

# BOB & CATHIE ASHBY, HOLLADAY... 2013 TREE FARMERS OF THE YR.

**Nominated By: Terry Tynes, Consultant**

**Robert (Bob) & Cathie Ashby, Legacy Acres Tree Farm, Benton County**

The **LEGACY ACRES TREE FARM** owned by Robert (Bob) L. and Catherine (Cathie) M. Ashby of Benton County, TN has been chosen unanimously by committee as the Tennessee 2013 Tree Farm of the year.

Bob, raised in Indiana, graduated from the Indiana University with a B.S. in Accounting in 1971 obtaining his CPA in 1973. Cathie was a nurse at the Camden hospital until her recent retirement.

Bob was Vice President Taxes for the Nortel Networks, Inc. in Nashville before his last employment with the Cracker Barrel Corp. as Chief Director of Taxes. Bob retired in 2012.

Bob was active in several professional organizations including President of Tax Executives Institute, member of Machinery and Allied Tax Products (MATI) Tax council II, member of American Electronics Assoc. National Tax Committee, and Chairman, Electronics Industry Assoc. Tax Council.

In his youth, Bob and his father shared time together when they went hunting for rabbits. Each time they went hunting his father needed to find a landowner and beg permission to hunt on his property being sure to observe the standards of good visitor behavior. Bob began to dream of owning land of his own someday. Bob had a friend with whom he spent many hours sharing their love of the outdoors on his friend's grandfather's farm.

Eventually the family purchased a farm of 243 acres in Benton County with an old barn and a small three bedroom house. They used the farm as often as possible as a getaway and to hunt.

One Christmas holiday he and Cathie were spending some time together at the farm when Cathie noticed a newspaper advertisement for the sale of a home and land not far from their farm. They met with the realtor to see the farm. When Cathie saw the beautiful valley with perennial flow creek, all of the beautiful trees in the front yard and the home with all of the windows facing the valley she told Bob "this is what I want." After some negotiation, they purchased the farm that contained 823 acres. All but 50 acres around the main house had been clear-cut harvested.

Cathie asked Bob what they should do with all of the clear-cut land. Bob said, "How do I know; I am an accountant but I've always wanted my own land to hunt where I didn't have to beg anyone for permission." After considering Cathie's question he contacted the Tennessee Division of Forestry for advice. When he met with the Area Forester, Mr. Terry Tynes, he was asked to state his objectives for management of the farm. After some discussion Bob decided 4 objectives: (1) Timber: Produce hardwood and pine timber for future financial gains and enjoyment (2) Aesthetics: Enhance natural beauty for low visual impacts (3) Recreation: Enhanced opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hunting, wildlife viewing, hiking etc. and (4) Wildlife: enhance habitat for deer, turkey, quail, songbirds, dove, rabbits, squirrels etc. With that information Terry went to work to prepare a written detailed Forest Stewardship management plan for the farm.

Bob began to implement the plan as funding permitted. He began by reforesting 305.6 acres of the poorer sites of ridges and slopes that faced the south and west in the clear-cut areas. In order to do this he had a helicopter vendor apply the recommended forestry herbicides over the area after the TN Div. of Forestry (TDF) cleared a path around the perimeter using a bull-dozer. Then, with the help of the TDF staff of the Area Forester and men from Benton and Carroll County the entire 305.6 acres was burned to consume as much of the woody debris as possible. A vendor from Mississippi was hired to plant genetically improved loblolly pine tree seedlings purchased from the TDF seedling nursery. Trees were planted at the spacing of 8 feet by 10 feet (545 trees per acre) totaling about 167,000 trees in late February, 1997. In November, 1997 personnel of the TDF conducted a sampling survey of the seedling survival for the first year. It was determined that 97.5% of the trees had survived. The plantation today, now 16 years old, is a fully stocked beautiful forest that some may describe as a "deep dark woods" teeming with deer and turkey. In its first 5 to 7 years it was a good habitat for all kinds of small animals as well which included quail (the large bodied bobwhite kind), rabbits, and songbirds.

Since the plantation was established, Bob has become proficient in control burning some of the plantation beginning when the trees were about 10 years old. Some areas have had 2 or 3 burns making them look clean of understory competing woody plants. The hollows and slopes that faced the north and east were allowed to grow natural regeneration of upland hardwood trees. Since the clear-cut harvest, these areas have become well stocked with multiple species of broadleaf hardwood trees including white oak, red oak, tulip poplar, hickory, sweetgum, black cherry, white ash, red maple, and others. They have grown to small pole-size trees now providing improved habitat for larger wildlife such as deer and turkey. At least as valuable as the wildlife benefits and financial benefits,

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are the values seen as aesthetic and recreational that have become so apparent. The farm now contains over 12 miles of interior roads constantly being improved that allow the family and visitors to access the view offered by seasonal changes in vegetation including the beautiful fall colors of the hardwood foliage and some trails also offer hiking opportunities.

When purchased the farm contained several wildlife openings that Bob attempted to maintain. At this date he still has 11 food plots devoted to wildlife. Since the initial purchase when approximately 25 wildlife openings were present Bob has planted several of them with loblolly pine seedlings-8,000 seedlings in 2012-due to the insurmountable task of maintaining so many openings.

Since the purchase of the original 823 acres they have purchased two more farms that adjoin the larger tract and one that lies across the highway from the home. In 1999 166.6 acres of land was purchased containing hardwood timber that had mostly been clear-cut the year before. The clear-cut area was allowed to naturally regenerate in mixed hardwoods and the un-cut area has been selectively harvested.

Later in 1999, 103.9 acres was purchased across the highway from the home site. Most of this land had been clear-cut the year before. Approximately 14.2 acres along the highway and along the sides of a small ephemeral stream had not been clear-cut and contains mostly mixed hardwood trees of pole-size and sawtimber sizes of trees. With TDF assistance and cost-share funding about 56,000 genetically improved loblolly pines were planted in February, 2000. Extensive herbicide and burning site preparation preceded the planting of the seedlings. The plantation contains 86.4 acres of well stocked pine trees.

In June, 2001 39 acres of land adjoining the 823 acres was purchased containing hilly upland hardwood sawtimber. In the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008 this timber was selectively harvested by a logger using horses and mules.

At this time the farm consists of 1,123 acres with a small lake, a small wildlife pond, meadow, wildlife openings, a catfish pond, 12 miles of roads, and a greenhouse.

You are invited to meet Bob and Cathie Ashby and learn more about their wonderful tree farm.

TFA joins the Tennessee Tree Farm Committee on congratulating Bob and Cathie Ashby, 2013 Tree Farmers of the Year!

