

## 'Combat biologists' true environmentalists

The story is an old one: disenchanted workers rebelling against an organization on ethical grounds. But this case puts a new twist on the timber controversy.

Call them "combat biologists" — Forest Service scientists taking on the higher-ups who wish to turn old-growth timber stands into barren clear cuts.

They've organized, forming the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics. The 2,000 members make a strong case of discrimination by their bosses. Midnight transfers, identifying whistle-blowers, forced resignations — all because the biologists objected to the free-wheeling destruction of the forests.

Excuse the impertinence, but shouldn't a desire to protect forests be in the job description of a Forest Service employee? Game wardens aren't expected to be lax on hunting or fishing violations, so why should biologists be expected to support logging practices that result in the shrinking of forest lands?

The answer is simple. They shouldn't.

It seems the '80s version of economic progress has seeped into the governmental bureaus. Forest Service executives, who should be protecting their domain, appear instead to be more concerned with cash flow from timber sales.

AFSEEE members have presented a damning list of allegations. Illegal logging, park management planning manipulation, resource mismanagement and falsifying reports are just a few of the complaints. One by one, the abuses are bad enough. As a whole, they are grotesque.

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As can be expected, the Forest Service has responded to the allegations brought forth by AFSEEE. In a February memo, the chief of the department told employees to not violate environmental laws or forest plan standards, and that he would not tolerate any retaliation against whistle-blowers.

Nice verbal sophistry, but is that actually happening? The evidence would suggest it isn't.

It is heartening to see government workers having the courage to stand up and report abuses. AFSEEE has already had an impact, not only in the Forest Service, but in other government departments. Advocacy groups are cropping up all over the place.

The Forest Service needs to be held to its professed standards. If it doesn't, how can its executives hope to be taken seriously during a crisis, such as the spotted owl controversy? Credibility wanes, and the only thing the officials will hear is laughter from people who just can't believe them.



## OPINION

# A few thoughts about Opening Day



### THE FINE PRINT

BY DON PETERS

Baseball has begun. Logically, it should be hard to get excited about the first couple days in a 162-game, seven-month season. But we're not talking logic here. Monday was Opening Day. Capital letters and such.

The 1992 season is under way, and to borrow a tired slogan, it already has two strikes against it.

Last year's World Series will go down as one of the best in history. A seven-game, extra-inning thriller between two teams that were in the cellar the year before.

Strike one. Ryne Sandberg jumps over the Steve Austin Line and becomes the world's first Seven-Million-Dollar (a year) Man. Owners, general managers and fans cringe. Players rejoice.

Strike two. Look for the next pitch to be a high fastball, either from the owners rejecting the Seattle Mariners sale or George Steinbrenner returning to the Yankees.

But what the heck, this is baseball. The game has survived two world wars, numerous presidencies, artificial turf and free agency. This year's crop of problems, though large, are not crippling. Spiraling salaries will eventually level off. The other woes will fix themselves.

There are no problems on Opening Day.

I take a lot of flack for being a diehard baseball fan. I am informed the game is "too slow" or "boring." Perhaps — for the amateur viewer. Whereas in other sports, all the action is up front and on the screen, baseball has more things going on than most people recognize.

A routine groundout to second is a good example. The out is the culmination of the manager placing the fielder in the proper position to make the play, the pitcher and catcher teaming up to decide what to throw, and numerous other

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tiny adjustments. Maybe the batter was fooled, a right-handed hitter not turning on the ball, the bat head lagging behind his hands. Instead of driving the ball, he barely plunks it. A routine 4-3 groundout, but hardly boring.

There is something different about baseball, something that attracts itself to the American public. Baseball fans come from everywhere. In fact, I just finished a book by one such fan, political commentator George Will's *Men at Work*. I find Will's politics frightening. Anytime I can read a column of his and know all the words, I consider it a moral victory. But his love of the game — and his knowledge — are reflected in his writing.

I am genetically predisposed to being a baseball fan. My father was on a champion Little League team in Panama and played a pretty fair second base. His father was one of the best coaches I've ever seen — a man with a formidable knowledge of the game and its rules.

One of my favorite baseball memories was watching my father, as an umpire, toss my grandfather-coach out of a game for arguing a balk call. Let me tell you, it made the next Sunday family dinner mighty interesting.

On a side note, my grandfather has finally admitted he was right to get the thumb, but he still argues the balk call.

The separation of baseball and other sports is also reflected in movies about the game. Football, hockey and basketball movies invariably are of the thrill-of-victory/agonies-of-defeat type. But we fans have been treated to classics such as *Bang the Drum Slowly*, *Field of Dreams* and the best baseball movie ever made, *Bull Durham*. The on-field action makes up but a small part of these films. The surroundings, the people, are the important things.

Growing up in Southern California, I had three teams to choose from. My brother followed the Los Angeles Dodgers, and at that time, the San Diego Padres wore uniforms more suited to fast food than fastballs. So I rooted for the California Angels.

I play golf because I don't have enough frustration in my life. I follow the Angels for much the same reason. The Angels will forever go down in history as the team closest to going to the World Series (1986, one pitch) and not make it. Their history is replete with such occurrences.

But baseball, like life, has its ironies. Two years ago, I had the unbelievable opportunity to cover the Padres for my hometown newspaper. After my first game, I was chewed out in front of the entire San Diego baseball press corps by then-Montreal Expos manager Buck Rodgers for reasons I won't go into right now. Welcome to the big leagues, kid.

Baseball followers reading this are laughing because that same Buck Rodgers is now the manager of my beloved Angels, thus providing one of the best definitions of the term "mixed emotions."

Oh well, I'll still live and die by the Angels. Play ball.

*Don Peters is an editorial editor for the Emerald.*

## COMMENTARY POLICY

Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission. The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length if necessary.

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