



John Albert Derks

March 11, 1935 - January 15, 2022

John Albert Derks, of Morrilton, Arkansas, passed away, January 15, 2022, in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was born March 11, 1935, in Crystal Springs, Mississippi, the son of the late Herbert John Derks and Hettie Lee Derks. Reared in Covich County Mississippi, he attended Crystal Springs Consolidated High School and later graduated from Covich Lincoln Junior College in Wesson, Mississippi. He grew up working for his father who ran a logging company, owned and operated a Sawmill and Planer, also a pulpwood dealer for the Great Southern Paper Company in Bogalusa, Louisiana. After Junior College, his father formed a partnership and built a Sawmill with a Planer in Scott Valley, California in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

John worked for a logger in the California Coastal Redwood and Douglas Fir Region that owned several portable Highlead Logging Operations. Crews were made up mostly of Russians, and they all said John talked funny being from the South. He was having the time of his life gaining valuable working experience working with the big equipment moving huge Redwood and Douglas Fir timber in the mountainous terrain making big money for a young man and seeing different parts of the west. One morning crew members presented him with a fine pair of leather caulked sole boots and said to him "Now you are one of us even if you still talk funny". Those boots were cherished for many years.

The best equipment one could have, was several very good guardian angels watching over you because the only safe place would be a mile away from

this type of logging operation. Pressured by his parents to finish college he enrolled in the University of California at Berkley, California. One semester was enough for him. He went back South and completed college at Mississippi State University graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Production and Management.

John went to work for the U.S. Forest Service working in Mississippi- DeSoto National Forest on the Leaf River and Biloxi Ranger Districts, then Arkansas-Ozark-St. Francis National Forest on the Pleasant Hill and Mt. Magazine Ranger Districts. He went on to work in Alabama-Talladega National Forest on the Oakmulgee Ranger Districts, and Western North Carolina-Nantahala National Forest on the Cheoal Ranger Districts. He became one of the youngest District Rangers in Region 8 which covers 13 states, receiving two superior service awards during his service. He was detailed to several of the huge forest fires back in the Pacific Northwest. The fire at Wenatchee, Washington was the worst but he realized his guardian angels were still looking out for him.

John's professional organizations were the Society of American Foresters, Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry (Tappi), American Pulpwood Association, and Arkansas Forestry Association.

John joined Green Bay Packing, Inc. as District Procurement Forester in the Booneville-Waldron area then moved to Morrilton as Manager of the Land Department. In Mississippi, he worked procuring pulpwood to be shipped by rail to the Arkansas Kraft Mill, and later Supervisor of Woods Chipping and Company Logging Operations. He became Chip and Wood Fuel Procurement Manager and dealt with many suppliers. And also, sold hardwood chips to three other paper mills. He loved all aspects of the Timber Industry and respected and admired all of its people.

John and his wife Patsy Ann lived in Morrilton, Arkansas, and attended Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church after retiring from Green Bay Packing. On one occasion he was asked if he would change anything if he could live his life over. "No-no, he said he got to work in the Santa Cruz and Pacific Coast

Mountain Ranges as a very young man. Then all the way East to the Appalachians in Western North Carolina, but the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains and its people were his favorite pick and where he wanted to live. Survivors include his loving wife of 43 years, Patsy Ann Johnson Derks; daughter, Natalie (Wes) Kirby; step-son, Mike (Jennifer) Sandifer; five granddaughters and two great-granddaughters, and one great-grandson, all of Knoxville, Tennessee; sister-in-law, Marilyn J. Hood of Crystal Springs, Mississippi.

Cemetery Details

Crystal Springs Cemetery

Crystal Springs , MS

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 18. 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Harris Funeral Homes - Morrilton
1325 Oak St
Morrilton, AR 72110
(501) 354-4575

Tribute Wall



“ *John Albert Derks*

January 30, 2023 at 02:08 AM



“ *Patsy, I just learned of the passing of your beloved, John. May God bless and comfort you. John was a good man. Arlene Walker*

Arlene Walker - January 28, 2022 at 01:36 PM



“ *Patsy Ann, I'm so sorry to hear this. My prayers are with you and the kids. My number# 601-327-1507*

Lisa Edwards Bray - January 22, 2022 at 12:14 AM



“ *Lisa Edwards Bray lit a candle in memory of John Albert Derks*



Lisa Edwards Bray - January 22, 2022 at 12:12 AM



“ *Patsy, Jeff and I are so sorry to hear of the passing of John. We are thankful for the opportunity to know him both professionally at GBP and the blessing of attending church with you both. Praying for peace and comfort for you and your family. Jeff and Jennifer Berry*

Jeff and Jennifer Berry - January 19, 2022 at 06:55 PM

NS

“ *What a pleasure it was to work with John A. Derks for many many years. The stories John shared with us, and the great examples of professionalism shown by John are often still talked about here at GBP. A true Southern Gentleman that will always remain in our hearts.*

Patsy and family, may you find peace and comfort in the upcoming days.

Nova Scroggins

Nova Scroggins - January 18, 2022 at 03:54 PM

JT

“ *Jared Smith, Susan, Kyle & Tyler purchased the Springtime Wishes for the family of John Albert Derks.*



Jared Smith, Susan, Kyle & Tyler - January 18, 2022 at 03:23 PM

GF

“ *Patsy,*

I'm soo sorry to hear of John's passing. John was a great man, and I enjoyed working with him at GBP. I have a lot of great memories of him. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Ginger Gangluff Freeman

GINGER FREEMAN - January 18, 2022 at 10:26 AM



“ *Floor Plant for Sympathy was purchased for the family of John Albert Derks.*



January 18, 2022 at 09:38 AM



“ *John was a real Southern Gentleman. I had the good fortune to spend time with John early in my career. John shared wonderful stories of his logging/forestry/woods experience and showed me how to see an issue from every angle.*

One February day in 1977 John rode with me looking over recent tree plantings. Near the end, we had about 200 yards of mud hole to get to the highway. It looked very, very marginal (In those days all we had was 2 wheel drive pickups) We knew we couldn't go back. Forward was our only choice. John asked me what I thought. I told him that we could get to the highway, but it wouldn't be pretty. John told me "you get me outta here and I'll never breathe a word of how you did it". We got a run at the mud hole, slid about every way you could slide, slung mud from there to Missouri and got to the highway. When we got there, John yelled for me to stop. He got out, kissed the ground and with shaking hands lit up a cigarette. He thanked me for getting us out and never mentioned that ride again.

A wonderful man. My life was richer having known John.

David Cawein

David Cawein - January 17, 2022 at 05:48 PM