

# RENEW

COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES  
ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

**2021-22**



**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™**  
COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES

# RENEW

## COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2021-22

Mark E. Keenum ..... **PRESIDENT, MSU**  
Keith Coble ..... **VICE PRESIDENT, DAFVM**  
L. Wes Burger ..... **DEAN**  
Ian Munn ..... **ASSOCIATE DEAN**  
Steve Bullard ..... **ASSOCIATE DEAN**

### CONTRIBUTORS

David Ammon	Kathleen Forman
Megan Bean	Meg Henderson
Vanessa Beeson	Russ Houston
Dominique Belcher	Grace Jones
Karen Brasher	Beth Wynn

The College of Forest Resources is a unit in the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University.

The mission of the College of Forest Resources is to promote, support, and enable the management, conservation, and utilization of forest and other natural resources to benefit the stakeholders of Mississippi, the nation, and the world.



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## CFR BY THE NUMBERS

**573**

STUDENTS (FALL 2021)

**429**

UNDERGRADUATES (FALL 2021)

**88**

MASTER'S STUDENTS (FALL 2021)

**56**

PH.D. STUDENTS (FALL 2021)

**72**

FACULTY (FISCAL YEAR 2021)

**148**

DEGREES AWARDED (2020/2021)

**88**

FRESHMEN (FALL 2021)

**25.1**

AVERAGE FRESHMEN ACT SCORE (FALL 2021)

**\$13,793,402**

GIFTS (FISCAL YEAR 2021)

**\$211,039**

SCHOLARSHIPS (2020/2021)

**34,370**

ACRES IN THE BULLDOG FOREST (FISCAL YEAR 2021)

**ON THE COVER:** College of Forest Resources' faculty and students joined Phi Kappa Phi members to plant native shrubs, trees, and perennial plants around Thompson Hall. The planting project was recognized with the Phi Kappa Phi National Service Project Award. (Photo by Dominique Belcher)



## FROM THE DEAN

**GREETINGS FROM THE COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES (CFR) AT** Mississippi State. I am pleased to write this letter as the dean of the College of Forest Resources and director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center. As you may remember, my last letter was as interim dean and director, a position I held for nearly 18 months. In November, after a competitive search process, I was pleased to accept the offer to become the dean and director. As a 29-year veteran faculty member in the CFR and associate director of FWRC for a decade, I am humbled and thrilled to lead this incredible organization.

To complete the administration of our college and research center, I brought Dr. Steve Bullard back to assume the role of associate dean and associate director. Dr. Ian Munn, associate dean and forestry professor, retired in December 2021. Ian did a great job in his role as associate dean and while he will be greatly missed, we are happy for him to begin a new chapter as a retiree. Fortunately, Steve also retired from Stephen F. Austin in December after serving as provost and dean of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. When he came to ask for office space in Thompson Hall as emeritus faculty, I told him I had just the right office for him and encouraged him to come back to work in the CFR as associate dean. As an alumnus, former forestry faculty member, and former administrator, he jumped at the chance to come back to his alma mater and I couldn't be happier to have him assist me in the day-to-day activities of running the college and research center.

After the 2020 school year marked by COVID disruptions, virtual meetings, and online classes, our students, staff, and faculty were all happy to see the 2021 school year arrive with a return to normalcy. To make up for missed opportunities during COVID, we held two forestry summer field sessions in summer 2021, a feat not previously accomplished. Our faculty, staff, and graduate students did an excellent job training forestry students in this hands-on experience and I couldn't be prouder of their hard work and endurance over the 2021 summer.

We were able to see so many of you at meetings and events, something we missed in 2020. We held advisory meetings, college-wide meetings, a benefit golf tournament, and the CFR alumni and friends tailgate. You don't realize how much you appreciate these meetings and the fellowship they provide until you aren't able to



meet face-to-face.

I often tell people that we are one of the smallest colleges on campus with one of the largest research portfolios. We accomplish that because of faculty who are experts in their field and truly care about student success, an award winning and outstanding student body, and supportive alumni, who are leading natural resource conservation throughout the world.

In this issue of *Renew*, we highlight many of our outstanding alumni. An example of support provided by alumni is the scholarship that John Enlow established in honor of his cousin, Dene Enlow, also an alumnus. The gift will provide scholarships for students from Tishomingo County. A new feature in the magazine is a spotlight on natural resource leaders. This year's Leaders in Conservation include Adrian Blocker, Elizabeth Rooks-Barber, and Kevin Ragon. I'm sure you will enjoy discovering what your fellow alumni are doing to manage, conserve, and use our natural resources for the betterment of our state, nation, and world. We also feature Malone Buchanan, a forestry alumnus, who has worked in production and procurement and been a wonderful contributor on the dean's advisory committee. Likewise, Juliet Tang, a sustainable bioproducts alumna, continues to contribute to the department through research and by mentoring students as an adjunct faculty member. Finally, Clay Hayes, a wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture alumnus, is featured with his incredible win on Season 8 of the History Channel's *Alone* Series.

I am sure you will enjoy reading about your fellow alumni in this issue of *Renew*. I am honored to work with you all for the betterment of the CFR. Your support means so much to me and our faculty, staff, and students. Thank you for all you do. I look forward to seeing you soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Wes Burger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "L." being more distinct than the last name.

**L. Wes Burger**  
Dean

LEADERS IN

# NATURAL RESOURCES

*MSU alumni as stewards  
of the land, industry*

BY VANESSA BEESON

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**M**SU'S COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES WAS founded nearly 60 years ago as the School of Forest Resources. Since then, more than 4,000 students have graduated from the program, many of whom have gone on to be leaders in their respective fields. In this feature, we profile CFR alumni who lead the charge in land stewardship and industry innovation in natural resources. This year's profiles include a senior executive from the world's largest softwood timber producer, a certified wildlife biologist who strives to protect Mississippi's most vulnerable lands, and a nonprofit executive director aimed at helping the region's timber producers and manufacturers of wood utility poles.

## FROM FARM TO FOREST

**ADRIAN BLOCKER** grew up in the Oktoc community on the outskirts of Starkville on a black angus cattle farm.

“We had row-crops and timberland and I remember cutting down trees for firewood or to sell to the local paper mill,” Blocker said.

He signed up for college on a Saturday and returned home in time for afternoon chores on the farm. While at MSU, he earned undergraduate degrees in both forestry and business in 1979 and an MBA in 1980. He would go on to help manage working forests across North America. Most recently, Blocker retired as senior vice president, timberlands from Weyerhaeuser in October 2021.

He said his degree helped prepare him for his career.

“MSU has a reputation for training solid operational foresters. That’s still my opinion today. MSU students are very well grounded in forestry practices,” he said.

After MSU, Blocker went on to work for Champion International, International Paper, and West Fraser, Inc., before spending several years at Weyerhaeuser overhauling the company’s lumber, oriented strand board (OSB), and engineered wood mills.

“I created a vision for Weyerhaeuser’s manufacturing business where we invested \$300 million a year to enhance performance and productivity,” Blocker said.

In March 2019, he led the complete reconfiguration of a 2’ x 4’ x 8’ stud mill in Millport, Alabama that had been in operation for nearly 50 years.

“Generally, people building houses today have ceilings higher than eight feet. While no one needed eight-foot studs anymore, Millport had a tremendous workforce and surrounding forest resources. The workforce had a great cost structure for an older mill so I knew a new mill with plenty of timber would be successful,” he said. “We built the new mill in and around the old mill while it was still running and as the new mill came online, we took the old mill down on the same footprint. It’s a brand-new mill from start to finish from the log yard to the dry kilns to lumber shipment.”

In 2018, one of Weyerhaeuser’s legacy mills located in Dierks, Arkansas received a \$190 million upgrade. The mill, which had been built in 1915 was acquired by Weyerhaeuser in 1969.

“We were investing in all our mills, but the Dierks mill was another legacy mill with a tremendous workforce. It’s not only about rebuilding the mill; it’s about continuing to support the community. Those communities have supported us for all those years so it’s important to reinvest in both the mill and the community,” he said.

Now Blocker serves on the Binational Softwood Lumber Council, a council formed to help better relationships between U.S. and Canadian lumber manufacturers. He is also on the board for the U.S. Endowment of Forestry and Communities, the largest forestry endowment in North America.



“Their purpose is to ensure that forests continue to be working forests in support of the industry and communities,” he said.

Blocker is also an industry consultant and serves on an advisory board that helps mentor succession candidates for small companies.

These days, while he still has one foot in the forest, he’s also spending more time on the water. He loves boating, having traveled much of the Puget Sound and San Juan Island. Last summer he began exploring the Great Lakes, which he plans to continue this year as he makes his way from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to the Erie Canal down along to the Eastern Seaboard where he’ll make his way home to Savannah, Georgia.

While his career took him across North America’s forests, his constant forward momentum has served him well. He encourages others striking out on a path in forest resources to seize every opportunity to excel.

