



# Full Circle

By *Elishia Johnson*, Editor

**R**etirement. The word is not even in Raymond Newman's vocabulary. However, managing the land, making improvements, planting and enjoying watching pine trees grow . . . those are phrases you'll hear often if you talk to Mr. Newman for very long.

Born and raised "just down the road," he first bought the property in Lee County in the late 40s – 1,046 acres originally. It was not very well managed, mostly crop and pasture land. Now, some sixty-odd years later, the land is much improved and there are quite a few more acres. It's covered in pines and hardwoods, and wildlife thrives here.

Mr. Newman began converting Circle N Farm to timber back in the late 70's. He had originally farmed the land: cotton, corn, and vegetables. Next he had

tried his hand at the cattle business, also having horses and raising Shetland ponies for a while. He laughingly says he was "kicked, hooked, thrown, even chased by a Brahma bull." Then, when the cattle market started declining, he sold every one of them – more than 400 head. Growing pines just seemed to be the obvious choice. He remarked that in a way, it was as if he were coming back full circle to something he had always loved. He started planting timber, and hasn't regretted it one bit.

There are a few slash and long leaf pines, but the plantations are predominantly loblolly. The age of the pine trees at Circle N range from 1-year-old seedlings to 40 to 50-year-old mature stands. Having been in the timber business for over 50 years, it's not surprising that one of Mr. Newman's management



theories is thinning. He states, "It improves the quality as well as the growth of the trees." He prefers planting to natural regeneration, adding that it's smarter and more economical in the long run. He is also a firm believer in prescribed burning, another practice that he completes on an annual basis. He says they burn 700-800 acres nearly every February. It seems that he actually worked his land under the principals of the TREASURE Forest program prior to hearing about it, long before becoming a TREASURE Forest in 1980 (Certificate #115). Then in 2003, all the hard work and sound management paid off when he was honored as a Helene Mosley Memorial Award Winner for the Southeast Region.

Although it is obvious that Mr. Newman himself is the "overseer," he says his son, Mike, also helps at the farm. That is, when he's not busy running the family timber business – Raymond turned that enterprise over to his son a few years ago, so that he could devote all of his energies to the farm.

*Right: This road leading through a stand of 30-year-old loblollies represents just a portion of the 135 miles of road that take Raymond Newman anywhere he wishes to go on his farm.*

*Below: Hardwoods and mature pines enhance the view from the hunting lodge.*

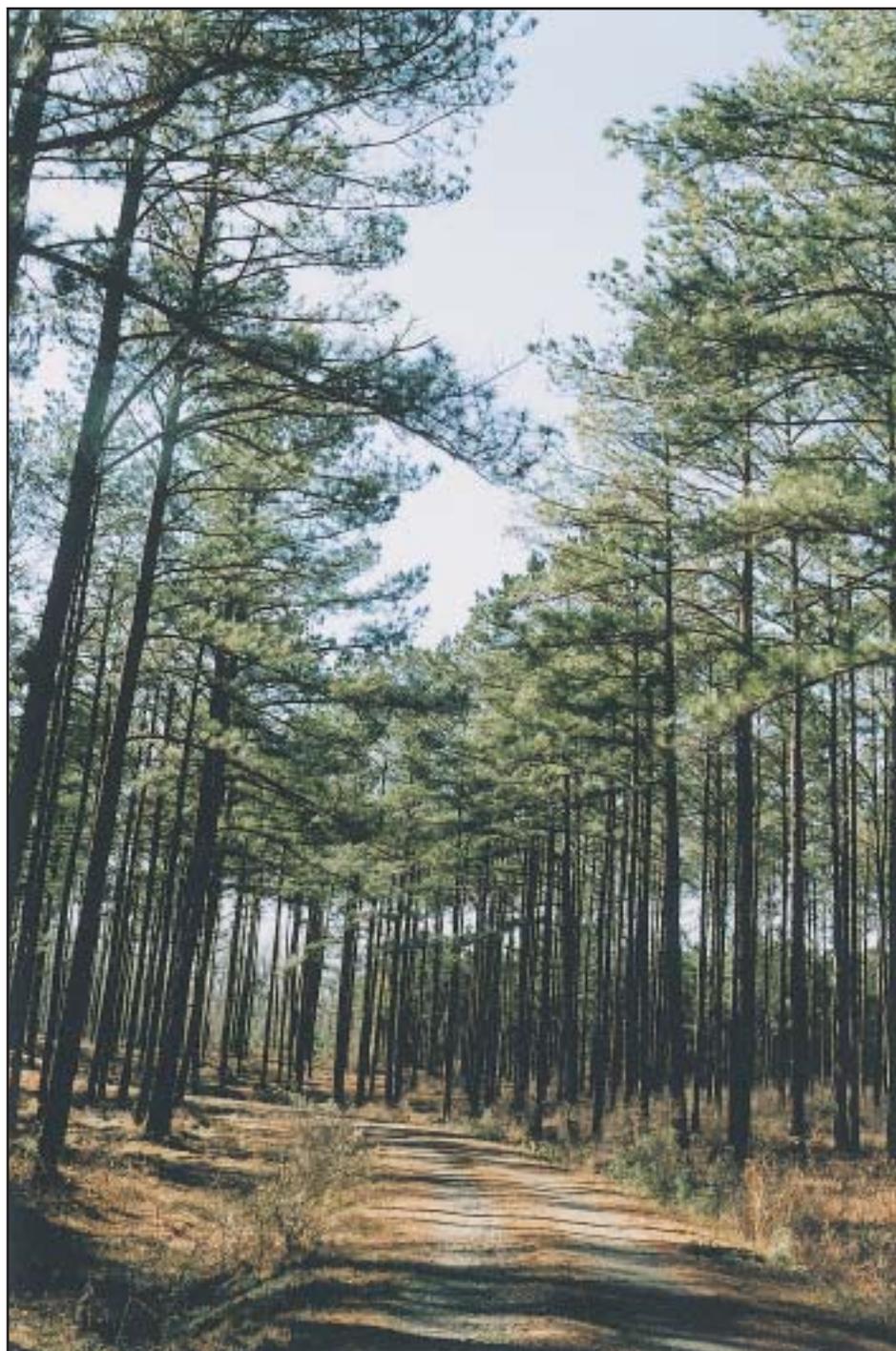
Over the years, they've received assistance and guidance from the Alabama Forestry Commission, as well as the Soil and Water Conservation folks.

