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## A SWAT TEAM FOR URBAN FORESTRY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** Municipal arborists are often limited in effectiveness because they do not know how to organize and use a small but effective network of influential citizens as a support group. Such a group is more useful than the usual "citizens' shade tree organizations" which are hard to maintain and mobilize. An effective support group would probably include municipal activists from the following categories: lawyers, public relations people, corporate leaders, university tree experts, media people, city engineer (if possible), wealthy citizens, and legislators or city council members. This urban forestry "SWAT Team" is not easy to collect, and the potential members require careful cultivation, but it can provide substantial, efficient, and speedy assistance in dealing with budget, labor, environmental, media, and citizen problems faced by the municipal arborist.

Our society and our world admires power and effectiveness. Whatever our political views, most of us are getting various degrees of enjoyment at seeing the retired actor in the White House manipulating national and world situations with remarkable aplomb. We appreciate the power of Olympic athletes and the organizational skills of the people who put on the great spectacles to celebrate their victories. We delight in the corporate and organizational abilities of Lee Iacocca as he rescues Chrysler Corporation and gives a facelift to Lady Liberty. We glue ourselves to the TV sets as stylishly dressed undercover cops chase around Miami in hot pursuit of vice, flaunting their authority at every opportunity.

We love to read about these people in our papers and see and hear them on TV. Yet what are the headlines about our special concern, Urban Forestry? Too often those headlines read: "Urban Forestry Budget Cut Again" and "Trees Sacrificed to Keep City Out of Red." What are the

quotes attributed to the average municipal arborist on the rare occasions when he or she is interviewed by the media? Too often they say: "I do not know how we can keep on with such limited resources" and "We are going to have to stop planting new trees next year unless we can get back part of the appropriation we had last year" and "Well, we will try to get along and do more with less."

Does this sound familiar?

In a society which lionizes the political and social tigers, altogether too many of our urban foresters and their departments have to play the role of the sheep. Too often they get slaughtered.

Why?

### The Stature and Influence of Many Municipal Arborists

I propose the following answer to the question of the relative powerlessness of so many of the people who are in charge of our most significant urban amenities: Many municipal arborists do not know how to "network." They do not know how to create that web of contacts that makes all the difference when you want to get something done well and in a hurry. Reagan, Iacocca, and Uberoth did not do it alone. They have a lot of help now and they had a lot of help in getting to where they are now. Their successes were the result of being able to multiply and to supplement their own considerable resources.

Obviously, this concept is not new. Anyone who studies the life of Winston Churchill cannot fail to

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in San Antonio in August 1986.

understand that even though he was undoubtedly one of the greatest men who ever lived, he got where he did during his long career not just by the brilliance of his tongue and his pen, which often got him into trouble rather than promoting success. He succeeded in considerable measure because he knew how to call on the right people to give him information, to counsel him on strategy, and to help him fight his battles. He always sought and received the help of influential people.

Nobody expects municipal arborists to be Churchills, Reagans, or Iacoccas. But the relationship between those heroes and our Municipal Arborists is not as distant as one may assume at first glance. Municipal arborists manage assets of incredible value (even though that value is often not understood). They have to manipulate scarce and often failing resources in battles against clever and powerful bacterial, fungal, viral, and human enemies. They must be men and women of great vision, for if their work is done properly it will endure for centuries and benefit generations as yet unborn. Their mission is to preserve, protect, renew, and expand the single most important part of the environment for most people in America. Yet their public image and stature, and their influence is often far from being commensurate with the large role they must play.

I realize that much of what I have to say will be "old hat" to some of you. I recognize in our audience today urban forestry leaders who have done everything I will talk about today and a lot more. But some of you have not. This message is for you. For you I will examine why this situation of restricted influence exists and then I will propose one way to help remedy the situation.

