

# AFAA NEWS

AUBURN FORESTRY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1987

## Remembering Solon Dixon

*On January 10, 1987, Solon Dixon died. As we all know, Mr. Dixon and his wife Martha were strong supporters of the School of Forestry. They, along with Mrs. Thelma Dixon, donated land and money to establish the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, near Andalusia, which serves as the School's summer camp facility and provides a setting for other forestry education, extension and research. Mr. Dixon visited the Center on a regular basis and was always interested in what was going on. Rhett Johnson, Manager of the Dixon Center since it opened, presented his thoughts about Mr. Dixon in the 1987 KnotHole, the student's yearbook. They are reprinted here, by permission.*

## "THOUGHTS OF A FRIEND"

The School of Forestry, Auburn University, the forestry and wildlife professions, and all Alabamians concerned with the state of their natural resources lost an invaluable friend this past January with the death of Solon Dixon. Solon was a true conservationist as the term was originally defined: a wise user of natural resources. He was at once many things -- an accomplished engineer, a successful businessman, a pilot, an educator, a lumberman and innovative sawmiller, an outdoorsman and avid hunter, an unabashed Auburn fan who took as much pleasure in an Alabama victory over anyone else as any "Roll Tider", a philanthropist, and greatest of all, for many of us, a true friend.

Mr. Dixon's contributions to Alabama's youth and education causes were substantial. He and his wife, Martha, donated \$500,000 to match federal funds to construct a performing arts center at Lurleen B. Wallace State Junior College in Andalusia in 1982. Later contributions were made to help pave parking lots and set up scholarships and a student loan program at the junior college. Solon's years at Lyman Ward Military Academy, where he attended high school, resulted in a deep appreciation for that institution and he later gave \$130,000 toward the construction of an All-Faith Chapel on the Camp Hill campus. He served on their Board of Directors for many years and contributed to the school's well-being in a variety of ways. Solon and other Dixon family members were also instrumental in the construction of the lavish Alabama Forestry Association building in Montgomery. He and Martha matched a \$100,000 gift from the wife of his late brother, Charles, to kick off the fund raising effort for the construction. In fact, Solon had joined with other Alabama Forest businessmen in the early 1950's to create the Alabama Forest Products Association which later became the Alabama Forestry Association.

Mr. Dixon received many awards in his lifetime for his contributions to his fellow Alabamians. He was named Forest Businessman of the Year in 1979 and received a special Honor plaque from the Alabama chapter of the SAF that same year for his outstanding contributions to forestry in Alabama. He also received the Alabama

## A Message from Your President

We had the highest membership ever in 1986. I give thanks to Dr. Emmett Thompson and the faculty, all the alumni, and Frankie Stewart, III, who led the membership drive. Let's break that record this year. The dues are \$5.00 per year. You can become a lifetime member for \$100 (one payment, \$20 per year for five years, or any other payment plan). Send your fees to Beth Kennedy, Route 4, Box 419, Winfield, AL 35594.

There will be two or three meetings this year. Also, we hope to publish at least two newsletters. Dr. Glenn Glover needs information on lost alumni. If your name has not appeared in the newsletter in several years, please send information about yourself and family to Glenn.

Larry Brooks has accepted the job as chairman of the Outstanding Alumnus Award Committee. The award will be given at the awards banquet in spring, 1988. If you know an outstanding alumnus, send the information to Larry Brooks, Rt. 4, Box 182-A, Selma, AL 36701 or call him at 872-2384. We appreciate Larry supporting our association.

I expect a productive year and we solicit your support. We are always interested in ideas on what the association should be doing. Send this information to Dr. Glenn Glover, Frankie Stewart, III, myself or the School's Office of Student and Alumni Services.

**Marvin Odom (#74)**  
**President**  
**Auburn Forestry Alumni Association**

Wildlife Federation's top award, Conservationist of the Year, for his dedication to wise natural resource management. Other awards were garnered including an honorary doctorate from Auburn University in 1979 following his gift of land and money for the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center.