“When young people ask me the secret formula for success, I tell them not to waste their time trying to plan a career. There are too many unknowns. The best way to be successful is to excel at what you are currently doing, overdeliver in your current job, and take advantage of opportunities that come your way,” he said.



## COMMUNICATING CONSERVATION

**AS ONE OF SEVEN SIBLINGS, ELIZABETH ROOKS-BARBER** was the first in her family to attend MSU, with many family members following suit.

“Two siblings, and so far, ten nieces and nephews are MSU grads. Two of my grandchildren are current MSU students, plus all my stepchildren and their spouses are MSU grads. I’m immensely proud of the MSU legacy in the Rooks and Barber families,” she said.

Days spent exploring creeks and forests surrounding her south Jackson neighborhood instilled a love of nature in Rooks-Barber.

“Though my dad’s time for hunting and fishing was limited with seven kids, running a hardware store, and all his civic involvement, my siblings and I tagged along on his trips afield,” she said.

This time outside coupled with a love of reading and science led Rooks-Barber to pursue a career in conservation with a communication emphasis. She earned a John W. Starr Memorial Scholarship to study forestry and wildlife at MSU.

She was a park ranger trainee through MSU’s Cooperative Education program with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and served as a park ranger on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway after graduating with dual degrees in forestry and wildlife in 1987.

“All my studies built a perfect foundation for what I do today. CFR ensures their wildlife biologists understand forest management and obtain hands-on skills in habitat management. This was pivotal for my natural resource management career, which has included advocacy, organizational management, conservation and land planning, and forest and coastal conservation,” she said.

She went on to receive a master’s degree in communication from Mississippi College and became executive director of the Mississippi Wildlife Federation (MWF), the state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

“MWF was a leader in several key issues: getting sand and gravel mining out of our streams, advocating for the Boating under the Influence law, and against road hunting. We started the Adopt-a-Stream program in Mississippi and

the Mississippi legislature passed the Mississippi Scenic Stewardship Streams bill during my time at MWF,” she said.

Rooks-Barber has championed conservation for more than 30 years. She co-founded Barber and Mann, Inc., which focuses on helping private landowners and agencies protect habitat, stream corridors, coastal areas, forests, farms, and grasslands across the Southeast U.S. The certified wildlife biologist and conservation planner has also established and directed various conservation efforts across Mississippi. She helped the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) develop the state’s first wildlife action plan.

“The Mississippi State Wildlife Action Plan, or SWAP, is a comprehensive guide for our state’s long-term conservation of species of the greatest conservation need,” she said.

She guided the Mississippi Forestry Commission, or MFC, in establishing their first forest action plan and helped found Mississippi’s Forestry Legacy Program, which has protected nearly 7,000 acres of forest lands since its inception.

She spearheaded the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, aimed at shoring up conservation efforts in the Gulf Coast states. In 2020, the organization partnered with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and MSU’s Television Center to produce content that educated the public on the critical need to protect the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. One of the films won a regional Emmy Award.

Rooks-Barber noted how the pandemic has illustrated the community’s need for wild spaces.

“The desire for people to get out and enjoy nature during the COVID quarantine in the spring of 2020 demonstrated how much we need wild places and greenspaces. We must work with our city, county, and state leaders to make more green spaces, gardens, and community forests available in cities and urban areas, and especially in lower income areas,” she said. “We must continue to invest in research on ecosystem services and what must be protected, restored, managed, and sustained to have clean water, clean air, timber, crops, pollination, and healthy soil.”



Elizabeth Rooks-Barber. (Photo Submitted)





## FORESTS THAT KEEP THE LIGHTS ON

**WHILE MARKS, MISSISSIPPI NATIVE, DR. KEVIN RAGON,** grew up in the wide-open spaces of the Mississippi Delta, he always felt connected to the forest.

“All we had were cotton and soybeans and the only trees were along the ditch, but I’ve always been keenly aware of the forest and all the good it does,” he said.

That awareness inspired him to get a bachelor’s in environmental science from Delta State University, before arriving at Mississippi State. He earned his master’s and doctoral degrees in forest products in the College of Forest Resources in 2000 and 2007, respectively.

He said his career challenges him to think about wood differently.

“We take electricity for granted. We have smart-phones and smart homes, but people don’t think of a wood utility pole as very smart. However, that pole is one of the smartest things we have, bringing us from the frontier to an industrialized nation. If you stop and think about it, wood poles are extremely important,” he said.

As executive director of the Southern Pressure Treaters’ Association, Ragon has spent the last ten years serving the wooden utility pole industry.

“We deal mainly with southern yellow pine poles, which comprise approximately 80 percent of the utility pole market across the U.S. and Canada. We also work with cross arms, made of Douglas fir, and southern yellow pine pilings used for wood utilization, construction, and foundations,” he said.

Ragon makes sure legislation benefits producers and the industry alike. He works alongside more than 20 utility companies.

“I stay abreast of what goes on in the industry and the legislative branches at the national and state levels to monitor

for bills that could potentially benefit or harm our industry while keeping all stakeholders informed,” Ragon explained.

He also finds ways to innovate and extend wood’s life.

“One of our goals is to make wood poles last longer. Currently, a pole should last an average of 60 years and we try to find ways to increase that life by another 40 or 50 years,” he said.

The organization, which includes Ragon’s wife, Amy, partners with the North American Wood Pole Council. They also partner with the National Rural Electric Co-op Association to bring electricity to developing countries.

His job has connected him with industry leaders.

“As I’ve been on this journey, I’ve met some of the leaders of the world’s biggest utilities and largest manufacturing companies as well as the state’s largest forest landowners. They’ll ask my opinion and I’m able to give them direct input. I also get to direct and work with engineers who work on our electric grid and national electrical safety standards and codes. Our input helps ensure we’re manufacturing a safe, effective, strong product that keeps everyone’s power on,” he said.

Ragon is most excited about the future of wood as a renewable natural resource.

“When the correct forestry and harvesting practices are in place, forest products benefit both the environment and society. I’m excited to see how it plays out for forests and forest product companies when it comes to sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change,” he said.

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*Editor’s Note: Ragon’s role with the Southern Pressure Treaters’ Association has changed from executive director to resource officer. He joined MSU as an assistant extension professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts in April 2022.*



Kevin Ragon. (Photo by David Ammon)



# ROOTS AND BRANCHES

*CFR alumnus reflects on deep ties in forestry*

BY MEG HENDERSON

**H**AVING A FOUR-DECADES LONG CAREER with International Paper, **MALONE BUCHANAN'S** roots in Mississippi's forestry industry run deep. And in recent years, he has branched out in the field, running his own consulting business, and serving as a member of the Dean's Advisory Board for the College of Forest Resources.

Growing up on a dairy farm in Okolona, Buchanan did not dream of becoming a forester.

"I was going to be a band director, because I enjoyed music, and I considered business management. But I didn't really have a feel for what I was going to do with either of those," he said.

Buchanan, however, knew that higher education was part of the plan. His elder two siblings (of nine) attended college, and his father, a WWII veteran, attended Okolona Community College on the GI Bill and graduated. He recalled a visit to his high school from MSU recruiters, who left brochures with the students. Looking at the list of majors, he selected forestry because it caught his interest.

"That decision was spur of the moment," Buchanan said, "But at that moment, I decided that's what I wanted to do."

This serendipitous decision led to a degree in forestry and a 39-year career with International Paper.

Buchanan spent his first thirty years in forest resources, managing over seven million acres of company forestland. When the company sold its properties, Buchanan moved to Vicksburg and spent the next decade working as a procurement forester, negotiating hardwood purchases for the Vicksburg mill.

"I had thirty years of forest management and ten years of procurement, so I got the chance to see the whole circle of production," he said.

Buchanan has seen considerable changes in the forestry

industry throughout his career, one of the most significant being the introduction of new technology in the 1980s and '90s.

"The industry became completely mechanized," he said. "You used to see a logging crew of 20 people—about one load per person. Now, it's not unusual for a crew of three to handle the same amount."

Buchanan has found meaningful ways to continue his service to the field since retiring in 2016. He established his own consulting business, Standing Pine Forestry Services, LLC, shortly after retiring from International Paper. He also sits on the board of directors for the Mississippi Forestry Association.

"When I go out on a property to advise someone, I want to make sure I'm abreast of the latest practices," he said.

Buchanan's post-retirement service also brought him back to MSU, where he was invited to serve as a member of the Dean's Advisory Board.

"I go to the meetings with the intent of bringing something to the table, and I want to be remembered as supporting academia and the people who come behind me," he said.

While his college days are long behind him, Buchanan has some timeless advice for forestry students today.

"A lot of people go into forestry thinking that they only have to manage trees," he said. "In order to move up, you have to learn how to manage people, too, so I would encourage students to home in on their people skills."