The first reason for the restricted influence of many municipal arborists is the very professionalism which the International Society of Arboriculture seeks to foster. Most of the urban foresters I know are highly accomplished, well trained, experienced people. They have forgotten more about trees than I will ever know. They know how to deal with all manner of arboricultural problems if someone will only give them the resources they need and then let them alone to do the job. They think a great deal about the problems of the urban trees over which they have authority. They

are dedicated, single-minded people who take great pride in the thoughtful, professional way they seek to deal with the problems of our urban forests. But I believe they think about trees too much. They are not unlike the scholarly lawyer who writes perfect contracts only to find out that no one will read these massive documents, let alone sign them, or who carries his client's case all the way to the Supreme Court only to find out that the client has gone bankrupt during the long and expensive process. Or they are like the precise and careful doctors who perform a dozen careful medical procedures only to find out that the patient has simply given up and died after a long stay in the sterile and disorienting ward of a modern hospital.

The second reason is to be found in the nature of many of the people who choose municipal arboriculture as a career. In a nation which is plagued with too many lawyers and politicians and which arguably may have too many farmers and steelworkers, it is wonderful to know that there are some people who would rather go work with trees: people who want to spend their days making our cities and towns beautiful, comfortable, and graceful places for all our citizens. But the same thing that makes a man or a woman shun the combative, argumentative field of the law or the manipulative role of the politician may contribute to making that person less effective when he or she has to do battle with people who have those skills because of their profession, or their training, or because they have learned to use such skills even though they may not be politicians or lawyers.

The final reason is surprising. It is that a lack of influence actually results from *the inherent rightness of the municipal arborist's cause and work!* As amazing as this may seem, the fact that the municipal arborist's job is to preserve, nurture, and increase our urban trees—a wholly righteous mission—may lead many arborists to think they do not have to get involved in the messy, somewhat unsavory activity of "politicking" in order to accomplish what they have been charged with doing. Like the famous picture of the saint at prayer as the barbarian soldier is about to spear him, many of our municipal arborists do not seem to understand that just because God is on their side,

He may not necessarily be there to provide His divine protection just at the time we need it. We often forget that God has much to do in His universe, and we forget that through the writings of the author of Chapter 9 of the Book of Ecclesiastes the Almighty has cautioned us that:

“[T]he race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding nor yet favour to men of skill . . . For man knoweth not his time, as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.”

Too often are municipal arborists and their departments “snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.”

### **An Arboricultural Solution to the Municipal Arborist's Problem**

What must be done to solve this problem? Let us analyze it from the standpoint of an arboriculturist. What we have here is a clearly desirable species: the municipal arborist, or to give it a scientific name: *Homo arbores municipales*. It is a species worth cultivating. It is sometimes pleasant to look at and it has many valuable characteristics. But like another species which it resembles in spirit, *Ulmus americana*, it has several very serious flaws. It can grow nicely for many years and provide much benefit to its surroundings, but it is highly susceptible to a virulent fungus called *Budgetitus* which causes it to wilt. It also can be blown over or lose major branches in the political, labor, and environmental storms that often sweep its exposed crown.

What would an arboriculturist do with such a valued tree that had those flaws? The answer is easy to state: Cross-breed it with other species having some of the traits that *Homo arbores municipales* lacks and obtain hybrid vigor in the process, or graft onto its powerful understock the other compatible species that will give the desired result.

As may be apparent to the learned arborist considering this message, the analogy is not entirely correct, but it illustrates the solution I would pro-

pose: the *good* municipal arborist who aspires to be *great* must seek out other professionals who have the skills he or she lacks or does not possess in abundance. The responsible and effective arborist should use these other people just as a plant breeder does in seeking to create a more perfect organism and just as a leader does when he or she seeks to multiply and extend the resources which that leader controls.