I have always thought that Solon reserved his greatest gift for Auburn. He attended and graduated from the school, then Alabama Polytechnical Institute, in 1926 with a degree in mechanical engineering. After receiving a masters degree in engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Solon returned to the Plains to teach mechanical and aeronautical engineering to Auburn students and to give flying lessons on the side. He remained at Auburn for several years before returning to Andalusia to join his brothers in the family businesses. As most of us are aware, the Dixons were very successful, accumulating wealth and land by shrewd management, hard work, and startling business acumen. In 1978, the mills and much of the land were sold to TMA, a subsidiary of Tenneco Corporation. At that time, Solon retained ownership of several thousand acres of farm and forest land in the Dixie and Rome communities near Andalusia,

land which included his old homeplace. Acting on a suggestion from John Vick, he acquired ownership of approximately 5300 acres in a block surrounding the old home and presented it to Auburn University for use as a forestry and wildlife education center. An accompanying gift from he and his wife of \$500,000 and further contributions from Thelma Dixon enabled the construction of what has been considered the finest field forestry education center in existence in the nation today.

The gift of money and land was the largest gift ever made to Auburn by a living person, but Solon gave us something even more dear to him. He gave us the woods and fields in which he had worked and rambled as a boy and a man. He gave us the home which his grandfather built nearly 150 years ago and in which he and his father and his family had been born and grew up. He gave us the acres where his family had settled and where they were buried. And Solon gave us a large part of himself as well. He was never able to stay away from the Center for long and his interest and concern never wavered. I think that is perhaps what I miss most about him now. When a success was enjoyed here -- a good timber sale, a good turkey hatch, a difficult project completed, my first thought was to call Mr. Dixon because he took such great pleasure in the news. When disaster struck or things went badly, I still called him first. He never criticized or second-guessed, although the temptation must have been great. Instead, he always had a suggestion or consolation and his concern was genuine. I often forgot that Solon's wide experience had made him well-versed in many areas, practical and abstract, and was often embarrassed when he saw right through "unsolvable" problems.

We have struggled to be self-sufficient here at the Dixon Center, using sales of forest and farm products and user-fees to offset operating costs. The vagaries of agricultural and forestry markets and unforeseen expenses often left us short at the end of a fiscal year. I always hated to have to ask Solon for assistance but sometimes had to and he always came through. Mr. Dixon had gained a great appreciation for hard work, frugality, perseverance, and self-reliance through his long career and we here at the Center have learned those values as well. They have stood us in good stead through trying financial times in recent years.

While Solon's health was good, he came out almost daily to visit and see what was going on. Even later, we talked on a regular basis on the telephone and he never lost interest in what we were up to. He had a keen interest in Center activities and took pleasure in meeting and welcoming guests to the facility. His welcomes were extended to groups ranging from Cub Scout dens to visiting Governors and University Presidents and were equally sincere. He took as much pleasure in a wildflower walk with a local garden club as with a technical update session for professional foresters or wildlife biologists. During his lifetime, he saw 240 Auburn forestry students complete Summer Camp at the Dixon Center and over 20,000 user-days logged at the facility. Obviously, his gift has already touched the lives of many interested in Alabama's natural resources.

As Solon's health began to fail, he was less active physically at the Center but he still inquired regularly about what was going on, who was here, had we seen many turkeys, what had we heard from Auburn, etc. His trips out here, although less and less frequent, seemed

to give him pleasure and to satisfy him. I do truly believe we had become sort of an extended family for him and that his constant enjoinder to guests to please come back to see us was genuine. When ill health finally overcame him on January 10, 1987, Mrs. Dixon made the decision to bury him in the family cemetery at the Dixon Center and asked the Center staff to serve as pallbearers. I know we all considered it fitting and a great privilege to, in the end, bring Solon home one last time.

*Editor's Note: Those of you who have attended summer camp at or visited the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center know what a unique facility it is. If you have not had or taken the opportunity to visit the Center I encourage you to do so. It is located about 22 miles west of Andalusia on U.S. 29. A large wooden sign on the north side of the road marks the entrance. The staff of the Center are always gracious hosts. Stop by and see the gift of Mr. Dixon, you will, I am sure, be impressed.*

## Alumni News

**Paul Schrantz ('74)** was recently promoted to Manager of Contractor Harvesting and Land Management Division with Rocky Creek Logging Company in Chapman, Alabama. Paul lives in Greenville, with his wife, Joanne, who teaches high school English. They have two daughters, Cathryn and Claire.

**Alan Bruce ('78)** was recently promoted to Woodlands Manager of James River Corporation, Naeohla, Alabama.

**James E. "Jack" Hinson ('50)** retired on December 31, 1986 as Chief Inspector - Timber, Research and Tests Department, Norfolk Southern Corporation. He immediately announced the formation of a consulting firm to offer services related to cross-ties and other products.

