

MEMORIAL

Dan James

Alabama Landowner Hall of Famer

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In my 29 years of working in forestry and natural resources in Alabama, I have worked with many landowners that have taught, inspired, and encouraged me. What a blessing these landowners have been in my life. There is no “Alabama Landowner Hall of Fame” of which I am aware, but if there were such a group, I would recommend we induct Dan James as the initial member.

Dan James of Brent, Alabama, died on May 2, 2014. He was a respected leader, knowledgeable landowner, and great communicator to the common man. He possessed all those qualities deserving of belonging in a landowner’s hall of fame.

First, he loved to share information with others, and he did it in a way that made you feel good. He didn’t talk down to you or speak as if he was in a hurry. You got the feeling he was actually doing you a favor; and, he was. He was a willing deliverer of valuable information. I would often remind myself when I was in his company: “Tim, if you slow down long enough and pay attention, you might learn something.”

Second, he was knowledgeable about the subject of trees and forest management. It was a rare occasion that I would spend time with Dan when he wouldn’t say something about a tree.

Always using the scientific name for the species, he knew its native range, wood characteristics, uses, medicinal purposes, and so much more that I often felt embarrassed because I was the forester!

But Dan never shared this information to try and make you feel small; he shared it because he loved this stuff. He loved trees!

Third, he was willing to take a leadership role if needed. In addition to serving as chairman of the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Alabama State Tree Farm Committee, Dan was president of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association and the

International Wood Collectors Society. He not only was involved in the local Bibb County Forestry Planning Committee, but was also instrumental in the creation of the Alabama Forestry Planning Committee (now the Alabama Natural Resources Coordinating Council). This is just a sample. He did much, much more, including leading a prison ministry.

Many times we don’t really appreciate someone until they are gone; but, in Dan’s case this is not true. I appreciated him while he was here. I knew he was someone special, and he will be greatly missed. We all have been given gifts from God. What makes some people more special than others is that they use their gift for the greater good: helping others. Dan was a wise steward of his gifts, leaving Alabama and all of us a great heritage and example to follow. ☮

Editor’s Note: After having their Bibb County property certified as a TREASURE Forest (#385), Dan and his wife, Romaleta, received the “Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award” in 1986. Other honors included being named Alabama’s “Tree Farmer of the Year” in 1989 and later “Forest Conservationist of the Year” in 1992 by the Alabama Wildlife Federation. The couple was presented the “Bill Moody Award” by the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association at the 2002 Alabama TREASURE Forest and Landowner Conference. Then in 2003, Dan James was the recipient of the “W. Kelly Mosley Award” for his contributions in the advancement of environmental knowledge and mentoring youth on the issues of timber production and wildlife.

