



Maryland Resident Champ Zumbrun Keeps The Concept of Liberty Trees Alive

Retired forester Champ Zumbrun is the driving force behind the movement to plant descendants of the nation's last surviving "Liberty Tree" all around the country. After spending more than 30 years working for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), he ended his illustrious career as manager of [Green Ridge State Forest](#), which is located in Allegany County, in 2009. Though Champ is no longer in official state service, he continues to rely on his passion for nature, his knowledge of forestry and his long list of connections in his volunteer role as the guardian of countless young Liberty Trees.

Champ was born in Rhode Island in 1949. As a child, he loved exploring the Norman Bird Sanctuary in Middletown, where he befriended an employee he called "Mr. Ranger." This mentor introduced him to hawks and owls, nurturing in him a deep appreciation for nature. Many years later, Champ discovered that "Mr. Ranger" was actually Jim Baird, who became a renowned ornithologist and environmental educator in New England. In addition to his outdoor adventures, young Champ was captivated by television shows and movies such as "Daniel Boone," "Davy Crockett," and "Johnny Tremain." All of this fueled his fascination with early American history and a life working in nature.

As Champ approached his teenage years, his family relocated to Baltimore. At the age of 18, he joined the Navy during the Vietnam War. After spending four years at sea, Champ longed for a life back on land, surrounded by trees. Thanks to the GI Bill, he was able to attend West Virginia University and pursue a degree in forestry.



Photo Credit: Champ Zumbrun

Upon graduation, Champ began working with the National Park Service and was stationed at park sites around the country. When a friend told him about an opportunity with Maryland's DNR, he returned to the state and settled in Allegany County, which is affectionately referred to as "[The Mountain Side of Maryland.](#)" That's where he spent his entire career in state service and where he continues to live today.

It was during Champ's time working with the DNR that the last surviving Liberty Tree in America, located in Maryland's capital city of Annapolis, was destroyed by a hurricane in 1999. As that was tree cut up and removed from where it had stood on the campus of St. John's College, seed was discovered. It ultimately generated 13 seedlings and it was decided that one should go to each of the original 13 states. Champ was assigned responsibility for Maryland's seedling, which he collected and planted in Allegany County ... and from there his incredible story really took root.

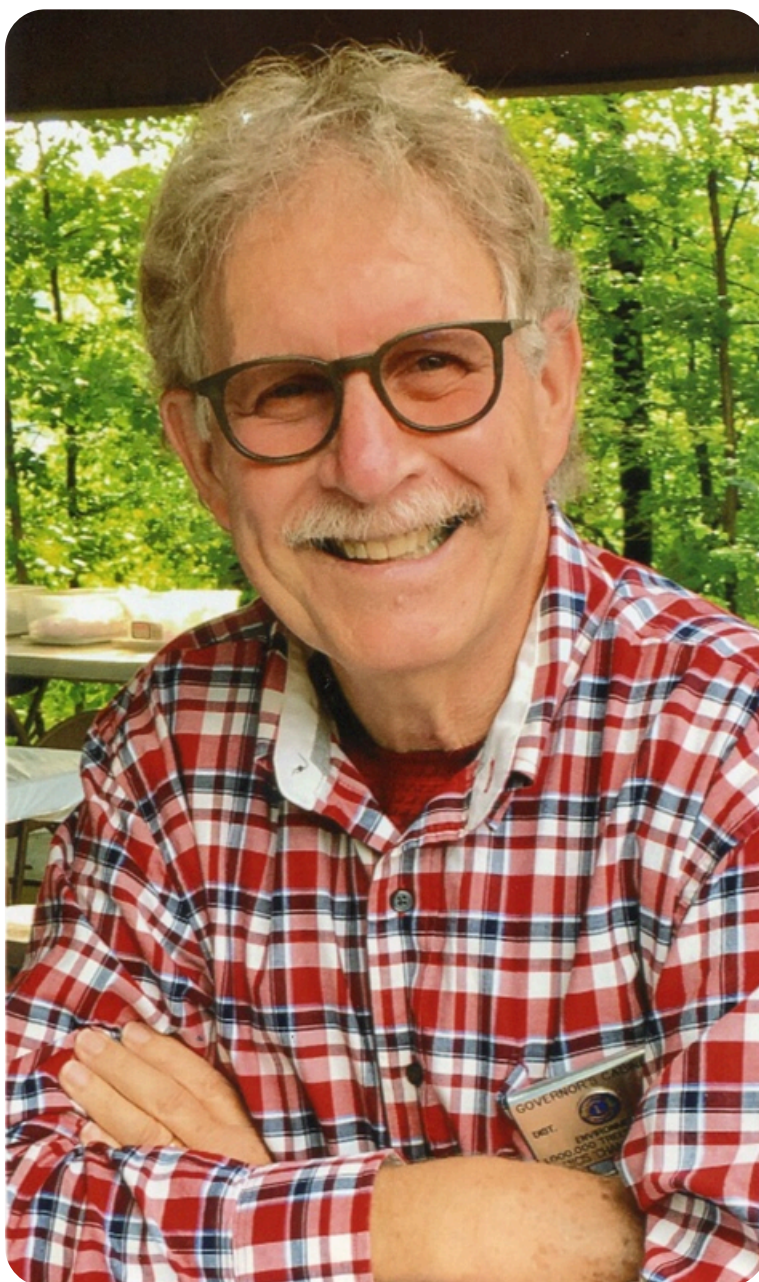


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