**YOUR NAME COULD BE HERE  
PLEASE SEND US INFORMATION**

### NOMINATIONS BEING ACCEPTED

Nominations are now being accepted for new officers of the AFAA for 1988-89 and the 1988 School of Forestry's Outstanding Alumnus.

Jerry Johnson, past president, is serving as chairman of the nominating committee for officers. If you would like to make a nomination please contact Jerry at:

Jerry Johnson, Chairman  
AFAA Nominating Committee  
1412 Azalea Drive  
Auburn, AL 36830

The chairman of the Outstanding Alumnus Award for 1988 is Larry Brooks. Nominations should include a biographical sketch listing past and present employment, contributions to the School and forestry in general, accomplishments and any other information which you deem makes the nominee outstanding. We have many outstanding alumni out there, please take time to recognize one that you know. The recipient will receive a plaque at the Annual Awards Banquet and their name will be inscribed on a placque which hangs in the Dean's Office. Send your nominations by December 31, 1987,

to:  
Larry Brooks, Chairman  
AFAA Outstanding Alumnus Committee  
Route, 4, Box 182-A  
Selma, AL 36701

## Forestry Awards Banquet

The Auburn University Student Chapter of the Society of American Foresters held their 1987 Forestry Awards Banquet on Tuesday, March 3, 1987, in conjunction with the School of Forestry's Advisory Council meeting. Holding the banquet at the time when the Advisory Council is in town provides the Council a chance to see what an outstanding job the students do in planning and executing the banquet, and to see those students (and faculty) who receive awards. Marvin Odom, President of the Forestry Alumni Association, presented the AFAA's Outstanding Senior Award for Academics to James Curry. Charles Pigg, Chairman of the AFAA Outstanding Alumnus Award Council, presented Mr. Frank M. Stewart, Jr. this year's Outstanding Alumnus Award (see article elsewhere in the newsletter).

Other students who received awards include: Jeff Green, Daren Kirkham and Jimmy Trice (E. A. Hauss Scholastic Improvement Award); Dennis Shaw, Don Johnson and Alan Lewis (H. E. Christen Memorial Summer Camp Awards); Sam Houston (American Can Company Forest Measurements Award); Brian Harris (MacMillan Bloedel, Inc. Forest Economics Award); Al Brown (Southeastern Society of American Foresters Outstanding Senior Award for Academics); and Dale Williams (L. M. Ware Outstanding Senior in Forestry Award). Other students were recognized as recipients of scholarships and we were fortunate to have several scholarship and award donors or representatives of donors present at the banquet.

## EXTRA! EXTRA! We Need Students

Anyone who has followed U.S. forestry schools' enrollments over the years knows that number of students is a cyclical phenomenon. We are currently in a deep valley. 1987's summer camp stands at 16 students, the lowest summer camp enrolled since 1972. The summer camp class is the only group of students available to graduate two years from now. Although the job market has been somewhat depressed, this low level of enrollment is not good for the newly formed School of Forestry. Many schools in the U. S. are experiencing the same situation and some have lost funding due to low enrollment.

Although we certainly do not want to glut the employment market, we believe that a larger student body is desirable. The School has a recruiting effort, but you, the Alumni, are the best recruiting group that we have. Take time to talk to high school or first- and second-year college students to familiarize them with what Forestry is really all about. We often suffer from a misconception of our profession. Few people know of the broad array of biological, technical, social and business courses that are a part of a forestry curriculum; that forestry is the leading industry in the state of Alabama and that foresters are in the forefront of technological development and application. If you need brochures describing our program please call or write the School's Office of Student Services, or the Dean's office.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP.**

## IN MEMORIAM

William B. Black ('51)  
Fred W. Clearman ('61)

## HOME COMING, 1987

Speaking of coming by to see us, if you are attending the Homecoming football game on October 24, versus Mississippi State, plan to have lunch with us and on us. Bar-B-Q sandwiches and all the fixings will be provided in the Forestry Building starting about 2 1/2 hours before game time. We will have plenty of food and door prizes, so bring your family and friends, have lunch, visit with other alumni and get in the —

