

Deans Remembered: Miller, McArdle, Jeffers, Wohletz

Ken Hungerford

Miller

I feel very fortunate to have actually had personal contact with Francis Garner Miller, who was Dean of the College of Forestry from 1917 until his death in 1934. My Dad, in the early and mid-1920s, was a young professor of plant pathology in the College of Agriculture, and his office and laboratory were on the fourth floor of Morrill Hall, later called the old Forestry Building.

In the back corner of his laboratory was a square trapdoor with a ring which formed a wedge-like block in a hole in the floor which was designed to provide emergency fire access down to the third floor. (There were no fire escapes at that time that reached to the fourth floor of the building.) The problem was that this trapdoor opened directly over the desk of the dean of the College of Forestry. I was always very curious about that trapdoor, and I'd been warned many times not to touch it, but I didn't really understand why.

One Saturday morning I was playing around in my Dad's lab in the back corner while he was busy with something else. Curiosity finally got the better of me; I pulled open that trapdoor to see what was down below.

I was very shocked to look down and see the bald head of a man working at a desk there, and, of course, my



jarring and opening of this trapdoor meant that a lot of the accumulated dirt and litter there had sifted through and down on his desk. He simply looked up at me and said, "Now, see, you've dirtied the papers I was working with." He said it in a rather gentle manner designed to not terrify me, but anyway, I remember the gentleness of those words, even as he spoke them.

I carefully replaced the door and waited and tried to figure out how to break this news to my Dad when he finally came back. I received quite a tongue-lashing for this escapade and remember the painful experience of composing a letter of apology to the dean of the College of Forestry when I was merely a grade school student.

Later on, when I was in high school in Moscow, I met Dean Miller at one of the career guidance days and had a chance to talk with him about potential careers in forestry. At that time I hadn't really planned to go into forestry but into communications engineering. At any rate, I did start in the College of Forestry in the fall after my graduation from high school. This was about six months after Dean Miller's death. Others had reported to me that Dean Miller was a very outstanding person, but also very modest, and a man with a very keen and subtle sense of humor, but also very gentle—as I'd found from experience.

McArdle

The dean that replaced Francis Garner Miller was Richard E. McArdle, who came to the college from the Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station. I got to know McArdle quite well because he was the instructor of our beginning forestry class. Dean McArdle was really quite a rough, tough forester and liked to present that image. He was dean under a president who came from an ivy league school. And this, he told me in later years, caused him what he thought was a lot of difficulty.

All of us who were in school remember the dean when he attended the forestry barbecue that one year [1934-35] he was at Idaho. He watched the students struggling to get some distance in the tobacco spitting contest, then came up and said, "Fellows, give me the plug. I can do better than that!" After a suitable show of chewing up a good spit, he proceeded to just do that, and he won the contest. Of course, this news came out reported in the *Argonaut* with a picture of the dean all puckered up.

Kenneth E. (Ken) Hungerford and friend. An alumnus (BS - Forest Mgt., '38) and faculty member (1946-1978), Ken Hungerford is Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Management.

He told me in later years that he was afraid to go to the president's office for at least two weeks because of that publicity. And even then our ivy league President had chided him considerably about the kind of negative publicity that a university would get from items of that sort.

Dean McArdle really tried to give us the whole ball of wax in that beginning forestry course. I think I worked harder for that grade than for any other course I had in college. I remember studying all night for his final examination, and I really felt quite fortunate to get an "A" in his course.

I had quite a bit more contact with the Dean the next spring when he picked five of us as freshmen for a job in the Pacific Coast Forest and Range Experiment Station for the summer. This was during depression years and jobs were really at a premium. We really thought we had a good setup there, being slated to get some experience in research and field work, too. It was only a week before school was out when the dean called the five of us in and announced that these jobs had just fallen through—that there just wasn't the money there to provide for them. But he said he had an alternative. He'd worked out a plan in the Deception Creek Forest and Range Experiment Station in northern Idaho where the five of us could go in as CCC enrollees. We would be rotated from one job to the other to gain experience in research at that experiment station. We all jumped at it, even though the pay was only about a third of what we expected at the Pacific Coast station. It was one of the most rewarding summers that I've had because of the wide range of experience that we got.

From my own experience, I can relate that the dean had a remarkable memory, which certainly was one factor in his becoming the Chief of the Forest Service. He left Idaho after one year to go with the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, and when I was a graduate student in New England I stopped briefly to say "hello" to him when he was at Ashville, North Carolina, also in the experiment station. Again in 1949, I bumped into him when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan and he was back for one of the alumni functions. From a crowd of about 200 he picked me out and called me by name, which I thought was rather remarkable, since he'd seen me only once for a few minutes in Ashville, North Carolina, until that alumni function in Michigan some fourteen years later.

