



Clarke W. Davis

# National Secretary Sees Dynamic Growth For Arboriculture

Clarke W. Davis, executive secretary,  
National Arborist Assn., outlines  
association objectives for WTT

## History:

**Davis:** At the 13th annual meeting of the National Shade Tree Conference in Baltimore, August 1937, commercial arborists formally organized. After some discussion, a committee was appointed by the acting chairman, Charles F. Irish, to formulate plans and prepare a constitution to be presented at the 14th annual meeting of the National Shade Tree Conference to be held at St. Louis, 1938. I understand that after much correspondence by the committee, a tentative constitution was written and was taken to the St. Louis meeting. There were about thirty commercial men at this meeting in 1938, and they discussed in length the organization of this group. At that meeting the organization of commercial tree men was established. Several names for the association were suggested, and it seemed to all present the name the National Arborist Association was the best.

## Progress:

**Davis:** At the August 1941 meeting in Washington, D. C., it was decided to employ a paid secretary from outside the association. Dr. Paul Tilford of Wooster,

Ohio, accepted the job as secretary-treasurer. Five years later at the Boston meeting in 1946, it was decided that the association needed and should employ a full-time executive secretary; and Dr. Tilford accepted as of January 1, 1947.

## Status In 1967:

**Davis:** Since its founding more than a quarter of a century ago, the National Arborist Association has remained the only national organization devoted solely to the furtherance of the arborist business. This, in itself attests to the job which has been done by the association for its members. Over the years, and particularly since the appointment of a full-time, paid executive secretary in 1941, the objectives established at the outset have been more than met. As the association has grown to over 200 firms in membership, all have become better informed, better arborists and businessmen, as a result of the information and findings of mutual interests developed through research and the work of special committees and disseminated to the members through the newsletters and an exchange of views

and information at the association's meetings.

## About The Future:

**Davis:** For the well-trained arborist, tree care will continue to be a promising occupation—an occupation that automation should not affect adversely. There is a growing demand for these workers as America becomes more tree-conservation conscious. It takes many years to grow a mature tree and the public is becoming more and more aware of the value of trees and the need for preserving them. With a continuation of our booming economy, more people will be interested in the protection of their trees. There is still a lot of work to be done, as a walk down an average street in almost any residential neighborhood will show. Because of the White House interest in natural beautification, city governments have sponsored an increasing number of community programs of tree care and preservation.

## Automation:

**Davis:** While we realize automation will never entirely engulf our industry the arborist profession cannot afford to neglect any of the major new technological

developments because, as it has been said, not to go forward is to go backward. The maintenance of our standard of living depends on our ability to remain in the forefront of technological progress.

Perhaps there is a lack of information which exists among arborists generally of what mechanical devices are already available to them for adaptation in arboricultural use. Perhaps the reason more machines are not used is because their uses and adaptations are not recognized by many, even though their existence is known. In view of the apparent lack of successful communication between manufacturers and local arborists, it has been suggested that the National Arborist Association, Inc., give consideration to the sponsorship of a symposium for arborists and the manufacturers of mechanized equipment enabling both to present their ideas and possible product solutions.

In some ways machinery and equipment that is already available in industrial and agricultural use, which has been or could be adapted to arboricultural use, must be called to the attention of the arborist and its adaptive uses explained and understood. A further extension of communication between manufacturer and supplier of equipment and arborists could be seriously considered also.

The arborist association plans to profit both the member and the manufacturer-dealer by assembling from the manufacturers descriptive material of their product, assembling the information and making it available to the members as a member service. As new or modified equipment becomes available, new inserts will be provided by the manufacturer and distributed to the association members by the arborist association.

### **Arboriculture As An Industry:**

**Davis:** All service industries will experience phenomenal growth (coming on top of the already astonishing growth they have known in the past 10 years), and America's cities will be transformed. For the arboricultural profession, complete and up-to-

date statistical information is not complete. By almost all yardsticks, however, the industry can be characterized as one of fast dynamic growth and one with prospects of continued future growth.

Well-publicized trends favoring even increased per capita use are: the gardening hobby; more leisure; outdoor living; suburban and other similar housing developments; highway, commercial, and industrial beautification; many outdoor recreational pursuits; and the emphasis on the aesthetic and the arts. Other apparent trends are more merchandising by mass outlets, greater need for knowledge by clients as they become more interested in quality tree care, greater government encouragement in the use of quality arborist firms, and the more businesslike members in the industry who will influence more maturity in production, sales and service. In the next ten years, there will be problems within the arborist industry which we will all have to face. These problems are those associated with fast growth, small competitive businesses, and business maturity.

Fast growth has produced "growing pains" attracting additional competition. Problems associated with the smaller firms will be: capitalization needs; need for cost control; need for inventory control; need for trained personnel; and many price and quality aspects.

### **Regarding Management:**

**Davis:** I believe the owner of any tree firm must be smart enough to know his objectives and strong enough not to be distracted from them. The owner must be a bold innovator not only sensitive to changes in the marketplace but also capable of anticipating the unstated needs of his clients and the consumer. He must have the courage to make decisions in the face of uncertainty and defend his decisions against criticism and second-guessing from others. This includes competition.

I do not believe the owner of a tree firm in the next ten years will be able to oversee all of his operations. Therefore, I do not believe the owner wants to be

a philosopher, a statesman running his own operation. I think instead he will want to be a professional soldier, a man who can take responsibility, a man with courage to get rid of deadheads, with the stubbornness to demand results from crews and people, with the leadership to share their problems and give them credit for the successes and the blame for mistakes. The foreman should also have a stingy streak. His purpose in life, as it should be, is to increase sales and profits. He ought to begrudge every dollar that is not working to bring in another dollar. Finally, I think the tree owner must be impatient, for no company can achieve greatness without leaders who are motivated by their own desire for success. When any man cuts short his vacation because he can't wait to get back into the thick of things, he is showing the kind of impatience which we all look for.

I believe that in today's community and society and in following years, each one of us must cost our operations and in this way become very conscious of marketing. And today's marketing executive, be he a title holder or the owner, faces a baffling dilemma. Change gets costlier every day. Yet not to change can be costlier still. A top position in any market is neither automatic nor permanent; and marketing must continually anticipate change in trends present and potential, expressed and unexpressed, known and unknown. Since one cannot or should not resort to crystal balls, this means learning the business well.

The law of markets is like Darwin's Law of Evolution. Change or perish. With the persistence of scientists we must all probe for new concepts, new insights into consumer behavior, and new marketing techniques; and with the courage of the explorer, we must be willing to turn from the old that is tarnishing to the new that sparkles with promise whether it be marketing procedures, cost analysis, new products, or product improvement. There is a great difference in playing not to lose and playing to win.