

James Ernest “Jim” Deitz

James Ernest “Jim” Deitz was born in Huntington, W.Va. Early in life, he developed a keen and endearing interest in nature and natural resources. Following these instincts, he enrolled in forestry at West Virginia University (WVU), graduating in 1955 with a Baccalaureate Degree in Forest Management. While a student at WVU, he was a member of Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity. From 1955-1957, he served in the U.S. Army, honorably discharged as a specialist third class. He and his wife Coralise had four daughters, Jennifer, Peggy, Debby and Libby and nine grandchildren.

After completing military service, Mr. Deitz served as a service forester for the W.Va. Division of Forestry from 1957-1964, providing technical assistance to forest landowners in the areas of tree planting, timber appraisals and preparation of forest management plans in Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, Boone, Logan and Mingo Counties. He made countless visits to youth groups and public schools to promote forest management and forest fire prevention – a major component of his job responsibilities in these fire-plagued counties. In the early 1960s, he was a member of the Society of American Foresters and periodically a member of the W.Va. Forestry Association.



Mr. Deitz was heavily involved in a WVU research project dealing with the selection of superior black walnut trees to improve growth and quality of this valuable species. He hoped that the project would provide tree seedlings that would produce high-quality lumber and veneer trees on most sites, including surface mine reclamation.

Early in his professional career, Mr. Deitz developed an interest in the potential of growing Christmas trees on his family-owned 550 acres in Milton. Some plantings were established by 1960, when his Stony Brook Tree Farm was organized and he joined the W.Va. Christmas Tree Growers Association (WVCTGA) and soon became a tireless promoter in an effort to provide quality, affordable Christmas trees accessible to all West Virginia families. He was also a researcher in his own right, developing better cultural practices and finding species that would grow into desirable Christmas trees.

Mr. Deitz was an influential leader and contributing member of the WVCTGA for 48 years – serving as treasurer in 1960, president in 1969, vice-president in 1970, and on the Association’s board of directors from 1979-1981. Mr. Deitz’s leadership on the 1960’s Committee on Long Range Planning helped revitalize the Association through the adoption of a long-range plan, designed to provide relevant programs and activities beneficial to all growers. Declining membership stabilized, then increased as the plan was implemented. He also served as National Trustee in 1973, representing the Association as director of the National Christmas Tree Growers Association, and in the early 1970s his farm was selected as the WVCTGA summer meeting site.

In 1974 and 1975 his Scotch pine was selected by the voting public as the Grand Champion Tree at the state contest held at the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins, W.Va. He also exhibited blue ribbon white pine and Norway spruce trees in 1969, 1971 and 1972.

After leaving the W.Va. Division of Forestry in 1964, Mr. Deitz was a forestry consultant, whose clients included large landholding companies, such as Union Carbide. He continued to promote the adoption of science-based forest management practices, implementing many of these practices to improve the quality of timber on his farm. He also owned and managed Oak Lawn Memorial Park in Huntington and developed the Pea Ridge Greenhouse, which provided quality landscaping and vegetable plants.

Mr. Deitz was involved in community activities, such as hosting the Boy Scouts of America Jamboree on his farm in 1962. He was a member of the Pea Ridge United Methodist Church, serving on its administrative council and board of trustees.