**AUBURN SPIRIT**  
**See you in October!**

## Frank Stewart, Outstanding Alumnus

At the 1987 Awards Banquet for the School of Forestry at Auburn University, Frank Stewart, Jr. was recognized by the School's alumni as the outstanding forestry alumnus for 1987. Mr. Stewart, President of Wilmon Timberlands, Inc., Vredenbug, Alabama, is a 1948 graduate of Auburn University. In presenting the award, Charles Pigg, Past-President of the Auburn Forestry Alumni Association, cited Mr. Stewart for his personal and professional accomplishments in the field of forestry and recognized his outstanding work in planning, developing, and perfecting an optimum system of forest management for the overall benefit of forestry, wildlife, and the land. Mr. Stewart is a registered forester in Alabama, a registered land surveyor, past secretary and past member of the Alabama Board of Registration for Foresters, past Chairman of the Consulting Committee for Forestry Research for Auburn University, past Chairman of the School of Forestry Advisory Council, past member of the Forestry Advisory Board for Patrick Henry State Junior College, past President of the Auburn Forestry Alumni Association, and past Executive Vice President and present member of the Board of Auburn University Forestry Foundation. He is an active member of the Society of American Foresters, the Alabama Forestry Association, and received the Governor's Wildlife Conservationist Award for 1966, the Governor's Forestry Conservationist Award for 1974, and the Southeastern Society of American Foresters Award for Excellence in the Practice of Forestry in 1981. Mr. Stewart was enshrined in the Alabama Forestry Hall of Fame in 1983.

## NEW ALUMNI OFFICE

One of the advantages (and disadvantages) of becoming a School is that we now maintain our own students records, and have thus formed an Office of Student Services. In order to better serve our alumni and provide a continuous, identifiable location for records, communication, etc., we have expanded the responsibilities of our Student office to the Office of Student and Alumni Services. This office is currently located in Room 100 of M. White Smith Hall and Wanda Libby is the secretary. The faculty liaison will continue to be Dr. Glenn Glover. If you have news about yourself or any other alumnus please send it to:

Office of Student and Alumni Services  
School of Forestry  
Auburn University, AL 36849

Better yet come by and see us sometime.

## AFAA Logo Contest!

### WIN A LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP OR \$50 CASH

The executive committee of the AFAA has discussed providing a decal signifying, "Auburn Forestry Alumni Association--Member, 1987", or something similar, to dues paying members. As part of this discussion we felt that a new logo for display on the decal, letterhead, etc. would be appropriate. So we are going to have a contest. If you have a creative bend, design a new logo that would appropriately represent the AFAA. Send your entries to the School of Forestry's office of Student and Alumni Services (see article elsewhere in newsletter) by November 1, 1987. The entries will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and the winning designer will be given a life membership to the AFAA (\$100 value) if they are an Auburn Forestry Alumnus or \$50 cash if they are not an alumnus.

## Life Membership —Why Do It?

The Bylaws of the AFAA allows for a lifetime membership dues of \$100. The intent of the lifetime membership was to build an endowment to fund a scholarship within the School of Forestry. A \$500 yearly scholarship would require an endowment of about \$8000 — 80 lifetime members out of over 1000 forestry graduates. As the number of lifetime members increase, the amount of the scholarship can be increased or more than one scholarship can be offered.

Please consider a lifetime membership to your Forestry Alumni Association. Arrangements can be made for payments over time — 5 years @ \$20 per year or any other payment plan. You will receive a certificate signifying you as a lifetime member of the AFAA.

## Auburn Forestry Foundation

The Auburn Forestry Foundation was formed as an arm of the Auburn Forestry Alumni Association to aid and promote the School of Forestry at Auburn University. To achieve this, the Forestry Endowment Trust Fund was established. The fund, at present, is relatively small, consisting of several accounts such as the Harold Christen Memorial, C. G. Duffee Lecture, Henry Posey Memorial, memorials to several deceased alumni, and general donations. All contributions go to the Endowment Trust Fund. The interest from the invested capital will be expended when deemed necessary to meet the special needs of the School of Forestry. Now is a good time to build the fund to support the continued growth of the School of Forestry at Auburn University.

To Contribute to "The Auburn Forestry Foundation"

Make your check payable to:

Auburn Forestry Foundation

Mail to:

School of Forestry  
100 M. Smith Hall

Auburn University, AL 36849 - 5418

**CHECK WITH YOUR EMPLOYERS TO DETERMINE IF  
THEY PROVIDE A MATCHING CONTRIBUTION—  
DOUBLE YOUR EFFORT.**

## School of Forestry

Auburn University Alumni Association  
Auburn University, AL. 36849-5418

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