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2009-2010
HOT Season for Young People
Teacher Guidebook

The Man Who Planted Trees

Puppet State Theatre
Company of Scotland





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Dear Teachers,

Scotland's Puppet State Theatre has created an inspired adaptation of a moving and wonderful tale. By choosing puppetry and inventing a hilarious personality in the character of the Dog to serve as a foil for the narrator, the company has made this meaningful piece completely accessible to children.

We have included both Jean Giono's original story and interesting information about the confusion of its classification: fiction or non-fiction. The company generally likes to give this background information after the performance, in order to preserve the surprise for audience members. Please decide whether this would be the best choice for your students.

In addition, there are many excellent web resources listed on page 14, especially the Project Learning Tree program recommended by the Tennessee Department of Forestry. We know you and your students will enjoy the performance!

TPAC
Education



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There are a few unique elements in this performance; the scent of lavender and a "forest" scent are gently introduced into the theatre during one brief sequence. There is also a segment when the performers use a mist bottle. A tiny bit of spray may reach the audience.

Guidebook compiled by Lattie Brown with contributions from Cassie LaFevor and Kristin Horsley.

A note from our Sponsor - Regions Bank

Regions is proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee Community. We care about our customers, and we care about our community. We also care about the education of our students.

That is why we are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is - reaching over 25,000 students and teachers - some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to our community and education and, in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we will have over 76 associates teaching financial literacy in local classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



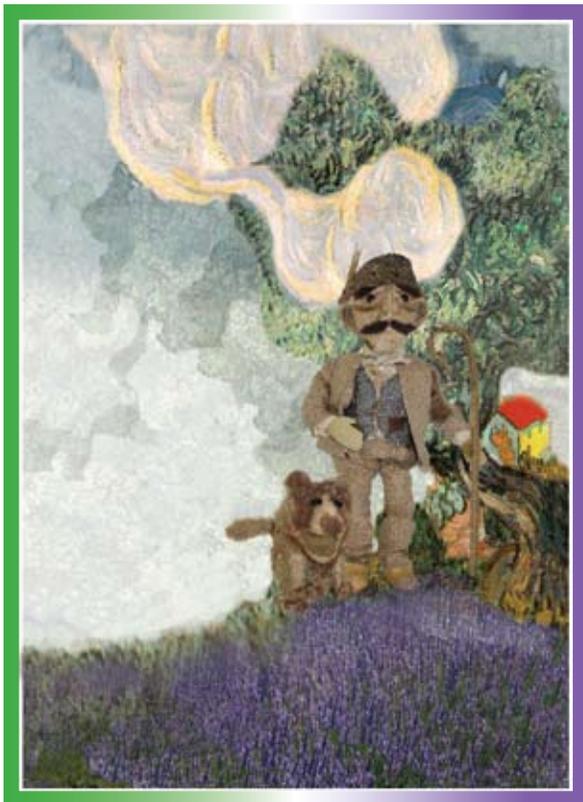
Jim Schmitz
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Puppet State Theatre Company was founded in 2003 by Richard Medrington, who has worked as a professional puppeteer since 1984. In 2006, he teamed up with Rick Conte and Ailie Cohen to develop an adaptation of Jean Giono's *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Aided by stage/office manager Elspeth Murray and administrator Jennifer Williams, the first three years of touring saw the show performed more than 800 times. In 2009, they appeared for the fourth time at the Edinburgh Fringe and were honoured to be part of the new Made in Scotland Showcase. Touring to date has involved performing in all corners of the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands, Bermuda, Malaysia, and the USA.

Awards include the Eco Prize for Creativity 2007, the Total Theatre Award for Story Theatre 2008, the Victor Award for best show at the International Performing Arts for Youth Showcase in Cleveland, Ohio and the Best Children's Show at the Brighton Festival 2009. In October 2009, Puppet State was part of Scots on Broadway and performed to great acclaim at the New Victory Theater in New York.



Adapting the Story:

"We came across Jean Giono's tale of a tree-planting shepherd in 2005 and were immediately struck not only by the beauty and simplicity of its message but also by its prophetic relevance to our times. The story has only rarely been dramatized for the stage and it was easy to see why: the gentle process of planting a forest over a period of 40 years is hardly high drama! And yet as we looked more closely we could see that world changing things were going on in the background: those 40 years - from 1910 to 1947 - were perhaps the most dramatic in human history, and the transformation that took place as a result of the shepherd's dedication in the face of many setbacks and obstacles was spectacular and inspiring. Then there was the problem of the main character's silent and isolated existence - not a lot of scope for pacy dialogue! But we noticed that Giono mentioned that the shepherd had A DOG. This was the key - the shepherd would remain silent, but the dog - his friend and confidant - could be our companion on the journey and tell us all we needed to know.

We have performed this show all over the UK and Ireland and in such far flung places as Bermuda, Kuala Lumpur, Ohio and just off Broadway in New York; in theatres large and small, schools, tents, churches and village halls; at festivals and conferences, in shopping malls and forests, front rooms and garden sheds. The story seems to strike a chord not just with children and young people, but with their parents and grandparents and the many adults who come accompanied only by their own inner child.

In such difficult times the popularity of this story is a source of great encouragement. As the author and environmentalist Wendell Berry said:

Jean Giono's story surely belongs among the most moving and endearing statements of our hope."



