of SWST, I would submit an occasional article to *Wood and Fiber Science* and attend the annual meetings, sort of as an entree to the FPS annual meeting. I would wince upon arrival of a manuscript from *Wood and Fiber Science*, but would dutifully review the sent manuscript. I would mail in my annual dues, always at the last possible minute. The money was sent in partially out of guilt, but primarily so that Vicki would not have to pester me about my annual dues. I'd peruse the quarterly journal upon its arrival into the predesignated pigeon hole, paper clipping the articles of interest, and tossing them in the proverbial stack. When the stack reached a critical level, I would compromise, settling on just the abstracts and then jamming the journals into any nook or cranny I could find on the bookshelf.

A funny thing happened several years ago. I actually started reading the editorials. From the never-ending pounding theme of 'get involved' that seems to resonate in almost every one of these editorials, I decided to do just that. I joined a few committees and actually managed to walk away from them relatively unscathed. Falling under the category of 'no good deed goes unpunished,' I then found myself elected to the SWST board. And thus, the soul-searching begins.

Being elected an officer in SWST is an honor that I hope you will have the opportunity to experience in the future. You become an executor of an organization whose basic doctrine is the understanding and efficient utilization of this nation's most utilized, renewable resource. We are a unique group, hungry for knowledge and obsessed with inquiry. We are well-educated children trying to fig-

ure out why things work and how we can build them better.

As members of the Society, we are indoctrinated into increasing our knowledge of wood: its components, assemblage, and potential. It was this underlying principle that brought a who's who list of wood scientists (Jayne, Marra, Bethel, Ellis, de Zeeuw et al.) to Robert Youngs' house 42 years ago to form the foundation of our current Society. Those founders drafted the Constitution and By-Laws, and shortly thereafter our young Society comprised more than 600 of us inquisitive children. Membership numbers have leveled off at around 450, but the flames of science are burning as bright as ever. This level of scientific excellence can be seen in the pages of this journal, heard during the fundamental sessions of the annual meeting, and subsequently discussed in the more informal evening elbow-rubbings.

Find out more about your Society. Find out about your fellow members, officers, and committees. The next time Bob sends you a manuscript to review, feel free to toss it on top of the high priority pile on your desk. At the risk of sounding incestuous, I urge you to give these manuscripts a thorough critique—not because Bob sent a personalized note with the review and not because you are friends with one of the authors, co-authors, or with someone who would benefit from this research. Do it because the article to be published (or not) is the most visible reflection of who we are as a scientific organization. Serve on committees when asked. Let elected officers of your Society know what is being done wrong or right. Pay your dues. Publish. Educate. Pursue grants. Play in the lab. Be thankful for the fact that you are getting paid to do what you love. And fan those flames of fundamental knowledge that benefit the field of wood science and the success of the forest products industry.

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