



Warmest greetings, Tigers.

Celebrating Valentine’s Day this week reminded me of one of my favorite songs, *Love is in the Air* by John Paul Young. He sings, “Love is In the air; everywhere I look around; love is in the air; every sight and every sound; love is in the air; in the rising of the sun; love is in the air; when the day is nearly done.”

As I reflect on Clemson and how many people LOVE this place, I am overwhelmed with joy to feel the energy and excitement from people we encounter who are first-time visitors as well as long-time alumni and friends. Love actually surrounds everything we do, and it permeates the hearts of every member of the Clemson Family, wherever they may go. That love began many years ago when Anna Calhoun was born on February 13, 1817. Had it not been for Anna, there would be no Clemson. Love was in the air on that crisp, cold winter’s morning — the day her birth brought joy to her parents. And when she met Thomas in Washington and introduced him to Fort Hill, where they would later build a family, love was in the air. When they witnessed a war-ravaged and divided country where families were devastated, Anna and Thomas acted on their hearts' desire to improve the lives of all South Carolinians, lifting others up to make a multiplying difference for generations to come. As they crafted their estate plans, love was in the air, and it’s a love that continues to fill the hearts and minds of Tigers who share a sense of belonging and compassion with others from one generation to the next.

Joe Sherman wrote, “There is something in these hills that you and I can’t define and others can’t understand.” I believe that “something” he described is love and passion for helping others be successful. A shared love of Clemson has created a special bond among Tigers and makes Clemson unique. We all share a deep affection for this great University and for one another. “Best is Standard,” and we want Clemson to be the very best, and we also want the best for our students, our community, our state and our world.



Al and Evelyn Berry are the embodiment of that love. They remind us that love is not just a feeling. It is also an action. They demonstrate their love for each other, their community and society at large. Al Berry '65 tells the story of how coming to Clemson changed the course of his life. "I still get tears in my eyes when I think of how I, a farm boy from Saluda, hitchhiked my way to Clemson, found the admissions office and told them I wanted to be a Clemson student," Al recalls. Literally and figuratively, doors were opened for him as he met with the Dean of Admissions who asked him about his life goals and how Clemson fit into the picture. After Al completed his application for admission that same day, the Dean directed him to the financial aid office where he received the assistance needed to become a Clemson Tiger.

More doors continued to open for Al after he enrolled at Clemson. Although on a very tight budget, Al dedicated himself to his studies. His diligence was noticed by professors, and one of his animal science professors asked if he would be interested in managing two farms on Clemson's campus. That opportunity gave Al the ability to buy a used car for transportation to his job, which was instrumental to his Clemson Experience. "The leadership skills I learned by managing those farms also helped open doors for me upon graduation," Al says. "After I graduated with a degree in ag-education, I had an offer to teach physical science and coach football, girls basketball and baseball. My teams won three state football championships in four years, and I moved into school administration."

Along the way, Al met the love of his life, Evelyn. They married in 1991 and shared a full household of children. One day while in the office at the school where Al taught, he had a conversation with someone who was looking for a home builder. Al thought about it and decided he could start a side business of building homes to support his growing family. He became a licensed surveyor and real estate broker and began building two homes per year. Al later served as Superintendent for Planning and Operations for Lexington School District One, and retired in 1994. After retirement, he represented school districts and the purchase of more than 100 school sites in South Carolina.

Evelyn and Al share a passion for public school education. Evelyn began her career as a teacher and worked her way through the ranks of administration in Columbia area school districts, eventually serving as Superintendent of Lexington School District One. She held numerous leadership roles with school board associations and served as a volunteer for multiple

organizations, including her alma mater, Winthrop University. She even served as the President of the Winthrop Alumni Association and as a member of the Board of Trustees and Foundation Board. Together, she and Al modeled servant leadership and love in action in all aspects of their careers. Evelyn shared: “It is important in life to have a passion for discovering how to serve others.”

Since their retirements, Al and Evelyn have continued to volunteer their time, talent and treasure in many different ways. Al serves on Clemson’s Board of Visitors and led the Board of Visitors as chairman in 2000 – 2001. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Award — the highest honor that the Alumni Association can bestow on an alumnus, given to those who have not only devoted their life to professionalism and public service, but who have also demonstrated a lifelong dedication to Clemson University.

Al and Evelyn firmly believe in paying it forward for the next generation of educators, so that others may come behind them and carry on their legacy of service. “True happiness in life is found in what you give to others, not what you keep for yourself,” Evelyn said. “Al is a great example to others; his heart is all about giving. We both seek ways to help others. Our marriage has been about using the opportunities God has given us to help others and support each other. When we have a disagreement, we talk through it and work together to come to a solution. As we have gotten older and health challenges have arisen, we continue to support and encourage each other. We believe how we handle our struggles and challenges ties directly to how we live our lives of faith.”

Al and Evelyn have established multiple endowed scholarships for the College of Education and the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences, helping students to pay it forward for the next generation. This love in action shows their commitment to making the world a better place for others and is a great example of how their shared love and passion for education will elevate the Clemson Experience for generations. You can read their story [here](#).

Al and Evelyn, through their thoughtful generosity and artful estate plan, are committed to impacting students, most of whom they will never meet, representing the true hallmark of philanthropy with the most selfless and deepest kind of love.

I encourage you to listen to the song *Love is in the Air*, and as you do, focus on the words and imagine your relationship and experiences with Clemson; picture our beautiful campus, active and engaging students who are growing and thriving; join the teams as they celebrate trophies being lifted in the air; and look around to find your favorite Clemson friends and memories. I encourage you to never lose sight of how valuable your experiences have been and how Anna and Thomas’ act of love, along with so many others who have followed in their footsteps to secure Clemson’s future, have made it all possible — a love that manifested from intentional planning to pave the way for others to enjoy.

Planned gifts position the University to be enriched and enhanced in the future. We hope you will reach out to our Gift Planning Officers to discuss how you can make a significant impact at Clemson today, tomorrow and forever. Please visit our [website](#) or send a personal email to us at giving@clemson.edu. You will also find information about IRA Charitable Qualified Distribution (QCD) benefits [here](#). And for information regarding general estate planning, please download our [free Wills Guide](#), designed to help you navigate your thoughts and plans before you visit with your attorney and/or financial advisors. As always, we are here to help you as you help others.

February may be heart month; however, at Clemson and within the Clemson Family, “love is in the air everywhere I look around.” We are beginning to get the first glimpse of spring, and we hope you are making plans to visit our amazing campus again soon!

Love to you all, and *GO* Tigers!
Gratefully yours,
JoVanna King