Jean Giono

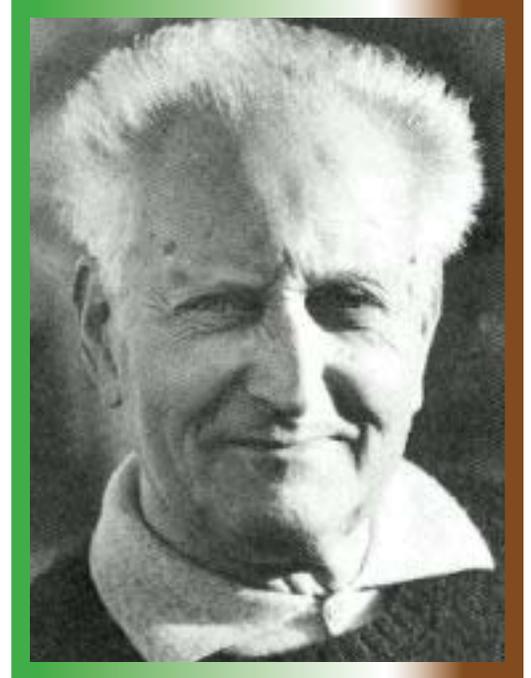
First published in 1954 by Vogue magazine, Jean Giono's story has been translated into at least a dozen languages. It has since inspired reforestation efforts worldwide.

Giono was a self-taught man. He lived virtually his entire life in the little city of Manosque in France. His elderly father was a cobbler and his mother, he tells us in his early novel *Jean le Bleu (Blue Boy)*, ran a hand laundry. This family of three resided in the poorest of tenements where the child had only a sad view down into the well. At age sixteen, becoming sole support of the family, Giono left school and went to clerk in a bank. Eighteen years later, in 1929, he published his first two novels, *Colline (Hill of Destiny)* and *Un de Baumugnes (Lovers Are Never Losers)*, both rave successes, thanks in part to the instant sponsorship of Andre Gide.

Years afterward, Giono recalled the turning point in his life—a moment in the afternoon of December 20, 1911, when he could spare enough pennies to purchase the cheapest book he could find. It turned out to be a copy of Virgil's poems. He never forgot that first flush of his own creative understanding and energy: "My heart soared."

Giono ran into difficulties with the American editors of Reader's Digest who in 1953 asked him to write a few pages about an unforgettable character. Apparently, the publishers required a story about an actual unforgettable character, while Giono chose to write some pages about that character which to him would be most unforgettable. When what he wrote met with the objection that no "Bouffier" had died in the shelter at Banon, a tiny mountain hamlet, Giono donated his pages to all and sundry. Not long after the story was rejected, it was accepted by Vogue and published as "The Man Who Planted Hope and Grew Happiness." Giono later wrote an American admirer of the tale that his purpose in creating Bouffier "was to make people love the tree, or more precisely, to make them love planting trees."

Giono interpreted an individual as an unforgettable character, if unselfish, generous beyond measure, they left their mark on earth without thought of reward. Giono believed he left his own mark when he wrote Elzeard Bouffier's story because he gave it away for the good of others, heedless of payment: "It is one of my stories of which I am the proudest. It does not bring me in one single penny and that is why it has accomplished what it was written for."



Jean Giono set his story in the high foothills of the Alps north of Provence, France where he lived.



Many questions were asked by people who read the story about Elzéard Bouffier and the forest of Vergons, in Jean Giono's home region of Provence. Even though *The Man Who Planted Trees* is the product of the imagination, there indeed was an enormous effort to re-forest that region since 1880. One hundred thousand hectares were planted before World War I, mainly with Austrian Black Pine and European Larch. Today those forests have transformed the landscape and hydrology of the region.

Here is the English translation of the letter that Giono wrote to the Waters and Forests Manager of Digne, Mr. Valdeyron, in 1957, about this novel :

Dear sir,

Sorry to disappoint you, but Elzéard Bouffier is a fictional person. The goal was to make trees likeable, or more specifically, make planting trees likeable (this has always been one of my most fondest ideas). And if I judge based on the results, it seems to have been attained through this imaginary person. The text which you read in *Trees and Life* has been translated in Danish, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, English, German, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Spanish, Italian, Yiddish and Polish.

I freely give away my rights, for all to publish. An American has come to me recently, to ask my permission to make 100,000 copies which he would distribute freely in America (which of course, I granted).

The University of Zagreb has created a Yugoslavian translation. It is one of my works of which I am most proud. It does not bring me a cent, and this is why it is able to achieve the goal for which it was written.

I would like to meet with you, if that would be possible, to discuss practical uses of the work. I think it's time we created "Tree Politics", though the work "Political" seems very out of place.

*Cordially,
Jean Giono*

translation by Peter Doyle

Here is the text of the letter in the original French. The show includes a few French words for a sense of authenticity, but students will be able to understand what is happening.

Cher Monsieur,

Navré de vous décevoir, mais Elzéard Bouffier est un personnage inventé. Le but était de faire aimer l'arbre ou plus exactement faire aimer à planter des arbres (ce qui est depuis toujours une de mes idées les plus chères). Or si j'en juge par le résultat, le but a été atteint par ce personnage imaginaire. Le texte que vous avez lu dans *Trees and Life* a été traduit en Danois, Finlandais, Suédois, Norvégien, Anglais, Allemand, Russe, Tchèque, Hongrois, Espagnol, Italien, Yiddisch, Polonais.

J'ai donné mes droits gratuitement pour toutes les reproductions. Un américain est venu me voir dernièrement pour me demander l'autorisation de faire tirer ce texte à 100 000 exemplaires pour les répandre gratuitement en Amérique (ce que j'ai bien entendu accepté).

L'Université de Zagreb en fait une traduction en yougoslave. C'est un de mes textes dont je suis le plus fier. Il ne me rapporte pas un centime et c'est pourquoi il accomplit ce pour quoi il a été écrit.

J'aimerais vous rencontrer, s'il vous est possible, pour parler précisément de l'utilisation pratique de ce texte. Je crois qu'il est temps qu'on fasse une « politique de l'arbre » bien que le mot politique semble bien mal adapté.

