



Clemson Legacy Connection

PLANNED GIVING NEWSLETTER



Aleda Jo Howard '83

“You never know in life what experiences will open doors.”

This time of year in Clemson is truly awe-inspiring. We experience so much new growth, not only in the natural beauty of this campus, but also in the excitement and energy of the days that span before us. Our seniors are looking forward to graduation and what lies ahead for them, while our newly admitted students eagerly await their turn to become Clemson Tigers. This natural rhythm of a student’s journey is beautiful to witness and is the lifeblood of our campus.

Back in the late 1970s, Aleda Jo Howard '83, known to her family and close friends as “Bo,” was one of those eager to become a Clemson Tiger. Raised in Charleston, South Carolina, she first visited campus when her older brother George Howard '79 was a freshman, and she was still in high school. She quickly made her mind up that Clemson was where she wanted to attend college, as well. “I only applied to Clemson, putting all my eggs in one basket,” Aleda Jo recalls. “It was that clear to me that this was the place I needed to be.”



Her brother drove her to Clemson for her freshman year, and Aleda Jo said she is not sure who was more excited: her brother or her. He was in graduate school at the time and told her that he would count on her to get him student football tickets. He was especially grateful when she was able to get him tickets during the 1980-81 championship season, she remembered.

Aleda Jo began her college years living in Benet Hall where she met lifelong friends who still get together to reminisce about their time at Clemson. “Last year, two of my hallmates and I met up on campus to walk down memory lane. We even went into Benet and found our old rooms there. It was a bit of a shock when we knocked on the doors and male students were inhabitants of the rooms!” The students were kind enough to let the ladies peek in their old rooms for the last time before Benet Hall was slated for demolition.

Benet Hall would be the source of many friendships developed during Aleda Jo’s time at Clemson since she lived there until she graduated in 1983. She said that she and her roommate Gretchen McKellar Penney ’83 were the perfect balance of roommates with one being a morning person and the other a night owl. “Gretchen and I have stayed close throughout the years despite living in different cities; in fact, I will see her later this week to play in her golf league’s annual Member/Guest golf tournament in Charleston,” Aleda Jo said.

Aleda Jo had initially considered becoming a professional photographer but switched focus before arriving at Clemson and majored in Wood Utilization in the Forestry Department instead. She also chose to take all elective classes in business. Despite the career shift, she still enjoyed taking photos as a hobby and sharing those with her friends. A few years ago, she put together a book of photography from their years at Clemson and after to share with her friends.

While at Clemson, Aleda Jo worked several jobs to support herself, one of which was in the Forestry Department. One of her professors asked her to take on a work-related project, analyzing data. “To do what he asked, I had to teach myself SAS, the computer programming language used for statistical analysis,” said Aleda Jo. “Little did I know that learning SAS would be the differentiator when I began interviewing for jobs.”

After graduation, Aleda Jo again followed in her older brother’s footsteps and went on to attain her MBA from University of South Carolina. While there, she took courses in benefits and compensation, and upon completion of her MBA, interviewed with Lowe’s Companies, Inc. for a compensation analyst role. “I was told that they hired me because I had some basic SAS knowledge and had taken compensation classes,” Aleda Jo said. “And looking back now, it is obvious to me that having those differentiators changed my life – and my family’s lives – for the better.”

Aleda Jo went on to spend 15 years in compensation roles at Lowe’s where she eventually became the third female vice president in the company’s history. “I was there during a time of rapid growth. We went from 282 stores to over 1,700 stores during my time at Lowe’s. That growth meant that our employee numbers grew exponentially, too: we had around 13,000 employees in the mid-’80s to more than 238,000 by the time I retired in 2010,” Aleda Jo recounted.

“SAS followed me throughout my career. Lowe’s continued my education in the program, and it was something I used continually, especially in my first 15 years there,” she said. “Had I not had that experience while at Clemson, I may not have been hired at Lowe’s. You never know in life what experiences will open doors,” Aleda Jo stated.

Aleda Jo retired from Lowe’s in 2010 to be able to spend time with her ailing mother. She moved to Fort Mill, South Carolina, where she built a home for her mother and one in the same neighborhood for herself. “My career at Lowe’s gave me everything I needed to take care of my family,” Aleda Jo said. “I can clearly connect that to my Clemson Experience, and I thank God every day for my education.”

Aleda Jo wants to provide opportunities for students like her to attend Clemson. “I had grants, loans and scholarships to be able to make it here. I just want those who can’t afford to be here to have the chance to get an education like I did,” she shared.

Aleda Jo has set up several scholarship endowments: the *Aleda Jo Howard ’83 “Hear Her Roar” Endowment for Women’s Golf*, the *Aleda Jo Howard ’83 Scholarship Endowment*, and one that is named after her mother: *the Mary Jane Harris Howard Memorial Founding Scholarship Endowment*, an inaugural scholarship to support the College of Veterinary Medicine. Aleda Jo’s dear mother passed away in January, and the endowment is a beautiful way to honor her memory and keep her light shining through the students who will benefit from this scholarship.

Aleda Jo has also left a planned gift to Clemson in her will, in the hopes that her legacy can live on to support others. “To whom much has been given, much is required,” she stated, “and I believe that the next generation of Clemson students need to have opportunities for life-changing experiences like I had.”

Like Aleda Jo, have you considered leaving a lasting legacy to impact future students’ lives? There is much we cannot predict about the future, but one thing is for certain: Clemson University will continue to attract students who can make a difference in this world. Let’s help elevate future generations to shape our state, nation and world in ways that we can only begin to imagine. Please reach out to us for assistance in learning more about making a lasting difference in the lives of others. Our website features useful online resources that we hope you will explore, including our free Wills Guide, designed to help you navigate your thoughts and plans before you visit with your attorney and/or advisors. We always love hearing from you directly, so please call 864-656-0663 or email us at giving@clemson.edu.

I hope that you have been enjoying this season of new growth, wherever you may be, and that it brings back fond memories of the beauty of Springtime in Clemson.

With tremendous gratitude, I am,

Gratefully Yours,

JoVanna King