



Whether on the job or at the farm, it's "all in the family." Pictured at a job site a few years ago are (left to right): Don Jordan, Jr., the late H.C. "Hack" Jordan, and D.R. Jordan.

Building Bridges to Success

By *Elishia Johnson*, Editor

\$347.12. That's the amount of money H. C. "Hack" Jordan had saved when he started his own bridge construction business in 1946 at the end of World War II. He had finished high school in Choctaw County and begun working with a railroad "bridge gang." When the war broke out, his eyesight kept him out of the military service so he worked at Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company in Mobile. A few years later when he ventured out on his own, all he knew was how to drive piling and build railroad

bridges. His very first job took him to Dale County. And as his son Donald Ray stated, "The rest is history."

In 1948, Mr. Jordan was given the opportunity to purchase 400 acres just outside of Ozark in Dale County. He had always heard that land was a good investment, so he bought the property which was mostly farmland at the time. Over the next few years he was much too busy running his now successful construction company to give the farm much attention. Consequently the property lay idle for many years. He made a few

unsuccessful attempts at raising cattle, and would later comment on that particular endeavor, "the cow business is tougher than the bridge-building business!"

Growing up in Ozark, Alabama was delightful according to Donald Ray ("D.R.") Jordan, an only child, "Everybody knew everybody else . . . and even their dog's name!" Some of his fondest childhood memories involve camping and fishing on the property as a young Cub Scout and Boy Scout. Because his father held such a strong belief in the

ideals of the Boy Scouts of America, their farm became a primary facility for hosting scouts and “camporees” in the Dale County area. The support and encouragement of Mr. Hack, as well as the time spent on the property, actually helped D.R. earn his Eagle Scout Badge and God and Country Award.

In 1967, after his son finished college and a stint in the military, Mr. Hack started taking a little time off to escape to the farm to do the things he had always wanted to do there. He began developing the property and roads. One of his good friends, Jack Monk, had advised him that timber production would be a wise investment for his land. Finally in 1982, he got serious about it. He hired a forestry consultant, Norm Kinney, to help manage his land and timber. Over twenty years later, Norm is still there.

While the family bridge-construction business grew and was eventually moved to Mobile, the family farm also grew. The size of the Jordan property has now increased to almost 600 acres. Approximately 408 acres are covered in woodlands, with two-thirds planted in loblolly and longleaf pines, and one-third made up of hardwoods. Timber is the Jordan’s primary TREASURE Forest objective.

Photo by Elishia Johnson



The family continues to follow Mr. Hack Jordan’s management principles, including good thin and burn programs that benefit both timber and wildlife.

Managing wildlife is their secondary objective. There is an abundance of deer and turkey on the property, which D.R. stated is a source of happiness to both his son and son-in-law who are hunters. Although hunting is reserved for family and employees, they maintain about ten food plots of oats, corn, field peas, and chufas for summer and winter forage.

There are also plentiful quail, squirrels, and bobcats on the farm.

Education is another important goal for the Jordan’s TREASURE Forest. For the last five or six years, hundreds of fifth graders from Ozark and other Dale County schools have taken field trips out to the farm. Additionally, they have also hosted several landowner tours.

Mr. Hack passed away in 1997 at 87 years of age. His wife, Mrs. Alma Jordan, just recently passed away. At the 2002 TREASURE Forest and

Landowner Conference, their property was recognized with the Helene Mosley Award for the Southeast Region, which D.R. and his children proudly accepted.

In the last years of his father’s life and since his death, D.R. has taken a more active role in the operations of the farm. In addition to following the professional guidance and recommendations of Norm Kinney, D.R. also relies on another family member. His cousin, Ben Johnson, who retired from the bridge building company after 40 years, now assists with the day-to-day management