*Très cordialement,
Jean Giono*

Story Timeline



Jean Giono's original story, *The Man Who Planted Trees*, is included in full on page 13. This timeline is extracted from the story, which spans over forty years. That long period of time is key to its powerful meaning. Jean Giono refers to specific years in his narration which gives the story a non-fiction feel, as does the mention of the two World Wars. Students should know that these wars occurred and had a devastating effect on the land and people of Europe.

Elzeard Bouffier begins to plant trees.	1910
The narrator first visits Elzeard Bouffier. Elzeard is 55.	1913
World War I breaks out. The narrator serves in the armed forces.	1914
The narrator visits Elzeard after the War. The forest is growing.	1919
Elzeard Bouffier receives a visit from a ranger warning him to take care of the forest. Elzeard is 75.	1935
An official Government delegation comes to examine the "natural forest".	1937
World War II begins. Men begin to cut the massive forest for fuel, but abandon the project because of access difficulties.	1939
The narrator visits Elzeard for the last time after the war in Europe is over. Elzeard is 87.	1945
Elzeard Bouffier passes away peacefully.	1947
The villages near the forest glow with health and prosperity as people are drawn to the beautiful land.	1953





Time~

- ⌚ Make two lists: what takes a long time to happen and what takes a short time to happen.
- ⌚ Look at your lists together as a class. Do you need to make new classifications about what is a long time and what is a short time?
- ⌚ Begin to mark your lists with symbols (stars, smiley-faces, zig-zags) that show which things happen in nature and which things people make happen.
- ⌚ Now look at the lists and talk about which things get put in the wrong category. What do people try to do in a short time that should be done in a long-time and vice-versa? Mark them with different symbols. For example, what would happen if you had to learn all your history for the year in a week?
- ⌚ Lastly, look at your lists and find things that take a long time to accomplish that can be undone or in a short time.
- ⌚ Is this okay? What could you do to keep this from happening?



Jean Giono, left, and poet, Lucien Jacques, right.

Measuring the Age of Trees

You can estimate the age of a tree without cutting it down and counting the growth rings. Many trees add about one inch to their circumference (the distance around the tree) every year. If you divide the total circumference by one inch you will have a good guess at the tree's age.

With a measuring tape, measure from the ground up to five feet. Measure the circumference around the tree at the 5-ft. line. Divide this number by 1 inch to get the age of the tree (so a tree with a 16 inch circumference is 16 years old).

Not all trees can be dated with this method. Some trees grow taller faster than increasing in circumference such as firs, eucalyptuses, and North American redwoods. Some trees grow taller slower such as limes, horse chestnuts, and yews. Palm trees grow taller without increasing in circumference.

With thanks to www.sciencebug.org.

Write a Letter

- ✂ Find your favorite tree at school.
- ✂ Estimate the tree's age with the formula below.
- ✂ Think about who might have planted it many years ago.
- ✂ Write a letter to that person letting them know what the tree looks like now, why you like it, and where it is in your schoolyard.
- ✂ You might also add something about how the world has changed and draw them a picture of the tree.



One definition of puppetry

is the manipulation of objects so as to give them life and personality. In this production of *The Man Who Planted Trees*, the character of the Dog is a hand-puppet, but many of the other puppets are more like dolls that are moved in a life-like way. The puppeteers are always visible, and, with the exception of moving the dog, their manipulations can be seen.

First: Ask students to bring in a medium-sized stuffed animal from home. They are going to transform the toy into a puppet, discovering its unique character and acting as its puppeteer.

(For older students, the activity will be more challenging if they switch animals with their friends.)

Second: Ask students to explore all the ways they can move their animal. Many people have only seen hand puppets or marionettes, and do not realize the potential for other objects in puppetry. The students are the puppeteers, and the stuffed animal is their puppet. Ask them to try movements that they can create while sitting or standing at their desk. For example, if they want the puppet to run, simply zooming the puppet around the room while they are running themselves won't work. They need to be able to move the puppet's legs, body, or self so it looks like the puppet is doing something approximating running. Assure them that each puppet character will do things in a different way, and sometime it can be funny if the only way a puppet can "run" is to wiggle sideways while it bobs its head.

Third: Ask students to begin to create or discover the personality of their puppet character. Ask them to complete some conditional statements about their new puppet's behavior:

"If my animal got really excited, it would....."

"When my animal sleeps, it does this funny thing....."

"When my animal is puzzled, it look like this....."

As they answer each question in their mind, ask them to experiment with showing the answer with their puppet. Ask them to think about what kind of personality their animal seems to have.

Ask them to give their animal a funny voice that matches their personality.

The thing that makes object puppetry work is attention to the puppet. When the puppet is talking or moving, as the puppeteer you must look at it as if you believed it is alive.

Fourth: Pair students to have conversation between their two animals. They need a relevant topic. Ask them to try talking about what happened in their last class as if the animals were in the class. Keeping the animal personalities and voices, what would they say to each other? When the puppets talk, unlike hand puppets and some marionettes, these puppets don't have to move their mouths.

Pair the pairs into groups of four, and ask them to have the puppets discuss a deeper question: do their puppet animals think people are taking care of the Earth?





Close your eyes and imagine that you are in a forest.

What do you SEE? What colors and shapes are around you? What do you HEAR? What sounds does nature make? Are there animals around? What sounds do they make? What do you FEEL? What textures do you feel beside you? Under you? Do you feel smooth or rough tree trunks? Do you feel soft flowers? Is there something fuzzy near you? What do you SMELL? Will it smell differently in a different season? At a different time of day? (Teachers – consider bringing in a pine scented spray, a CD with nature sounds, and a small quiet fan. Give students time after each question to use their imaginations, then use the items to enhance the experience while students' eyes are still closed.)



