

# S. R. Gevorkiantz, Forest Biometrician

Suren R. Gevorkiantz, mathematical statistician at the Lake States Forest Experiment Station and internationally known research forester, died on 8 May 1958, after collapsing at work. Thus a still productive career was brought to a sudden close.

Gevorkiantz was born in Tiflis in the Russian Caucasus on 27 July 1899. He was brought up, however, in the Baikal region of Siberia, where he attended the Government Classical Gymnasium at Chita from 1908 to 1917. He began collegiate work in mechanical engineering in 1917 at the Imperial Institute of Technology in Tomsk, Siberia. In 1918 the Russian Revolution cut short his educational pursuits, and near its conclusion in 1919 Gevorkiantz fled to northern China. For the next 3 years he was a refugee in China, Manchuria, and Japan. From the latter country he made his way to California in 1922. There he entered the Forest School and obtained his B.S. degree from the University of California in 1924. Later he attended the Harvard Forest School where he obtained the M.F. degree in 1928.

In January 1925 Gevorkiantz became a member of the staff of the Lake States Forest Experiment Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. He was attracted there by the fact that another former refugee from Russia, Raphael Zon, was director of the station. Gevorkiantz continued at the station until his death. Although his entire career was spent in one locality, he became widely known both nationally and internationally. His research was confined largely to the fields of forest mensuration and the application of statistical methods to forestry and related problems. His work has been reported in more than 100 publications of which he is author or coauthor.

Gevorkiantz' professional accomplishments were numerous and substantial. In forest mensuration he developed

original volume and yield tables for the principal species and forest types in the Lake States; two of them involved the development of original procedures. He devised methods for predicting forest growth under various conditions, including the difficult situation in uneven-aged stands. He developed composite volume tables that can be applied regardless of species. He defined a large proportion of the mensurational and statistical terms used, in *Forestry Terminology, A Glossary of Technical Terms Used in Forestry* (Society of American Foresters, Washington, D.C., ed. 3, 1958).

In the application of statistical methods to research problems he made an outstanding contribution. His advice in designing scientific experiments was sought and applied not only by members of his own organization but also by members of other federal, state, and private agencies in forestry, entomology, genetics, plant pathology, wood utilization, and wildlife management. He was called upon to present papers in this field at national meetings.

The simplified techniques that he stressed made it possible for practising foresters to understand and make better use of statistical methods. He developed rules of thumb (with a mathematical basis) for log scaling. He derived a method of sample scaling for national forest timber sales and for estimating stand volume directly in the field. He was joint author of a timber-cruising manual widely used by timber estimators, teachers, and students [J. W. Girard and S. R. Gevorkiantz, "Timber Cruising" (U.S. Forest Service) (Processed)]. His cumulative volume tally sheet is widely used in the Lake States and other regions.

Gevorkiantz was active in several professional societies. He was a long-time member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the American Statistical Association. During his 30 years in the Society of American Foresters he served three times as a sec-

tion officer and was associate editor of the *Journal of Forestry* from 1946 to 1957. In the latter capacity he set and upheld high standards for articles on forest mensuration and statistics appearing in the *Journal*.

Few are as versatile as Gevorkiantz was. Aside from his excellence in mathematics and forestry, he was an interesting speaker, a good teacher, an entertaining and stimulating conversationalist, an accomplished artist, an untrained but skillful musician, and an enthusiastic performer in such sports as golf and bowling. He was basically an optimist, and everything he undertook from the simplest to the most complex activity, was an adventure.

Gevorkiantz was an unusually considerate person. Coupled with this was remarkable patience. These two attributes were most evident when he was helping other workers design experiments or select methods for analyzing data. He would spend a great deal of time, where necessary, first in understanding the problems that confronted the worker and then in searching out or devising methods or procedures that best suited the individual cases. The evident confidence with which he approached these problems, along with the high degree of success that attended his efforts, in turn inspired great confidence in those who consulted him.

In recent years Gevorkiantz received some tangible recognition for his professional accomplishments. In 1953 he received the Superior Service award of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and in 1957 he was elected fellow of the Society of American Foresters. He thoroughly enjoyed these honors, but he appeared to derive even greater satisfaction from the esteem in which he was held by his friends and associates. He was respected by many, ranging from such giants in research as Sir Ronald A. Fisher to the youngest neophytes. So far as his associates knew, he was truly a man without an enemy.

Gevorkiantz' passing leaves an unfilled void in the profession. To his family, friends, and associates it leaves a personal sense of loss alleviated only by memories of this warm, helpful, and talented person and his accomplishments.

PAUL O. RUDOLF  
*Lake States Forest Experiment Station,  
U.S. Forest Service,  
St. Paul, Minnesota*