



Though the forecast was for rain and most of us started out in rain gear, the day turned out perfect for an SAF field trip to the woods. We began at the Lugar's Farm where Bob Lugar welcomed us and gave us an overview of what we would see that morning. He spoke fondly of the walnut plantations that flourished on his family's farm and said that working with trees has been some of the best times he's been able to bond with his father. "Out here my dad's not Senator Lugar, he's just a regular guy who grabs a saw and prunes walnuts and works all day with me," Bob says with a warm smile, "It's a chance for us to spend time together."

The Lugar's Farm has some amazing stands of walnut and white pine. The group made a few stops just to wander through the stands and marvel over the growth the trees had made. At the bottom of the hill we met up with Jim McKenna, a Forest Service researcher who showed us two different fenced research plantations on the farm. The first had a variety of species involved with genetic improvement of black walnut.

The second fenced plantation was grafted black/English walnut trees that were showing amazing promise. It was a novel research study that intrigued the group. We also looked at a recent timber sale on the farm and another newly planted plantation.



From the Lugar's farm we went to lunch then on to the Thiesing Veneer Mill. This family-owned mill in Mooresville included several highlights. One was

the most extensive collection of wood samples any of us had ever seen including a sizeable plank of poison oak wood! The offices of the mill were some of the most beautiful paneling we'd seen and the largest room was done entirely with the wood from one walnut tree. As we toured the mill we were treated to explanations of how they are using technology and skill to maximize the volume of our hardwood lumber. It was an impressive operation.



brought to the mill, which are turned into veneer and then returned to GR Wood where they are graded, sorted, and sent to customers all over the world. As foresters we got a good feel for this very specific marketing end of the industry.

It was a good day, well organized, with a good mix of subjects and you can't beat the company!