First: Ask students to bring in a leaf from home, take them on a nature walk to collect them, or have some already collected when they come into class. As a class, look at the different types of leaves and discuss the different shades and hues in the color (Example: Do some have more green and others more yellow? Are they light in color or dark?), the size, and the shapes and lines (Example: Does the leaf have a curved shape, or is it sharp and pointed?) of the leaves. What do your students like about the leaves? What makes them beautiful?

Second: Each student will choose a leaf for the activity. Give them magnifying glasses to really observe their treasure. Divide the class into pairs and ask students to describe their leaf to a partner. Remind them to discuss color, shape, size, texture and line.

Third: Give each student a piece of paper and ask them to fold it in half and re-open it. On one side, students should create their own drawing of their leaf. Ask them to try to include the color, shape, size and lines of their actual leaf.

Fourth: Next, students should make a rubbing of their leaves on the other side of their paper by placing the leaf underneath the paper and rubbing a crayon across the top. With their partners, students will compare and contrast their drawings, the rubbing, and the actual leaf.

Conclusion: Was it easy to recreate the beauty of the real leaf? After seeing the performance, discuss how nature's beauty was represented. Did it work for you? Why is it important to appreciate the beauty of nature? What can each of them do to help take care of the environment?



The Tennessee State Forestry recommends this educational resource, Project Learning Tree, a program of the American Forest Foundation.

<http://www.plt.org/>

Curriculum connections by grade for Project Learning Tree~

<http://tennessee.gov/education/projectcents/plt/index.shtml>

Adopt a Tree activity from the Project Learning Tree website. Notice everything about your tree, and then journal and track changes.

http://www.learnoutside.org/images/PLT_Activity_21_Adopt_a_Tree_lo.pdf

Tennessee has both national forest lands and state forests. Find out about our state forests.

<http://www.state.tn.us/agriculture/forestry/stateforests.html>

A modern day "man who plants trees"~

<http://www.goodnewsindia.com/Pages/content/inspirational/abdulKareem.html>

Trees as Habitat activity from the Project Learning Tree site. If one tree makes a home for many other animals, what can a forest do?

http://www.learnoutside.org/images/PLT_Activity_22_Trees_as_Habitats_Secure.pdf

This is the Oscar award-winning animated movie made based on *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Right now, the film is in three sections on youtube.com, beginning with part one. **PLEASE** do not let students watch the film before they see the performance, and we prefer that you wait to watch it yourself.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MbosrkVYPU>

UK curriculum connections maps from Puppet State Theatre~

<http://www.puppetstate.com/teach/1questions.pdf>

<http://www.puppetstate.com/teach/2themes.pdf>

An excellent glossary of tree terms~

<http://www.treepeople.org/glossary>

A local organization that promotes trees in an urban environment~

<http://nashvilletreefoundation.org/>

2010 Arbor Day ~ April 25, 2010~

<http://www.arborday.org/>

Find the official tree for each state.

<http://www.50states.com/tree/>

Teachers!

The story of Johnny Appleseed is also a good curriculum connection for students. Students can compare and contrast the fictional French character, Elzeard Bouffier with the real American, Johnny Chapman, "Johnny Appleseed."
<http://www.jahci.org/>



One of the central factors in *The Man Who Planted Trees* is the power of forests to positively affect the environment, even transform it. Review the benefits of a forest below”

Clean water — Trees’ hair-like root fibers help filter groundwater. They trap nutrients and pollutants that are potential contaminants.

Soil protection and nourishment — Tree roots hold soil in place so it cannot be easily blown away by wind or washed away by water; the decaying of dead tree parts returns nutrients to the soil. Without trees, heavy rains can wash soil into streams and rivers, creating avenues for nutrient pollution and habitat destruction, and increasing the likelihood of flooding.

Stormwater control — Leaves and branches slow the movement of rain to the ground, allowing it to soak in slowly.

Clean air — Trees produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. They also capture particulates (dust, pollen, etc.).

Mineral and nutrient cycling — Throughout their lives, trees cycle and utilize minerals and nutrients from the air, water, and soil.

Habitat for wildlife — Trees and forests provide homes for many different species of animals.

Aesthetics — Trees beautify urban and community areas such as parks, streets, and schoolyards.

Recreation and physical health — Forests are great places for activities such as hiking, backpacking, skiing, hunting, and birdwatching. Looking at trees makes people feel better. Studies have shown that hospital patients who can see trees outside their windows tend to recover more quickly than those who look out on pavement and buildings.

Community spirit — Planting and caring for neighborhood trees can bring residents together to improve their environment and build a sense of community and environmental stewardship.

Natural source of medicines — Trees provide substances with medicinal value. For example, *taxol*, a drug extracted from the bark of the yew, is used in treating cancer.

Education — Forested areas offer many resources as outdoor classrooms, nature centers, and trails.

Economy — Making room for trees in our cities provides job opportunities and a healthier environment. The forest industry also provides jobs for many people, from cabinetmakers to homebuilders. Trees planted for energy conservation help consumers save money.

Energy — Trees are used to shade homes and businesses, keeping them cool and conserving energy. In some parts of the world, trees are the main source of fuel for cooking food, warming houses, and running small businesses.

Make a Pitch for Trees!

Ask students to look through a magazine and pick out their favorite ads. Compare and talk about them in class. Pair students and ask them to design a magazine ad for one of the forest benefits at left. Encourage them to use illustrations, short descriptions, even ad slogans, to educate people about a forest benefit and convince them of the importance of forests. Put the ads in a binder and share them with other classes. Send TPAC Education a copy, and we’ll put the ads on our Facebook page!