### **Citizen Organizations May Not Be the Best Answer**

At this point, many who are active in the profession of municipal arborists may well groan and say that they have tried citizen support organizations, that they are much, much trouble to create and maintain, and that they are not really effective when you most need them. I will not argue either for or against that position. I believe that nothing can be better for the cause of urban forestry than a well-educated citizenry populated with individual taxpayers who not only care about their trees but are willing to raise their voices in loud protest against those who would ignore or destroy their trees and in strong support of those who would appropriate sufficient resources to build urban forests for the next century and beyond. Once a considerable mass of ordinary people get aroused about some issue, it is almost certain that something will be done by the politicians on that issue. But I also know that truly effective citizen organizations are dreadfully hard to create. They consume much, much time of the people who are involved with them. And while they are almost unstoppable once they get going, that unstoppable arises from the law of physics known as the Law of Inertia: “Bodies in motion tend to stay in motion.” The corollary of that law is that “Bodies at rest tend to stay at rest.” The practical effect for municipal arborists is that large citizen organizations are not very useful when you find out on a Monday morning that Wednesday afternoon the Budget Committee of the City Council is probably going to vote to cut your budget in half in order to pay for a new street paving job the City Engineer says he must have if your city is to be kept from turning into a cow town. Citizen organizations are also of little value when some so-called “environmental group” threatens today

to sue you tomorrow morning for using some chemical on a pest that is threatening to denude your city of half of its trees.

### **An Urban Forestry SWAT Team**

In many cases a municipal arborist does not need a great Citizen Army to help fight the battles of the day. Instead, you need a SWAT team. "SWAT" in this case is an acronym for "Special Wisdom and Tactics."

I propose that every concerned Director of Forestry or Chief Municipal Arborist in every city and town in America needs his or her own version of the Army's Special Forces: that is, a small group of highly skilled individuals, each with a different specialty, who can be called upon singly or as a group when danger threatens or when a specific objective must be achieved.

**General requirements.** There is no truly "right" answer to the make-up of your urban forestry SWAT team. As with any other special force, it depends upon the resources available, the missions to be accomplished, the area of the world in which you are fighting, and the abilities and characteristics of the commanding officer (and there should be no doubt whatsoever who the commanding officer is). But I will make some recommendations on elements that you should consider, and some comments on why you should choose those particular components.

First, the group should be small—seven to ten people you can rely upon, and can reach quickly. You should be able to have your team in action making influential telephone calls for you within a few hours of the time you find you have a crisis or an opportunity.

Second, the members of the group should each be highly trained in one specialty, and should have a prior knowledge of the problems facing our urban forests and the opportunities for improving the urban forest, or should have a strong interest and a willingness to learn from you and others about those problems and opportunities. Perhaps the factor of interest in urban forestry is more important than prior knowledge. There is something to be said for taking a person who has a particular useful skill and then indoctrinating that person with your views of the urban forest. You do not need someone you have to argue with about everything

you want to do for your urban forest. Of course, there will be differences of opinion whenever you have a group of talented and active people, but you should seek to minimize those where issues of arboriculture are concerned.

Third, each of these people should be a man or woman of affairs—a person of consequence in the community. You need to pick people who are respected in their own professional or business areas, and people who will get their phone calls returned by the mayor, the city council members, and the city desk editors and producers of your local newspapers and television stations.

Fourth, each member of your team should have a different specialty. One time you may need to cross a bone dry "budget desert." Another time you may need to blow up an underwater "environmentalist obstruction" to your pest control program. You will be hard pressed to find one person who can help you solve all your problems.

Fifth, each member of your team should be an "urban activist." You must have people who care about the environment of their cities and towns. You must have people who live in the city in which you work. You must have people who have already demonstrated their commitment and their ability by working on other aspects of the problems of your community.

There are some specific types of people having these general characteristics who should be on your SWAT Team. They are best categorized by their professions, and so I will review each in turn.

**A lawyer.** As you probably have already guessed, I must recommend that the first member of your SWAT Team be a lawyer. Why? Not because of professional loyalty or because there are so many lawyers that I am trying to find something for some of them to do. Instead I recommend a member of my learned profession because lawyers are, whether you like it or not, "societal engineers"—people trained to devise the structures by which our society operates. The legal profession constitutes the last preserve of the generalist. Lawyers are trained to pick up a subject about which they know little or nothing, and master enough of its elements so that they can represent their clients in court, or before other governmental or official bodies or in negotiations between public or private entities. A good

lawyer has to be a “quick study” and he or she has to be a strong advocate. Furthermore, whether you like it or not, lawyers still have some standing in society. They tend to get their phone calls returned.