He also reflects on his desire to see more minority students choosing forestry and related sciences as a career path, as the country is more diverse than ever.

"I think a lot of people would enjoy a career in the sciences if they were exposed to it," he said. "Forestry is an occupation that you have to love first. If you do, it will love you back." ♣



Malone Buchanan. (Photo Submitted)





# GROWING GREEN SOLUTIONS

*Sustainable bioproducts alumna protects and prolongs wood's life*

BY KATHLEEN FORMAN

**D**R. JULIET TANG, research forest products technologist at the United States Forest Service, went “green” long before it was in vogue. With a bachelor’s degree in zoology, a master’s degree in entomology, and a doctoral degree in forest resources, Tang’s educational background transitioned into a lifestyle as she prioritizes environmental protection both personally and professionally.

“I commute to work by bicycle and have been doing so long before I ever heard about climate change,” said Tang. “I burn wood for heat, I dress according to the weather, I grow vegetables year-round. I try to reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, and upcycle as much as possible. Not only do these choices reduce my carbon footprint, but for me, it’s healthier and saves money.”

Raised in Massachusetts, Tang graduated from the University of Massachusetts with her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in 1986. She then worked at Cornell University for ten years before migrating south to Starkville, Mississippi. Tang began working at Mississippi State as a research assistant in entomology. Because of her background in molecular biology, Tang was invited by Dr. Susan Diehl, a now retired sustainable bioproducts professor at MSU, to participate alongside her in a doctoral study examining copper tolerance in wood decay fungi. She replied with a resounding yes and now describes this as the “best career decision she has ever made.”

In 2011, Tang graduated from Mississippi State with her doctoral degree in forest resources, and in late 2014, she was offered a job in Starkville with the USDA Forest Service’s Forest Products Laboratory.

“My goal as a wood protection scientist is to better understand

wood biodegradation in order to prolong the life of wood in service,” said Tang. “Increasing the useful life of wood also aligns well with the Forest Service mission, which is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.”

Working as a research forest products technologist with the USDA Forest Service for seven years, Tang has contributed on over nine different projects accruing a collective \$1.4 million dollars in funding. Her current research focuses on improving green building solutions by researching decomposition and reducing termiticide use in cross-laminated timber (CLT) buildings. CLT is made from mass timber and serves as a more environmentally-conscious construction material compared to concrete and steel.

The collective goal of Tang’s research endeavors is to make incorporating green building solutions more accessible, which will bring America closer to reaching net zero carbon emissions. Large corporations such as Microsoft and Walmart pledged to build new campus headquarters with CLT to reduce their carbon footprint. Tang predicts that Mississippi, with more than 60 percent forested land, will be an essential part of this mass timber revolution, and her research is a vital part of elevating this revolution.

“To quote Amy Androff, Public Affairs Specialist for Forest Products Laboratory, ‘Trees are our climate change heroes.’ Every hour of the day they pull CO<sub>2</sub> out of the air turning it into wood,” said Tang. “So, the more we can incorporate mass timber into the structural components of the built environment, then the closer we can get to net zero for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.” ♣



Juliet Tang. (Photo by David Ammon)



# ANSWERING ADVENTURE'S CALLS

*CFR alumnus promotes traditional, primitive hunting techniques through self-made business*

BY GRACE JONES

**T**HERE IS A PLACE called Adventure that lives just on the horizon. It calls us forth, over the next ridge and around the next bend. It is where life's good stories live. The ones that will be told around campfires for a lifetime and more; but Adventure does not give up her secrets easily. She keeps them hidden from all but the most willing, willing to pay the asking price," said **CLAY HAYES** while surviving Season 8 of *Alone* in the isolated Canadian wilderness on the shores of Chilko Lake, British Columbia.

Hayes, a MSU wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture alumnus, lives an unconventional life, even for a wildlife biologist. After graduating with a master's in wildlife science in 2007, Hayes, a native of Milton, Florida, moved to Idaho, to start his career in fish and game. Hayes and his wife, Liz, have been together for over 23 years, sharing a love for the outdoors with each other and their two sons ages nine and twelve. In 2017, Hayes decided to leave his job and support his wife and two kids through teaching bow building classes, writing, and producing YouTube videos that focus on sharing primitive hunting and survival skills. Hayes has expanded his company by selling his instructional CDs, two traditional bow-hunting books, creating a membership platform for exclusive access to content and hunting information, and promoting the brands and equipment he uses for hunting on his website, [twistedstave.com](http://twistedstave.com).

"Since I was a kid, I have been drawn to primitive skills and traditional bow hunting," Hayes said. "I had a field guide when I was twelve, and I used that until it fell apart. It taught me how to make traps and things like that. My main interest is making my own bows. It allows me to be much more intimately involved in the hunt from beginning to end. I create my own weapons, and I use them to hunt and provide food for my family. It brings a different feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment when you get to be that involved in the hunting process."

Hayes not only strives to share his love for traditional archery and bowhunting, but he also wishes to inspire others to unplug

and listen to adventure's calls. Another significant life goal of the survivalist has been to live as close to the land as possible, which he was able to do as a contestant on *Alone*, a survival series on the History channel. Hayes said that once he spoke with the casting for the show, he started trying to gain weight, along with learning how to make nets, snare snowshoe hare with wire snares, and other specific survival techniques he was not well-versed in.

"Before I got out there, I had not used wire before to set snares. I was able to find some videos of how to snare snowshoes and learned a tremendous amount before going out," Hayes said in his YouTube video explaining the survival items he brought on the show.

When Hayes was dropped off at Chilko Lake, he began by preparing his shelter and planning to obtain enough food to slow rapid weight loss. After losing twenty pounds in the first twenty days, Hayes successfully killed a deer and was able to ration the meat for a significant part of his time in the wilderness. With enough food to last him approximately 90 days, Hayes was the sole contestant left to survive the frigid isolation of Chilko Lake. After spending seventy-four days fighting against nature's toughest environments in a place known as Grizzly Mountain, Hayes won the show, returning home to his family in Northern Idaho with his \$500,000 grand prize.

Now, the family hunts, travels, and works together to share their love for the outdoors with the world. Hayes noted that his business is family-oriented and that he gets to share his interest and his job with his kids through taking them camping, hunting, or teaching them about bowhunting.

"I think that all the greatest experiences come from pushing beyond your comfort zone," Hayes said. "You don't get to experience adventure when you are sitting on your couch. You must go out and have burning lungs, sore legs, and tired feet from climbing the mountain if you want to see the top. You have to accept that you will suffer a bit to get where you want to go and experience the best things." ♦



Clay Hayes with his son. (Photo submitted)





**Clay Hayes, winner of Alone, Season 8, shared photos of his adventures and time spent with his family. (Photos Submitted)**







# DEVELOPMENT

## FINANCING THE FUTURE FOR FORESTRY STUDENTS

*CFR alumnus establishes scholarship for students from Tishomingo County*

BY GRACE JONES

**J**OHNN ENLOW established the “Edwin E. (Dene) Enlow, Sr. Endowed Scholarship” in honor of his cousin, Dene, who inspired and guided John in his career path. The charitable gift will provide higher education scholarships for students from Tishomingo County.

John grew up in Tishomingo County, and his father had a sawmill when he was in high school. His cousin, Dene, graduated from MSU in 1968, with a bachelor’s in forest management. John attributes these influences to what helped him realize that he wanted to major in forestry.

“When I came to Mississippi State, I had an awesome experience there,” he said. “I was fascinated with the economic and finance classes I took, but still wanted to be in forestry. I knew I wanted to do something where the natural world would intersect with the financial world. When I was getting ready to graduate, Dene gave me some helpful advice that was pivotal in my career path by encouraging me to get an MBA and that really opened up career paths for me and led me to where I am today.”

John has played a key role in the forestry industry. Until recently, he was the CEO of Deltic Timber Corporation. He now works with several companies as a member of their Board of Directors and advises large institutional investors on timberland investments. He received a bachelor’s in forest management at Mississippi State University in 1990, an M.B.A. from Brenau University, and attended the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania Executive Education Program. In 2016, he was selected as the CFR Alumnus of the Year.

The scholarship will benefit students from John’s hometown and is not academically based, which makes the scholarship more accessible to those who financially need help paying for school.

“Dene and I were both first generation college graduates in

our family. So, the value of education we have in both our lives really helped our futures be dramatically different than they would have been,” John said. “Part of the reason I did this is so I can help make college easier for a student or family who would struggle to pay for college, and maybe didn’t have the grades to receive other scholarships.”

Jeff Little, senior director of development for the College of Forest Resources and the Bulldog Forest, oversees many scholarships that are designed to help students. Little admired John’s humility and willingness to set up this scholarship.

“John is doing great things through this scholarship. He is not only honoring someone he loves and that has helped in life, but he is giving back to his alma mater, to forestry students, and his hometown,” Little said. “I hope that through his scholarship we are able to recruit more forestry students from Tishomingo County, and not only get them here, but also help these students with the financial burden of college.”