With all of the effort he puts into timber, which is his secondary TREASURE Forest objective, you can just imagine the love and time Mr. Newman devotes to his primary objective: Wildlife! He is an avid quail hunter, and each year raises several hundred. With over 100 acres planted in food plots, there is also an abundance of turkey, deer, and doves. There are over 50 acres of grain sorghum and bicolor lespedeza for the quail, and

more than 40 acres of winter grazing plots of wheat, clover, and brown top millet. But planting of these grains is just the beginning . . . he has the equipment to do the whole process: a combine cuts the seed, then it is cleaned, bagged, and stored. Last year he harvested 70,000 pounds of wheat.

And don't forget the fish. There are three ponds at Circle N: a 17-acre, an 8-acre, and a 4-acre. They harvest blue gill, shell cracker, copper nose bream, and largemouth bass. In addition to fertiliz-

*(Continued on page 6)*



Spring 2005

Photos by Elishia Johnson

Wildlife is the primary TREASURE Forest objective of Circle N Farm. Over 100 acres planted in food plots, such as this greenfield, attract an abundance of turkey, deer, and doves.

Below: An avid quail hunter, every year Mr. Newman raises several hundred birds from chicks. He loves to shoot birds and work with his five bird dogs.



Photo by Elishia Johnson



Photo by Elishia Johnson

ing, liming, and setting turtle traps, Mr. Newman states they keep the bass happy by feeding the bream. He says that he manages the ponds to promote good, quality fishing.

One of the most notable features of this TREASURE Forest is the road

building. According to Mr. Newman, there are 135 miles of road, all of which they build and maintain themselves. He says that there is nowhere on the property that he can't go and see

fruits of his labor with neighbors and friends. He also occasionally enjoys shooting at his regulation skeet range, and he's been known to host friends at the hunting lodge that he built about 30 years ago.

Meanwhile, Raymond Newman doesn't have any plans to retire. He hasn't got time . . . he's much too busy carrying out his timber farming philosophy which has proven quite successful: cut, spray, burn, then plant more! 🌱

what he wants to see! They quarry bronze rock out of three rock pits on the property, haul it with a 25-ton dump truck, use a D6 Caterpillar to crush it, then shape it with a 130G motor grader.

In all of his "spare" time, Mr. Newman attends to his hobby: the fruit orchards. He raises plums, pears, scuppernong grapes, as well as eight or ten varieties of peaches including Georgia Belle, Red Haven, and Lohring. He explains that it gives him great satisfaction to share the

Left: Raymond Newman, pictured with the skid steer that he says makes a snap of clearing the forest floor of sweet gum saplings and other undergrowth.

Right: The three ponds on the property are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also provide good fishing for bass and bream.



Photo by Elishia Johnson

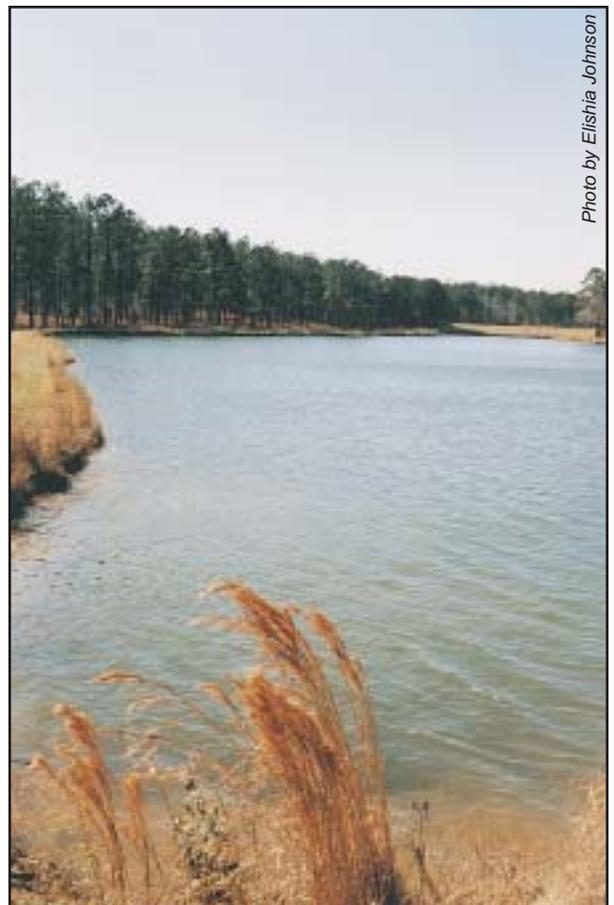


Photo by Elishia Johnson