

## Focusing on Forestry: Benefactor Wants to Make Penn State Best

Joe Ibberson's goal is simple: he wants to make Penn State's forestry program the best in the nation. And the 1947 Penn State forestry graduate is doing something about it—in a very big way.

The Harrisburg resident, retired chief of the Division of Forest Advisory Services in Pennsylvania's Department of Forests and Waters (now the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), recently committed \$2 million to endow a new faculty chair in the School of Forest Resources. The gift is part of the donor's estate plans and will create the Joseph E. Ibberson Chair in Silviculture Research for Pennsylvania.

The chair will focus on the challenges of forest management under changing conditions and the evolving needs of society. The chair holder's research program will aim to improve silviculture within the state's forests to produce the highest quality and quantity of products and services. Silviculture is the art and science of managing forests for their establishment, composition, growth, and harvest. Forest products and services include timber, wildlife, aesthetics, watershed protection, recreation, and fisheries.

"I consider this chair an investment that will help protect and improve our state's forest resources," says Ibberson. "But I also hope to inspire others to be philanthropic in areas that are of the most interest to them. My objective is to make Penn State's School of Forest Resources the best in the country, and I believe it will be the best when these chairs are filled."

This silviculture chair joins two others in the School of Forest Resources to which Ibberson has committed support: the Joseph E.



**Joe Ibberson, with his friend and partner in philanthropy, Nila Grimes.**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JOE IBBERSON

Ibberson Chair in Forest Resources Management, currently held by Professor of Forestry Harry Wiant Jr., and the Joseph E. Ibberson Chair in Urban and Community Forestry, which is presently vacant. Income from faculty endowments are directed to such purposes as research-related expenses, graduate assistantships, support services, travel expenses, and salary supplements.

"We're overwhelmed by Joe's generosity to the School of Forest Resources," says Robert Steele, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences, "and we applaud his foresight in creating this new chair to address critical forestry issues in Pennsylvania and nationwide. We hope our students will follow in his footsteps. Through his thoughts, words, and deeds, Joe Ibberson personifies the highest ideals of the forestry profession."

Ibberson downplays the magnitude of his gifts to the college. "People tell me that it is amazing what I have done, but the way I look at it, I don't think I had much to do with it," he says. "I think I was the person who was picked by the Lord to carry out good deeds for humankind through Penn State. I was just fortunate that I was the guy who was chosen to do it. I had too much luck and good things happen

to me in my life and business for it to be any other way."

Ibberson chair holder Wiant believes Ibberson is the most significant and generous benefactor that the American forestry profession has ever seen. "Joe Ibberson has made a difference in the field of forestry, and generations of Penn State students will leave their mark on the field in a very positive way, thanks to him."

Since arriving at Penn State in 2002, Wiant has organized the Ibberson Forum series to provide information to forest landowners and foresters on forest taxation, timber evaluation, dealing with timber trespass, and many other topics related to good forest management. He developed MensiTutor, a computer program students use to learn the basics of forest inventory and sampling procedures. Wiant also developed a course in consulting forestry, teaches courses in forest measurements and forest administration and policy, and has published widely.

Previously, Wiant was a forestry professor at West Virginia University for 24 years, at Stephen F. Austin State University in the Piney Woods of East Texas for seven years, and at Humboldt State University in the redwood region of northern California for four years.

He also served a term as president of the Society of American Foresters. "From my personal view, it has been a wonderful opportunity to be here at Penn State—it's a great institution," he says. "But more important, it has been good to interact with fine undergraduate and graduate students and be an adviser to the award-winning Penn State student chapter of the Society of American Foresters.

"I often tell students forestry is a wonderful profession," Wiant adds. "I have never met a forester who is unhappy being a forester. I don't know that you could say that about many other professions."

Ibberson no doubt would agree. In 1948, he was recruited by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry to develop the first forest management plans for two million acres of state forestland. He also initiated several innovative programs that targeted forest inventory, pest control, tree improvement, nursery development, and service to private forest landowners. In 1962, he began buying his own land to create a tree farm on which he practiced various forms of forest management, eventually accumulating more than 2,000 acres.

In 1999, Ibberson gave 350 acres of this land, located in Dauphin County, to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. It became the Joseph E. Ibberson Conservation Area, the first of its kind in the state.

Ibberson received Outstanding Alumnus awards from the School of Forest Resources in 2003 and from the College of Agricultural Sciences in 2006. In 2007, he was inducted into the Henry P. Armsby Honor Society, named in recognition of the College of Agricultural Sciences' first dean, for his commitments to the college. He also is a member of the Penn State President's Club and the Mount Nittany Society's Laurel Circle, which recognizes the highest commitment of philanthropic giving to Penn State.

—Jeff Mulhollem