Not just any lawyer will do, of course. You must pick your lawyer for your SWAT Team as carefully as you would pick one to represent you if you were in big trouble. Your lawyer should be interested in trees, and not just any trees, but urban trees. A lawyer who is working hard for the Sierra Club, for example, is probably not going to help you much, because altogether too many (but not all) *Sierra Club* types forget the importance of the environmental problems which stand right outside the door of their homes in the cities and towns of America. Also, that lawyer will already have made a big commitment to what we call *pro bono publico* work and may not have more time to commit to your cause.

Your lawyer should also be something of a political activist. He or she should be an active participant in political fund raising, and should know at least some of the local elected officials on a first name basis. That is not a difficult requirement, because lawyers get hit hard by politicians seeking money, and sooner or later they get to know most of the local “pols.”

Your lawyer should be willing to spend some time with you (for free, of course, as is the case with all members of your SWAT Team) doing what good lawyers do every day—counseling you. The proper legal term for a member of my profession is not “lawyer” but “Attorney and Counselor at Law” because much of what we do is counsel people. Often our counseling is much broader than just on strictly legal questions. We are drawn into the entire range of our client’s problems, and we are often asked to bring to bear the entire range of our experience and knowledge to help our clients. A good lawyer on your team will do that for you as well, and will be flattered and pleased to have you say “I’ve got a problem that I would like to talk over with you concerning how we handle diseased tree removals (or whatever your problem is at the moment).” A good lawyer is probably the best possible person off of whom to bounce thoughts, ideas, and plans, and the lawyer will give you the benefit of years of experience in

response.

**2. Another lawyer.** The second member of your team should be another lawyer. “Now wait just a damn minute,” I can hear you say. “Enough is enough.” Well, give me the benefit of the doubt. I have my reasons. The best reason to have two lawyers on tap is that good, activist lawyers are very busy people. They are usually badly over-committed to *community and pro bono publico* activities. Then they also have the problem of working to make a living, and contrary to what you may think, most lawyers do not make a lot of money. The few that make the headlines on the big personal injury cases have given the rest of us a bad name. The law is a competitive business and it is one with high overhead. Your first choice as a lawyer may not be available when you want his or her assistance. So have a second one on tap. Since you are not paying your SWAT lawyer, you may as well have two. Remember the old joke about how many lawyers it takes to change a light bulb: “Just as many as you can afford.” Finally, different lawyers have different specialties and they probably know different important people in the community.

**3. A public relations specialist.** Advertising or public relations people are increasingly important in our media-dominated society. Explaining your case to people accustomed to television (and who have had their minds numbed by it) takes special skills. The urban forest needs all the careful, clever explaining it can get. If you want to get your message across, you will seek out a senior person in a good PR firm in your city, and recruit that person for your team. PR firms like to work on meaningful public service projects, and the trees in front of their houses are a natural subject for their interest.

When you get a PR person on your team, *listen* to him or her. They understand communicating with the “great unwashed masses” the way you understand the cultural requirements of shade trees. Sometimes they can get carried away (just as lawyers can) so you have to review their work and channel their creative genius, but they can give you a lot of wonderful ideas that will improve both your image and your effectiveness. Furthermore, they can produce effective media pieces for use by your organization.

**A corporate leader.** Every major community fund drive and major community project relies on corporate leaders for much of their work. The urban forest should also benefit from corporate leaders. The value of corporate leaders on your team is twofold. First, by their endorsement and their presence they give your programs and goals a level of visibility and a stamp of approval that can greatly increase your effectiveness. Second, they command vast resources and can provide a lot of material help in the right circumstances.

