



John H. Beuter

1935-2006

In a career spanning six decades, John H. Beuter, Ph.D., CF, brought his expertise on forestry and economics to timberland owners, higher education, and governments around the world. John's ability to ask tough, penetrating questions—and follow up with thorough analysis—characterized his career at every step.

John was born in Chicago on December 24, 1935, the second of Hermine (née Weberruss) and John Beuter's three children. John's father was from Austria, his mother from Germany. As a working-class immigrant family, the Beuters had limited means, but a loving and supportive household provided a foundation from which John could pursue his aspirations.

John's father worked as a waiter and his mother on an assembly line, and when John was old enough, he too contributed to the family income. He delivered newspapers beginning at the age of seven, and in high school became a Western Union messenger in downtown Chicago.

As a messenger, John was exposed to every stratum of society. He took telegrams to celebrities in their cars on the Santa Fe Super Chief before its departure from Dearborn Station. He brought money orders to inhabitants of skid row flophouses and to entertainers backstage at Minsky's Burlesque.

John attended Chicago's Lane Technical High School, an experience that he strongly credits for his success in life. Then an all-boys school, Lane had 5,000 students representing the diverse ethnic and economic class mix of Chicago's north side. The school was also disciplined and academically rigorous. "The school and its melting pot environment taught me academic, social, and physical survival skills that served me well throughout my career," recalled John. Though John was a top high school student, occasionally a Cubs game at nearby Wrigley Field enticed him to play hooky from class. John has remained a lifelong Cubs fan.

Even while holding down his part-time job with Western Union during his high school years, John managed to participate in crew, play clarinet in the concert band, and graduate near the top of his class. He received his high school diploma from Lane's college prep program in 1953.

As a child and young man, John began to develop his love for forestry and the woods. His mother shared stories of her native Germany's Schwarzwald (the Black Forest), and an older cousin who was a forester demonstrated that you could have a career in forestry. The Cook County Forest Preserves also provided John a chance to enjoy forestlands even though he lived in the heart of Chicago.

John attended Michigan State University in East Lansing and pursued his interests in forestry and boxing. He won the all university intramural 125-pound boxing championship in 1954, and earned a boxing scholarship by serving as manager of the varsity boxing team for four years. He received his B.S. in Forestry, with a minor in Business, in 1957, and his M.S. in Forestry, with Economics and Statistics minors, in 1958. John worked as a Research Assistant in the summer between his degree programs, and after receiving his M.S., he spent two months as a Forester for the U.S. Forest Service on Oregon's Mt. Hood National Forest.

In July 1958, John received his commission as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, and he was stationed at what was then a new base in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Initially, John served as a Base Personnel and Special Services Officer. His duties ranged from supervising procurement and staffing for base recreation and welfare facilities to

coaching basketball; John's team won the 1959 29th Air Division championship.

In 1959, John took on new responsibilities as a Civil Engineering Officer. He supervised 160 enlisted men whose duties included base maintenance, repair, and light construction. For the first time, John also applied his knowledge as a forester to a large-scale project: He designed and implemented a program for windbreak planting and management for air bases in North Dakota and Montana.

In the Air Force, John renewed his friendship with Jill Hanson, whom he had met in church in Chicago in 1948. While John had become a forester and Air Force officer, Jill had pursued a career in music education. When they got back together, Jill was working as a substitute teacher in Chicago schools and a United Airlines stewardess. On December 10, 1960, John and Jill were married. John brought Jill back to Grand Forks to settle down; she was welcomed by temperatures that hit 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

The newlyweds survived North Dakota's tough winter, and in August 1961, after John's tour of duty in the Air Force was over, he took a position as a Research Forester and Resource Analyst at the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station in Portland, Oregon. For two years, John did forest survey field work, and compiled and analyzed data to help produce the 1965 timber assessment for the Pacific Northwest.

On July 4, 1962, John and Jill had extra reason to celebrate the holiday: their first child, John K. "Kurt" Beuter, was born. The Beuters welcomed a daughter, Karena Beuter, on September 18, 1965.

From August 1963 to June 1965, the Beuters took up residence in Ames, Iowa, where John worked toward his Ph.D. in Forestry and Economics at Iowa State University. For his thesis, John analyzed stumpage appraisal in the Douglas-fir subregion. John was awarded his doctorate in 1966.

