

Don Richardson



Don, you
made a
difference.

We miss
you.

Inside:
VIEWPOINT

MID-SOUTH &
METRO

MUIR OF MEMPHIS



By Matthew Craig

Owing largely to Don Richardson's work, the Old Forest in Overton Park stands today in public perception as a living link to Memphis's past. He expects he volunteers 200 hours a year to keep it so and was honored for his work by the national Sierra Club.

Have you hugged tree hugger today?

“Owing largely to Don Richardson's work, the Old Forest in Overton Park stands today in public perception as a living link to Memphis' past. He expects he volunteers 200 hours per year to keep it so and was honored for his work by the national Sierra Club”



The following pages have Comments that were left on Don's Facebook page



“Don was a soft-spoken but powerful advocate for conservation. His obituary appropriately listed among his survivors 'the many trees and parks and public spaces Don helped save.' He worked to leave a legacy of green spaces in and around Memphis where generations of future residents will find a place to connect with nature.”

“I am truly sorry to hear of Don's passing. I have missed seeing him at Chapter meetings and seeing his smile and talking to him about his ideas for improving our environment.”

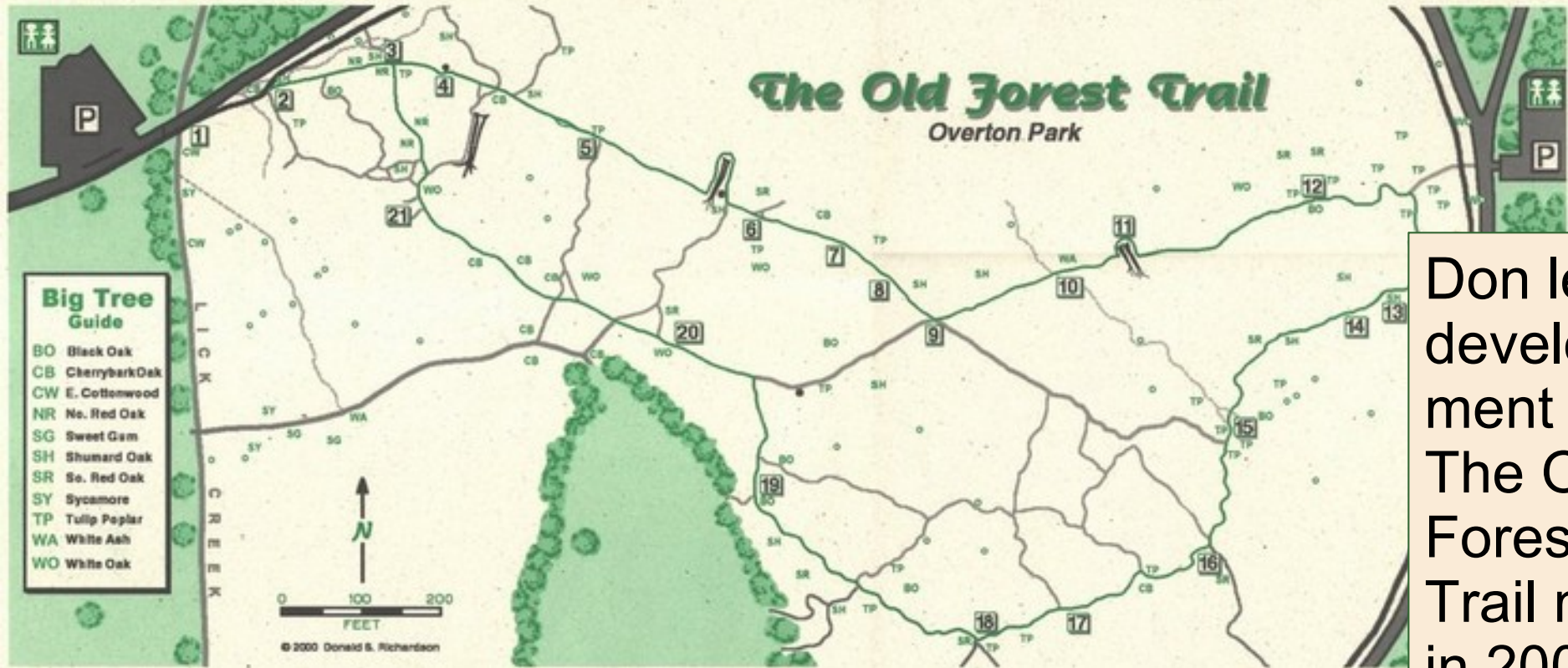




“This is a real bummer. I remember well his big smile and his outgoing and friendly demeanor. Some of us were talking recently about people who formerly came to chapter meetings and who we miss seeing. He was one. Goodbye ole friend.”

