...It's a beautiful thing!

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Dr. Manwiller on Dr. Prestemon

Dean and I both obtained our forest products education under Dwight Bensend and would have been undergraduate classmates except that I spent four years in military service. I didn’t meet Dean until October of 1965 when he, a new Ph.D. from California, arrived to become an extension forester. I left four months later for the U.S. Forest Service in Louisiana with my graduate work completed.

When I returned to ISU to the forestry faculty in 1978, Paul Wray had joined Dean as the second extension forester and they had developed the first long-term, cohesive extension program for Iowa forestry. Dean has had a strong commitment to good forestland stewardship and to the best use of the wood products. When I arrived he was educating contractors and homeowners to the construction and maintenance of energy-efficient homes in response to the energy crisis that began in 1974. I also helped him construct two solar kilns, one on the Yellow River State Forest and one at the State Nursery, to evaluate and demonstrate their suitability as a low-energy alternative to dry kilns. We dried several loads of lumber in the nursery kiln and once proved, despite conventional wisdom to the contrary, that lumber can be casehardened in a solar kiln. He and Paul went on to introduce very successful forestry field days around the state, the nationally recognized Master Woodland Managers Program, the Woodland Owners Newsletter and numerous other successful educational programs.

In addition to his considerable extension responsibilities, Dean has been teaching a 2-credit course to students in the products option. The course covered all aspects of the use of the wood products in building construction. Several students have related to me their disappointment that it is no longer offered. One student who took the course stated that if one were ever to build a house the value of the knowledge learned would more than offset the money he had spent on tuition while at ISU.

Anyone who knows Dean Prestemon would agree that he is far more complex and interesting than the average individual. Words that come to mind include liberality, integrity, openness, and passion. In meetings, or one on one, Dean expresses his views forcefully and clearly and is frustrated when others aren’t willing to do the same. Once the group comes to a decision, he supports it regardless of his personal decision. Dean demands the highest standards of himself and of others. I purchased my last car with confidence from a...
dealer because Dean praises the integrity of the service department; there are dealers who rightfully fear his wrath for work that doesn't meet his standards. Unlike me, he is not a procrastinator; he always finishes tasks quickly and completely.

Dean is personally very committed to equality for all. He believes passionately that society must care for the less fortunate and has written more than one pointed letter to the newspapers criticizing a perceived political or social injustice. Although Dean has been very committed to his professional life, Jean, their six children and their spouses are of far greater importance to him. And his grandchildren bring him more pleasure than he can express. Dean and Jean both retire at the same time, she from teaching. They could both keep busy just visiting family located all over the United States but they also expect to visit Europe and Dean always has projects for himself and for the family. Dean is a unique individual who cannot be replaced in the Department of Forestry. Staff meetings will, at times, have a little less passion, a slight narrowing of perspective, one less viewpoint based on principle. The DEO will receive less e-mail. The noon card game that has gone on for at least 20 years, and the camaraderie, will end with Dean's retirement. I also suspect there will be Dean Prestemon stories that will become more colorful as the years pass.

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