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World Forest Institute

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## First Alumni Reunion a Grand Success



*From left: Angie DiSalvo, Claudio Ortolan (Brazil), Rainer Hummel (Germany), Xiaoli Wang (China), Blair Freeman (Australia), Rainer Gareyev (Russia), Jaakko Rantanen (Finland), Tony Scherl (Australia), Harry Merlo, Guangyu Wang (China), Sara Wu, Jasjit Singh Walia (India), Mario Angel (Chile) Luke Balcombe (Australia), Alex Battistella (Brazil), Michael Taylor (Australia), Jussi Silventoinen (Finland), Patrice Ngalla (Cameroon), Jon Bingen Sande (Norway), Mikkel Brings Nielsen (Denmark), and Yanping Zhang (China).*

The first ever WFI alumni reunion held the week of September 2<sup>nd</sup> was a great success, with over 20 alumni and spouses attending from as far away as Finland, Brazil and Australia. The festivities began with a relaxed dinner hosted by Rainer Hummel (Germany), wife Susan and daughter Johanna at their home, which included a special cake featuring photographs of the World Forestry Center. Shouts and bear hugs exploded at the door as each alum arrived to greetings from friends who have not seen each other in some time. Old friends caught up on careers and families, and new friendships were forged over a

delicious home-made buffet held in the new Hummel atrium.

The following evening the official events began with a dinner hosted by Harry Merlo, father of the World Forest Institute. The dinner was held downtown at the Harrison Restaurant and nearly 70 directors, spouses, alumni and guests attended, giving the alumni a chance to meet with the WFC directors. WFC President Gary Hartshorn introduced each alumnus, and then WFI Director Sara Wu presented Harry Merlo with an autographed frame of a group photograph taken the night before. In multiple lan-

guages, alumni thanked Harry for his vision and generosity in creating this special institution.

After two great social evenings, it was time to sober up and get down to business. Several WFI alumni were featured speakers ***continued on page 2***



*Michael Taylor (Australia) and Runar Gareyev (Russia)*

## WFI Remembers Weidong Li

Mr. Weidong Li, WFI's first fellow from China back in 1994, passed away from a heart attack on October 26. We received this sad news from Mr. Jialu Xie in Beijing.

Mr. Li was a Professor at the Institute of Scien-Tech Information in the Chinese Academy of Forestry. In 2000, WFI director Sara Wu, and Brazilian alumnus Alex Battistella, had a chance to reunite with Mr. Li and Mr. Xie for dinner in Beijing, during a WFI-led business tour to China.

Mr. Li will always be fondly remembered at WFI for his kindness, hard work and sincerity. He was an excellent cook who enjoyed sharing meals with his colleagues. He is survived by his wife and daughter.



Mr. Weidong Li was the first Fellow from China to participate in the WFI Fellowship Program



Left: Sara Wu with Claudio and Sabrina Ortolan. Right: Chinese Fellows unite—Guangyu Wang, Yanping Zhang, and Xiaoli Wang.



*continued from page 1*  
at the second "International Perspectives on Forestry" conference, which attracted a crowd of over 180 registrants. Alumni speakers included Rainer Hummel (Germany), Mikkel Brings Nielsen (Denmark), Tony Scherl (Australia), Claudio Ortolan (Brazil), Jon Bingen Sande (Norway), Jussi Silventoinen (Finland), Michael Taylor (Australia), and Guangyu Wang (China). WFC directors Colin McKenzie, Jim McNutt, Hal Salwasser, John Shelk, and John Wilkinson also participated as presenters or panelists. The conference theme, on globalization's impact on forestry, highlighted some of the key factors affecting forest ownership, wood production and trade. The event was sponsored by Forest Capital Partners, Green Diamond Resource Company, John Hancock Bond & Corporate

Finance Group, Port Blakely Tree Farms, Rimbunan Hijau Group, Stimson Lumber Company, Stoel Rives, USAID Natural Resource Management Office Forestry Team, and Weyerhaeuser. Coverage in the forestry media, such as PaperLoop.com and Crow's Publications were very positive. Those who were unable to attend the conference can still order proceedings through the WFI website.

Following the conference, some alumni hopped aboard the WFI minivan to tour Mt. Hood and the Oregon coast, as well as a few local pubs to fortify themselves after a long day's hike. New friendships and professional ties were made amongst fellows who were not at WFI in the same year. It is this informal networking that allows the alumni to expand their contacts even after they leave WFI.

A farewell BBQ hosted by Jussi Silventoinen and wife Christine at their home closed out this memorable week. Despite—in some cases—years of not having seen each other, it was quite amazing that everyone fell back into easy camaraderie. Perhaps Claudio Ortolan expressed it best when he said that "It's as if we've only been apart a few weeks, not years." Parting was bittersweet but everyone was excited and looking forward to future reunions with even more alumni attending. On that happy thought, I wish to thank all the alumni and their spouses for coming such long distances to Portland, and the sponsors and directors who made this event a success.

Sincerely,  
Sara Wu, WFI Director

**Additional Photos at:**  
<http://wfi.worldforestry.org/fellowship-6.htm>



Left: At the conference reception, Mario Angel, Alex Battistella, Blair Freeman, Jaakko Rantanen, and Susan Parsons. Middle: Jon Bingen Sande and Mikkel Nielsen resumed their posts at the WFI desks. Right: Rainer and Susan Stevens Hummel hosted a fantastic evening for alums at their home.

