

THE OUTDOORSMAN

Good Land Stewardship Runs in Dr. Bembry's Family

It wasn't hard to find Dr. John Bembry's farm house just south of Hawkinsville near Highway #341. As I drove into the dirt driveway I immediately had heart warm feelings because the old home place reminded me of visits to my Grandmother's house in rural Georgia so many years ago. The heart of pine siding, tin roof and old-

timey wrap around porch seemed frozen in time from the early 1900s. Yet some fresh lumber on the steps and a well groomed yard showed the house was loved by its present owner.

I had yet to reach the door when a friendly voice from inside the house called out through the screened door, "Hi John! Come on In." Dr. Bembry has a very friendly and engaging personality well suited to a country

veterinarian who must deal with a wide variety of animal calamities and illnesses on a daily basis. But today we were going to discuss another of Dr. Bembry's passions, land stewardship and forestry. His old family restored home serves as an office for his forestry and farming operations on slightly less than 1,000 acres owned by him and his sister Amy. The home also doubles as a camp house for some trusted friends

By John T. Trussel



Bembry on the porch of his hand-built cabin, Ocmulgee river in the background.

that lease the hunting and fishing rights to Dr. Bemby's property. Reflecting the homes practical working nature, the walls are sparsely decorated, but three items stuck out. One was a large aerial photo of the Bemby property and surrounding landscape. Maps are nice, but a bird's eye view from the sky is hard to beat for dimension, landscape details and property overview, says Dr. Bemby. Another item was an old piece of Beech tree bark with the initials RTB and the year 1933. Bemby explained that few years ago he was conducting a prescribed burn on a piece of his property and looked down as he used the drip torch to ignite the leaves. He happened to notice a dead beech tree lying on the ground with some initials carved into the bark. On closer inspection he realized that the initials were the handiwork of his deceased uncle, Roscoe Bemby. Suddenly that old piece of bark has a very special meaning and now holds an honored place on his wall.

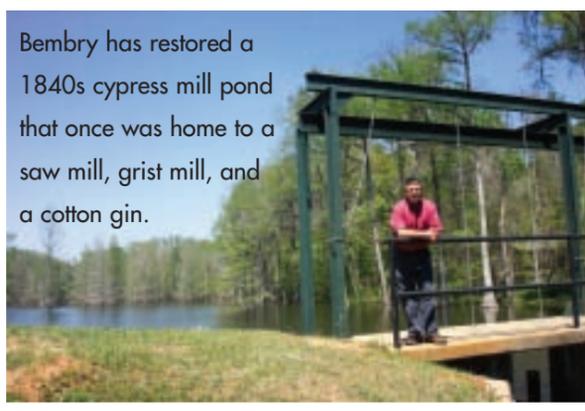
Dr. Bemby didn't mention it, but a framed award noted that he was the Soil and Water Conservation of the Year Winner a few years back. This indicated that he has been a role model for others as he has followed expert advice and practices in his woodlands and fields to

conserve soil and water resources. He also serves on the Georgia Land Conservation Council and the Pulaski County School Board, so he believes in giving back to his community.

Now it was time for a tour of the woodlands that Dr. Bemby has devoted so much time and energy to for many years. Although he likes to hunt and fish, he usually stays very busy and derives just as much pleasure from fixing a road, cutting boards for wood projects at his sawmill, or building a bluebird house.

As we proceeded around the forestlands, Dr. Bemby pointed out his old family cemetery where two Civil War veterans were buried. There are also two Revolutionary soldiers buried on the property, but they are not related. We

soon passed a beautiful pond, named "Capt's Pond" in memory of Dr Bemby's uncle, which had a strong artisan well flowing out of a pipe. Many years ago the flowing well supplied water to the house, almost a mile away. Moving on, we followed a lovely winding dirt road down to the banks of the Ocmulgee River where the family has rustic cabin, built with lumber cut and sawed on the farm. I soon noticed that Dr. Bemby had a Georgia Certified Steward sign on his property, signifying that he had been faithful to the principles of good stewardship and land conservation. His property was certified by Rick S. Hatten, State Stewardship Coordinator in 2002 based on a comprehensive forest stewardship management plan drawn up by registered forester



Bemby has restored a 1840s cypress mill pond that once was home to a saw mill, grist mill, and a cotton gin.

Gregory D. Long with input from Dr Bemby in 1994. He also had a ten year revised plan completed to help keep him on target on all his land management goals. Dr. Bemby highly recommends the stewardship program to any landowner who wants to better manage their property. The program is free, he says, and is tailored to the interests of the landowner and helps them identify a wealth of materials, information, resources and possible funding sources that are needed for good land management and stewardship.

For example on Dr. Bemby's property, he identified the management of the forest resources on the family farm to improve recreational opportunities. Of secondary concern was the management of the property's resources to

improve wildlife habitat for both game and non game species. He also wished to improve aesthetics, timber health and valves, plus soil and water quality whenever feasible and practical. He relayed these wishes to forester Long through an interview and brief pre-assessment questionnaire. After extensive research, exploration and development, Long responded with a superbly written and documented stewardship forestry plan based on the best management practices (BMP) for Georgia timberlands. The forty six page forestry stewardship plan reviewed the assets of the property including archaeological, cultural, and historic resources. Very useful and detailed maps of the property's dimensions, soil types, and topography were created. Specific recommendations for

food plots for deer, wild turkey and non game species were presented along with proposals timber management, prescribed burning, and for renovating an old grist mill site on the property. In fact, Dr. Bemby's family roots run back to 1807 on this tract of land, thus he says he is both honored and humbled by the responsibility of being the best steward of the land as possible. Around 1840 Miles Bemby constructed a grist mill, saw mill

and cotton gin powered by the creek flow. However the gin and sawmill burned sometime around 1860-65. Today Bemby has restored the dam and lake and the site is full of memories. Standing on the concrete dam, I noticed a small child's footprint in the concrete. Bemby smiled and said, "Yes, that was made by my sister Amy in 1973 with the help of my Dad. There are lots of great memories here." With Dr. Bemby's foresight and stewardship, more good memories will be made and the future is bright for future generations. If you would like addition information on Georgia's Forestry stewardship program, call 1800-GA TREES or visit www.gfc.state.ga.us. Remember, someday someone will own the land after us, so let's be good stewards for them! ♦

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