In the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in the mid-1970s, corporate leaders provided much needed emphasis in mounting a large fight against Dutch Elm Disease. One bank contributed people to work on the project, funded a shade tree disease "Hotline" and paid for over \$450,000 in major public awareness advertising. Other companies contributed people, money, and equipment. They adopted city parks, and paid for tree removal and replanting. One Senior Vice President of General Mills, Robert Hatch (now CEO of Interstate Brands Corporation in Kansas City) worked with a bright young General Mills brand manager, John Schwab (now Executive Vice President of Interstate) to organize a large old neighborhood in Minneapolis to protect its elms by removing dead elm wood and to raise money to plant hundreds of new trees. Messrs. Hatch and Schwab were extremely valuable to Minneapolis Director of Forestry David F. DeVoto in another way. They could by a single phone call get the attention of members of the Minneapolis Park Board and City Council when it came time to appropriate the tens of millions of dollars Minneapolis has spent to get Dutch elm disease under control and to plant more than 150,000 new caliper stock boulevard trees.

**5. A plant pathologist and a horticulturist.** Most municipal arborists seem to keep their distance from the so-called experts in the universities. This is probably a mistake. You obviously know how to use the information these experts provide. But you ought to cultivate at least one good plant pathologist with shade tree expertise and one horticulturist with a strong interest in arboriculture for your SWAT Team. You should consult with them before you have a problem and get their advice and, if possible, their approval on your

plans and methods. Then, when you are challenged you can say quite simply to your tormentors: "Talk to the people at the U. Ask them what they think about what we are doing. Go see Professor 'A' at Plant Pathology. Ask Horticulturist 'B.' See what they say." You will look a lot better in any public dispute if the newspaper article says that what you are doing has approval from someone denominated as an expert in the field. Furthermore, we have found in Minnesota that when you are seeking money to deal with shade tree problems a university professor's testimony can carry a lot of weight, especially if such a person is a recognized expert in plant pathology or horticulture. Dr. David W. French of the University of Minnesota has done more than anyone to sway legislators to do something about Dutch elm disease and oak wilt in Minnesota. His testimony probably saved hundreds of thousands of trees.

But just as with your lawyers, you must pick your professors with care. They must have expertise in the field, professional standing, and—most important—they must be willing to recognize that speaking to a bunch of non-technical, busy, and often distracted legislators or council members is a lot different than presenting a paper to a scientific conference. If they temporize on each point, and if they say "But, on the other hand, it could be some other way . . ." you will be hurt. You need professional support that recognizes the nature and abilities of their hearers, and speaks accordingly.

**A reporter and an editor.** The media is so important that you must emphasize it both from the PR standpoint and from the standpoint of the so-called working press. You need to have at least one good print reporter and one good TV reporter on your team. By this I do not mean to imply that you should have the reporter in your hip pocket, writing whatever you say. But I think it is wise to make sure at all times that at least one TV journalist and one newspaper journalist understands what you are doing, and how you are doing it. Identify the reporters who cover environmental issues. Call the City Desk of your local newspaper and the best TV station, and ask who covers environmental issues. Then call those reporters and offer to give a background briefing on your city's urban forest. If you have a story, offer it to one of

“your” reporters first if possible.

Seek an editor for your team, in the same way you seek a reporter. If there is an editorial on an environmental subject in the paper, call the Editorial Page Editor and ask who wrote the editorial. Offer to give that editor a briefing, or a tour of your urban forest. Alert that editor to major urban forestry issues.

Of course, I realize that dealing with the press is something some city administrators and managers want to handle themselves. Thus, you may have to be far more subtle than I have suggested here when you recruit these media members for your little private SWAT Team. On the other hand, many enlightened city administrators encourage just the sort of thing I have suggested. Anything that makes you look good probably will make them look good, too.

