WELCOME

Mr. Moderator, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

The opportunity to welcome you to Atlanta and this Conference is a source of great personal satisfaction. Regional Forester Ted Schlapfer had planned to greet you this morning but unfortunately had to be out of town today.

I hope you will have time to enjoy the many attractions of the Atlanta area while you are here. The Forest Service, as host, has attempted to do as complete a planning job as possible to insure the success of this conference. I hope you will let us know immediately if there is any way in which we can serve you. Our objective is to make this the smoothest-running conference to date. Both Tom Swofford, as General Chairman, and LeRoy Jones, as Program Chairman, are ready and willing to assist you with any problems you may encounter.

The importance of this meeting cannot be over-emphasized. This biennial conference may be credited in a large degree with elevating the Southern Genetic Tree Improvement Programs to their present level of National leadership. It provides communication among practitioners, scholars, researchers, and administrators. Here the latest state of the art of genetic tree improvement can be determined by all participants, thus insuring the use of the most advanced techniques and principles in day-to-day operations. Also, here the indications for direction of future research and experimentation are developed.

Research in the genetic improvement of forest trees started in this country 50-years ago. For decades these efforts were uncoordinated and meagerly supported, kept alive only by the dedication of a few individuals inspired by the progress abroad, especially in the Scandinavian countries.

Then, about 1950, the need for tree improvement became generally recognized, published results of earlier work encouraged further effort, and more trained workers and financial support became available. Examples of the results of earlier work were the seed source studies such as the 1911 ponderosa pine study in Northern Idaho, the 1916 Pike's Peak study, the 1912 Douglas fir study, and the 1926 loblolly study at Bogalusa, Louisiana. Research was broadened, intensified, and became better coordinated. Action programs took shape, especially in the South. A tremendous impetus to tree improvement resulted from the 1942 program at the

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Speech presented by R. M. Peterson, Deputy Regional Forester, U. S. Forest Service, at the Tree Improvement Conference at the Quality Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, June 15, 1971.

Lake City, Florida Research Center in the intensive selection of high gum yielding slash and longleaf pine. This program demonstrated that the basic principles of inheritance hold good for Southern pines just as they do with agricultural crop plants.

From this beginning, the development of action plans mushroomed as evidenced by the following partial listing of events:

1949 - Calloway Tree Improvement Program initiated by Calloway Foundation and the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station.

1950 - TVA began agitating for the formation of a south-wide conference on tree improvement, resulting in the first meeting in 1951.

1951 - Texas Forest Service program initiated by Zobel.

1952 - Florida cooperative program initiated by Perry and Chi-Wu.

1952 - Crossett Company assisted Crossett Research Center of the Southern Station with financing.

1954 - Georgia Forestry Commission program started.

1954 - Southern Institute of Forest Genetics established.

1957 - North Carolina State College Cooperative formed by Zobel.

Since these dates, a host of agencies and individuals began active tree improvement programs. It is impossible to even list all participants, but among them are TVA, Westvaco, International Paper, Hodges, and our own Region 8.

If one had to specify the dominant tree improvement activity in the South in one sentence, he would have to describe it as the selection of superior trees within local races of species, the grafting of scions from those selections, and the establishment of the grafts in seed orchards. In short, the past and presently continuing major activities of Southern tree improvement are superior tree selection and seed production.

The production of seed from orchards is rapidly becoming more significant in Southern forestry. Some State nurseries now advertise the sale of superior seedlings. Many companies and organizations are using superior stock in stand regeneration. Orchards will become the principal source of supply for seed in the near future.

Tomorrow looks bright for Southern tree improvement. Progeny tests are proving the validity of superior tree selections. Second generation orchards are being planned and established. Techniques for seed collection and establishment of new forest stands are evolving. Intensive orchard selection programs and hybrid production are creating specialty trees for use in areas with unusual silvicultural requirements. The basis for tree improvement programs is changing from faith alone to demonstrated worth. We are also seeing more emphasis on finding superior trees for many purposes - urban beauty, noise buffers, wildlife habitat, etc.

Under the banner of tree improvement, industry, schools, TVA, State Forestry Departments and the Forest Service have joined hands to further the improvement of Southern forests. This cooperation has varied from the informal discussions that will take place among the participants of this conference, the activities of the Southern Forest Tree Improvement Committee, formal working agreements, to the formation and activation of tree improvement cooperatives. A free flow of information and maintenance of the desire to be helpful to others characterize Southern tree improvement. Such cooperation is real, effective, and outstanding. I'm sure it will continue.

I am not concerned about the probability of a good conference. All the elements of success are already present. Therefore, I will not express the wish for a successful meeting, but for an outstanding one.

Thank you.