

Gilmour B. MacDonald

1883-1960

By Dr. J. A. Larsen

GILMOUR BEYERS MACDONALD was born in Carleton, Nebraska, March 9, 1883, the fourth son of a Scotch Presbyterian Minister. His parents were John M. and Janet Piercy MacDonald. His living brothers are Kenneth of Missoula, Mont. and Rosmond of Nahant, Mass. Another brother, George, lived from 1875 until 1953. In the course of changing pastorates the parents moved from Hubbell to Hopewell, then Unadilla and finally to Lincoln, Nebraska in 1887, where the boys completed their schooling. While a high school student in Lincoln and later in the University of Nebraska, Gilmour was active in basketball, football, and pole vaulting.

At the suggestion of Dr. G. E. Condra, the Nebraska conservationist and geologist, Gilmour majored in forestry, which was then a new field and much to his liking. Upon the completion of his course work in 1907 he gained an appointment with U.S. Forest Service and was for a season employed in Wyo. & Mont. He soon returned to the University of Nebraska to earn a master's degree (1910) in forestry. This was the year of his marriage to Edith Lillian Craig of Lincoln, Nebr., and the call to fill a teaching position in forestry at Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa, where he soon earned a permanent position and became the first technically trained forester,



and the leader and the head of a growing department of forestry dating from the year 1910.

During their early years in Ames, four children were born: Gilmour Craig, 1911; Donald Craig, 1914; Mary

Janet (Dunlap), 1916; and Ruth Eloise (Lamourreaux), 1925. There are now 12 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.

It is given to few people to make a greater contribution to the family, the community, and the profession of forestry, than G. B. MacDonald; and the service of Gilmour and Edith together rank high in achievement. It would be difficult to name a forester in this country who, throughout his entire professional life-span has so completely, wholeheartedly and successfully devoted his energy and wisdom to the advancement of forestry education and conservation movement in this state. Dr. G. B. MacDonald will rank with Pammel, Shimek, MacBride, and others who labored unceasingly for the establishment of a sane and well-balanced program for the husbanding and wise utilization of Iowa's natural resources. He gave strong support to the organization of the Iowa Conservation Commission and the state park movement. He served as Deputy State Forester 1912-1933, and State Forester 1933-1955. It fell naturally to him with his ability and knowledge of the state resources, to organize and direct the State Civilian Conservation Corps program from 1934 until 1938. He also planned and developed the State Forest Nursery at Ames.

Throughout his long residence in Ames, he actively and generously supported many groups. He served as life time elder in the Collegiate Presbyterian church. He was a Rotarian for 38 years. He actively supported the Boy Scout Movement for 45 years, frequently on advisory committees. He served 28 years on the Ames City Council and for 50 years he maintained close contact with the College Y.M.C.A.

Prof. MacDonald was elected member of Alpha Zeta and Gamma Sigma Delta, both honorary societies in agriculture and to honorary membership in Cardinal Guild at Ames. He was part time president of the Iowa Forestry and Conservation Association; in 1930 he received the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scout organization; in 1947 his Alma Mater conferred upon him the Honorary degree of Doctor of Agriculture; the same year he became a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters and he has been a member of the Council of the Society. In 1955 at the annual meeting of the American Forestry Association in Florida he was honored with the Award for Distinguished Service in Education; in 1958, at the 100th Anniversary celebration of the Iowa State College at Ames, he was honored by having his name read as one who had received the Distinguished Service Award in 1958. The Iowa Journal of Science also conferred on him a notable honor in dedicating its July 1948 issue, (Vol. 22, No. 4) to "Gilmour Beyers MacDonald in Recognition of his Service in the Department of Forestry at Iowa State College 1910-1948". As a fitting, lasting and appropriate memorial to their teacher and friend the Iowa State forestry students and graduates bought a timbered tract (of 7½ acres) near Ames and named it the "MacDonald Woods". Immediately upon his retirement from his administrative duties at the Iowa State College in 1948 he was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to National Advisory Council, serving until 1954. From this time until 1958 he served the U.S. Forest Service on the project of Access Road locations in the western states.

No statement about the life, character and work of Prof. MacDonald would be complete without mention of his pride and love for his family. He was a much beloved and devoted husband and father, an able and friendly teacher, a warm and sympathetic friend and a wise administrator.