Dangers of Deforestation



Current Events:

Read about the problems that deforestation has caused for Haiti. These issues increased the level of devastation from the recent earthquake .

HAITI

Nothing better symbolized the vicious cycle of poverty in Haiti than the process of deforestation. Haiti was once a lush tropical island, replete with pines and broad leaf trees; however, by 1988 only about 2 percent of the country had tree cover.

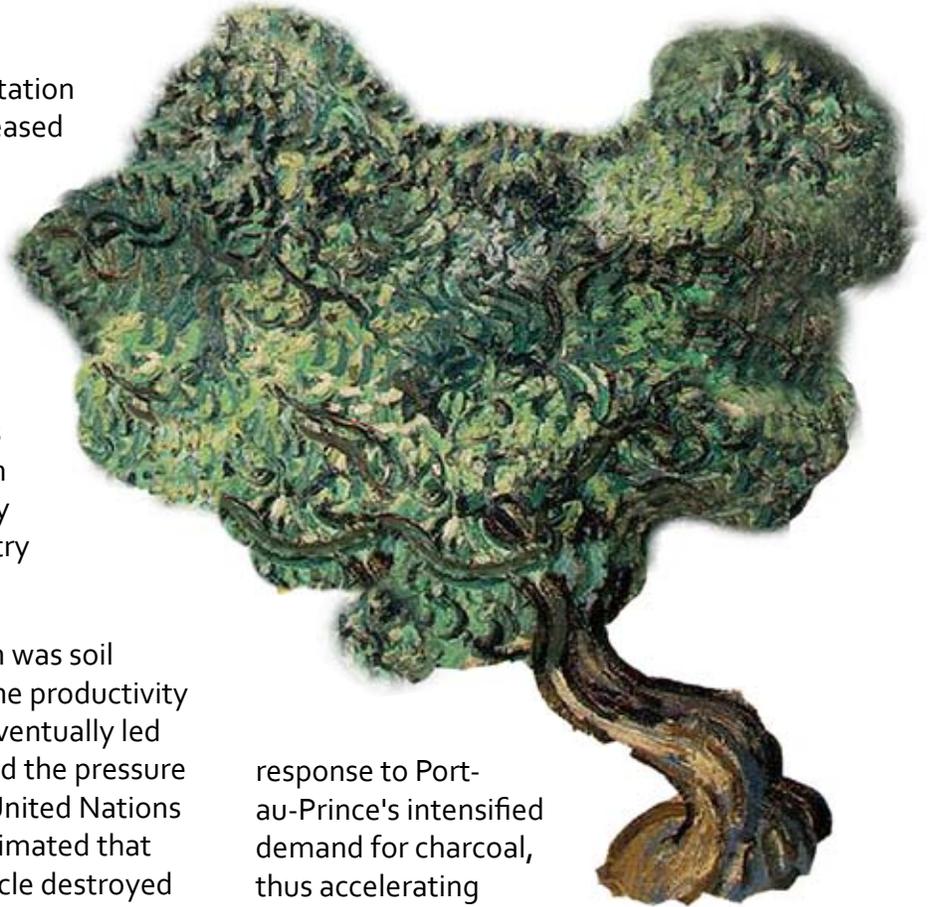
The most direct effect of deforestation was soil erosion. In turn, soil erosion lowered the productivity of the land, worsened droughts, and eventually led to desertification, all of which increased the pressure on the remaining land and trees. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that

this cycle destroyed 6,000 hectares of arable land a year in the 1980s. Analysts calculated that, at the rate of deforestation prevailing in the late 1980s, the country's tree cover would be completely depleted by 2008.

Deforestation accelerated after Hurricane Hazel downed trees throughout the island in 1954. Beginning in about 1954, concessionaires stepped up their logging operations, in

response to Port-au-Prince's intensified demand for charcoal, thus accelerating deforestation, which had already become a problem because of environmentally unsound agricultural practices, rapid population growth, and increased competition over scarce land.

Most of Haiti's governments paid only lip service to the imperative of reforestation. As was the case in other areas of Haitian life, the main impetus to act came from abroad. AID's Agroforestry Outreach Program, Projè Pyebwa, was the country's major reforestation program in the 1980s. Peasants planted more than 25 million trees under Projè Pyebwa, but as many as seven trees were cut for each new tree planted. Later efforts to save Haiti's trees--and thus its ecosystem--focused on intensifying reforestation programs, reducing waste in charcoal production, introducing more wood-efficient stoves, and importing wood under AID's Food for Peace program.





The Man Who Planted Trees

by Jean Giono



For a human character to reveal truly exceptional qualities, one must have the good fortune to be able to observe its performance over many years. If this performance is devoid of all egoism, if its guiding motive is unparalleled generosity, if it is absolutely certain that there is no thought of recompense and that, in addition, it has left its visible mark upon the earth, then there can be no mistake. About forty years ago I was taking a long trip on foot over mountain heights quite unknown to tourists, in that ancient region where the Alps thrust down into Provence. All this, at the time I embarked upon my long walk through these deserted regions, was barren and colorless land. Nothing grew there but wild lavender.

I was crossing the area at its widest point, and after three days' walking, found myself in the midst of unparalleled desolation. I camped near the vestiges of an abandoned village. I had run out of water the day before, and had to find some. These clustered houses, although in ruins, like an old wasps' nest, suggested that there must once have been a spring or well here. There was indeed a spring, but it was dry. The five or six houses, roofless, gnawed by wind and rain, the tiny chapel with its crumbling steeple, stood about like the houses and chapels in living villages, but all life had vanished.

It was a fine June day, brilliant with sunlight, but over this unsheltered land, high in the sky, the wind blew with unendurable ferocity. It growled over carcasses of the houses like a lion disturbed at its meal. I had to move my camp.

