

U.S. Forest Products Lab Centennial Oral History Project

Title: U.S. Forest Products Lab Centennial Oral History Project

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Abstract:

Digital audio recorded interviews with 52 current and former employees of the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory located in Madison, Wisconsin. The interviews were conducted as part of an oral history project undertaken by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Oral History Program in cooperation with the Forest Products Laboratory, to document the Forest Products Laboratory's history in their work to promote healthy forest and forest-based economies through the efficient, sustainable use of our wood resources in Wisconsin and through the U.S. in preparation for the Laboratory's centennial anniversary in 2010.

Interviews were conducted by Lauren Benditt, Ellen Jacks, Allison Page, and Brad Wiles between January and November 2008. All interviews have been fully transcribed and keyword indexed; the transcripts and indexes are on paper and also have been preserved in electronic form. Also included in the collection are project documents relating to the planning, research, and execution of the oral history project.

Biography/History:

Established in 1910 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service through the efforts of the newly appointed U.S. Forest Service Chief, Gifford Pinchot, his deputy Overton Price, and the chief of the Office of Wood Utilization, McGarvey Cline; the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory, located in Madison, Wisconsin, became the first research facility of its kind focusing principally on the study and research into the physical properties and resource utilization of wood.

Originally residing at 1509 University Avenue on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, now the Materials Science and Engineering Building, the Forest Products Laboratory was comprised of four research divisions: wood preservation timber testing, wood chemistry and wood technology. Within a short time the Laboratory developed divisions in other research areas in engineering, pathology, wood distillation, and pulp and paper.

Since its founding, the Laboratory has served as the nation's leading wood research institute. Many of the Laboratory's significant contributions have included crucial research and cooperative studies with the U.S. Armed Forces during both World War I and World War II, performing experiments on wood for airplane construction; as well as research into box and packaging materials, and charcoal used in gas masks.

More recently, through the inclusion of other research areas, the Laboratory continues to play a significant role in responding to environmental pressures on forest resources by focusing on the study of recycling, developing environmentally friendly technology, and understanding ecosystem-based forest management.

Scope and Content:

This collection consists of digitally recorded interviews, keyword abstracts, full-text transcriptions, and project documents relating to interviews conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Oral History Program from January to November 2008 with current and former employees of the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory whose careers span from 1942 to present (2008).

The interviews document the history of the USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory from its founding in 1910 to present through current and former men and women scientists, technicians, and secretarial/clerical employees at the Laboratory. While two of the narrators were present at the Laboratory during its wartime operations and several have been employed in the early years of the turn of the 21st century; the bulk of the interviews conducted focus on the post-war FPL period and careers from the 1950s and 1960s to the late 1990s.

This collection is arranged into five series: the digitally recorded audio interviews with fifty-one of the fifty-two narrators, including one additional session each for three narrators; abstracts to the transcriptions of each interview, paper-based full-text transcriptions of the interviews, the interviewers' research files including interview notes and materials collected on FPL, and the project's administrative files.

Series 1: The Audio Recordings series contains the digitally recorded audio MP3s of the oral history interviews. Each narrator was assigned a single Oral History Number upon completion of his/her initial interview, regardless of whether a second interview was conducted. Access to individual audio recordings is available upon request through individual oral history tape numbers. All the interviews were transcribed and the transcripts are located in Series 3.

Series 2: The Abstracts series consists of keyword and time code indexes to each interview session constructed by the oral history project team. The series is arranged alphabetically by the narrators' last names and contain biographical and professional information relating to each narrator, administrative data relating to the conducting and processing of individual interviews, as well as the keyword, page, and time coded index for individual interview sessions with each narrator. Abstracts are available for viewing in hard-copy in the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University Archives' reading room.

Series 3: The Transcripts series contains the full-text transcriptions of the recorded interviews found in Series 1. The content of the interviews primarily focuses initially on biographical information about the narrator's pre-FPL lives and careers, with commentaries on their motivation or interest in forestry or a related field, early education and previous employment, as well as their initial impressions of the Lab and about their hiring and training process in the early years.

When discussing their careers at the Laboratory most focused on their scientific research areas and projects conducted at the Lab's facilities or as a representative of the Lab in fieldwork at locations such as the Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station in Portland, Oregon. Research areas and significant scientific contributions are highlighted by the narrators and range from research in: adhesives, wood preservation and resource utilization; bioenergy, pulp and paper, wood anatomy research; mechanical testing, recycling, mycology; wood and fungi identification, and

finishing and restoration of wood products. In addition to their research, many narrators reminisced about their colleagues and the social atmosphere of the Laboratory, providing stories about departmental and Lab parties and picnics, leagues such as the FPL bowling and softball teams; contributing to the staff newsletter CHIPS, and participating in organized groups like the Men's Club and FLPEA (Forest Products Lab Employees Association).

Narrators also commented on their later years and for the bulk of the narrators, their retirement from the Laboratory. Many reflected on their careers at the Lab and on working for or with an agency that is part of the U.S. Forest Service, in addition to their opinion of how the Lab is viewed nationally and internationally. Many of those that are current employees, considered their ambitions for their future work at the Lab, as well as their expectations and hopes for the future of the Lab itself.