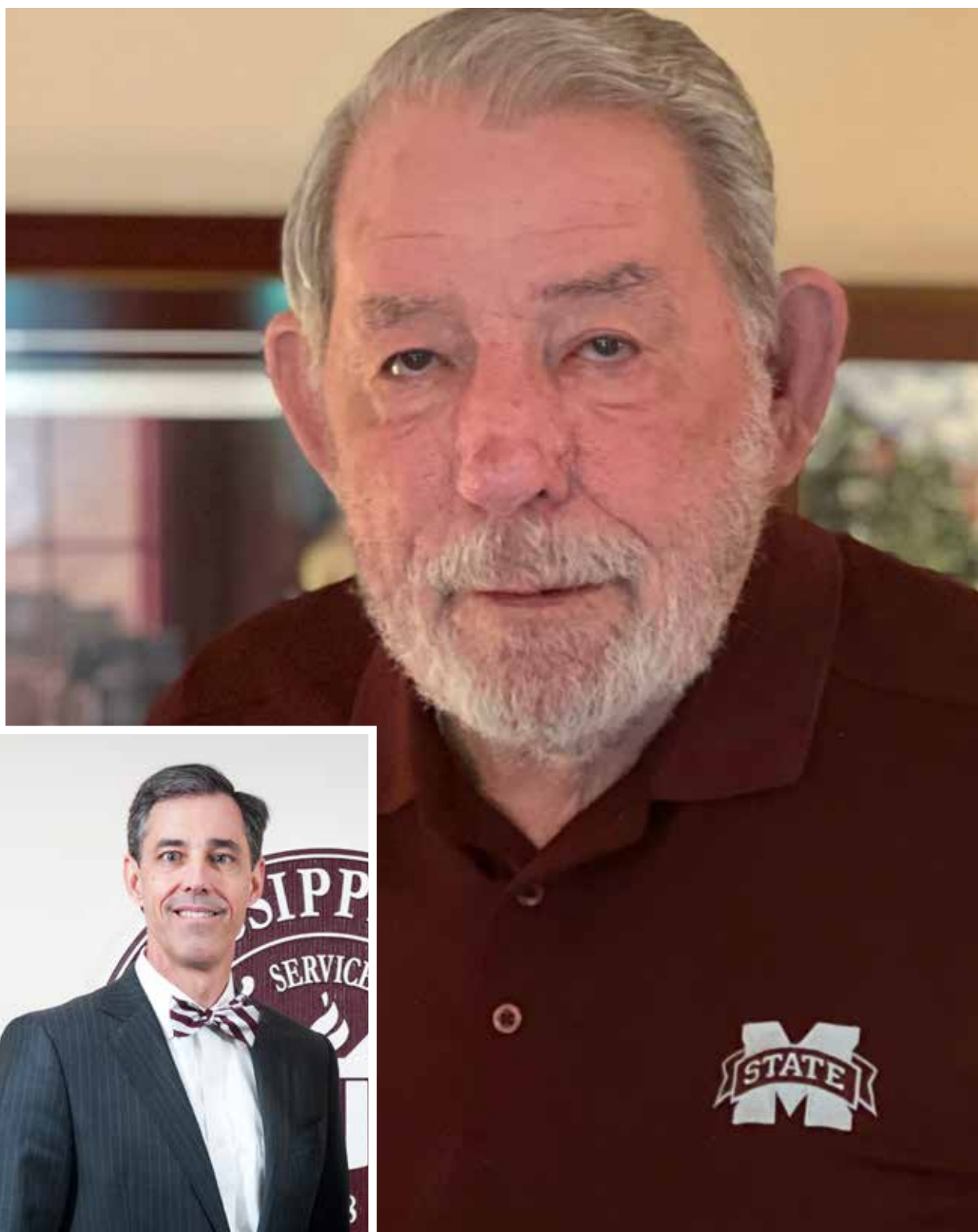
Dene Enlow, who recently turned 80, is an avid Mississippi State fan. Since graduating in 1968, he and his wife have dedicated as much time as they can to cheer on their alma mater. Dene spoke to how he felt once John told him about the scholarship.

“My wife and I have been to every MSU home and away football game for the past 26 years. Now, we watch every game from our recliners at home, and we love it,” Enlow said. “I am extremely honored and in awe of the scholarship John established and what he thinks about me. I am happy that John made the scholarship available to any person from Tishomingo County and to people who need the money rather than people who have high academic status.” ♦

*For more information on the scholarship, contact Jeff Little at 662-325-8151 or [jlittle@foundation.msstate.edu](mailto:jlittle@foundation.msstate.edu)*



Dene Enlow (Photo Submitted).  
Inset: John Enlow (Photo by Russ Houston).



# COLLEGE NEWS

## FORESTRY

### MSU, A TREE CAMPUS USA FOR THE SEVENTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR, CELEBRATES ARBOR DAY WITH ANNUAL CAMPUS TREE PLANTING



MSU President Mark E. Keenum joined College of Forest Resources students, faculty and administrators, as well as campus landscape personnel, in celebrating Arbor Day on Feb. 12 with a campus tree planting on the Drill Field. In recognition of the university's commitment to the value and maintenance of trees, MSU has been designated a Tree Campus USA for seven consecutive years by the Arbor Day Foundation. (Photo by David Ammon)

**MISSISSIPPI STATE FACULTY, STAFF AND** students celebrated Arbor Day today [Feb. 12] by planting trees on the MSU Drill Field.

Nationally celebrated in April, Mississippi's Arbor Day observance occurs on the second Friday in February, similar

to other southern states that adjust the holiday in the warmer climate to ensure better survival of newly planted trees.

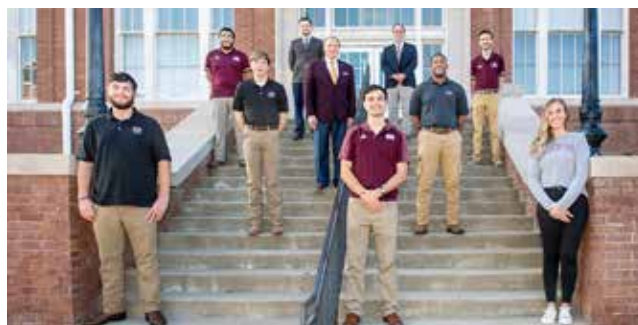
The ninth annual tree planting is sponsored by the MSU Tree Campus Higher Education Advisory Committee,

MSU Campus Services and the Division of Finance and Administration. The MSU student chapter of the Society of American Foresters, and David and Elizabeth Waldorf Endowed Scholarship recipients, also participated.

### MSU FORESTRY ORGANIZATION HONORED AGAIN AS LEADING NATIONAL CHAPTER

**FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW**, Mississippi State's student chapter of the Society of American Foresters, or SAF, placed first in the national Outstanding Student Chapter competition.

The award honors the top three SAF student chapters in the nation, as well as their faculty advisor. MSU has been recognized with the first-place award nine times in the last 25 years and has placed in the top three consecutively for more than two decades.



MSU President Mark E. Keenum is pictured with forestry students and mentors during a congratulatory meeting with members of the university's student chapter of the Society of American Foresters, which again is being recognized as the national Outstanding Student Chapter. (Photo by Beth Wynn)



## NOTABLE FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS



**DR. STEVE GRADO**, professor, received the 2021 CFR Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award and CFR Faculty Excellence in Advising Award.



**DR. ROBERT GRALA** was named the George L. Switzer Professor of Forestry. Grala also received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Service Award.



**DR. JOSHUA GRANGER**, assistant professor, received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Teaching Award.



**DR. HEIDI RENNINGER**, associate professor, received the 2021 CFR/FWRC Faculty Excellence in Research Award. She received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Early Career Achievement Award. She also completed the MSU Faculty Leadership Development Institute.



**DR. BRADY SELF**, associate extension professor, received the 2021 CFR/FWRC Faculty Excellence in Extension Award.

## BULLARD NAMED ASSOCIATE DEAN AND DIRECTOR

**DR. STEVE BULLARD** is Mississippi State's new CFR associate dean and FWRC associate director.

A forest economist, Bullard held numerous positions in the CFR/FWRC. Upon his retirement from MSU, he joined the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky as chair for nearly five years. He then served six years as dean of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture at Stephen F. Austin State University before being promoted to provost and vice president of Academic Affairs, where he served an additional six years.

## STUDENT AWARDS

**ELIZABETH BAACH** placed first for her poster in the Life and Biomedical Sciences master's student category at the MSU Graduate Student Spring 2021 Symposium. She also tied for first for her poster in the Forest Resources and Veterinary Medicine master's student category of the MSU Graduate Student Fall 2021 Symposium. She also placed in the top three for best poster presentation at the 2021 Biennial Southern Silviculture Research Conference.