“This has been a very sad day for me. I got a call mid-day from Sue Williams informing me of Don's passing. I have been sad all day.”





Don lead development of The Old Forest Trail map in 2000.

1 THREE FOREST COMMUNITIES
 Next to Lick Creek is the first of the three forest communities which make up The Old Forest. This Bottomland Hardwood area includes water-loving trees such as the Cottonwood and Sycamore. As we ascend thirty-four feet to the highest area of the forest and pass through the other forest communities, notice the change in the types of trees and plant life.

2 OLD GROWTH TREES OF THE OLD FOREST
 This Shumard Oak, 16 feet in circumference and as much as 200 years old, is one of many old growth trees that make The Old Forest the only urban forest of its kind in America. Other old-growth species in the forest include the Tulip Poplar, Black Oak, White Oak, Cherrybark Oak, Southern Red Oak, Northern Red Oak, Cottonwood, Sycamore, Sweet Gum and White Ash.

3 THE MIXED MESOPHYTTIC FOREST
 As we move up in elevation and away from the creek, we enter our second forest community, the Mixed Mesophytic Forest. This Northern Red Oak is dying, which may be due in part to its location at the intersection of two trails. Trees need loose soil to breathe and extract nutrients through its smallest roots. The delicate network of mineral exchange between trees and plants in an old-growth forest can be disrupted when the soil is compacted by human feet, so please stay on the trails.

4 VALUE OF STANDING DEAD TREES
 These large dead trees, or snags, are valuable for the insects they provide food for, and the birds that in turn feed on them. In addition, one of our largest birds, the increasingly scarce Pileated Woodpecker, nests only in standing dead trees. Up ahead and down the small trail to the right is the downed tree nicknamed Park Berch. If you're curious about the view from the top of tall trees, walk beside this one and imagine climbing up into the air 100 feet.

5 WILDFLOWER WATCH STATION
 This spot is home to many varieties of wildflowers: Spring Solomon's Seal, Blue Phlox, Cut-leaf Toothwort, Spottedbush and several species of Violets, Early Summer Wild Hydrangeas, Black Snakeroot and Sweet Cicely Late Summer Green-Headed Cone-flower, Fall White Snakeroot.

6 OLIVER'S FOREST GARDEN
 In the late 1970's, an unidentified man whose name may be Oliver brought seeds of the Celandine or Wood Poppy from east of the Tennessee River to this area. In spring, almost a half acre is now covered in yellow blooms. Several other unique plants in the forest were seeded by Oliver from threatened wildflowers he rescued from area construction sites.

7 PIT AND MOUND FOREST FLOOR
 One of the indicators of an old growth forest are the pits and mounds you see on the forest floor. These features form where trees fall over due to storms, earthquakes or old age. Pits are the holes left in the ground and the mounds are the earth originally held in the roots before the wood decays. Pits and mounds contribute to the plant diversity in the forest.

8 ANGEL WINGS AND THE BAT SIGNAL
 Big tree stumps are seldom preserved outside a forest, but are an important source of nutrients in the soil and food and habitat for insects and in turn wildlife. They come in such a variety of shapes and sizes that many stumps inspire special nicknames. Beside the trail to the left is Angel Wings, and in the forest to the right is the Bat Signal.

9 THE CROSS AND THE ORIGINAL 1902 PLAN
 This intersection of paths, the Cross, is the only original segment still in use from the original 1902 plan for Overton Park. Architect George Kessler, who also planned Central Park in New York City, designed these wide trails as bridle paths, since horseback riding was preferred over hiking at that time.

10 THE PHANTOM CREEK AND NURSERY TREE
 The central "creek" and drainage in the Old Forest is visible to your left where the ground is soft enough to form a creek bed. When it rains long enough, water will pool in the large area to your right before spilling over the higher, compacted trail into its natural course. To your right is the large stump named Titanic. This is called a nursery tree because of the special conditions for plant growth along the downed trunk, encouraged by the increased moisture and the trapping of airborne soil in its bark.

11 EFFECTS OF WIND STORMS
 These trees were blown over on May 7, 1998, which also toppled twenty-six of our largest trees. Destructive wind storms like that only happen inside the The Old Forest every 10 years or so.

12 EARTHQUAKE GROVE AND KUDZU ATTACK
 The Tulip Poplars you see here, the largest concentration in The Old Forest, may be the result of the 1811-1812 New Madrid Earthquakes knocking down the then dominant oak trees, allowing the faster growing Tulip Poplars to take over. The clearing is the result of efforts to remove Kudzu, an aggressive non-native vine that had invaded this area. Left alone, kudzu prevents the growth of native forest plants by choking off the sunlight needed for them to grow.

