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David A. Saugey
Ouachita National Forest

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In Memoriam: Robert L. Watson, 1934 – 2010



Robert Lee Watson, 75, of Little Rock passed away on Saturday, April 24, 2010. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Mary Ann, and children Brian Watson and Melanie Kirtley of Little Rock; Kelly Otwell of Maumelle; and five grandchildren, John Thomas, Kate and Emma Otwell, and Allison and Jack Kirtley.

Born on November 8, 1934, in Plainview, Arkansas, Bob graduated from Plainview High School in May 1952, received an associate degree in Agriculture from Arkansas Polytechnic College (now Arkansas Tech University) in 1954, bachelor's degree in General Agriculture (1956) and master's degree in Entomology (1963), both from the University of Arkansas, and a Ph.D. in Entomology with minor in Zoology and Ecology from Auburn University in 1968. In undergraduate school Bob received a John Rust Scholarship and graduated with high honors. During graduate studies at Auburn University he was member of the Society of Sigma Xi, received a NASA Fellowship, and the 1966 Henry B. Good Award for outstanding graduate student in the Department of Zoology, Entomology, Fisheries and Wildlife.

In 1953 Bob spent a hot summer in Tallulah, Louisiana as a Field Aid for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and worked as a "cotton scout" at Pine Bluff during the summer of 1955. Bob proudly served

his country as a Captain in the U.S. Army from 1956 to 1962 being recalled to active duty during the Cuban Missile Crisis while a master's student at Fayetteville.

Bob moved to Little Rock in September 1967 when he was appointed an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Arkansas – Little Rock. After 33 years of service to the Department and University, Bob retired in 2000. During that time, Bob served as Chairman of the Department of Biology for 19 years from 1973 to 1992 and later as Acting Associate Dean of the College of Sciences for two years. Interviewed in 1986 for the campus publication Faculty Focus, Bob said he pursued the Department Chair position because he was not a strong researcher but felt he could do a good job as chair because dealing with people was one of his strong points. Colleagues James Peck and Dale Ferguson paid Watson praise with Peck saying "I wish every department were as lucky as we are" to have Watson as chairperson because "he's fair, he's honest, and he communicates." Ferguson said "he just bends over backwards to be fair."

Bob was a member of the Entomological Society of America, American Institute of Biological Science, and the Arkansas Academy of Science where he held the office of President from 1990-91. In June 2010 Bob was honored with the dedication of the Robert L. Watson Entomology Museum located in Fribourgh Hall on the UALR campus.

David A. Saugey, *Wildlife Biologist, Jessieville-Winona-Fourche Ranger District, Ouachita National Forest, P.O. Box 189, 8607 Hwy 7 North, Jessieville, AR 71949.*