**LEE ERIC BRIDGES** received the Moehring Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

**DARCEY COLLINS** placed first for her oral presentation in the Life and Biomedical Sciences master's student category at the MSU Graduate Student Spring 2021 Symposium. She also placed third for oral presentation in the master's student Forest Resources and Veterinary Medicine category at the MSU Graduate Student Fall 2021 Symposium. She also placed in the top three for best oral presentation at the 2021 Biennial Southern Silviculture Research Conference.

**BINI DAHAL** placed first for her poster presentation at the 67th Annual Southern Hardwood Forest Research Group.

**ANNA DICKIE** received the U.S. Forest Service Science Award.

**MACY GOSSELAAR** placed first for her poster in the Forestry Resources and Veterinary Medicine master's student category at the MSU Graduate Student Fall 2021 Symposium.

**HARRIS GROBERG** and **KERIAH HAMPTON** received the Sophomore Academic Achievement Award.

**CLAYTON HALE** received the Moehring Outstanding Graduate Student Award. He was also named a MSU Graduate Student Hall of Fame Scholar.

**CASEY IWAMOTO** placed second for her poster in the Life and Biomedical Sciences doctoral student category at the MSU Graduate Student Spring 2021 Symposium. She also placed second for her poster presentation in the Forest Resources and Veterinary Medicine Ph.D. student category at the MSU Graduate Student Fall 2021 Symposium. Iwamoto also won the People's Choice Award at the Fall 2021 MSU Three Minute Thesis competition.

**WILL KRUCKEBERG** placed third for his poster presentation at the 67th Annual Southern Hardwood Forest Research Group.

**ADAM LINDSEY** received the George Switzer Outstanding Undergraduate Award.

**HUNTER MARLOW** received the Senior Academic Achievement.

**NITANT RAI** placed second for his poster presentation at the 67th Annual Southern Hardwood Forest Research Group. He also placed second for his oral presentation in the Life and Biomedical Sciences doctoral student category at the MSU Graduate Student Spring 2021 Symposium.

**MAHESH TIWANI** placed second for his oral presentation in the Forest Resources and Veterinary Medicine master's category at the MSU Graduate Student Fall Symposium.

**MERRY "ALLY" WALKER** received the Senior Academic Achievement Award and the George Switzer Outstanding Undergraduate Award.

## SUSTAINABLE BIOPRODUCTS

### MSU RESEARCHERS THINK 'OUTSIDE THE BLOCK,' WIN BIG AT MDA V-QUAD COMPETITION

FOR A TEAM OF MISSISSIPPI STATE RESEARCHERS, concrete design isn't set in stone.

**DR. JILEI ZHANG**, Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology, and a team of MSU Department of Sustainable Bioproducts researchers have rethought the material's design and cemented their product's status by participating in the Mississippi Development Authority's inaugural V-Quad competition, a U.S. Department of Energy-sponsored initiative to boost innovation in the state's energy and agriculture sectors. In fall 2021, Zhang's team won \$7,500 during the "Pitch in the V-Quad" competition with his patented technology using bio-based waste material to produce graphene for concrete production. The team's winnings, supported by the DoE's Energy Program for Innovations Clusters prize, will be used for the team to complete an industrial scale trial run with a Columbus-based masonry manufacturer to conduct usage, testing, and certification of the product on a commercial scale.

The catalytic thermal conversion process makes biomass-graphene using the original polymer lignin as a carbon source. The



Mississippi Development Authority representatives present a check to MSU's Jilei Zhang following the inaugural "Pitch in the V-Quad" competition. Pictured, from left, is MDA Director of Business Research and Workforce Development Bill Ashley; MDA Director of Energy and Natural Resources Sumesh Arora; MSU Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology Jilei Zhang; and MDA Director of Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Joe Donovan. (Photo courtesy of MDA)

technology avoids the use of harsh chemicals and can potentially reduce cement usage in concrete production by up to 20 percent. Cement production alone contributes to 8 percent of global carbon emissions annually. The technology significantly lowers production costs, improves strength, and reduces the material's carbon footprint.

The team received a \$5,000 Stage 1 Venture Development Grant in spring 2021, as well as access to a 10-week V-Quad accelerator training course, while MDA

provided mentoring and market analysis as the team completed a venture development report. The initial grant helped researchers validate the technology in a lab trial.

In addition to Zhang, MSU researchers on the technology include Drs. Xuefang Zhang, assistant research professor, and Jason Street, associate professor, both in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts. Collaborators include the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory.

## MSU DEPARTMENT HEAD ELECTED INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF WOOD SCIENCE FELLOW

THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF WOOD Science is honoring Mississippi State's **DR. RUBIN SHMULSKY** with the designation of fellow, recognizing his significant scientific achievements and research contributions to the field.

Newly elected for 2022, the Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology and head of the MSU's Department of Sustainable Bioproducts joins 145 IAWS Fellows throughout

the U.S., in addition to international honorees who hold this distinction.

The global organization is known for promoting research, technology, and outreach in wood science and investing in the betterment of forests. Fellows are scientists active in research who uphold high standards in wood science advancement.

A 17-year veteran faculty member at Mississippi State, Shmulsky earned his bachelor's degree at the University of

Massachusetts before completing a master's degree in forest products and a Ph.D. in forest resources at MSU. He said he looks forward

to furthering the economic and environmental sustainability of wood through innovative research, education, and outreach.







## MSU RESEARCHERS DEVELOP ECONOMIC MODEL TO LURE INDUSTRY TO STATE

**TWO-THIRDS OF MISSISSIPPI**, nearly 20 million acres, is forested land. Sustainable Bioproducts scientists are dedicated to increasing the value of the state's forestland for both timber producers and the forest products industry.

Toward that end, researchers developed Mill Site, an economic model that aids in forest products business recruitment and expansion across the state.

Mill Site was developed in partnership with the Mississippi Forestry Association (MFA), whose staff use it when a forest products manufacturing company is interested in opening a new facility or expanding an existing operation in the state. MFA staff members find pockets of Mississippi timber in need of a home. Mill Site then assesses potential site locations on a county-by-county basis and factors in variable costs such as raw materials, labor, transportation, and electricity.

The program also quantifies market potential using either truck or rail

transportation to selected markets to determine a potential location's equitable market share. Mississippi locales can then be compared to any potential sites in any county across Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia.

**DR. DAN SEALE**, sustainable bioproducts professor and FWRC scientist, developed the technology with William Griffin, a 2020 sustainable bioproducts master's graduate. Seale said the model, which yields results in minutes, takes the guesswork out of opening or expanding a forest-products facility in an industry that employees nearly 70,000 Mississippians.

"The value of standing timber is the wealth of our state. If we can make that timberland worth more, it raises the standard of living of everyone here," Seale said.

## NOTABLE FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

**DRS. FRED FRANCA, TAMARA FRANCA, DAN SEALE, and RUBIN SHMULSKY** had the second most cited paper in the Forest Products Journal. The paper was entitled, "Nondestructive Evaluation of 2 by 8 and 2 by 10 Southern Pine Dimensional Lumber."



**DR. TAMARA FRANCA** was elected as a new board member of the Forest Products Society.



**DR. DAN SEALE** was named Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology.



**DR. BETH STOKES** completed the MSU Faculty Leadership Development Institute.

## STUDENT AWARDS

**SAMUEL AYANLEYE** placed second for his poster at the 2021 Forest Products Society Conference.

**ADRIANA COSTA** placed first for her poster at the 2021 Forest Products Society Conference.

**BRIANNA DUQUETTE** received the Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

**GULBAHAR BAHSI KAYA** placed first for her oral presentation in the Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering doctoral students category at the MSU Graduate Student Spring 2021 Symposium.

**DAVID MILSTEAD** placed second in the Wood Award, an award of the Forest Products Society that recognizes outstanding graduate student research. Milstead also received the Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

**XANDRA SULLIVAN** received the Senior Academic Achievement Award.

## WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE



Abby Florez, Kayla Feist, and Loraine Walker (Photo Submitted)

### MSU STUDENT CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY AWARDED FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**THE MSU STUDENT CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY** received the 2021 MSU Community Engagement Award in the Community-engaged Teaching and Learning Award Category.

“Engaging and Educating Youth about Conservation,” is the project which was led by Kayla Feist, a conservation education master’s student from Meridian, and Abby Florez, a spring 2021 wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture bachelor’s graduate from Clover, South Carolina, with collaboration from Starkville Public Library Children’s Services Librarian Loraine Walker.

Members of the MSU student chapter of The Wildlife Society and faculty advisors Dr. Leslie Burger and Dr. Chris Ayers also assisted with the project, which addressed the need for youth engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that did not require face-to-face interaction.

MSU Wildlife Society members created “drive-by” and “pick-up” crafts to highlight wildlife science and conservation. The students also recorded wildlife-themed book reading videos.