After five hours' walking I had still not found water and there was nothing to give me any hope of finding any. All about me was the same dryness, the same coarse grasses. I thought I glimpsed in the distance a small black silhouette, upright, and took it for the trunk of a solitary tree. In any case I started toward it. It was a shepherd. Thirty sheep were lying about him on the baking earth.

He gave me a drink from his water-gourd and, a little later, took me to his cottage in a fold of the plain. He drew his water - excellent water - from a very deep natural well above which he had constructed a primitive winch.

The man spoke little. This is the way of those who live alone, but one felt that he has sure of himself, and confident in his assurance. That was unexpected in this barren country. He lived, not in a cabin, but in a real house built of stone that bore plain evidence of how his own efforts had reclaimed the



ruin he had found there on his arrival. His roof was strong and sound. The wind on its tiles made the sound of the sea upon its shore.

The place was in order, the dishes washed, the floor swept, his rifle oiled; his soup was boiling over the fire. I noticed then that he was cleanly shaved, that all his buttons were firmly sewed on, that his clothing had been mended with the meticulous care that makes the mending invisible. He shared his soup with me and afterwards, when I offered my tobacco pouch, he told me that he did not smoke. His dog, as silent as himself, was friendly without being servile.

It was understood from the first that I should spend the night there; the nearest village was still more than a day and a half away. And besides I was perfectly familiar with the nature of the rare villages in that region. There were four or five of them scattered well apart from each other on these mountain slopes, among white oak thickets, at the extreme end of the wagon roads. They were inhabited by charcoal burners, and the living was bad. Families, crowded together in a climate that is excessively harsh both in winter and in summer, found no escape from the unceasing conflict of personalities. Irrational ambition reached inordinate proportions in the continual desire for escape. The men took their wagon loads of charcoal to the town, then returned. The soundest characters broke under the perpetual grind. The women nursed their grievances. There was rivalry in everything, over the price of charcoal as over a pew in the church, over warring virtues as over warring vices as well as over the ceaseless combat between virtue and vice. And over all there was the wind, also ceaseless, to rasp upon the nerves. There were epidemics of suicide and frequent cases of insanity, usually homicidal.

The shepherd went to fetch a small sack and poured out a heap of acorns on the table. He began to inspect them, one by one, with great concentration, separating the good from the bad. I smoked

my pipe. I did offer to help him. He told me that it was his job. And in fact, seeing the care he devoted to the task, I did not insist. That was the whole of our conversation. When he had set aside a large enough pile of good acorns he counted them out by tens, meanwhile eliminating the small ones or those which were slightly cracked, for now he examined them more closely. When he had thus selected one hundred perfect acorns he stopped and we went to bed.

There was peace in being with this man. The next day I asked if I might rest here for a day. He found it quite natural - or, to be more exact, he gave me the impression that nothing could startle him. The rest was not absolutely necessary, but I was interested and wished to know more about him. He opened the pen and led his flock to pasture. Before leaving, he plunged his sack of carefully selected and counted acorns into a pail of water.

I noticed that he carried for a stick an iron rod as thick as my thumb and about a yard and a half long. Resting myself by walking, I followed a path parallel to his. His pasture was in a valley. He left the dog in charge of the little flock and climbed toward where I stood. I was afraid that he was about to rebuke me for my indiscretion, but it was not that at all: this was the way he was going, and he invited me to go along if I had nothing better to do. He climbed to the top of the ridge, about a hundred yards away.

There he began thrusting his iron rod into the earth, making a hole in which he planted an acorn; then he refilled the hole. He was planting oak trees. I asked him if the land belonged to him. He answered no. Did he know whose it was? He did not. He supposed it was community property, or perhaps belonged to people who cared nothing about it. He was not interested in finding out whose it was. He planted his hundred acorns with the greatest care.

After the midday meal he resumed his planting. I suppose I must have been fairly insistent in my



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questioning, for he answered me. For three years he had been planting trees in this wilderness. He had planted one hundred thousand. Of the hundred thousand, twenty thousand were oak and he had expected to lose half, to rodents or to the unpredictable designs of Providence. There remained ten thousand oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before.

That was when I began to wonder about the age of this man. He was obviously over fifty. Fifty-five, he told me. His name was Elzeard Bouffier. He had once had a farm in the lowlands. There he had his life. He had lost his only son, then this wife. He had withdrawn into this solitude where his pleasure was to live leisurely with his lambs and his dog. It was his opinion that this land was dying for want of trees. He added that, having no very pressing business of his own, he had resolved to remedy this state of affairs.

Since I was at that time, in spite of my youth, leading a solitary life, I understood how to deal gently with solitary spirits. But my very youth forced me to consider the future in relation to myself and to a certain quest for happiness. I told him that in thirty years his ten thousand oaks would be magnificent. He answered quite simply that if God granted him life, in thirty years he would have planted so many more that these ten thousand would be like a drop of water in the ocean.

Besides, he was now studying the reproduction of beech trees and had a nursery of seedlings grown from beechnuts near his cottage. The seedlings, which he had protected from his sheep with a wire fence, were very beautiful. He was also considering birches for the valleys where, he told me, there was a certain amount of moisture a few yards below the surface of the soil.

The next day, we parted.

The following year came the War of 1914, in which I was involved for the next five years. An infantry man hardly had time for reflecting upon trees. To tell the truth, the thing itself had made no impression upon me; I had considered it as a hobby, a stamp collection, and forgotten it.

The war was over, I found myself possessed of a tiny demobilization bonus and a huge desire to breathe fresh air for a while. It was with no other objective that I again took the road to the barren lands.

