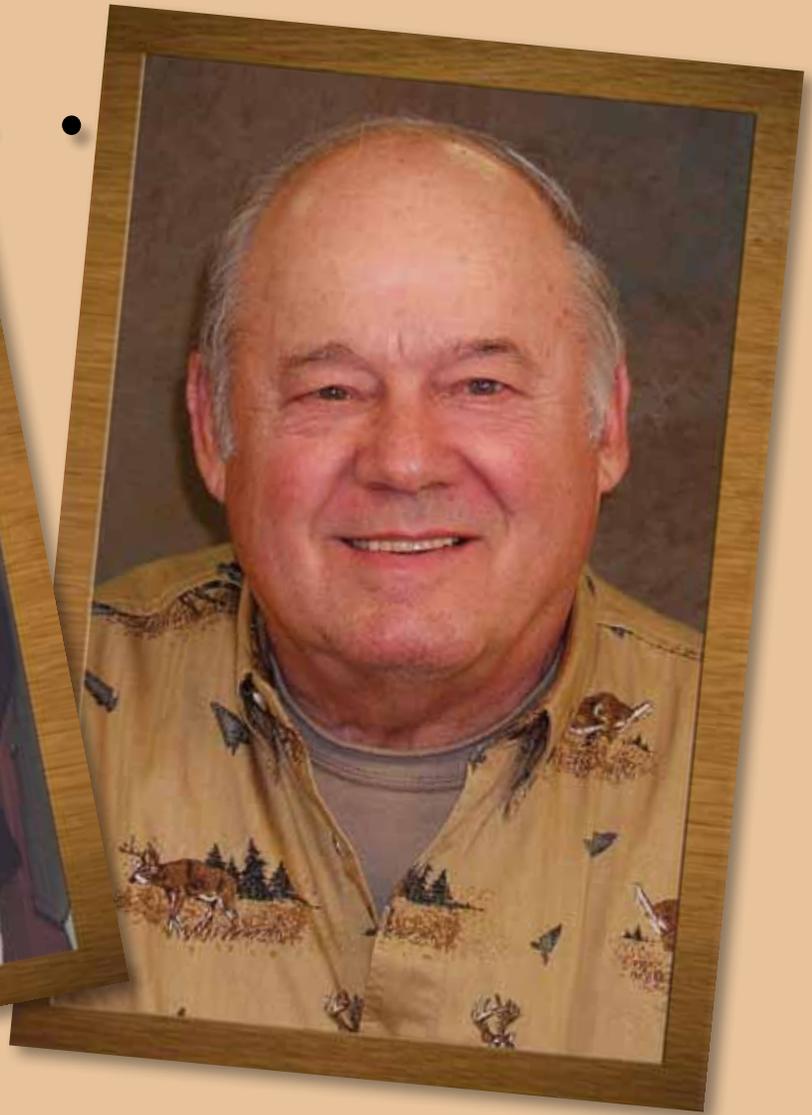


# Goodbye to a Friend . . .



**James Gary Fortenberry**

(March 17, 1936 - September 27, 2012)

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to an individual who played a long and important role in the history of the Alabama Forestry Commission and the Alabama TREASURE Forest program.

Former Commission Chairman James Gary Fortenberry passed away on September 27, 2012, at the age of 76.

A resident of Ward, Alabama, he was retired from the James River Corporation in Pennington. Originally from Irondale, he attended the University of Alabama where he met his bride, Shirley. Following graduation, they moved to Choctaw County, Shirley's home county, and purchased 100 acres from her father. Managing the timberland and obtaining more acreage as time passed, he soon became a leader in the Choctaw County forestry community.

As a strong proponent of good forest stewardship, Fortenberry's property was certified as a Tree Farm in 1978 and a TREASURE Forest in 1980. With his multiple-use management philosophy, wildlife was the top priority and timber production his secondary objective. Therefore he took advantage of every acre of the forest with both hardwoods and pines. In 1989, their now 1,200-acre property was honored as the state winner of the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award. Ten years later, the timberland they owned had climbed to over 2,000 acres.

In 2004, Gary and Shirley Fortenberry were honored with the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association's Bill Moody Award. This award, given to honor individuals and/or groups making significant contributions to the advancement of the TREASURE Forest Program and the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA), was presented at the Alabama Landowners and TREASURE Forest Conference in Tuscaloosa in October of that year. At the time, Mr. Fortenberry was serving as Chairman of the Alabama Forestry Commission's Board of Commissioners.

Gary was first appointed as a Commissioner by Governor Fob James and began his service to the Forestry Commission on November 5, 1996, replacing Carol Jean Grisham. Governor Don Siegelman re-appointed him to another term beginning November 5, 2001.



Recently established Fortenberry Memorial at the Baldwin County Boys Ranch in Summerdale.

During his tenure as a Commissioner, Fortenberry was elected Vice-Chairman on January 7, 1999, and continued to serve in that position through the January 2005 meeting. He was elected Chairman on January 21, 2005, and served in that capacity through the April 26, 2006, meeting. His term of office ended on November 5, 2006, having served ten years as a commissioner.

Friends of Gary Fortenberry have recently established the "Gary Fortenberry Memorial Hardwood Grove" at the Baldwin County Boys Ranch in Summerdale, Alabama (one of the homes in the Alabama Sheriffs' Youth Ranches organization). "Mr. Fortenberry was a long-time contributor to the Ranch," said organizers, "and establishing a memorial hardwood grove seemed only appropriate. Gary loved hardwoods, especially oaks, and he had a special affection for Chinese chestnut trees because deer are so fond of the chestnuts."



The boys at the Ranch helped plant the memorial trees.

The boys at the Ranch helped dig the holes and plant the trees. The hardwood grove is home to a variety of species, and the Ranch director plans to establish a disc golf course in and around the grove for resident boys to enjoy.

It's doubtful that Gary Fortenberry could have imagined a more suitable legacy.

Sources: *Alabama's TREASURED Forests* (Spring 1990, Winter 1999, and Spring 2005)