

EDITORIAL

I am honored to write this final letter as I retire from being your Executive Director of the *Society of Wood Science and Technology*. It has been a wonderful ride these past 46 years.

Two years ago, I was chosen to be one of the “SWST Woman Ambassadors Creating the Future of Wood Science.” However, I don’t have the same background as the rest of the Women Ambassadors. I don’t have a BS, MS, or PhD. When I graduated high school, even though I was 3rd in my class, I was counseled that my best career option would be as a secretary because I had good organizational skills, math skills, and secretarial ability. I didn’t have the confidence in myself at that time to do something different. So that’s what I did, first for an insurance company in Madison, WI, then at a US Army medical pharmacy in Fort Jackson, SC, next at a nuclear missile base as the colonel’s secretary in Neu Ulm Germany, and finally back to Madison at the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) where I retired in 2011. I began as a secretary but was fortunate enough to have a supervisor with good insight to establish an upward mobility position as a statistical assistant. I was able to get training and education in this field and earned a 2-yr associate degree in science from our local technical college and university to reach the research statistician level.

In 1976, William Lehmann was the Society’s Executive Secretary (this had always been a scientist or engineer from FPL since the Society began in 1958). He was also my supervisor at FPL. He asked me to help him with his Society position and said I would love it and be challenged by it. Thus, began my journey with SWST. I was the Assistant to William Lehman, followed by William Simpson, and finally J. T. Quirk. In 1984, Dr. Quirk said I was doing all the work anyway so I should just become the Executive Secretary. It was a challenge to get the SWST Board of Directors to agree to this because, since 1958 when the organization was formed, the Executive Secretary had ALWAYS

been a MALE research scientist at FPL. However, it did happen and I have been the Executive Director since.

I remember the first meeting I attended. It was held in the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver, CO, in June 1977. I was in awe, as I saw the opulence of the hotel, the crystal chandeliers, the beautiful furnishings. It was the most extravagant hotel I had been in, and I was there to WORK and meet this amazing group of professional wood science people who were world-renowned and experts in their fields. I was overwhelmed as a very young 25-yr-old, unexperienced, timid, and naïve woman.

But time goes by quickly and now I stand before you, not as that 25-yr-old, but as a much older, more experienced, confident, and determined woman. And you, professional world-renowned scientists, are still here and I am enlightened and educated at each meeting and with each interaction I have with any of you.

I was especially appreciative to be present at the 2023 International Convention in June in Asheville, NC, with 19 past presidents who came to share this last event with me, to offer their support and friendship, and to let me know they appreciated my time with them. I also had correspondence and phone calls with several other past presidents who couldn’t make it to the meeting but wanted to be sure they could pass on their good wishes.

Each past president didn’t just give 1 yr of their time to the Society, but 4 years on the Board, in addition to numerous committee assignments. I was able to spend this time with them, helping them travel through the many rules and procedures that make up a professional Society. It was a challenge at times, but always rewarding and fulfilling.

Working for SWST enabled me to grow as a person and gave me the gift of self-confidence. During the time I’ve been Executive Director, I have run the day-to-day operations of the Society, answering emails, taking phone calls, taking care

of financials, writing reports, developing and maintaining the organization's website, working with many board members and committee members, and organizing board meetings, as well as meetings of the Society as a whole.

With my background at FPL as a Statistician, I was involved in many different fields of research, so I knew a little about each of them and this helped with my handling of inquiries about a myriad of wood-related issues. The best, and sometimes most challenging part, has been organizing international meetings. I've learned a great deal about organizing conferences and everything associated with conference planning particularly holding meetings in several countries around the world. I have enjoyed thoroughly the considerable travel associated with these meetings as well as the opportunity to meet and work with so many different people over the years and in many countries.

I believe that people in the wood field are wonderful. They care about other people and truly about our earth and want to make a difference in the world. I have been so lucky to have met and worked with a multitude of talented and dedicated people over the years on the Executive Boards and Committees.

What you choose to do is important and can change the world. I would like to challenge you to continue

to support your professional society, SWST, and become involved. You can do this by writing papers and publishing in our two journals, *BioProducts Business* and *Wood and Fiber Science*. They are known around the world as high-level research journals. You can also attend conventions that are held once a year where you can present your research and learn from others about research that is going on either in your field or in something totally different that you might find interesting. It's a time to network and meet these great people. You can also volunteer on committees, run for office for SWST, and help shape the future. Just remember—**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

It was difficult for me to say goodbye and turn over the Executive Director's position, but I look forward to new challenges and opportunities in other paths. I ask that you offer your new Executive Director, Angela Haney, the same respect and assistance that you have given me over the years.

I will never say "Goodbye," but instead "Au Revoir" (until we meet again). I send out my love and best wishes to all of you! Thank you for all you have done for me.

Sincerely,

VICTORIA HERIAN
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