You’ve come a Long Way, Baby!

Year of birth: 1925; actual day unknown but perhaps early July; 10 inches long; weighing in at a modest 52 pages; proud parents: the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers, later to become the Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut Forestier du Canada. I refer of course to The Forestry Chronicle.

From humble beginnings, the Chronicle has come a long way thanks to the efforts of numerous people over the past 88 years. As Jim Cayford noted, it is constantly evolving, constantly informing (Cayford 2000).

This past year saw a richness of articles in addition to professional and scientific papers. To highlight a few: in the July/August issue, look again at Mark Kube’s President’s Perspective When the Valley was Unknown about the Canadian Forestry Corps in World War I, complementing incidentally an excellent and personal article by current vice president Al Stinson in the 2010 July/August issue, Canadian Forestry Skills to the Rescue.

Re-read Jeff Muzzi’s article in the September/October issue: There are commodities and there are services. Commodities pay the bills. The November/December Chronicle featured a guest editorial by Denis Villeneuve, president of l’Ordre des ingénieurs forestiers du Quebec (OIFQ), and in the same issue, professional association news from the OIFQ—thanks in large part to the fine efforts of Sylvie Carles, chair of the Orléans Section, who continues to provide news from the Section and from the Université Laval.

In January/February there was an interesting Of Relevance article on experimental design and statistics, sourced by former president, Fred Pinto, a Practitioners’ Corner article Developing LiDAR Acquisition Standards for Enhanced Forest Resource Inventory Applications, and Dr. Peter Murphy’s fine Old Growth article Where did all the loggers go?

Over the last 12 months several theme issues, well worth a second look, were published: September/October’s Future Forest Leaders, March/April’s Chinese Graduate Forestry Research and the Multi-cohort Forest Management theme in the May/June issue. In fact, although the total number of manuscripts submitted may be gradually falling off for a variety of reasons, including the rise of more specialized journals, the interest in theme issues remains strong. Coming up in the January/February Chronicle are papers from the recent Boreal Mixed Woods Conference at the University of Alberta, and in May/June, a special issue on Canada’s forest history. Theme issues have become a natural and valued feature of The Forestry Chronicle; they help our bottom line. It is not clear when the first theme issued appeared. It may have been the June 1927 “western” issue which featured articles from British Columbia, one on Cypress Hills in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and one on the administration of Dominion forests in western Canada. Other possibilities may be the December 1945 issue on forest education or the September 1951 issue to promote understanding of woodlot management and product merchandising. For this latter Chronicle there were contributions from throughout Canada as well as two from the United States—from New England and from the southern pine region.

The early years of the Chronicle might have been less rich in diversity and texture but built a solid foundation for today’s magazine.
The Canadian Society of Forest Engineers was established in 1908 with Dr. Bernhard Fernow, first dean of Toronto’s Faculty of Forestry, as the Society’s President. For some 17 years until the birth of the Chronicle, the only service the Society provided to members was an annual meeting, always held in eastern Canada. In the months between meetings it was difficult to keep members informed of Society activities or of forestry developments. Efforts to change this included using special sections in the Canadian Forestry Journal and its successor Forests and Outdoors (both published by the Canadian Forestry Association), the issuing of news bulletins from time to time, and providing members with a subscription to the Society of American Foresters’ Forest Quarterly, which in 1917 became the Journal of Forestry. None of these efforts were satisfactory, and in early 1925 a committee of Society members was established to determine the pros and cons of developing a journal for the Society. Interestingly, before the committee had submitted its report, the Society’s Secretary, Arthur H. Richardson, issued the first The Forestry Chronicle from his Queen’s Park office in Toronto—52 mimeographed pages, stapled in one corner, and mailed out to members.

This first issue had an Introductory Note by the Society’s President, Dr. Clifton Durant Howe, now dean of the Faculty, three articles (including a 27-page one by Howe), an announcement on the 1926 World Forestry Congress to be held in Rome, and several pages of “personalia” (news of activities in Quebec and Maritime Provinces, Ontario, Prairie Provinces and British Columbia).

From 1925 to 1928 The Forestry Chronicle was mimeographed and sent out four times a year. It often contained reprints and varied from 25 to 68 pages, most without numbers. It covered technical articles, many presented at annual meetings, a few news items, notes on member activities, the occasional editorial, and obituaries. Photographs were rare and pasted directly into the text.

Beginning in 1929, the Chronicle became a commercially printed journal. The editorial in this issue stated, “The Forestry Chronicle is now where it should be—among the group of printed professional journals. There is no excuse now for any member to decline from sending in his most finished thesis no matter how aristocratic his typographical tastes may be.” The journal was about the size of today’s National Geographic, had a standard green cover with a sketch of a conifer in one corner and came out quarterly (top right). This 1929 Chronicle also included a report on the annual meeting held in Winnipeg—in January! Fortunately AGMs no longer take place in the dead of winter!

In 1934, the first article in French was published, written by Gustave-Clodomir Piche and dealt with black spruce reproduction in northern Quebec. Piche was the Society’s first Quebec-based President.