Jeffers

Dean Dwight S. Jeffers arrived on campus in my sophomore year, and I was a student under him for three years until my graduation in 1938. My outstanding remembrance of Dean Jeffers is that he was a very kindly man—much like Dean Miller in that respect—but also very patient, thoughtful, somewhat refined but never afraid to participate in outdoor activities such as the faculty pie-eating contest at the Foresters' Barbecue. When I came back to

the college as a young staff member in 1946, Dean Jeffers, of course, was still the Dean, as he was until 1953.

As a young faculty member just starting a career I also remember Dean Jeffers' words of friendly advice and his helpfulness in getting started and trying to get things done. I also remember that he was one of my sharpest critics in setting up some of the exhibit cases in the old Forestry Building, just outside his office. Incidentally, this was the same office that was occupied by Dean Miller and the same office that I occupied as a professor later on when the Dean's office was moved down to the main floor.

At any rate, when I had a tiny bit of ecological error built into some of those exhibits (they were mostly built on the stuffed birds and mammals in the wildlife collections), the dean would be one of the first to pick it up and let me know about it. I remember the faculty meetings in the late '40s and early '50s would consist of about seven or eight of us around the dean's desk in his office, a very small group compared with the later years.

The main reason I came back with the college after my discharge from the U.S. Navy was that Dean Jeffers told me about plans for creating a wildlife research unit at the College. Based on that, I took what I thought would be a very temporary job as an acting, half-time instructor. By the time the unit was established and Dr. Paul Dalke came the following year, I had had two promotions and was already up to instructor.

Wildlife courses had been taught for a good many years, beginning back around 1915 as far as I can determine. And yet I was the first one with any formal training in wildlife to teach in that field. I came in the spring of 1946. Immediately I was assigned to help Ernie Wohletz at summer camp, and I began teaching wildlife courses in the fall semester of 1947-48.

One story about Dean Jeffers which I recall happened when I was a graduate student at the University of Connecticut. That same year, Jonathan Wright [BS - Forest Mgt., '38] was a graduate student at Harvard Forest. And somehow or other we met on the campus of Yale University at New Haven. I believe it was for some sort of a seminar program. At any rate, we ended up in the library and happened to find a number of the doctoral theses of Yale, so we decided we would try to find Dean Jeffers' thesis. We did find it, and looked at it, the "Table of Contents," and thumbed through it, and we both immediately came up with the same thought: There's our senior course in forest policy.

I remember Dean Jeffers as a very scholarly man, very thoughtful, seeking perfection and yet kindly in the way he pointed out one's lack of perfection. I know he loved the outdoors and was a good field man, although this didn't show much because of his commitments as dean. However, he used to tell me about his days as a young ranger and

later forest supervisor on the Uncompaghre National Forest in Colorado. I think he abhorred what he called "politics," whether this meant dealing with the right public officials of the state to promote the college or whether this meant battling among the deans for budget allotments. I sense that he disliked this part of his job quite thoroughly.

Wohletz

Ernest Wohletz first came to the College of Forestry in the fall of 1937 as an assistant professor of forest mensuration and forest economics. This was my senior year in the college, and although I did not take any courses from Ernie that year, I did get acquainted with him to some extent. Certainly when I came back to the faculty as a young acting instructor under Dean Jeffers, my first assignment was helping Ernie at the summer camp at McCall. I had to get all of the equipment ready to take to McCall, including all of the mensuration equipment, cross-cut saws, axes—everything necessary to set camp up and get it going. I was also expected to help teach the surveying, the mensuration course, the range communities under Dr. Vernon Young, and to be responsible for an experiment

which was to teach a complete course in fire control at summer camp.

That first summer I spent at McCall with Ernie was quite an experience. There were mostly GI's, veterans who had started school, were called into the service, and then were back to finish summer camp and then begin their junior year. These fellows weren't much younger than I was, a new veteran just out of the Navy, and, in fact, this group included my own brother, a new veteran of the Air Force. This bunch of veterans being older than most students really knew what they wanted and perhaps a little bit more about how to get it. Ernie said it was different than any other group he'd ever had at camp, and, of course, I had no background at all for this.

I also remember there were times at that camp where Ernie and I, occupying the office tent, would get involved in some discussion of our own, usually involving trying to figure the dollar value of wildlife in a resource allocation. We would argue there, even though we were in bed, until perhaps 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. It wasn't too many years after that (in 1953) that Ernie became dean and I succeeded him as director of the summer camp.