

HIDDEN



TREASURES

Hall of Fame Inducts True “TREASURE”

By TILDA MIMS, Education Specialist, Alabama Forestry Commission, Northwest Region

After 44 years in the world of professional baseball, Jimmy and Sarah Bragan are enjoying their retirement at “Rolling Meadows,” a 40-acre TREASURE Forest in north Shelby County. The hayfield they purchased 20 years ago now boasts stocked ponds, ample wildlife foods and an orchard of peaches, plums, apples, pears, figs and scuppernongs. Their lovely home is a peaceful retreat from the fast-paced careers they enjoyed for so many years.

This winter, however, they joined one of the state’s biggest parties to see Jimmy inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, Class of 2001 along with Wendell Hudson, Derrick Thomas and others. The third pair of brothers to enter the Hall, Jimmy joined his brother Bobby in the ASHOF.

After graduation from Birmingham’s Phillips High School, Jimmy accepted a baseball scholarship to Mississippi State and played on the 1948 and 1949 SEC championship teams. In 1950, he married Sarah and they embarked on a 44-year journey of playing and coaching baseball, while raising their family.

He played professionally as high as AA at Fort Worth and Mobile, was head coach at MSU and managed in the minors. He was a major-league scout, signing Sammy Ellis and Lee May, and then reached the majors as a coach at Cincinnati, Montreal and Milwaukee. He played with Frank Robinson at

Columbia, saw the first major league game of Johnny Bench at Cincinnati and the last home run of Hank Aaron at Milwaukee.

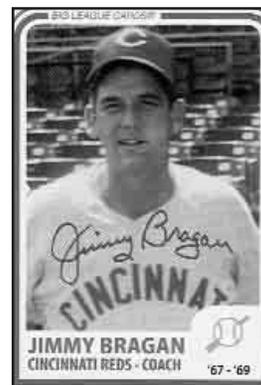
Jimmy spent the last 14 years of their career as president of the Class AA Southern League, working with Sarah in one of the country’s most successful minor league offices. While managing the League they continued working on their Shelby County farm to establish ponds, forested areas, an orchard and wildlife habitat.



Shelby County Manager Clay Snider and Jimmy Bragan.

A new brick home complete with winding drive and complementary flowering shrubs and trees was finished shortly before their date of retirement. Within a week after leaving the Southern League, they were living at Rolling Meadows.

Today, Jimmy tends to his orchard, taking particular pride in his scuppernongs. His dad grew them when he was a child and he had always wanted to do the same. He says that people scoff when



he says he has grown them the size of golf balls but he swears it is true. He uses the trimmed vines to make decorative wreaths that he and Sarah

give to friends and family.

Rolling Meadows has become a gathering place for the large extended family of Bragans. There is a swimming pool, open areas for four-wheelers, several dogs and lots of wide, open spaces for the grandchildren and their friends. Brothers, sisters, children and friends are frequent visitors to the peaceful setting, and Jimmy and Sarah clearly welcome the opportunity to enjoy time with their family.

After a life of travel and the fast pace of professional sports, the Bragans are enjoying life on their farm. I don’t know if he is the first TREASURE Forest landowner to be inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame or not, but I am certain that no Hall-of-Famer ever had more fun growing scuppernongs, trees and ♣️ bream than Jimmy Bragan.

Editor’s Note: Mr. Bragan passed away shortly after this story was written. Please read more about him on page 16.