

## Gratitude and Hope

*Founder's Essay by Bren Whittaker, a proud founding member from Brunswick VT, population 112.*

Editors and writing coaches warn against using terms such as “eternally grateful” for something. They describe them as “trite”, “over-blown” or “hackneyed.” Yet, with no apology here, I will state that I am eternally grateful - and always will be - to my Vermont Forester colleague and long-time friend, Ross Morgan who, in 1997 insisted I go with him to Asheville NC for the birth-event and formal launching of the Forest Stewards Guild.

When I look back upon my sixty-three year career in Forestry, the most significant event was to be present in the very rooms where the young Gifford Pinchot presented his Plan for the Biltmore Forest to the Vanderbilts back in 1893, and cast my “yea” vote for the final motion to name the Guild. (This significance even surpasses my becoming only the second professional forester to head Vermont’s Natural Resource Agency during its past 50 years in existence.)

Those now, in my time of retirement, are my personal memories of the Guild and I obviously treasure them.

But looking forward I want to talk to young graduate foresters, who are perhaps just beginning, and to even younger men and women considering a forestry career. As I am writing this, our national forested treasures, the National and private forests in the Pacific states are horrifically on fire. With this tragedy, our profession is plunged into national debate, including the politicization, and resulting misunderstandings by the general public over “The Practice of Forestry.” We have seen nothing like this since the days of Gifford Pinchot, Teddy Roosevelt, and Wm. H. Taft.

Younger professionals and those who aspire to this profession, with the Guild, will be the generation to bring forth a “New Forestry.” My personal conviction is that, somehow historic classic Silviculture, with its base in ever-growing scientific findings, will be a major key here. That remains to be seen as we enter unprecedented challenges in Forestry.

For now, I urge us all, once again and often, to turn to the fundamental [Six Principles of the Forest Stewards Guild](#). In the words of my Episcopal Prayer Book, “Read, Mark, Learn, and Inwardly Digest Them.” They are, and will continue to be, a steadying rock as we go forward into a Forestry which, while carrying fundamentals long familiar (e.g., “Silviculture” mentioned above) will have aspects unknown to us at this time.

From my own small section of the Spruce-Fir Acadian Forest in far northeastern Vermont, I send best wishes and Godspeed to all members, young and older, of the Forest Stewards Guild!