



# From Oil Lamps to Electricity

## Taking Care of Life: Part II

### Country Lines: \_\_\_\_\_ *by Dean C. Young*

**A** wise man once said, “Taking care of cows, people, and trees is about taking care of life.” That man was Dr. John “Doc” Ouellette, who, with his wife, Sally, earned the prestigious award of 2010 Wisconsin Outstanding Tree Farm of the Year. In this second portion about the farm, I will cover their Field Day 2011, a day of learning and appreciation.

I had arrived too late for the bird tour at 7 a.m., but early enough to get in the snack line before registration. As the crowd grew, people milled about the huge barn, eating, talking, and browsing the exhibits around the perimeter as they were being set up. Doing the same, I noticed that the exhibitors were not vendors, but people who were involved with tree farming and cared about its impact on communities, the state, and ultimately, the world.

Grabbing a donut, I ambled by the exhibitors, stopping to talk when they were available. Out the back door of the barn was Don Wanless from the Richland Center area, standing proudly by a machine looking like a Dr. Seuss creation—a hulking, heavy dozer with huge rolling lines of teeth out front daring anything to get in the way.

He anticipated my question and blurted happily, “It’s a brush-eating beast! This machine will clear an average of 10 to 15 acres of brush and trees a day, but no two acres are alike. It will go on some pretty ugly ground!”

Nearby was Dan Bohlin, from a 260-acre tree farm near Stitzer, whose prime motivation in life seemed to be removing invasive species. Though burning is the best removal, his exhibit displayed an arsenal of weed-fighting tools that would make any invasive quake.

One extensive exhibit was shown by Bernie Williams, a DNR specialist in forest health. She demonstrated how destructive earth worms are to a forest environment, causing the invasive plants to thrive. I had listened to her speak on public radio and she has a very convincing argument against the worms in the forests.

Bustling about moving tables and food boxes was a familiar face from the UW–Richland Extension, Steve Kohlstedt. He was here to help, as were many non-paid, behind-the-scene volunteers from the surrounding communities who just wanted to donate time making the field day run smoothly. Many folks in green DNR shirts passed by, making preparations for the day. John DuPlissis, an extension forestry specialist from UW–Stevens Point,



stepped up to the front and our day of adventure began.

“Today is a day of celebration,” he announced, “a day of everything right and good in tree farming. Why have a meeting when you can have a party? Today we celebrate John and Sally Ouellette’s accomplishments, achievements, and love for the land!” A certificate of commendation for being such wonderful stewards and protectors of wildlife was presented to the Ouellettes by a representative from Senator Herb Kohl.

The crowd, which now numbered 148, plus 30 volunteers, was ushered outside where school buses waited. We were divided into four groups, loaded on our bus, and carted for a few minutes through the green countryside to the edge of a wood where we unloaded. I was in a group following John DuPlissis, as we plodded through a freshly mown field of alfalfa to the entrance of the Ouellettes’ tree farm, where black walnut trees rose over us. I couldn’t help remembering the scene in Jurassic Park where the tourists enter the looming gates into the unknown.

The sky turned from blue to a greenish cast as we trudged up and down hills between row and rows of towering black walnut trees, oaks, and pines as John turned to us to proclaim, “Our theme today is education, education, education!” The group soon reached our first destination, where we would be taught in classes of 20 minutes each.

If you’ve ever seen a test soil pit dug when you want to put in a septic tank, that’s what the pit looked. State Forester Greg Rebman stood in the pit, speaking to us. He stressed the importance of matching tree species to soil conditions. “Walnuts like fertile, well-drained, deep soil. Check the soil before ordering your trees,!” he told us, adding that walnut trees like neutral soil. We are at the northern edge of the range for walnuts, so perfect conditions are necessary as you reach the edge of the trees’



*Dr. Dale Parker gathers the Field Day crowd around a soil pit to explain the different types of soil that work best for various trees. Opposite page: Jack Elder, DNR forester for Richland County, explains what’s growing in the “Deer Exclosure.”*

range. We stared into the pit as Greg pointed out the lack of rich soil, which makes the soil very rocky and hard for the long tap roots on walnuts to grow. He waved toward the surrounding trees, announcing, “That’s why the walnut trees in this area are growing poorly.”

John DuPlissis chimed in, noting, “Believe it or not, these trees NEED competition! With competition they will gain height more quickly.”

Our walk through the wood continued. From a distance I could see our next destination, an open area aptly named “The Deer Exclosure,” surrounded by a high fence with aluminum cans hanging from it. Jake Elder, the DNR forester for Richland County, waited in the clearing of about three acres.

