

QUESTIONS RAISED BY WALK IN WOODS

Summer is gone; the colors and smells of Autumn fill the Western Carolina hills. It's the season when the trees get a great amount of attention from the tourist and the native son alike. Even if you're not the outdoorsy type, this time of year seems to call you out for a walk in the warm sunlight and the cool air.

Many of us will be walking the trails, fields and forests of the more than 11,000 acres of company property which surrounds the Brevard Plant.

It's an unusual property, as industrial sites go, and it's many things to many different people. Hunters see the property as a potential source of game; clear streams provide trout for those who like to fish. Wildflower lovers wander the miles of trails in the springtime, and in summer the woods are full of campers, hikers trail riders and picnickers.

For the plant, it's a good place to entertain customers and guests in almost any season. Many visitors aren't as accustomed as we are to being near quiet forests with beautiful waterfalls; being in this peaceful place away from telephones and traffic is a real treat for them.

But looking at the whole property can be bewildering. In some areas are open woods, carpeted with the cool green of sun-dappled fern; in another place an army of white pines stands in precise formation, row on row. Around a bend in the road is a young forest; it gives the impression of having been carefully tended. Then you wander over a ridge and find the trees gone, bushes torn from the earth, and limbs and roots piled in ugly rows across a desolate and tortured landscape.

It's a shock, but it's part of a careful land management plan. And good management of the land is like good management of anything else: more complicated than it seemed at first glance.

The current program was started after considering advice from both the US and NC forest services, and after using services of several private consultants. All sources agreed as to the best techniques for tree farming, but good management of the property and good tree farming are not identical. Existing conditions and other desirable uses for the property had to be considered before an active forestry program could be started.

Some areas of the property are most important just because they're pleasing to look at, and in such areas no logging will be done. If a dead or damaged tree seems to present a problem, it will be carefully removed. Some underbrush may be taken out to improve appearance, but the woods will be kept "untouched" as far as possible in recreation areas and along major roadsides.

Where good stands of healthy timber exist, mature timber may be carefully harvested. These areas will be replanted as appropriate, but not "reforested" in the usual sense. Removal of trees will be done in such a manner as to minimize damage to surrounding timber, and an effort made to maintain the stand as forested area.

But for many places on the property, "reforestation" is the choice. The land is not highly visible nor does it have existing forest as such.

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GO, MULE! "Mule" is the name of the 4-wheel drive vehicle which the forest service uses to look at remote forestry areas. Jim Hill holds on as NC Forester Don Seagle brings the mule back onto graded road; Jesse Owen, Don's assistant, elected to walk the last few steps.



John

FOCUS: THE OTHER PRECIOUS METAL

No one is spared the cruel blows inflicted by double-digit inflation. The current high level of inflation is not only affecting the pocketbooks of every employee, but also dramatically increasing the cost of basic raw materials essential to the operation of the Brevard Plant.

DMT, a by-product of crude oil, is used in the manufacture of polyester film base, and silver is the key element in x-ray emulsions. All of us are aware of the skyrocketing costs of gasoline and home heating oil, both of which have risen sharply since mid-summer. Industrial users of silver and gold have fared even worse in the marketplace.

A recent article published in Newsweek Magazine referred to "the other precious metal." The article raised the question, "What's good as gold, and perhaps better?" The answer — silver. The Wall Street Journal summed up the situation by stating: "Chaos has struck the silver market."

Effects of this have been felt at this plant during the past few months. Silver, our most costly raw material, has risen in price by more than three times its average cost in 1978. This spiralling increase in silver prices seriously threatens the profitability of our business, since we use millions of ounces each year.

We have made progress in reducing the silver content of our film, but this effort has fallen far short of offsetting the extreme increases in silver price. The higher cost of raw materials isn't automatically passed on to our customers because competition is a major factor in determining the selling price of our products.

Whenever the price of x-ray film is about to be increased, our customers start stockpiling film at the lower price. This results in heavy production demands, which create high backlogs and disrupt customer service.

This situation calls for the continuing cooperation and understanding of every employee. Customer stockpiling means producing against future orders, but it is impossible to determine accurately which customer is stockpiling and which customer is ordering film to meet immediate needs.

If we fail to meet the needs of a customer who must have an order filled, that business will be lost to a competitor. To avoid this, we are adding a limited number of permanent employees to gain flexibility in the finishing operation.

In addition, some temporary employees will be used to support the demand brought on by pre-price increase buyers. Since this surge in volume does not represent new business, this is being done to avoid the necessity of lay-offs when production is reduced to adjust customer inventories next year.

Here's what you can do to help:

1. Do your best in helping meet your area's production goals.
2. Save by reducing machine downtime and scrapped product.
3. Help our temporary employees to be as effective as possible during their service with us.

These steps are essential to meeting the challenges of this very difficult period.

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