The countryside had not changed. However, beyond the deserted village I glimpsed in the distance a sort of grayish mist that covered the mountaintops like a carpet. Since the day before, I had begun to think again of the shepherd tree-planter. "Ten thousand oaks," I reflected, "really take up quite a bit of space."

I had seen too many men die during those five years not to imagine easily that Elzeard Bouffier was dead, especially since, at twenty, one regards men of fifty as old men with nothing left to do but die. He was not dead.

As a matter of fact, he was extremely spry. He had changed jobs. Now he had only four sheep but, instead, a hundred beehives. He had got rid of the sheep because they threatened his young trees. For, he told me (and I saw for myself), the war had disturbed him not at all. He had imperturbably continued to plant.

The oaks of 1910 were then ten years old and taller than either of us. It was an impressive spectacle. I was literally speechless and, as he did not talk, we spent, the whole day walking in silence through his forest. In three sections, it measured eleven kilometers in length and three kilometers at its greatest width. When you remembered that all this had sprung from the hands and the soul of this one man, without technical resources, you understand that men could be as effectual as God in other realms than that of destruction.



He had pursued his plan, and beech trees as high as my shoulder, spreading out as far as the eye could reach, confirmed it. He showed me handsome clumps of birch planted five years before - that is, in 1915, when I had been fighting at Verdun. He had set them out in all the valleys where he had guessed - and rightly - that there was moisture almost at the surface of the ground. They were as delicate as young girls, and very well established.

Creation seemed to come about in a sort of chain reaction. He did not worry about it; he was determinedly pursuing his task in all its simplicity; but as we went back toward the village I saw water flowing in brooks that had been dry since the memory of man. This was the most impressive result of chain reaction that I had seen. These dry streams had once, long ago, run with water. Some of the dreary villages I mentioned before had been built on the sites of ancient Roman settlements, traces of which still remained; and archaeologists, exploring there, had found fishhooks where, in the twentieth century, cisterns were needed to assure a small supply of water.

The wind, too, scattered seeds. As the water reappeared, so there reappeared willows, rushes meadows, gardens, flowers, and a certain purpose in being alive. But the transformation took place so gradually that it became part of the pattern without causing any astonishment. Hunters, climbing into the wilderness in pursuit of hares or wild boar, had of course noticed the sudden growth of little trees, but had attributed it to some natural caprice of the earth. That is why no one meddled with Elzeard Bouffier's work. If he had been detected he would have had opposition. He was undetectable. Who in the villages or in the administration could have dreamed of such perseverance in a magnificent generosity?

To have anything like a precise idea of this exceptional character one must not forget that he worked

in total solitude: so total that, toward the end of his life, he lost the habit of speech. Or perhaps it was that he saw no need for it.

In 1933 he received a visit from a forest ranger who notified him of an order against lighting fires out of doors for fear of endangering the growth of this natural forest. It was the first time, that man told him naively, that he had ever heard of a forest growing out of its own accord. At that time Bouffier was about to plant beeches at a spot some twelve kilometers from his cottage. In order to avoid travelling back and forth - for he was then seventy-five - he planned to build a stone cabin right at the plantation. The next year he did so. In 1935 a whole delegation came from the Government to examine the "natural forest". There was a high official from the Forest Service, a deputy, technicians. There was a great deal of ineffectual talk. It was decided that some thing must be done and, fortunately, nothing was done except the only helpful thing: the whole forest was placed under the protection of the State, and charcoal burning prohibited. For it was impossible not to be captivated by the beauty of those young trees in fullness of health, and they cast their spell over the deputy himself.

A friend of mine was among the forestry officers of the delegation. To him I explained the mystery. One day the following week we went together to see Elzeard Bouffier. We found him hard at work, some ten kilometers from the spot where the inspection had taken place. This forester was not my friend for nothing. He was aware of values. He knew how to keep silent. I delivered the eggs I had brought as a present. We shared our lunch among the three of us and spent several hours in wordless contemplation of the countryside.

In the direction from which we had come the slopes were covered with trees twenty to twenty-five feet tall. I remembered how the land had looked in 1913: a desert ... Peaceful, regular toil, the vigorous mountain air, frugality and, above all, serenity of



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spirit had endowed this old man with awe-inspiring health. He was one of God's athletes. I wondered how many more acres he was going to cover with trees.

Before leaving, my friend simply made a brief suggestion about certain species of trees that the soil here seemed particularly suited for. He did not force the point. "For the very good reason," he told me later, "that Bouffier knows more about it than I do." At the end of an hour's walking - having turned it over his mind - he added, "He knows a lot more about it than anybody. He's discovered a wonderful way to be happy!"

It was thanks to this officer that not only the forest but also the happiness of the man was protected. He delegated three rangers to the task, and so terrorized them that they remained proof against all the bottles of wine the charcoal burners could offer.

The only serious danger to the work occurred during the war of 1939. As cars were being run on gazogenes (wood-burning generators), there was never enough wood. Cutting was started among the oaks of 1910, but the area was so far from any rail roads that the enterprise turned out to be financially unsound. It was abandoned. The shepherd had seen nothing of it. He was thirty kilometers away, peacefully continuing his work, ignoring the war of '39 as he had ignored that of '14.

I saw Elzeard Bouffier for the last time in June of 1945. He was then eighty-seven. I had started back along the route through the wastelands; by now, in spite of the disorder in which the war had left the country, there was a bus running between the Durance Valley and the mountain. I attributed the fact that I no longer recognized the scenes of my earlier journeys to this relatively speedy transportation. It seemed to me, too, that the route took me through new territory. It took the name of a village to convince me that I was actually in that region that had been all ruins and desolation.

