



Walter F. "Mac" McCulloch

1905 – 1973

W.F. McCulloch once described his job as “injecting a little silviculture into the boys at Oregon State.”

During his remarkable 32-year career at Oregon State University, as both a professor and dean of the School (now College) of Forestry, “Mac” McCulloch dispensed a great deal more than just the fundamentals of good forestry. He was dedicated to molding students into responsible adults, good citizens and professional foresters – in that order.

His goal was to impart those values that he himself held high, including personal integrity, loyalty, punctuality and responsibility to the job. He did it with enthusiasm, discipline, humor and, on more than once occasion, unabashed guile.

McCulloch’s code of conduct, which every student soon learned (or quickly came to regret it), was that the “School of Forestry expects every man in every class, every day, with every lesson prepared and with the right attitude toward the profession and his fellow man.”

His efforts to teach responsibility and punctuality to his students were legendary. They remember him locking the classroom door at the precise moment his class was scheduled to start. Not one-minute later, or 30 seconds later. On the dot.

There were also stories about field trips, which were scheduled to leave at 5:59 a.m. At 5:58, McCulloch, with railroad watch in hand, would give the order to start the engines; at 5:59 the busses would leave, regardless of who was not there. Of these field trips, more than one student remembers being left in the Oregon towns of Baker, or Bend, or Burns when they were not back on board after a “15-minute” rest stop.

While McCulloch often appeared stern and unforgiving, he could be equally passionate. Quietly and without fanfare, he personally provided financial support to a number of students who otherwise would have been unable to graduate. He also established a student assistance fund, not given on the basis of grades, but to those students who

were struggling financially despite their best efforts.

Dr. McCulloch joined the faculty at the Oregon State College (now university) School of Forestry in 1937. He was named dean in 1955, and held the position for the next 11 years.

Born in Vernon, British Columbia, in 1905, McCulloch came to Oregon State by way of New York, Washington and Michigan. After receiving his undergraduate degree at the University of British Columbia, he went on to earn his master's degree at New York State College of Forestry and his doctorate in education at the University of Oregon.

Along the way he worked as a forester "from Alaska down as far as trees go," as a fireman on the Erie Railroad in Michigan, as a building contractor in Portland, Oregon, as manager of a wholesale hardware store in New York, and as forest experiment station director at Michigan State.

However, in the end it was the lure of the Pacific Northwest that brought him and his wife, Billie, back to Oregon in 1937, when he was named assistant professor of forestry at Oregon State.

Except for a brief stint as assistant state forester of Oregon during World War II, he served continuously at Oregon State University until his retirement in 1969.

Although his primary concern was always his students, McCulloch's commitment to the community established him as a true "citizen-forester," a concept he believed in deeply. Evidence of his contributions to society in general and the nation's forests in particular can be found in his involvement in dozens of professional and civic organizations.

In addition to serving as a director of the Oregon Historical Society and the Forest History Society, he was chairman of the Bureau of Land Management Advisory Board of the Salem, district. In 1957, he was named Chairman of the Keep Oregon Green Association. And, as a lifelong member of the Society of American Foresters, he was elected Fellow of the Society in 1962. He was also a member of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association and served as editor of its publication.

A prolific and compelling writer, McCulloch authored several articles and two books on forestry. "Wood Words," a book published by the Oregon Historical Society, was a lighthearted look at the language heard in early-day logging camps. In it, he defines such terms as "slumguillion: like hash only looser, but not as loose as soup."

A listing of his many achievements in education does little to convey the magnitude of his influence on the forestry program at Oregon State. McCulloch's highly regarded educational standards and programs eventually drew national recognition to Oregon State University College of Forestry.

Although he resigned as dean in 1966 due to ill health, he continued to work at Oregon State for three more years, pursuing his lifelong effort to improve communication methods in forestry education at the teacher-student level.

As an academic administrator, Mac McCulloch worked ceaselessly to broaden and deepen the content of the forestry curricula.

However, it was as an educator and leader that he made his most lasting mark. His emphasis on developing the student as an individual and as a citizen has left an enduring legacy, which he has bequeathed to both the college and its graduates.