

# EMMETT A. CONWAY, SR.

## FEBRUARY 17, 1914 – FEBRUARY 20, 2009

by John Dorka, OFA Executive Director



The Ohio Forestry Association lost a very dear, old friend recently. **Emmett Conway Sr.** passed away on February 20, 2009 in Chillicothe, shortly after turning 95 years old. Affectionately known as “The Olde Forester”, Emmett leaves behind a long legacy and love of Ohio history and forestry that few, if any, among our ranks can share. He was a lifelong member of OFA, having served as founder and chairman of the first Paul Bunyan Show in McArthur in 1957. He created the program and format for exhibitors and education that remains to this day. In 2007, the year of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Show, Emmett was awarded the OFA Lifetime Achievement Award.

Many of you knew Emmett Sr. for his “tales” and knowledge about the early and pre-settlement history of Ohio. But you may not have known his history as a forester and his work in the wood industry.

First and foremost, Emmett was a dedicated husband to Myrtle Irene for 66 years, an adored father to six children, grandfather to eleven, and great grandfather to ten. He was born in Glouster, Ohio before his family moved to Struthers. During his youth, he and a twin brother, Errett, shared a life of adventure and on two separate instances, reportedly saved one another from drowning. His achievement as an Eagle Scout sprouted his interest in the outdoors and his lifelong passions took root.

Emmett’s career in forestry started after graduating from the University of Michigan in 1939 with a BS and MS in Forestry and Conservation. Soon after, he took a job with Mill Creek Park in Youngstown as the first park forester. In 1941, he moved back to southeastern Ohio

where he remained the rest of his life.

In 1941, he became the Forest Ranger at Zaleski State Forest and Lake Hope Park and accomplished a number of tasks, among them helping to build the state’s first lodge at Lake Hope. It unfortunately burned down several years ago but is soon to be rebuilt. At Zaleski he completed much tree planting, timber stand improvement, ran the state sawmill, and administered Lake Hope Park, which was then managed by the Division of Forestry headquartered in Wooster, Ohio before the Ohio Department of Natural Resources was created in 1949.

In 1948, Emmett moved to forest research and during his time in that job, he single-handedly completed an inventory and forest plan of all state forest lands that totaled nearly 140,000 acres. In a little more than a year, Emmett walked over 500 miles of timber inventory lines and then “crunched” numbers by hand to complete what has been until very recently the only comprehensive inventory of Ohio state forests ever completed. His report established that special areas be protected while an allowable cut of over 10 million board feet per year could be sustained. That inventory and information continues to provide benchmark data to this day.

Emmett left the state job in 1951 to become superintendent of timberlands for D.B. Frampton & Co. in McArthur,

*continued next page*

which at the time had the largest sawmill in Ohio. The company owned over 75,000 acres of land. The Frampton sawmill site is now where Crownover Lumber is located and the timberland became the first large land purchase for the Mead Corporation in Chillicothe.

While working for Frampton, Emmett was instrumental in creating the Vinton Furnace Experimental Forest on 1,800 acres of Frampton property in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service. Over the years, that land has changed hands many times but has been maintained for research ever since. The Vinton Furnace Experimental Forest remains to this day, standing testimony to the value and importance of the hardwood forest research legacy he helped create.

Emmett then moved to Ohio University in 1964, working in research for industrial and tourism planning until his retirement in 1976.

Emmett was a Christmas tree grower for over a half century and used the proceeds to feed “the College Fund” that he used to put all six of his children through four-year colleges.

To the many of us who knew him later in his life, he may be most fondly remembered for his incredible knowledge of and voracious appetite for Ohio’s natural and native history. He was a lifetime scholar of early Ohio history with vast knowledge of the iron ore furnaces, Native American villages and trails, the Jackson salt springs, and other historic areas and sites. He was often at his best when he could share his knowledge with anyone who wanted to hear the beauty of his tales. It was eloquently stated that Emmett’s goal in life was for “people to learn and carry the message of our inheritance.”

Emmett served in many capacities over the years.

Beyond being a member of the Ohio Forestry Association, he was a lifetime member of the Society of American Foresters, the American Forestry Society, the South Central Ohio Preservation Society, a Past Master of the Masons, a member of the Les Voyageur Society at the University of Michigan, and a long member of the McArthur First Presbyterian Church.

I had the good fortune to be able to recognize Emmett as a Friend of the Forest, given by the ODNR, Division of Forestry to those who have made significant contributions to forestry over the years. I remember how much he appreciated receiving that award. The week following the ceremony, Emmett sent me an eight-page, hand written account of his early years with the Division of Forestry and Zaleski State Forest that contained new details and information that none of us knew before.

Emmett was truly a friend of forestry and the forest industry and will leave forever a hole in the fabric of where we’ve come from, but filled by our memories of what he gave us.

