

WOOD AND FIBER

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WOOD AND WOMAN

In this age of fast and dynamic change, it is important that we have a fresh approach and perhaps a different perspective on the world about us.

A wood technologist is indeed a marriage counsellor in that he must study and effectively combine different materials—wood and metal, wood and plastics, etc. This counsellor philosophy led me to develop an analogy to introduce and explain wood technology to heterogeneous groups. It has proved to be amusing and successful, and I would like to pass along some of the more provocative remarks.

Wood as a material of antiquity has been out-glamoured by plastics and metal in the last quarter century, and its very ease of use has led to considerable abuse and much misunderstanding as to its potential.

Like many other things in nature, wood—and woman, too—are complex and must be understood to be appreciated or effectively utilized. I use the “wood and woman” theme since these two subjects have the most influence on my life and are in many respects very comparable.

Both are designed by nature with form and beauty, quite variable in shape, at times easy to work with and at other times most refractory. Woman has changed with the times—so has wood and our capability with it. Take the analogy a bit further. Wood is variable from board to board, in color and figure, in reaction to stress and ability to spring back; it changes with changes in weather, is difficult to move unless properly finished or dressed, and is better when handled with respect and treated or fed properly.

We continually have a changing look

with woman—the basics don't really change but by proper and inventive marketing (take the mini-skirt, for example), we have a new appeal, easier sale, and increased customer satisfaction.

What I have been trying to emphasize is that modern technology has been, is being, and can be applied to wood as it has been to modern woman. Women today do many more jobs and find unlimited potential on the basis of modern attitudes and technology. They live longer lives, that is, with reasonably good treatment, and are more attractive than ever.

The need to communicate with other professions as with women “to tell it like it is” is a professional charge we don't meet often enough. How can we best communicate to assure an optimum technical exchange? A positive approach to “what wood could do” is paramount. We know it, so let's tell it and sell it in words that make others listen and understand. Emphasize the future of this renewable, natural, elastic, plastic, honeycomb material designed by nature as a structural system. Its availability, economy, and virtual inexhaustibility assure a continuing role for wood as a primary engineering material.

Wood is a complex material but we know a great deal about it and are learning more. By application of our knowledge, with a realistic attitude toward people's needs, wood, like woman, offers unlimited potential for human welfare.

HAROLD B. GATSLICK

*Department of Forestry
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003*