Sandra Correa holds a fish in the genus *Myloplus* in the Colombian Amazon in 2019. The fish is a herbivorous cousin of piranhas that eat fruits and, in the process, disperse seeds and keep the natural regeneration of riparian forests. (Photo by Jorge Garcia-Melo)

### MSU SCIENTIST’S WORK IN AMAZON RIVER BASIN FEATURED AT UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

**A MISSISSIPPI STATE RESEARCHER** is part of a historic scientific consortium presenting its findings on the Amazon River Basin at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP26, in Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Assistant Professor **DR. SANDRA B. CORREA** is part of the Science Panel for the Amazon, or SPA, a group of over 200 prominent scientists who created a comprehensive report that addresses climate adaptation and mitigation in the Amazon.

SPA, which is convened under the U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network, or SDSN, developed a scientific assessment of the state of the Amazon Basin. Correa coauthored two of the 34 chapters of the comprehensive report calling for immediate action to control and halt deforestation by 2030, restore aquatic and terrestrial

ecosystems, and promote a sustainable bioeconomy guided by science, technology, innovation and local knowledge.

Correa, who is from Colombia, South America, one of the eight countries within the Amazon biome, has spent two decades working there.

“It was a tremendous honor and a humbling experience to participate in the Science Panel for the Amazon, where we all share a passion for Amazonia. When I started working in the Amazon, I never thought I would witness its destruction. Nowadays, annual floods that shaped nature and people for millennia are unpredictable, drought and wildfires are devastating pristine forests, and the iconic fish that feed people and disperse seeds for new vegetation are becoming a tale of the past,” Correa said.



## STUDENT AWARDS

**CALEB ALDRIDGE** received the Ernest Gluesing Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

**REBECCA BRACKEN** placed first for her poster in the Life and Biomedical Sciences doctoral student category at the MSU Graduate Student Spring 2021 Symposium. She also placed second for her oral presentation in the Forestry and Veterinary Medicine Ph.D. category at the MSU Fall 2021 Graduate Student Symposium.

**DEVIN CHEN** placed first for her oral presentation in the Forestry and Veterinary Medicine Ph.D. category at the MSU Fall 2021 Graduate Student Symposium.

**NICKY FAUCHEUX** received the David Nabi Memorial Award.

**ABBY FLOREZ** received the Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award.

**ANNA E. GAMBLIN** tied for third place in the biological sciences category of the Spring 2021 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

**SHRADDHA HEGDE** placed third for her oral presentation in the Ag and Life Sciences Ph.D. category at the MSU Fall 2021 Graduate Student Symposium.

**SARAH HOBBS** received the Sophomore Academic Achievement Award. Hobbs also earned third place in the biological sciences category of the Spring 2021 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

**MIRANDA HUANG** received the Ernest Gluesing Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

**CONNER OWENS** was selected as Graduate Research Assistant of the Year, Master's Division, by the MSU Graduate School.

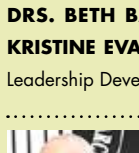
**SARAH SCOTT** received the Senior Academic Achievement Award.

**HOLLY TODARO** placed first for her oral presentation in the Forestry and Veterinary Medicine master's student category at the MSU Graduate Student Fall 2021 Symposium.

## NOTABLE FACULTY AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



**DR. CHRIS AYERS** received the 2021 Donald Zacharias Early Career Undergraduate Teaching Excellence Award.



**DRS. BETH BAKER, LESLIE BURGER,** and **KRISTINE EVANS** completed the MSU Faculty Leadership Development Institute.



**MR. CHAD DACUS**, training manager for Wildlife Services National Training Academy, received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Extension/Outreach Award.



**MR. MACK FONDREN**, facilities coordinator, received the inaugural 2020 CFR/FWRC Beverly Smith Professional Staff Award.



**MS. MORGAN HERZOG**, business coordinator, received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Doris Lee Memorial Staff Award, in the support staff category.



**MS. ANGELA HILL**, administrative assistant I, received the inaugural 2020 CFR/FWRC Beverly Smith Support Staff Award.



**MS. ANNICE HILL**, business manager I, received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Doris Lee Memorial Staff Award, in the professional/non-faculty category.



**DR. KEVIN HUNT** was named the Sharp Professor of Human Dimensions. He also received the 2021 CFR/FWRC Service Award.



**DR. RAY IGLAY** received the 2021 CFR/FWRC Early Career Achievement Award.



**DR. DANA MORIN** received the 2020 CFR/FWRC Research Award.



**DR. GUIMING WANG** was named Dale H. Arner Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Management.



Scott Edwards, MSU Extension instructor and Army National Guard chaplain, presents Andy Kouba, Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture department head, and Chad Dacus, MSU Extension instructor, with the Patriot Award. Also on hand is Jimmy Vaughan, Mississippi area chair for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. (Photo by David Ammon)

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

# A LOVE OF FOREST AND INDUSTRY

*Sustainable bioproducts grad student has passion for wood products*

BY VANESSA BEESON

**B**Y DAY, ADAM WADE is finding better ways to identify wood species using artificial intelligence as a sustainable bioproducts doctoral student. At night, he's crafting a custom guitar out of poplar and maple.

"The guitar design I'm working on replicates a Fender Stratocaster. I'm making everything from scratch using rough-sawn lumber. The guitar's body is made of poplar with a soft maple top. The neck and fretboard are hard maple. I'm using poplar and maple because they are lightweight and considered good tone woods, known to carry sound waves better than other species," Wade said.

Understanding the anatomy of wood is central to both Wade's woodworking hobby and his MSU doctoral research. He wants to make a difference in the wood products industry while also learning more about the material to become a better woodworker.

Wade's doctoral project, under the direction of **DR. FRANK OWENS**, assistant professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts, aims to improve machine learning and artificial intelligence capabilities in the field of wood identification to help combat illegal logging.

"I'm training and testing models for the Xylotron device, developed by scientists at the USDA Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory. The Xylotron uses computer vision and artificial intelligence to accurately identify wood specimens," Wade said.

He said most wood identification currently is done by a manual process.

"Right now, someone trained in wood anatomy must identify imported wood species with a hand lens, and that's subject to human error, how well they've been trained, and how they interpret the data," Wade said.

He hopes his research will make the process easier and faster.

"Ideally, this system will allow you to train someone who knows nothing about wood anatomy in a short period of time to accurately and rapidly identify a wood specimen," he said.

The Scooba native grew up with the woods as his backyard and he always had a career in forestry or wood products in mind. It wasn't until 2016 at age 36, however, that he saw the chance to finally take the leap.

"I have two kids, so returning to school was always daunting," Wade said. "When the electric supply warehouse where I worked downsized and I was laid off, I knew I had to start over somewhere. I figured it was a good time to go back to school," he said.

He attended East Mississippi Community College to work toward an associate degree in forestry.

"When I arrived at EMCC, I fell in love with forestry and the management of trees. My instructors there told me about MSU and the bachelor's degree in forestry here. I made up my mind to go for it," Wade said.

After transferring to MSU, he completed his bachelor's degree in forestry in May 2020. In June of that year, he began work as a graduate student in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts. He said two consecutive summers in the forestry summer field program—first as a student and then as a teaching assistant—affirmed his love of the field, while an undergraduate research project and wood anatomy class ignited his desire to pursue graduate school.

"Going through the forestry program, especially the summer field program, gave me a greater respect for forestry and inspired me to continue on because I had more questions I wanted to answer. On the wood products side, I'm fascinated about learning about different species, the different cells, their functions, and locations, and how all of that affects how you manipulate wood to make a certain product," Wade said. ♣



Adam Wade with his custom guitar. (Photo by David Ammon)



# 2021 GRADUATES



## SPRING 2021 GRADUATING CLASS

Albert Alexander  
Guangmei Anderson  
Samantha Avery  
Corey Bacon  
Samuel Balding  
Wesley Banks  
Nikolas Beckstein  
John Benson  
Sal Bilello  
William Burford  
Ryan Calvert  
Camryn Carlson  
Eric Clack  
Brett Cobb  
Landon Creed  
Makinlea Crocker  
Benjamin Crystal  
Jonathan Dew  
Vandana Dharan  
Anna Dickie  
Jonathan Dobbs  
Zoe Dudiak  
Brianna Ellis

Braden Estes  
Philip Faulk  
Ian Fentress  
Destiny Flemons  
Abby Florez  
David Foster  
Caleb Franklin  
Phillip Garland  
Nathan Gatlin  
Garrett Gibson  
Richard Gillentine  
Charlene Givens  
Noah Hammond  
Robert Hines  
Taylor Hutson  
Rachael Irby  
Olivia Jenkins  
Jerika Johnson  
Paul Johnson  
Haley Jones  
Hunter Kelly  
Adam Lindsey  
Skylar Liner