Throughout the 1930s the Chronicle was both praised and criticized and in 1936 some members suggested it be discontinued. “Its contents were considered to be too variable, it was difficult to get top quality articles and its cost was too great.” The first two editors, Richardson and Ellwood Wilson expressed concern about the scarcity of submissions and often used reprints of already published articles and material from other than Society members. In spite of this, "too many issues went to press with thin contents, too many were distributed late, and too many had material which would not have been accepted had there been more competition."

However, as Ken Fensom notes in his history of the CIF/IFC, “The Forestry Chronicle with all its faults was the major coalescing force in Society affairs...” (Fensom 1972). Fensom became editor in 1945 and established a consistent structure for the Chronicle. Each issue began with an editorial, followed by contributed articles and papers, and sections on News and Notes, and Society Affairs (changed to Institute Affairs in 1950 when the Society changed its name to the Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut Forestier du Canada ). In 1952, Kingsley Harris took over and became the first editor to provide instructions for the preparation of manuscripts. Among other innovations, he introduced the practice of including abstracts as well as the concept of publishing brief Technical Notes.

J. Harry G. Smith was editor from 1959 to 1966, and while keeping the basic structure, introduced numerous changes. An editorial board was established, submitted articles were carefully screened to improve their professional and scientific content, and more attention was given to the letters-to-the-editor section, which was called “For the Sake of Argument”. Throughout the Fensom-Harris-Smith period, articles focussed on traditional forestry topics, primarily related to timber management but during the mid-1960s there was a trend to include more articles in wildlife, water management and forest recreation. In 1967 a special Institute Affairs committee recommended that The Forestry Chronicle change from a quarterly to a bi-monthly magazine, and that an attractive glossy 8 X 10¾ in. format be introduced. Fensom had made the same recommendation in 1946 and expressed the hope that it “would be better spaced and have a more attractive layout.” He was twenty years ahead of everyone. In its final year of production (1968) the old green-covered Chronicle was edited by Gordon F. Weetman. Although there have been many changes in the Chronicle over the years, none would match the changes introduced in 1968 and midwifed
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succeeded by Dr. David Fayle. As Cayford remained editor until 1970, and was associated with the creation of the new Canadian Journal of Forest Research, which began publishing in 1971. Weetman introduced the concept of “Associate Editors”, which continues today. He also expressed concern that too many purely scientific articles were being published but suggested that this would be alleviated with the creation of the new Canadian Journal of Forest Research, which began publishing in 1971. Weetman remained editor until 1970, and was succeeded by Dr. David Fayle. As Cayford (2000) noted, “while he did not dramatically alter the format and organization, he brought a new and different perspective and philosophy” to the magazine. Fayle intended to bring “an element of surprise” to each issue and attempted to involve his readers by stimulating controversial discussion and through his use of participatory contests. His first cover was a crossword puzzle! He also introduced a column by “Nemorensis” (which observed the passing scene and was carried for several years—the author remaining anonymous to this day). Dr. Fayle continued to make changes to the design and content over his four years as editor to make The Forestry Chronicle more readable and stimulating. The number of technical articles increased (as opposed to research papers). The emphasis on forestry news and coverage of various events also increased. Under Fayle, the journal continued to be “exceedingly informative and entertaining and was internationally recognized” (Cayford 2000).

Dr. Bruce Denyer, who took over from Dan McArthur as editor in 1981, noted that “all issues had been produced on time but delivery was late because of post office delays and the conversion of the mailing list into a computerized system.” The first use of a colour photograph on the cover began with the 1983 August issue (top left), and featured placing black spruce cuttings into a peat-verniculite medium (inside colour began irregularly in September 2007; colour for all photos only in July 2010). Dr. Cam Place replaced Denyer as editor in 1984 and his appointment coincided with the start of the sustainable forestry era, reflected in changes in Chronicle content. Place noted in his first issue “The Chronicle is primarily a professional journal whose contents should reflect the interest and needs of CIF/IFC members... The format includes a new category of articles, i.e. professional papers.” Interestingly, the first professional paper published was Ewan Caldwell’s presentation at the 1983 AGM in Sault Ste. Marie, entitled Blood, Sweat and Tears or How Big is This Stupid Forest Anyway.” In 1991 Jim Cayford and Darwin Burgess were appointed as co-editors, Burgess being responsible for scientific and technical articles and Cayford for all the sections and overall design of the journal. In 1995 Dr. Vidar Nordin became co-editor with Burgess remaining as co-editor for scientific papers for two additional years. Dr. Nordin was appointed Editor-in-Chief in 1998 and had overall responsibility for the production of the Chronicle. Brian Haddon, who continues to serve his profession today, became Research Editor with responsibility for processing professional and peer-reviewed scientific papers.

As Jim Cayford, editor 1991–1994, noted, “The Forestry Chronicle’s history is one of steady and sometimes spectacular growth. The magazine continues to be an important source of information on sustainable forestry and the forest industry in Canada” (Cayford 2000).

After almost 90 years of growth, we have inherited a widely respected magazine both nationally and internationally, thanks in no small part to the efforts and talent of numerous people down through the years: editors, Associate Editors and all who have supported the Chronicle by submitting manuscripts, news articles and reviews. We are obligated to add to this rich history, to strive to produce a relevant magazine that meets our members’ interests.

Dr. Ron Ayling
Editor-in-Chief

[Based on a presentation to the Board of Directors September 13th, St. John’s Newfoundland]


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