The bus put me down at Vergons. In 1913 this hamlet of ten or twelve houses had three inhabitants. They had been savage creatures, hating one another, living by trapping game, little removed, both physically and morally, from the conditions of prehistoric man. All about them nettles were feeding upon the remains of abandoned houses. Their condition had been beyond hope. For them, nothing but to await death - a situation which rarely predisposes to virtue.

Everything was changed. Even the air. Instead of the harsh dry winds that used to attack me, a gentle breeze was blowing, laden with scents. A sound like water came from the mountains: it was the wind in the forest. Most amazing of all, I heard the actual sound of water falling into a pool. I saw that a fountain had been built, that it flowed freely and - what touched me most - that some one had planted a linden beside it, a linden that must have been four years old, already in full leaf, the incontestable symbol of resurrection.

Besides, Vergons bore evidence of labor at the sort of undertaking for which hope is required. Hope, then, had returned. Ruins had been cleared away, dilapidated walls torn down and five houses restored. Now there were twenty-eight inhabitants, four of them young married couples. The new houses, freshly plastered, were surrounded by gardens where vegetables and flowers grew in orderly confusion, cabbages and roses, leeks and snapdragons, celery and anemones. It was now a village where one would like to live.

From that point on I went on foot. The war just finished had not yet allowed the full blooming of life, but Lazarus was out of the tomb. On the lower slopes of the mountain I saw little fields of barely and of rye; deep in the narrow valleys the meadows were turning green.

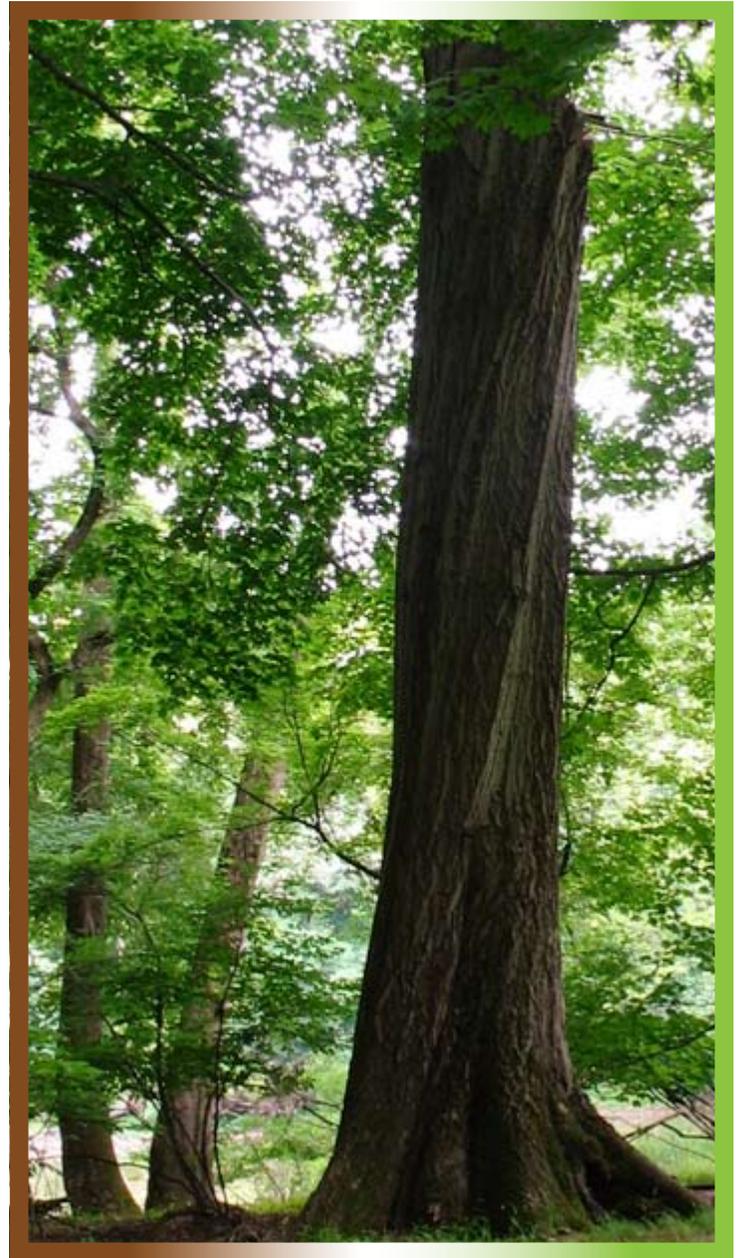
It has taken only the eight years since then for the



whole countryside to glow with health and prosperity. On the site of ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat farms, cleanly plastered, testifying to a happy and comfortable life. The old streams, fed by the rains and snows that the forest conserves, are flowing again. Their waters have been channeled. On each farm, in groves of maples, fountain, pools overflow on to carpets of fresh mint. Little by little the villages have been rebuilt. People from the plains, where land is costly, have settled here, bringing youth, motion, the spirit of adventure. Along the roads you meet hearty men and women, boys and girls who understand laughter and have recovered a taste for picnics. Counting the former population, unrecognizable now that they live in comfort, more than ten thousand people owe their happiness to Elzeard Bouffier.

When I reflect that one man, armed only with his own physical and moral resources, was able to cause this land of Canaan to spring from the wasteland, I am convinced that in spite of everything, humanity is admirable. But when I compute the unfailing greatness of spirit and the tenacity of benevolence that it must have taken to achieve this result, I am taken with an immense respect for that old and unlearned peasant who was able to complete a work worthy of God.

Elzeard Bouffier died peacefully in 1947 at the hospice in Banon.



With thanks to the following websites for posting the story on-line and honoring Jean Giono's wishes to freely share the rights with everyone.

<http://www.pinetum.org/GionoUK.htm>

<http://www.ftpf.org/themanwhoplanted.htm>



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