Michael Madden  
William Marshall  
Frank McAlpine  
Nathan Mercer  
Thomas Miles  
James Morehead  
Bohdi Morris  
Nicholas Mosby  
Conner Owens  
Elijah Potts  
Camden Ray  
Jordan Roberts  
Shelby Roberts  
Chase Robinson  
Joshua Rush  
Makenzie Sanabria  
Sarah Scott  
Andrew Shamaskin  
Joseph Simpson  
John Skinner  
Craig Sklarczyk  
Adam Smith  
Louis Smith

Emily Snipes  
Brandon Sorrell  
Emily Sosnowski  
Cara Stewart  
Nicholas Stewart  
Ryan Stokes  
Chandler Strickland  
Brandon Stuckey  
Alexandra Sullivan  
Walter Sullivant  
Nigel Temple  
Jacob Thacker  
Rachel Tillman  
Mark Verucchi  
Matthew Virden  
Jessica Ward  
Colton Webster  
Daniel West  
Benjamin Wilcox  
Dustin Zavala





## SUMMER/FALL 2021 GRADUATING CLASS

Gulbahar Bahsi-Kaya  
Tommie Barnett  
Cody Bates  
Emily Bedwell  
William Brewer  
Makayla Brister  
Isabella Burger  
Seth Champion  
Bini Dahal  
Blake Dial  
Divya Divya  
Kenzie Driggers  
Brianna Duquette  
Kayla Feist

Anna Gamblin  
Caleb Goldsmith  
Jacob Goyins  
Clayton Hale  
Ryan Harfst  
Andrew Henke  
James Hitchcock  
Cynthia Holt  
Miranda Huang  
Parker Humber  
Andrew Hyche  
Amy Lenoir  
Yali Li  
Michael Long

Kimberly Lowery  
Jackson McCommon  
David Milsted  
Sean Moskal  
Beau Navarre  
Kamal Neupane  
Wince Nordan  
Durham Norman  
Brian Ott  
Tyler Petroelje  
Robert Reese  
Thomas Rogers  
Michelle Salers  
Victoria Starnes

Emma Steeg  
Hayden Tisdale  
Alexandra Ullery  
Merry Walker  
Jacob West  
Drew Williams  
Andrew Wilson  
Shawn Woodard  
Hannah Wright  
Megan Young  
Xichun Zhou

# CHANGING OF THE GUARD

## BURGER NAMED DEAN AND DIRECTOR FOR MSU'S COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES AND FOREST AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER

**A LONGTIME MISSISSIPPI STATE FACULTY MEMBER AND** administrator is the new dean of the university's College of Forest Resources and director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center.

**LOREN W. "WES" BURGER**, a W.L. Giles Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology in MSU's Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, is the permanent dean and director, after serving in these roles on an interim basis since July 2020. The university conducted a nationwide search, chaired by College of Veterinary Medicine Dean Kent Hoblet.

"With nearly 30 years of research, teaching, and outreach at Mississippi State, Dr. Burger's leadership at all levels has served this university, his students, and many other stakeholders extremely well," said MSU Provost and Executive Vice President David Shaw. "We are fortunate to have Dr. Burger in this role because of his leadership, expertise and—most importantly—his commitment to undergraduate and graduate students."

"Dr. Burger has an outstanding reputation as a highly productive research administrator and educator," said MSU Vice President for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine Keith Coble. "He has developed programs of national significance in agriculture and natural resources, and we look forward to his ongoing leadership in the role of dean and director."

Since joining the MSU faculty in 1993, Burger has earned university, national, and international accolades. His research has focused on the ecology and management of upland birds in managed landscapes, as well as other topics in avian ecology. He has secured and managed over 130 grants totaling more than \$22.1 million in extramural funding from a myriad of private, state, and federal agencies. He is passionate about the forestry and wildlife resources in the state of Mississippi and wants to see the university serve those industries.

A John Grisham Master Teacher who held the Dale H. Arner Professorship of Wildlife Ecology and Management, Burger is a 2016 recipient of the Ralph E. Powe Excellence in



Research Award. He was a 2017 selection for a National Quail Symposium Award of Excellence, and he also has received two CFR Outstanding Research Awards. Additionally, he is a two-time recipient of the CFR Outstanding Teaching Award and has received major professional commendations from the Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Southeast Quail Study Group, and the Mississippi Wildlife Federation.

Burger is a Fellow of The Wildlife Society and Food Systems Leadership Institute. He was a 2017 Fellow of the SEC Academic Leadership Development Program.

Burger earned his master's and doctoral degrees in wildlife biology from the University of Missouri. He has bachelor's degrees in both mathematics and biology from Murray State University.



## NEW FACULTY



**DR. COREY DUNN** is a fisheries biologist for the U.S. Geological Survey and an assistant professor in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture. He earned a bachelor's in biological sciences and master's in fish and wildlife conservation from Virginia Tech. He earned a doctorate in natural resources from the University of Missouri. His research is focused on ecology and conservation of rivers and riverine biota and includes the ecology of large-river fishes, endangered species management, invasion ecology, and riverine landscape ecology.



**DR. ASHLEY SCHULZ** joined the Department of Forestry as an assistant professor. She earned a bachelor's in forestry at the University of Missouri, a master's in forest resources at the University of Georgia, and a doctorate in environmental sciences at Arkansas State University. Her research interests broadly include forest ecology and forest health, with a focus on prevention and management of forest disturbances.

## RETIREMENTS

**DR. IAN MUNN**, a forest resource economist and professor, served as associate dean of the College of Forest



Resources for nearly a decade. Prior to his administrative role, he was a forestry professor for more than 20 years. Munn's research interest includes natural resource economics and he's been a principal or co-principal investigator on more than 150 peer-reviewed publications since 2000.

**DR. JOHN B. AUEL**, assistant extension professor in the Department of Forestry, retired after 25 years



of service. He served as coordinator for Mississippi's Professional Logging Manager Program and was the MS Tree Farm State Administrator. He has taught best management practices, certification, and logging safety for 23 years. Auel completed bachelor's and master's degrees in forestry from Virginia Tech. In 2016, he completed a Ph.D. in Forestry from Mississippi State University.

**DR. JOHN D. KUSHLA**, associate extension and research professor, retired after 18 years of service.



As a forestry specialist with the MSU Extension Service, Kushla connected with Mississippi timber producers through in-person training and extension publications. In his role as researcher with the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, Kushla published nearly 20 publications focused on helping timber producers increase productivity and profitability of their timber tracts.

# ALUMNI NEWS



## 2021 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

*Russell W. "Rusty" Booker, Jr.*

**R**USSELL W. "RUSTY" BOOKER EARNED A BACHELOR'S degree in forestry from MSU in 1991 and subsequently began his career with Chesapeake Forest Products Company. For nearly 30 years, Booker has worked in progressive roles across the forestry industry for companies including International Paper Co., Drax Biomass International, and Weyerhaeuser. At International Paper, he helped design and institute a better supply strategy to lead the leanest divisional team at the second-largest virgin fiber consuming mill in the company and was awarded the inaugural Catalyst Award in the Forest Resources Division. Today, Booker serves as president of Scotch Land Management, LLC in Fulton, Alabama. Founded in 1888, the company provides comprehensive land and timber management services for more than 350,000 acres.



## 2021 ALUMNI FELLOW

*George G. "Glynn" Pittman*

**G**EORGE G. "GLYNN" PITTMAN OF WALKER, Louisiana, is a 45-year veteran of the forest products industry. The Memphis, Tennessee, native studied forestry at Mississippi State and graduated from the College of Forest Resources in 1976. He subsequently began his career with International Paper Co. as a field forester in central Mississippi and advanced to progressive roles over the years. Pittman joined Stella-Jones Corporation in 2012, where he serves as vice president of utility pole operations, overseeing multiple facilities across the southern and southeastern U.S. He was recently appointed to a five-year board of director's term for the Louisiana Forestry Commission and serves on advisory boards for the College of Forest Resources and the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts.





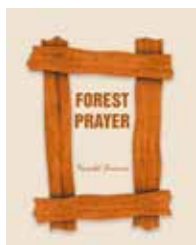
**MIKE CROWELL** (*forestry 1986*) was named the new Region 3 Regional Forester for the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC). Crowell has been with MFC for 30 years starting as a ranger in Scott County. He will direct the day-to-day operations of MFC's Region 3, supervising foresters and rangers in 19 counties in central Mississippi.



**DR. NATHAN IRBY** (*sustainable bioproducts 2006, 2008, 2019*) has been named the executive director of the Railway Tie Association. Since 2013, Irby has managed the strategic sourcing wood tie program for Union Pacific. He is also an adjunct professor in MSU's Department of Sustainable Bioproducts.



**ZACH PARDUE** (*forestry 2016*) and **SAVANNAH FENAES PARDUE** (*forestry 2017*) welcomed Wade Garrett Pardue on April 3, 2021.



