

## **Arnold Bolle (1912–1994) “Dean of Western Forests”**

*If we can credit one person with changing what students learn and what foresters do on the ground, then that person has to be Arnold Bolle.*

Dick Behan, Dean of the Northern  
Arizona University School of Forestry

Arnold Bolle was born on October 5, 1912, in Watertown, Wisconsin. From the earliest age he loved to be outdoors, hiking, hunting, and fishing. In 1934 this love of nature drew Bolle westward where, determined to pursue a career in the outdoors, he enrolled in the University of Montana’s school of forestry. In Missoula, he not only received a bachelor’s degree, but also met his future wife, Helen Swan, daughter of famed Forest Service photographer, K. D. Swan. The couple had three children.

After graduating in 1937, Bolle joined the Soil Conservation Service, working for that agency in Wyoming, Washington, and Oregon, before returning to Missoula in 1955 to join the faculty of his alma mater. Except for brief periods of leave to continue his own education at Harvard, where he received both his masters and doctorate, Bolle remained at the University—as a teacher, dean, and academic vice president—until retiring in 1978.

In 1971—at the behest of U.S. Senator Lee Metcalf—Bolle and his colleagues produced a document that quickly became known as “The Bolle Report.” Initially regarded as heretical by many in the timber industry, this report ultimately played a key role in redirecting Forest Service policy nationwide by giving the public a greater voice in the management of its forests. Likewise, Bolle transformed the university’s forestry program from one that focused almost solely on timber harvesting to one that addressed the management of forests more holistically. Bolle’s innovative curriculum eventually influenced almost every other forestry school in the nation.

In 1994 the University of Montana established the Bolle Center for People and Forests. In paying tribute to the man whose name it bears, the Bolle Center states, “[Bolle] had a lifelong commitment to improving the quality of forest and rangeland management and wilderness protection was one of the cornerstones of that philosophy and commitment. He transferred his vision for a conservation ethic to many young people throughout the country. He played key roles in a wide number of national, international, regional and local conservation organizations and was able to share his wisdom and vision through his participation and leadership in these organizations. Arnie was a trusted advisor to students and senators, staffers and supporters. The foundation for his vision and the source of his strength was based on his love for nature and people.”