**A city engineer.** My recommendation that you recruit a high-ranking city engineering type is perhaps a surprising suggestion for many of you. City engineers and municipal arborists are about as close as doctors and lawyers, for many of the same reasons. But several of the most enlightened urban foresters I know have taken the time to recruit the city engineer for their own special team. They have found that when the engineer understands the problems of the urban forest he is more likely to act with deference to horticultural considerations in preference to the normal straight-line engineering solutions he was trained to use. This is perhaps the hardest member to find for your team, but potentially the most rewarding. And if the City Forester and the City Engineer can present a united front to the City Council, they make a very, very strong team indeed.

If the goal of having the City Engineer on your team is an impossible one in your locality as it is in many places where the municipal engineers are unenlightened tree-hating drawers of straight lines, then you should try the next best thing. A competent military strategist knows that if he cannot have a certain force on his side in a battle, the next best thing is to neutralize that force. Such neutralization is at least better than having the force against one. So if you cannot get positive support from the City Engineer, at least try to insure that he is not on the team opposing you.

**8. A rich man or woman.** Every community has

rich, powerful, and influential people. Getting just one of them interested in your programs and policies could have a great influence on how successful you are if you choose your wealthy friend with care. A surprising number of people of considerable wealth are looking for some cause to champion with their wealth and with the time they have because, unlike you and me, they do not have to work for a living. Too often these people spend their time in some activity that is neither monumental or of long effect. The urban forest is both a vast effort and one destined to last for centuries. Therefore, it is a naturally appealing subject for many persons of wealth.

But surprise the person you are seeking to help you. Tell him or her you do not want any contributions, which is what most people want from them. Tell them you want the access and the influence that they can bring to bear on the city fathers and mothers when it comes time to put the urban forest as a line item in a tight city budget. Usually people of wealth have influence with politicians for the same reason that many lawyers do. These people are always getting hit up for campaign contributions.

Furthermore, people of wealth who are interested in their community can serve as valuable sources of contacts with other citizens who exercise disproportionate influence in the legislative assemblies of the community. The rich tend to hang out together. I am always amazed at the ease with which these people can turn and say, “Oh, I will call Mr. Bigbucks and talk to him about your situation. We grew up together on Gotrocks Avenue and I know he shares my concern. He is a good friend of the Mayor and of Councilman “Budge” Cutter, and I will get him to talk to them about the urban forestry appropriation.” Unfortunately for the theory of democracy in our society, such a phone call can often do more than a hundred ordinary citizens circulating a petition and working for some good cause. But that is the world in which we live, and you must adapt to it. Recruit a rich man or woman for your team.

**9. Legislators and council members—the ultimate activists.** The ultimate community activists in any community are its politicians. If you want a truly successful SWAT Team, recruit the legislators and council members. You do not need

them all, but you do need several to carry the water for you. Of all the recommendations I have made, this one is probably old hat to almost all of you. You would be idiots not to have thought of it on your own. But I am afraid that while many of you agree with the suggestion, you have probably failed to implement it to the fullest. Thus I present it here to remind you to constantly keep on the lookout for local politicians who like trees, and who are interested in what you are doing. Take the time to brief them, and give them tours. You will be greatly rewarded. In Minnesota, two state Senators, John Chenoweth and now Attorney General Hubert H. Humphrey III, and two Representatives, Tom Berg and now Congressman Martin Sabo, took a great interest in our shade tree problem and were the key legislators in appropriating many millions of dollars of State money to help local communities. Urban foresters who were working on the problem took every opportunity to brief these key and farsighted leaders, and to reinforce their natural interest in the problem. That effort paid off handsomely.

**10. Other candidates for your SWAT team.** Obviously you can think of other people of influence and power in your community that would make valued additions to your group of municipal activists. With people as with trees, so much depends upon the local conditions. But do make the effort to seek out these people. It will no doubt be rewarding professionally, and furthermore most of them will be interesting, vital folks who will make your life more interesting.

### **Collecting Your SWAT Team**

How do you find the people to make up your SWAT Team? You find them the same way you find desirable specimens to use in a tree breeding program. You keep your eyes open and look for individuals with unusual characteristics of the type you need to cross with other specimens having other desirable traits.