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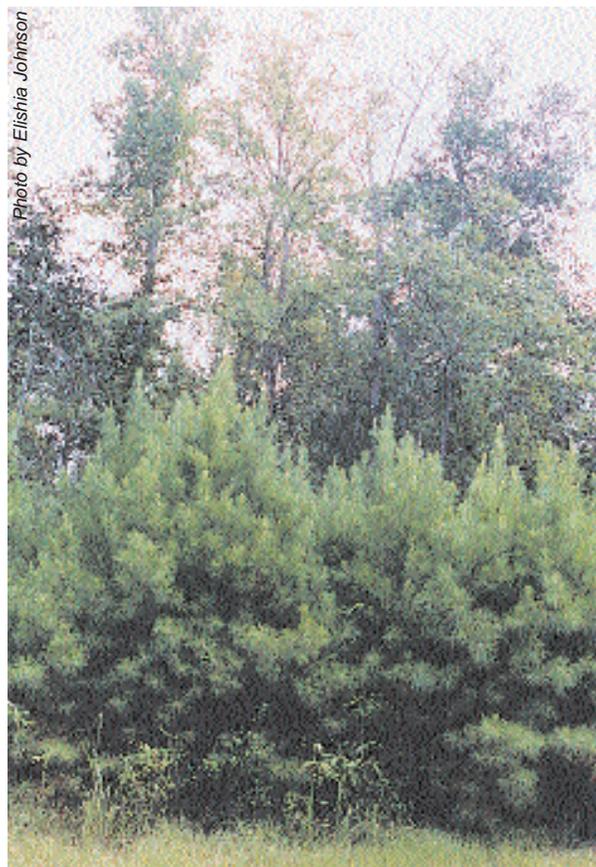


Photo by Elishia Johnson

Left: A mixed stand of pine and hardwoods illustrate the diversity of the property.

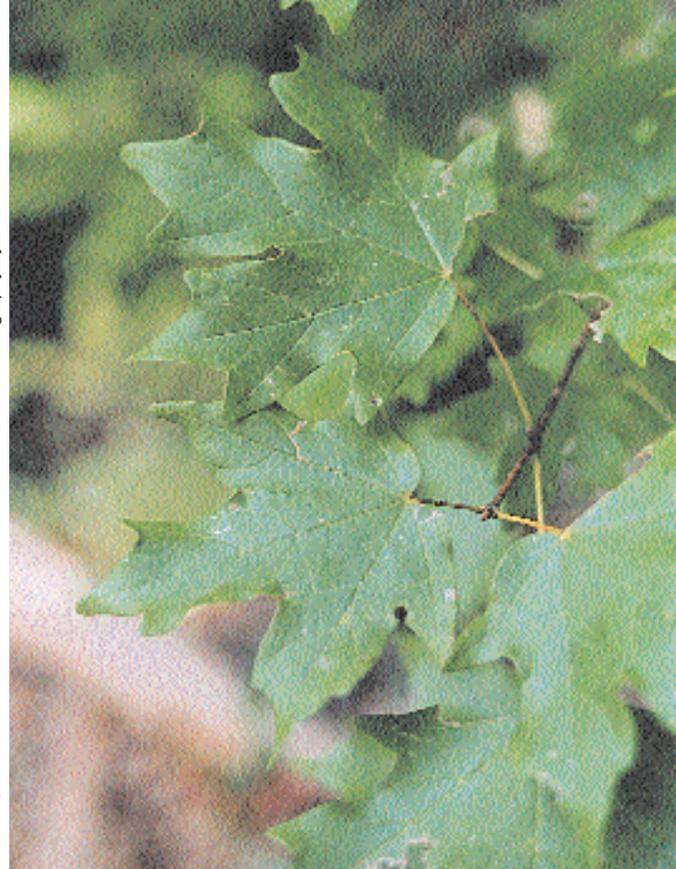
Right: Both the foliage and berries of the American beautyberry provide food for wildlife.



Photo by Elishia Johnson



Photography by Elishia Johnson



The Florida maple (right) provides one example of the abundant hardwoods found on the Jordan farm.

of the property. Built on trust and sound principals, the three men have developed a strong working relationship. They continue to follow the management practices Mr. Hack established such as his thinning and clear cutting/replanting programs. He also believed that prescribed burning on a three-year rotation was beneficial to both timber and wildlife.

D.R. describes his father as a real "visionary." He always foresaw the potential for his land. The fact that he owned a heavy construction business allowed him access to bulldozers, back-

hoes, and cranes for building roads and ponds to promote good conservation practices.

Maintaining such a large parcel of land involves hard work in any situation, much less when managing it from a distance and running a large company at the same time. But D. R. Jordan doesn't

have any ideas of ever letting it go. He is pleased that the next generation is already showing a love and genuine interest in the land as well, and he believes they will carry on the family operations in the coming years. He also knows his dad is "upstairs" looking down, and he would never consider disappointing him. 🙏

