

## EDITOR'S NOTE

by James G. Lewis

At the 2005 Western History Association meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, I found Hal Rothman sitting in a corner by himself, away from the crowd. I had never seen Hal not engaged in conversation or working the book exhibit hall, yet he was the same man I had met some twelve years before, at the Las Vegas American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) meeting: he was deeply interested in my work and me as a person, eager to help and offer sources, and a bit awe inspiring—because of his muscular build and his sharp mind and wit. At Las Vegas, he had taken time in the middle of the conference, where as the journal editor and local committee chair he was continually on call, to discuss my dissertation and research problems. He extracted a promise that I contact him after the meeting so that he could give me the title of a Forest Service publication he was editing (the book that became *I'll Never Fight Fire with My Bare Hands Again*) that I would need for my work.

In Scottsdale in 2005, it was the same: How's your book? When's it coming out? What's next? Then we compared medical situations: six weeks earlier, at age 39, I had had a stroke, which mercifully left me virtually unscathed, and Hal had been suffering muscle loss in his extremities. How the hell did you have a stroke at your age? he asked. But he was upbeat about his own health and dismissive of the potential seriousness of his condition—nobody suspected that he had ALS—and as we parted, we both promised to take better care of ourselves and reconnect at the next ASEH meeting, in St. Paul. At that meeting, five months later, he was in a wheelchair, but still feisty and direct, still solicitous about my career, still commanding attention because of what he had to say. Hal was a force of nature, someone you wanted on your side in a scholarly debate—because you didn't want him in opposition. In either situation, you had to be on top of your game. Hal brought out the best in scholars that way.

Most of us there suspected that St. Paul would be the last ASEH meeting for him. We were right, and yet also wrong. Just days before the 2007 meeting in Baton Rouge, word came that he had died, at age 48. Leave it to Hal to time his departure so that even though he couldn't attend the meeting, everyone would be talking about him. Indeed, he was there, his spirit pervading the proceedings. His presence—and his absence—will be felt at every ASEH meeting. For those who have never read Hal's work, and for an example of why you wanted him on your side of a scholarly debate, we include in this issue two of his newspaper columns on **Why the Nation Needs National Parks**.

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Witnesses to history are often our best source for what happened, and several articles in this issue were written by those who were there. Rudy Schafer, founder of Project Learning Tree, describes the early struggles of his nationally acclaimed environmental education program in **Planting the Seed: Perspectives from a PLT Pioneer**. Present when the Land Trust Alliance was formed and instrumental in helping it mature, Jean Hocker looks back on the past twenty-five years of **The Growth of the Land Trust Alliance and the Modern American Land Trust Movement**. Toni Stafford, a participant in the U.S. Forest Service's Enterprise Program, discusses how this innovative approach has been **Reinvigorating Government** since 1997. Al Sample, the president of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation and one of the many Americans who visited France as part of the international colloquium to celebrate Franco-American forestry connections in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service centennial, discusses **The Divergence and Reconvergence of European and American Forestry** in an excerpt from the forthcoming proceedings.

Although Barry Walsh was not an eyewitness to history, she brings to light an interview with someone who was. The managing editor of the Selby Botanical Gardens Press, she is also coauthor of *A History of Florida Forests*, a book begun forty years ago by Baynard Kendrick but shelved by the state's Division of Forestry until 2003. Walsh was asked to edit and update the manuscript, which includes **Memoirs of Martin Hoban: Logging Florida's Giant Cypress**, the transcript of Kendrick's interview with a logging engineer and businessman.

The "History on the Road" column takes us to the other side of the country to the **Tillamook Forest Center** in Oregon. The center tells the story of the Tillamook region—of the great fires that consumed the area and of the recovery efforts that have been ongoing for more than half a century. Our first article also takes us on the road. In western Nevada, visitors can see where forest history intersects with the Old West, literature, and popular culture. In **Timber for the Comstock**, Thomas J. Straka of Clemson University shares one of his favorite driving tours and gives Reno and Las Vegas visitors a good reason to go see where the real glitter originated. With that, we have come full circle back to the land Hal Rothman has eloquently examined in many of his books. Read one of Hal's books on Nevada and carry along Tom's article if you go. You'll look at the Nevada landscape in ways you could not have imagined. □