

Leaving A Legacy Through Land



“Clemson Forever means that this land will be with South Carolinians and will be preserved, and that people can experience it in their lives. People I don’t even know can have the experience that I have had here on a beautiful fall day with the birds chirping and going out and picking scuppernongs and hiking in the woods.”

– Jo Claire Hanvey Hickson

Jo Claire Hanvey Hickson has a deep and abiding love for her ancestral land in McCormick County, S.C.

She spent her girlhood there with her siblings and cousins collecting pecans to sell in town to raise money to buy Christmas presents for family. She remembers tromping through the woods and eating muscadine and scuppernong grapes until her belly hurt, and walking the streams in the fall of the year and drinking the crystalline water. There was the time she and her siblings spent Easter eve sleeping in the woods and woke in the morning to find fresh eggs placed beside their heads, and the time they stumbled upon an abandoned liquor still that later became a permanent fixture in their garden.

“My daddy called around to the neighbors to find out who was making liquor on our property,” says Jo Claire laughing. “We never did find out who that still belonged to, but it wasn’t a Hanvey, I can assure you that.”

A natural pathway

Her time exploring the woods and creeks of her family land produced more than cherished memories — it also informed her career choice, her passion for open-space preservation and her appreciation for natural places.

“We would come to our land as if it were a park,” she said. “Early on I decided I wanted to work with the land.”

After a career in landscape architecture, Jo Claire became executive director of the Coastal Georgia Greenway Inc., a grassroots volunteer organization working to build a network of trails from South Carolina to Florida through Georgia’s six coastal counties.

The Hanvey family has been in McCormick County since 1767, and their ancestral land is still a centerpiece of family life. But now Jo Claire, with her husband and co-owner, Dr. Harry Hickson, has bequeathed her portion of the family property to the Clemson University Real Estate Foundation as part of Clemson’s Timberland Legacy Program.

Through the Timberland Legacy Program, donated timberlands become living classrooms used to ignite a passion for the land sciences in a new generation of young people. Revenues derived from timber provide financial support necessary to maintain the property and for Clemson students to become tomorrow’s forestry and natural resources industry leaders.



As Jo Claire says, “Clemson is a land-based agricultural school and has always been tied to the land sciences. So, I think it’s natural with our family’s history at Clemson that our land would go there for its sustainability and wildlife potential, and as an outdoor classroom for students who maybe live in the city and don’t have that tie to the land.”

The Hanvey family’s Clemson roots date to the University’s foundational years. Her great uncles George and James Hanvey played on Clemson’s first football team and on the 1897 team that won the state championship. James (Jock) Hanvey played on Clemson’s 1902 and 1903 teams under coach John Heisman, and her grandfather Ernest Hanvey played center on Clemson’s varsity team in 1914.

Jo Claire’s father and uncles all graduated from Clemson. Her mother, Clara Hanvey, served as a Clemson home economist and as a McCormick County extension agent. Her brother, Hal Hanvey, was Clemson’s football team manager, and is currently the farm manager at Clemson’s Coastal Research and Education Center in Charleston. Her niece, Cassie Self, is a Clemson graduate and was on the Clemson diving team.



Jo Claire herself recalls attending Clemson football games as a young girl, standing on The Hill and gazing at the handsome cadets dressed in their military finery. But when it came time for her to attend college in 1970, Clemson did not have a landscape architecture degree program, so she ended up at the University of Georgia. There she rubbed elbows with professor Eugene Odum, who pioneered the concept of the interdependence of divergent ecosystems as the basis of how the earth functions.

From family roots to a living classroom

“We knew in the 1970s the need for conservation, but my generation didn’t take an active role when we could. That’s part of why I’m giving this land to Clemson. I can give back to the natural world and allow the next generation to experience that in their youth,” Jo Claire said. “My gift of land is to be used in furtherance of learning for wildlife ecology and the provision of sustainable landscapes for threatened and endangered species of the Southeast, and as a learning laboratory for undergraduate and graduate students by the Department of Forestry.”



ClemsonForward will position Clemson for the next 50 years and make an impact on real issues facing the people of our state and nation. Clemson Forever supports the goals of ClemsonForward through its unrelenting mission to strengthen the University by building a solid financial base of private giving, providing exemplary stewardship of those gifts and clearly communicating to donors the impact of their gift and the gratitude of the Clemson Family.

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