Series 4: The Interview Notes and Background Materials series contains the research files collected by the project team on the Forest Products Laboratory, interview notes and resources. The background research documents include a copy of the first administrative history of the Lab in the form of a PhD thesis by Charles A. Nelson titled, "History of the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory (1910-1963)," compiled in 1971; a bibliography to miscellaneous publications about FPL, as well as other publications regarding the history of individual research areas at the Lab.

Series 5: The Administrative Files series primarily contains the project team's administrative files relating to the funding, planning, execution and outreach of the FPL oral history project. Included are files relating to the budget, grants, purchases and cash distribution of funds for the project; the Institutional Review Board approval, the joint venture agreement contract between the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System and the USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory; and miscellaneous documents relating to the hiring and status transfer of the student project team members. In addition, the Administrative Files series contains project meeting notes, documents relating to the planning and development of the project, and spreadsheets documenting the workflow and process of the oral history project itself.

Also included in this series is correspondence between interviewers and narrators between February and October 2008. These files, which primarily consist of letter format with some printed email correspondence, include actual and templates of introductory and thank you letters sent to narrators, letters providing narrators with instruction on reviewing and submitting edits to the transcript of their interviews, and release form requests. Also within the correspondence subseries are files containing materials submitted by narrators, which contain the transcripts that were marked by the narrators with their corrections and returned to the project team, correspondence from narrators, and other materials submitted by narrators such as copies of their published works, which are arranged alphabetically by narrator. The permission agreement or release forms are also filed within the correspondence series, making the transcripts available to researchers.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Access Restrictions

No release forms were gathered from Douglas Crawford and Bryan River. Researchers, therefore, should not quote directly from these interviews. Additionally, researchers should note that records relating to interviews conducted with David Schumann and J. Dobbin McNatt are restricted indefinitely.

Contents List

Tape Number

AUDIO RECORDINGS

Tape No.910	Baker, Andrew
	Note: 2 audio CDS
Tape No.978	Boone, R. Sidney
Tape No.919	Caulfield, Daniel F.
Tape No.987	Clausen, Carol A.
Tape No.980	Crawford, Douglas M.
Tape No.983	Dietrich, Diane
Tape No.911	Esenher, Glenn R.
Tape No.925	Ethington, Robert L.
Tape No.926	Feist, William C.
Tape No.928	Fronczak, Frank J.
Tape No.923	Geimer, Robert L.
Tape No.976	Gerhards, Charles C.
Tape No.934	Gjovik, Lee R.
Tape No.991	Micales-Glaeser, Jessie A.
Tape No.937	Godshall, W. Duncan
Tape No.971	Green, David W.
Tape No.984	Gust, Dolores
Tape No.972	Hamilton, Thomas E.
Tape No.990	Highley, Terry L.
Tape No.989	Holmes, Carlton A.
	Note: No audio track. In place of audio interview, narrator provided a written statement.
Tape No.929	Johnson, Bruce R.

Tape No.921	Kirk, T. Kent
Tape No.922	Klungness, John H.
Tape No.914	Kurtenacker, Robert S.
Tape No.918	Laundrie, James F.
Tape No.985	LeVan, Susan
Tape No.992	Lulling, Robert M. Note: This interview was conducted in two sessions. Each session consists of 2 audio CDS.
Tape No.979	Lunstrum, Stanford J. Note: This interview was conducted with oral history program staff in one session. Additionally, the narrator submitted a revised audio version of his original answers to his original interview. Therefore this interview consists of 2 audio CDs of the original interview; as well as 1 CD and 1 audio cassette of the narrator's revised version.
Tape No.920	McDonald, Kent A.
Tape No.930	McNatt, J. Dobbin
Tape No.916	Maeglin, Robert R.
Tape No.932	Miller, Regis B.
Tape No.974	Minor, James L.
Tape No.927	Moody, Russell C.
Tape No.973	Myers, Gary C.
Tape No.982	Ralph, Sally
Tape No.975	River, Bryan H.
Tape No.931	Rowell, Roger M.
Tape No.917	Schumann, David R.
Tape No.912	Setterholm, Vance C.
Tape No.981	Simpson, William T.
Tape No.935	Soltis, Lawrence A.
Tape No.933	Springer, Edward L.

Tape No.938 Sykes, Marguerite
Tape No.993 Tuomi, Roger L.
Tape No.986 Wolfe, Barbara
Tape No.988 Wolfe, Ronald W.
Tape No.977 Wolter, Karl E.
Tape No.924 Youngquist, John
Tape No.913 Youngs, Robert
Tape No.915 Zerbe, John
Tape No.936 Zinkel, Duane F.

INTERVIEW ABSTRACTS
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
INTERVIEW NOTES AND BACKGROUND MATERIALS

Background research
Interview notes
Interview questions
Interview resources
Narrator lists and contact information

ADMINISTRATIVE FILES

Budget and Hiring Documents
Budget and cash distributions
Funds, Brittingham
Institutional Review Board
Joint venture agreements
Supply purchases and reimbursements
Student Employment Documents
Correspondence
Correspondence with narrators
Letter templates to narrators
Materials submitted by narrators
Permission agreement forms
Project Planning, Workflow, and Outreach
Oral History Association Conference
Project meeting notes
Workflow planning and spreadsheet