John returned to Portland and the Experiment Station in June 1965. As Principal Forest Economist and Project Leader, John supervised a team of economists who investigated the economic and employment impacts of the timber sector in the Pacific Northwest. John's research also focused on the procedures for federal timber sales, the regional economic importance of timber, and the impact of the Webb-Pomerene Act (a 1918 law that provides antitrust exemptions for U.S. businesses working together on foreign sales) on the export of forest products.

In August 1968, John left the U.S. Forest Service and joined Portland-based Mason, Bruce & Girard (MB&G), one of the nation's leading forestry consulting firms. For 18 months, John worked on projects for private- and public-sector clients, but in January 1970, he was asked to apply for a faculty position at Oregon State University by Dean Carl Stoltenberg (John's major professor for his Ph.D. program at Iowa State). He left MB&G to become a faculty member at OSU's School of Forestry (later the College of Forestry).

With the exception of a sabbatical year (1983-84) in Washington, D.C., John spent the next 18 years on the faculty at OSU. He started as a full-time researcher in the Department of Forest Engineering and

later moved to a teaching and research position in the Department of Forest Management. In addition to fulfilling his classroom duties, John became Director of School Research Forests in 1973, and later served as Chair of the Department of Forest Management and Associate Dean for teaching in the College of Forestry.

"John was an excellent teacher. A demanding teacher," said John's fellow faculty member George Brown, Ph.D. (now Dean Emeritus of the College of Forestry). "He also has a tremendous sense of dedication and purpose. In all his work, he gets at the heart of issues by asking tough, important questions."

John's research at Oregon State ranged widely and he was a prolific author. He published research and economic analyses on reforestation, regulatory policy, forest products marketing, timber valuation, and more. John led the development of a landmark study, first published in 1976 and later updated, of an assessment of Oregon's timber availability, which became known simply as the "Beuter Report."

John's report on federal timber sales, produced during his 1983-84 sabbatical year, proved highly useful for policy makers. Bob Wolf, a forester then working with the Congressional Research Service, recalled the strength of John's report, which illuminated problems with how the U.S. Forest Service measured timber sales. "John was a very sound economic analyst. He looked at things as they were, not how he wished them to be."

Wolf developed a friendship with John that went beyond their shared professional interests. "John is a very warm-hearted guy with a wry sense of humor. His one

failing,” Wolf joked, “is his love for the Chicago Cubs. He has stuck with them through thick and thin.”

In January 1988, John resigned from Oregon State and rejoined MB&G as a Consulting Forester and Vice President. Within three years, however, John was called back into public service. From January 1991 to January 1993, John served in the administration of President George H.W. Bush as Deputy and Acting Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment. In this position, John oversaw both the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service. John represented the USDA on key policy issues, most notably on the recovery team for the northern spotted owl. He also served as a liaison to the White House, Congress, and interest groups on forestry issues.

By July 1993, John was settled back in Oregon, where he bought a half-interest in Duck Creek Associates, a natural resources consulting firm in Corvallis. John’s clients ranged widely, from forest product companies to universities to law firms to government agencies. John served as an expert witness in court cases and provided expert testimony at state and federal legislative hearings. In 1995 and 1996, John took on the role of Chief Technical Adviser for a regional project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He provided guidance to governments in China, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma), and Vietnam on developing policies to aid the transition of their forestry sectors from central command economies to market-based economies.

In the 1990s, John also had the pleasure of actively managing his own forestlands. He

sold his interest in Duck Creek Associates in July 1999, but continued to consult. In 2001, John formed his own company, Umpqua-Tualatin, Inc., as an umbrella under which he consults and manages his family’s forests.

John was elected a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters in 1986, and he served as the organization’s President in 2004. He first joined the SAF in 1955 as a student member. From 1990 onward, John also served on the Board of Directors of the World Forestry Center.

“I’ve had an exciting and varied career as a forester, forest economist, teacher, researcher, administrator, policy maker, consultant, Air Force officer, and as owner and manager of our family forests,” John said, looking back on a half-century of forestry work. Wherever his career took him, John remained an optimist with a strong sense that his life demanded hard work and good forestry. John has only been too eager to meet these demands.

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