13 NATIONAL CHAMPION SHUMARD OAK
 This Shumard Oak is currently listed as the National Champion of its species in The National Register of Big Trees. It measures over 18 feet in circumference and is over 140 feet high. Mature oaks such as this provide most, in the form of nutritious acorns, that once fed enormous populations of wildlife in the Mid-South, such as Woodland Buffalo.

14 LIGHTNING DOES STRIKE TWICE
 Here is evidence that lightning CAN strike twice. See the line that looks like a knife sliced down the trunk. We can tell that the tree lived 8-10 years after this injury because the bark started to heal over. However, the second time lightning struck, it cut the inner part on the and killed the tree. It stood for many years until being blown over in June, 1998.

21 THE MAZE AND FOREST DESTRUCTION
 The area to your left is crisscrossed with needless paths that people have created without

20 LARGEST WHITE OAK IN THE OLD FOREST
 Returning to the Mixed Mesophytic Forest, we see an increase in White Oaks, of which this is the largest in

19 POISON IVY CANOPY & ANTIQUE TRAILS
 As we reenter the Mixed Mesophytic Forest, notice all the trees with the hairy vines of poison ivy.

18 HOMELESS CAMPS AND HUMAN IMPACT
 The trail to the north was created by homeless people in the summer of 1967, leading to their campsites.

17 TOOTHWORT GROVE AND REFUGEE CITY
 In March, a white carpet of Cut-leaf Toothwort wildflowers lines the trail for the next 100 feet. In the 1930's,

16 ELVIS RELICS AND THE UPLAND FOREST
 On your right is a unique example of historical litter. These are the urns that once sat on either side of the

15 NATIVE BAMBOO GROVE
 Phantom Creek's drainage into Lick Creek begins here. The pooling of water during heavy rains invites one of our largest species, Native Cane,

“Goodbye to Don, the man who led so many of us into the Old Forest. He was a fearless and ubiquitous advocate for the nature on Memphis' own backyard. He was also the most cheerful person I have ever known.

Rest in peace and beauty
Don, in the kind of peace
you fought for.”



“Don loved when someone called him Mr. Sierra. This photo is from the John Muir Trail... from the Trails to the Moon. Don loved exploring.”



“He and his father were important figures in the Memphis Science Fiction Community as well - our yearly literary award is named after his father.”



“When I moved back to Memphis in 2009, Don was one of the first people I met. We went on hikes through the Old Forest together. We served on various boards and committees together. We dreamed big dreams together. After being away for a decade, Don helped Memphis feel like home again.”



Challenging Memphis' (former) Mayor







IN HONOR OF SERVICE

Donald Sanders Richardson

MEMPHIS, TN

Donald Sanders Richardson, 66, died in Memphis on February 3rd. Lovingly nicknamed "the tree man," Don was widely respected as a conservationist and advocate for sustainability, environmental justice, and public parks.



Born in Covington, KY, the younger son of a Southern Baptist minister, Don's love of nature started early. He was active in the Boy Scouts of America, becoming an Eagle Scout and member of Order of the Arrow. In the 1950s Richardson lived with his family in West Germany. He returned to the U.S. to attend Wake Forest University in N. C. where he received a B. A. in political science. After college, Don served for two years in the U.S. Army Military Police Corps and was stationed in Fort Belvoir, VA. Don remained in the Washington area, working for various computer software stores, in marketing for "Army Times," and as a reporter for "Sport Scene Magazine."

In 1995, Don moved to Midtown Memphis to help care for his father and quickly became involved in the community. Don served as chair of the TN Chapter, Sierra Club as well as in various offices in the local organization. He was involved in sustainability plans for the region and a leader in developing the 2000 Old Forest trail map and arboretum. He shared his vast botanical knowledge with many on his monthly Old Forest hikes—introducing participants to the wonderful Shumard Oaks, aromatic leaf of the spice bush, and abundant wildflowers. He served as a board member of Park Friends from 2002 to 2009. In 2004 Don helped organize Friends for Our Riverfront and served on its board until his death.

He was preceded in death by his father Rev. Darrell Coleman Richardson and his mother Sarah Sanders Richardson. Survivors include the many trees and parks and public spaces Don helped save; an older brother Coleman and his wife Kathy, who live in College Park, MD; a niece, her husband and a grandnephew, in St Louis MO; and various first cousins, many residing in TN.

A memorial service will be 1 p.m. Sunday, February 7th at Canale Funeral Directors, 2700 Union Avenue Extended.

Memorials may be sent to an organization of the donors choice.