**GERALD P. INMON** (*forestry 1970, 1974*) has released his latest novel, **Forest Prayer**. A signed first edition hardback is available at [geraldinmon.com](http://geraldinmon.com). This is the third book written by Inmon. His other novels are **Yocona Puff Adder** and **Camp Re-Form**, also available on the website and book retailers.



**DR. SHANNON WESTLAKE** (*wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture 2019*) is part of the first cohort of senior social scientists hired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). As part of her doctoral degree from MSU, Westlake surveyed Mississippi landowners to assess pollinator conservation practice adoption across private lands. She also spearheaded the initiative to make MSU a Bee Campus USA. In her new role as social scientist for the South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin, she is a part of a team that integrates conservation social sciences into the agency's current initiatives and projects.



**RICK CAMPBELL** (*wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture 2020*) is working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He carries on a family tradition and makes the third consecutive generation to join the USFWS. His father and grandfather both worked at Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery in Tupelo, MS.



**DR. JAMES E. "JIM" MILLER** (*former faculty member*) released a new book that is a must for turkey enthusiasts. Released posthumously, the book is based on Miller's treasure of memories, knowledge, and many years of professional experience. Travel with Miller as he navigates his outdoor life as a hunter and naturalist. Join him as he pits his savvy knowledge against the wily turkey gobbler. **Path to Enlightened Turkey Hunting** is available at [www.turkey-huntingbook.com](http://www.turkey-huntingbook.com)

## OBITUARIES



### KELLY A. BUFKIN

*(Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2016)*

Bufkin (34) died on February 9, 2021, in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

The Vicksburg native was a dedicated outdoorsman, hunting with his family from an early age. He was a Boy Scout in Troop 7. He joined the United States Air Force through the Early Enlistment program. He entered service as a Munitions Systems Apprentice/Journeyman with the 712th Munitions Squadron, Camp Darby, Livorno, Italy, and finished service as an E-1, Senior Airman, Munitions Systems Journeyman with the 49th Maintenance Squadron, Holloman Air Force Base, Alamogordo, New Mexico. He held two degrees from Mississippi State, finishing with a B.A. in History and a B.S. in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture in May 2016.

He met his lifelong love, Katie McKnight, in Vicksburg, in 2008 and married in 2018. He followed her to Mississippi State University and then on to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where they continued their life together.

Bufkin worked for Hot Springs National Park, as a biological technician, conducting bat acoustic surveys. He had a tour with AmeriCorps NCCC, where he continued to study bats. He was part of a research project for Mississippi State University, tagging deer with GPS collars. He became a part of the Quail Forever family in December 2017, as a Farm Bill Biologist.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Katherine McKnight Bufkin of Hot Springs, Arkansas; his parents, Robert and Charla Bufkin; his brother Robby Bufkin and his twin sisters Carol and Alayn Bufkin, of Vicksburg, Mississippi; his grandparents Madeline (Matt) and Ken Grant, of Sutherlin, Oregon; his grandmother Shirley Bufkin, and his in-laws, Judith and Tom McKnight, also of Vicksburg, Mississippi.



### DONALD STEELE BELL

*(Forestry 1956)*

Bell (86) died on February 15, 2021, in Bruce, Mississippi. The Ethel, Mississippi

native served in the United States Army and Mississippi National Guard for over 22 years. He was a member of MSU's first forestry class. He worked at Jimmy Henley Lumber Company, the D. L. Fair Lumber Company, Georgia Pacific, and Weyerhaeuser where he was a forester and later a raw materials manager. He founded a consulting company Donald S. Bell and Associates in 1978.

Bell was a member of several forestry organizations including the Mississippi Forestry Association, the Society of American Foresters; the Association of Consulting Foresters of America; and the National Association of Forestry. He was a Scout Master for Boy Scout Troop 26 and served on the Pushmataha Scout Board. He received the Silver Beaver Award and the Order of the Arrow.

Bell was an active member of the Bruce United Methodist Church, serving in various roles.

The avid outdoorsman loved hunting deer, rabbit, and fishing. He was also an avid MSU sports fan.

Those left to honor his memory are his wife Billie Jo Pennington Bell, whom he married on July 27, 1956, daughters: Barbara (Ted) Camp, of Banner; Sharon (Steve) James, of Bruce; Donna (Thomas) Camp, of Banner, and Penny (Bryan) Register, of Vicksburg; brothers: Terrell (Edna) Bell, of Louisville, and Bob Bell, of Ethel; grandchildren: Kevin (Dr. Keri) Camp; Dr. Jason (Kristy) Camp; Christy (Michael) Listenbee; Kayla (Jason) Jenkins; Clint Camp; Hannah (Michael) Maier, and Matthew Register, and seven great grandchildren.



### JAMES "JIM" ELLIOT DOESCHER

*(Forestry 1966)*

Doescher (80) died August 3, 2021 in Panama City, FL. He is

survived by his wife of almost 50 years, Davie Harbor Doescher, his daughters Whitney Doescher Mims (Wes) and Noelle Doescher Morrison (Nate) and four grandchildren – Libbie Grace, Evie, Griffin, and Elliot. Jim's love of baseball carried him to Mississippi State University where he played first base. After graduating from Mississippi State in the height of the Vietnam War, Jim enlisted in the United States Army and attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He proudly served his country with the 9th Infantry Division "Old Reliables"—earning the rank of First Lieutenant. While in combat, he earned many accolades including the Bronze Star with Cluster and a Purple Heart.

Jim's attachment to the outdoors led him to a career in the forest products industry working in a variety of progressing roles for St. Regis Paper Company, Southwest Forest Products, and Natural Resources Planning Services before becoming the co-owner of Abbeville Forest Products. His final role before retirement was Executive Director of the Georgia Forestry Association. The height of his professional career was serving as President of the Florida Forestry Association.

Throughout his life, Jim invested time in a variety of organizations including the Society of American Foresters, Log A Load for Kids, Bay Credit Union, Bay Point Community Association, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Bay County Veteran's Council, the Military Welcome Center at Panama City Airport, and Emerald Coast Woodworking Guild.





Colonel Kennedy D. Johnson receives an honorary Doctor of Public Service degree from MSU President Mark E. Keenum during May 3, 2019 commencement exercises. (Photo by Megan Bean)

**COLONEL KENNETH D. JOHNSON** (*honorary Doctor of Public Service 2019*) Colonel Johnson (98) died June 25, 2021, in Jackson. The Lena, Mississippi native joined the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps and was commissioned a second lieutenant in February 1944.

During WWII, he was a transport pilot in Europe delivering supplies and evacuating the wounded from France following D-Day. His last assignment on his 30-month European Tour was a pilot for the late Justice Robert Jackson, Chief Prosecutor of the Nuremberg War Trial.

In 1951, the Colonel was assigned to Korea, where he flew 59 missions as a B-26 pilot during the Korean Conflict. He was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight.

Serving at bases from Japan to South Carolina, the Colonel logged more the 15,000 accident-free hours—nearly two years in the air. This extremely rare feat is accomplished by only one percent of all U.S. Air Force aircrew members.

He concluded his more than three decades of service in Oklahoma City, where he served as Senior Air Force Advisor to the Oklahoma National Guard. He received the Legion of Merit, which is one of the highest United States military awards.

After serving his country through three decades and three wars, Colonel Johnson returned to MSU in 1978 to complete the summer field program in forestry. The return to MSU facilitated a valuable, life-long relationship between Colonel Johnson and the College of Forest Resources. Through the creation of the Colonel K.D. Johnson Forest near his hometown of Lena, Mississippi, Johnson became the

first member of the Bulldog Forest. Further benefiting the college, he has established several other endowments.

In May 2019, he was awarded an honorary doctorate for his incomparable life experiences and commitment to the university community. Affectionately known as “The Colonel” amongst CFR Students he received a standing ovation, first from the graduating CFR students and then from the entire graduating class for his years of service to our country. When asked about the honor, Colonel Johnson humbly said “It only took me a little over 70 years to get a degree. I am honored to be awarded a degree by the university that I have grown to love. It is an unexpected honor that means so much to me.” When Dr. Mark E. Keenum, MSU President, asked how to refer to the new doctorate honoree, Colonel Johnson said, “Call me Colonel, there are a lot of doctors around here but only one Colonel.”

Along with his parents, Colonel Johnson is preceded in death by his wife Catherine Biggs Johnson.

Colonel Johnson is survived by his son, Larry Johnson of Cordova, TN; a daughter from a previous relationship, Gina Castonguay of Boscaween, NH; grandchildren, Allison Egan (Tom) of Watertown, MA; and Stephen Pleau of Hollis, ME; great grandchildren, Autumn, Rachael, and Luke.

He is survived by his longtime neighbor and friends, Claire and David Jackson, whom the family would like to thank for their care, compassion, and friendship over the years. He is also survived by his good friend and football companion, Jeff Little of the MSU Foundation.

He is also survived by his longtime friends and gardening partners, Mike and Sherry Sherman of Lena, Mississippi.



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