



Clemson Legacy Connection

PLANNED GIVING NEWSLETTER



Springtime – An opportunity to celebrate the return of sunshine, songbirds, stunning blooms and cherished time with family and friends. What could be better? Old Man Winter is finally moving on and the sizzling heat of summer is a few months away. Whether the spring equinox finds you getting a jumpstart on this year's garden, taking long walks outside or simply basking in the warm weather, you may be in search of an excuse to make your way home to Clemson soon.

We are witnessing significant enhancements to our landscape, including new buildings and roads, along with much-needed renovations to existing facilities. Construction on the new Alumni and Visitors Center, adjacent to the Clemson Conference Center & Inn, began last Spring and it is truly magnificent! The building is slated to open by the end of this year. We are thrilled to have a facility that will be the new home for our alumni and serve as a destination for all visitors. It will house 350 employees from Admissions, Advancement, Foundation, Class of 1944 Visitors Center, Board of Trustees, and Michelin Career Center teams. It is an exciting time to be a Tiger!

This facility is something we have dreamed about for more than 30 years and there have been numerous leaders, visionaries and generous donors who are making our dream a reality.

Over the years, Clemson has been blessed with great leadership and one that comes to mind often is William “Bill” Sturgis ’57, who was a devoted member of the Clemson Family. He and his wife, Martha Beth, made history in 2018 with the largest donation ever given to the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, creating a distinguished professorship in the department.



Bill grew up on a dairy farm in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and was the first in his family to attend college. He and Martha Beth met in first grade at Central Elementary, and their love story is one for the ages. Married 62 years at the time of Martha Beth’s death, their relationship was “a model of love, admiration and respect - the ultimate example for their children and grandchildren,” according to their son Rick Sturgis ’82.

Rick and his twin brother, Randy ’82, the oldest sons of Bill and Martha Beth, describe their parents as humble and kind change-agents, who quietly went about serving others and were always partners in everything they did. “They lived by the motto ‘Family First,’ and that was especially evident when Dad received an offer from his company to

move to Chicago and turned down the promotion to keep our family from having to move for a third time in three years,” Randy recalled. Martha Beth insisted that the family needed to develop strong roots, and they stayed in Greenville, South Carolina.

Bill’s career with W.R. Grace and Company, which provided packaging materials for meat, cheese, and poultry, was not derailed, however. Through Bill’s ingenuity, he developed a film to cover poultry to ensure freshness. That film is known worldwide as “Bill’s Film” and has changed the way poultry products are sold due to the extension of the shelf life of chicken.

Bill eventually became president of Cryovac, the packaging division of W.R. Grace, in 1984. At that time, sales were \$350 million annually, and by the time he retired in 1997, sales had grown to more than \$1 billion per year. After his retirement, Bill received “The Order of the Palmetto,” South Carolina’s highest honor for his commitment and service to the state and beyond.

Throughout his career and after his retirement, Bill volunteered his time and talent in support of Clemson University. Using his problem-solving skills, he advised the University to establish a packaging science degree program, which has become one of the strongest in the country since the degree was first offered in 1988. He also served as chair of the President’s Advisory Council and the advisory board of the college of engineering and science. Bill was chair of the Clemson University Foundation board of directors when the Clyde V. Madren Center and the John E. Walker Sr. Golf Course were under planning and construction, wherein he demonstrated outstanding leadership and strength of character. For his remarkable service to the University, he was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Service and “Volunteer of the Year.”

“Our father came to Clemson on a national 4-H scholarship, which was awarded to a student who exhibited ‘innovation and improvement’ — and that is exactly who he was. He was always thinking about how to make things better,” said Rick. “We grew up knowing that Dad was going to find a way to improve everything — from rewiring the electrical circuits at home to helping us navigate difficult personal challenges.”

Randy added: “Both of our parents came from modest beginnings, and Dad never forgot that he made it to Clemson University on a scholarship. He and our mother always prioritized three things: faith, family, and Clemson.”

Describing his father’s love for Clemson, Randy said, “Dad was always telling people that Clemson made him into the man he was and that he chose chemical engineering as a major because he knew it was a program that would challenge him. A phrase we often heard him say ‘But for Clemson...’ meaning that he was who he was because of his Clemson Experience.”

Rick shared that in his later years, his father began to reflect on his life, and continued to explore ways in which he could improve or enhance a situation and/or outcome. While he and his dad were fishing one day, Rick asked his father why giving back to Clemson was so important to him. His dad responded, “because Clemson has given so much to me, and I want to help take it to the next level.” His desire was for the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering to be as competitive as possible in recruiting talented faculty for the best and brightest students, Rick added.

“Our mother encouraged Dad to give to Clemson, knowing that he was one of its most successful graduates. She knew how passionate he was about bettering the chemical engineering program and wanted others to see and follow his example. She recognized that they had a unique opportunity to enjoy their philanthropy during their lives through a distinguished professorship and made provisions through

their estate to elevate the professorship to an endowed chair. This gave them tremendous joy, knowing their intentions would become a reality before Mom passed away in 2019.”

With four sons and seven grandchildren, many of whom are Clemson alumni, it is safe to say that the Sturgis family’s Clemson legacy continues to thrive. “We have such good memories of my parents hosting legendary tailgates. When my son Clark was accepted to Clemson, he went right over to their house that same night to share the news with his grandparents,” Rick recalls. Randy added, “Dad transferred his love of Clemson University to us all, even down to his great-grandchildren. My 4-year-old grandson already wants to attend the ‘Tiger Paws’ school, as he calls it.”

The Sturgis family is one of Clemson’s most dedicated and loyal group of Tigers. I will always have a warm place in my heart for Bill and Martha Beth Sturgis and their family. We are sincerely grateful for their example and their unwavering commitment to helping Clemson become the best it can be.

What will your family’s legacy be? Maybe you, too, have generations of Clemson connections that you would like to honor – or perhaps you want to help others begin their own Clemson journey.

Whatever your focus or dreams, our team would be honored to assist you in exploring various types of current and planned gifts and how they may benefit you and our great University. Let us help you enhance and expand your Clemson legacy.

We would welcome the opportunity to chat with you in person or you may contact us at giving@clemson.edu. Our [website](#) features useful online resources to guide you through various gift planning options, including information about IRA Charitable Qualified Distribution (QCD) benefits as well as information about general estate planning. Our free [Wills Guide](#) can be found [HERE](#).

Wishing you and your family a beautiful Spring as we enter this new season of growth and opportunity. As always, I remain tremendously grateful for everything you are doing to elevate our beloved Clemson and help us move fiercely forward into the future. GO Tigers!

Gratefully yours,

JoVanna King