Frankly, one of the most effective ways to find and capture an activist is to find someone who is giving you a hard time but who could be turned into an ally if he or she were given a little education and culturing. This is not unlike finding a tall, vigorous specimen standing out in a row of small trees. Maybe the specimen does not fit the normal

pattern for lindens or maples or whatever you are growing and thus appears undesirable at first glance, but if it clearly has unusual characteristics it may be valuable to you under the proper circumstances.

Another good way to find activists is to respond strongly and warmly to people who call you and ask about your program or seek your advice. If they have interest enough to seek you out, and if they fit into one of the above categories, go after them. As with plant breeding, you will have to look at dozens of specimens for each one you select, and even after selecting some specimens you will find you have to discard some of them later when they do not live up to their early promise. But you have to look, and you have to select. Nobel Peace Prize Winner Norman Borlaug did not create his miracle strains of grain sitting at his desk. You cannot create your hybrid urban forestry team at your desk either.

### **Cultivating Your SWAT Team**

Once you have selected your team members, or some of them, start cultivating them. It does no good to find a great specimen and transplant it to your nursery, but then let it die for lack of care and cultivating. Cultivating your SWAT team will take a little time, but it is as necessary as horticultural cultivation.

Call your pet lawyer or public relations person and ask them to join you for lunch. They will be flattered and will probably often pick up the tab, since they can deduct most of it while you cannot. Invite the University specialists to come and tour your establishment or your plantings, or your problem areas. Offer to come to the office of the interested corporate executive or the home of the interested wealthy person to give him or her a briefing on what you are doing, or a tour of your urban forest on a Saturday morning. (Yes, you will have to devote a bunch of your Saturdays to the effort, but then why should you get off any easier than the rest of us?) Ask your engineering colleague to join you on a tour of the City so that you can get his advice on some of your problems—a little flattery will go a long ways. Give your favorite reporter a scoop. Make sure that constituents who live in the wards or districts of supportive council members get special attention and send



copies of your follow-up letters to the council members. Offer to take council members on a tree tour in their ward.

Of course, you can and will do more formally organized things if you begin to see the value of having your own Special Forces. A small briefing over coffee or wine and cheese for the nucleus of an informal group will probably lead to the suggestion from the people in attendance that you create an Urban Forestry Advisory Council or something like that. From then on out, you may very well have a nearly self-sustaining chain reaction of support which will require only occasional steering and guidance from you.

Beyond that point your success is limited only by your imagination and your political skills.

### Using Your SWAT Team

Throughout this discussion I have implied the ways you can use the special forces which you create when you cross municipal arborists with municipal activists. I will only summarize them here.

First and foremost in these days of restricted revenues are the annual battles of the budget. Plan a long way ahead, and get your team to do much of the influencing long before the urban forestry budget is being wrung out in a legislative committee.

Your team will be of great support in labor battles as well, and in technical fights with the engineers who see trees as plants to be pruned about an inch off the ground.

Well meaning but ignorant citizen groups will often challenge your efforts, as each of you know. Outside forces, whether it be a lawyer like myself who is active in urban environment causes, or

university professors, or influential community members can often do much to dampen criticism and to explain why you are doing what you do, often with a few phone calls or a few quiet comments at community meetings.

Thoughtful public relations people can help you build a broader base of citizen support, and concerned legislators can take that support and multiply it greatly in the council chambers.

### Conclusion

But the key to all this is not some lawyer, public relations person, scientist, or corporate executive. It is the Master Arborist himself or herself: the one who has the good sense—the “Special Wisdom and Tactics”—to pick a careful force of effective supporters who can move into battle at a moment’s notice with knowledge and with power, and help you win the crucial victories.

If you are a capable general, and if you have chosen your limited but highly qualified team and have trained it well, then it may be said, with apologies to Winston Churchill and to the Royal Air Force, that

*Never in the course of Urban Forestry  
have so many  
owed so much  
to so few.*

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