

# Origin of the Western Forest Insect Work Conference

by Malcolm M. Furniss<sup>1</sup>

Much confusion exists regarding the events leading to the formation of what has come to be known as the Western Forest Insect Work Conference. Because of my interest in history of forest entomology and access to correspondence in the files of R.L. Furniss (RLF), one of the Founders, I am preparing this summary of events.

In a letter from RLF to Kenneth H. Wright, December 15, 1979, he wrote that he had found in his diary: "On October 13, 1949 at a Society of American foresters meeting in Seattle, **J.J. de Gryse** (Ottawa), **W.G. Mathers** (Vernon Lab, BC), **Hector A. Richmond** (Victoria Lab, BC), **M.G. Thompson** (Victoria Lab), **Kenneth Graham** (UBC, Vancouver BC), **F. Paul Keen** (Berkeley Lab), **James C. Evenden** (Coeur d'Alene Lab), **Noel D. Wygant** (Ft Collins Lab), **E.L. Kolbe** (Western Pine Association, Portland), and **R.L. Furniss** (Portland Lab) met and decided to have a Canadian - US get-together at the time of the annual Western Forestry Conference (Portland in December 1949). That was the germ that flowered into the Western Forest Insect Work Conference..." Thus, I consider that the 10 mentioned people are the true Founders.

In RLF's file, is a one-page document entitled "**History and Objectives**" of the Western Forest Insect Conference. Also in that file is a three-page document signed by Philip C. Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer and entitled: "**Western Forest Insect Conference. Minutes of Initial Meeting. Portland, Oregon, December 7, 1949**". This is, in effect, the "proceedings" of the first annual meeting.

Contributing to the lingering confusion was the lack of a numbered proceedings for the first meeting, Portland, OR, December 7, 1949 and erroneous designation of the second meeting (Fort Collins, CO, December 15-16, 1950) as the first annual WFIWC.

At the December 7, 1949 meeting, the organization name was Western Forest Insect Conference (as seen in the meeting minutes). That name was still referred-to in May 1950 correspondence between Chairman Hector Richmond and RLF. Exactly when the word "Work" was added is not evident but the Proceedings of the December 15-16, 1950 meeting in Fort Collins show the name as it is today (Western Forest Insect Work Conference).

The membership (or the officers) recognized the inconsistency in numbering the proceedings and set the matter straight by designating the next meeting (Portland, Oregon, November 26-28, 1951 [My first meeting]) as the Third Annual WFIWC as shown in the proceedings of that meeting.

Apart from the purpose here, but related somewhat, is that a proceedings was not printed for

the fifth conference that was held at Moscow, Idaho, in November 1953 [which I attended]. The circumstance is not clear but a footnote to the sixth WFIWC (Berkeley, December 2-4, 1954 [I attended]) reads in part: "By vote of the members at the time, the Proceedings of the Fifth Conference were not distributed."

I note one other anomaly for the historical record: Printing of the Proceedings of the 46th meeting of the WFIWC (Rapid City, SD, April 24-27, 1995 [I attended]) was delayed until 2003. The matter had been in limbo due to unresponsiveness of the Program Committee Chairperson until the death of Ron Stark (April 9, 2002) prompted his colleagues to enter a motion at the 53rd meeting at Whitefish, MT, April 23-25, 2002 [I attended] to prepare a proceedings with the main purpose of printing Ron's Founders address. Comparison of the belated proceedings (2003) with the printed program of the Rapid City meeting (1995), shows that much was lost in the interim. Should such an event reoccur, the necessary action (administrative and/or legal) should be taken by the officers to gain possession of the meeting records, including resumes of workshops and other sessions. Provision for this should be provided by amending the By-Laws as necessary.

*1 November, 2004. Malcolm F. Furniss ([MalFurniss@turbonet.com](mailto:MalFurniss@turbonet.com)) is Co-Chairman of the History Committee. This summary is based on material from the files of Robert L. Furniss (one of the WFIWC founders) and on the author's recollections.*