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*Left: Dr. John “Doc” Ouellette welcomes the crowd to his tree farm for Field Day 2011.. Events of the day included displays about various tree management practices and then bus tours through the Ouellette tree farm to learn about tree farming firsthand.*

# **Richland Electric Cooperative Employees Receive First Aid and CPR Training**

**B**eing a line worker at Richland Electric Cooperative (REC) is an extremely dangerous occupation. Line workers must deal with high-voltage electric lines on a daily basis that could seriously injure or kill them at any time if safety rules and precautions aren't followed. Lightning storms, high winds, ice, snow, rain, and even summer heat all add to the danger. The use of chainsaws to clear trees and limbs from downed electric lines or to clear a right-of-way can also be extremely hazardous. Even driving vehicles down the road requires constant attention to prevent accidents.

Other REC employees, who may not face the same kind of dangers as the line crew every day, nonetheless have to be prepared for an emergency that may arrive in the office or when they are in a vehicle. An accident or fall in the office could be deadly to not only an employee, but to a member who is in the office.

That's why all REC employees

receive First Aid and CPR training and updates on a regular basis. Larry Ganske provided First Aid Medic Plus training this year at the office. He updated employees on the new CPR changes that took effect in 2010 that put an emphasis on using chest compressions quicker during the CPR process to get oxygen into the blood stream when required. He also provided an update on the use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED), which is used to provide defibrillation to someone who has had cardiac arrest. AEDs are small, portable devices that can accurately identify whether defi-

brillation is needed. An AED analyzes the heart rhythm, advises you when a shock is indicated, and defibrillates the patient through electrode pads adhered to the patient's chest.

During the training, employees are actively involved in the proper procedure for administering first aid, CPR or an AED, as required. Employees learn how to recognize an emergency, how to safely help, and the proper procedures to follow if one occurs. Training dummies are used so employees can give chest compressions, open airways, provide breathing, and use an AED, if required. ■

## **Cooperative Principle # 5**

### **Education, Training and Information**

*Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public — particularly young people and opinion leaders — about the benefits of cooperation.*



*Above, left to right: Dave Darling places the AED pads on the dummy in preparation for a defibrillation shock from the AED; Cory Oyen begins chest compressions after the AED gave a defibrillation shock; Kim Cejpek practices the proper chest compressions of 100 times per minute; CEO/General Manager Shannon Clark tilts the head to establish an airway prior to giving ventilation; Nicole Prochaska removes the battery and then reinstalls it so the AED can do a self-diagnostic check. Right: Instructor Larry Ganske explains how the adult pads in an AED can be replaced with infant pads instead.*



# Ouellette Tree Farm

(Continued from page 5)

We stood in a clear-cut area protected from ravaging deer. Though we could see only a few trees, there were thousands at our feet, hidden in the ground cover, the goal being a protected zone of red oak, walnut, butternut, and red and white pine. Because of the former state of woods here, the soil was able to use mycorrhizal symbiosis, which, in plainer terms, is where mycorrhiza use carbohydrates produced from the plants and in turn, give more access to moisture and nutrients for the plants through the roots. These trees will mature at the same time and are an example of how competition pushes them to be straight and tall: "A race to the sun," Jake explained. Thinning will need to be done along the way.

Tom Hill, DNR forester of Iowa County, was next on our path. His specialty today was marketing the lumber. He tried to explain when to cut or not to cut, tree grading, the best size of tree to harvest, and risks you take unless you get multiple bids from buyers.

Gary Harden, Crawford County forester, talked about improving tree stand practices, including structure, growth rates, and health. Dr. Dale Parker met us at a soil pit to show us a poor soil mix with little possibility for the trees to succeed. Then he took us to a pit where the soil was so rich and deep it probably was like dessert for the trees. He also warned of frost pockets and advised us to aim for north and east slopes where the soil would stay moister.

Gary Edge, a La Crosse forester, advised us on producing quality timber using tree competition as we stood in a wood where rows (up to 1,200 stems planted per acre) alternated between black walnut, oak, and pine. The pines would later be cut after the hardwoods were established. He also went over good pruning techniques.

I returned to the barn late in the afternoon, with a

## Laugh Lines

Ole says:

- I live in my own little world. But it's okay; they know me here.
- I started out with nothing, and I still have most of it.
- It is far more impressive when others discover your good qualities without your help.
- It is hard to understand how a cemetery raised its burial cost and blamed it on the cost of living.
- A day without sunshine is like night.



Don Wanless with his display of tools used to fight invasive species, including the "brush-eating beast" (inset).

demonstration of growing Shiitake mushrooms still on the schedule, and talked with worn-out, but satisfied John DuPlissis, who was thankful for all the people who had made this day a success. This included the owners, Doc and Sally Ouellette, who not only had to ready the tree farm for this huge undertaking, but also handled details like ordering chairs and calling the EMTs and sheriff's department to be prepared.

It was not hard to see why Doc and Sally were selected for the 2010 Wisconsin Tree Farm of the Year award. Their positive work ethic, commitment to the community, and just plain niceness have certainly made a difference in many lives. Thank you, Doc and Sally! ■

*Do you know of an interesting business or hobby or unique way of life along the REC lines? Contact the REC business office or e-mail me, Dean Young, at [dad@mwt.net](mailto:dad@mwt.net).*



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