



Clemson Legacy Connection

PLANNED GIVING NEWSLETTER

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Greetings, Tigers!

What do you see when you pause long enough to really look?

Spring has arrived on campus in full color — dogwoods are in bloom, longer days are stretching into golden evenings and a renewed sense that possibility is everywhere. It's a season that invites reflection. Not just on what surrounds us, but on how we choose to see it.

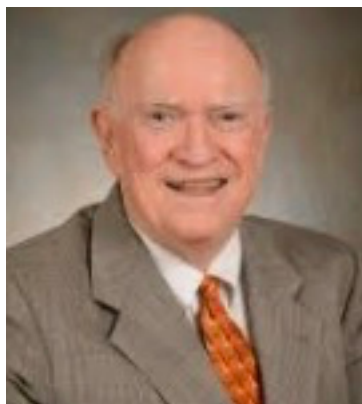
This month, I'd like to introduce you to someone who has spent a lifetime refining that perspective — someone who reminds us that how we see the world can shape the difference we make in it.

A vision sparked at Clemson

For John Mullen '71, Clemson wasn't just a place — it was a turning point.

John's family moved to South Carolina from Virginia when he was 6 years old, and Clemson University is part of his family's legacy, as his sister, brother-in-law and nephew also graduated from Clemson. John said that when he decided to enroll at Clemson, he had no idea how impactful that decision would be. "Clemson University and Professor Jerome V. Reel '60 gave me the inspiration and education that helped me move forward in life," John reflected.

Professor Reel was a longtime professor of history at Clemson University, serving as head of the Department of History, Faculty Senate president, Dean of Undergraduate Studies and senior vice provost. He is still active as a professor emeritus of history with the Office of the University Historian.



John said that Professor Reel, the faculty advisor for John's fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, encouraged others to give back in whatever ways possible. He served as a mentor to John, encouraging him to use his artistic skills. "Because his wife, Edmee Reel M'82, had been a Chi Omega sorority member at LSU, Dr. Reel commissioned me to paint the coat of arms for the newly established chapter of Chi Omega sorority at Clemson," John recalled. "That was a real confidence-builder for me: a moment that helped me see myself differently."

Leadership skills learned while giving 110%

John fondly remembers his experiences and the leadership skills he gained as an officer and member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. “I learned firsthand about teamwork and leadership, particularly when I was put in charge of leading the brothers in creating our Homecoming float. Our theme was ‘Smooth Sailing Over Wake’ since the Homecoming football game was against Wake Forest,” John said. “We won first place, and I was proud of our teamwork in creating that beautiful display of a Viking ship with a huge Tiger Paw on its sail.”

Incidentally, Clemson defeated Wake Forest in that Homecoming game 23-6. It also happens to be the game at which head coach Frank Howard famously told his players, “If you’re going to give me 110 percent, you can rub that rock. If you’re not, keep your filthy hands off it,” cementing the tradition of rubbing Howard’s Rock.

John believes the “soft skills” he learned — how to work with and lead others, the impact of service and the value of teamwork — truly set him up for success after his college graduation.

From opportunity to impact

“I had worked my way through school, funding everything myself. In the summers, I worked at Yeargin Construction Company, where I was hired full-time after I graduated with a degree in architecture and building construction,” John said.

By age 28, John left South Carolina for new frontiers in California, where he purchased a fourplex as his residence. “Interest rates were 14 percent, and I needed tenants to help pay the mortgage,” John recalled. “Over time, I leveraged that equity to buy other properties,” he added.

Continuing his tradition of service and outreach

Naturally, while in California, John continued to find ways to serve his community. He began volunteering at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego and, after his early retirement from Halliburton, he served as chairman of the museum’s board of trustees.

“I learned quickly about the importance of philanthropic gifts while serving on the board,” John said. “It is so critical for people who have the passion and ability to give to do so. This cannot be overstated. We all see the world through our own lens, and I encourage everyone to consider how they can sharpen the focus for those around them.”

A legacy that reflects what matters most

For John and his husband, Mike Brase, that meant finding a way to thank the University that gave John his start. “Now in my 70s, I’ve chosen to give assets of that first building I purchased, the fourplex, to Clemson through a Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT). The CRUT provides several meaningful benefits: a reliable income stream, an immediate charitable tax deduction and the ability to defer capital gains tax,” John said.

“Just as importantly to us, it allowed Mike and me to make a more significant future gift to Clemson. This is my way of ensuring that others find opportunity — just as I did at Clemson,” John added. Their planned gift will support the Dr. Jerome V. Reel Jr. Endowed Scholarship, honoring the professor and mentor who left such an indelible mark on John.



Created by Pi Kappa Alpha alumni and friends, this endowment provides unrestricted Universitywide scholarships and stands as a testament to the remarkable impact Dr. Reel has had — and continues to have — on the lives of Clemson students who are now leaving their mark around the globe, just as John continues to do.

John works to make the world better and brighter for others wherever he goes. John and Mike spend several months each year in Mexico, where they work with a foundation that rescues animals and finds them new homes. That is just another way John has found to live out the values learned at Clemson.

What do you see through your own lens?

John's story isn't just about success; it's about perspective.

What comes into focus when you look at your own life?

What experiences have shaped what you value most?

Who helped you become who you are today?

And how might you honor that — through the choices and decisions you make now?

A gift — whether today or as part of your future gift plans — is more than a financial decision. It is a reflection of what matters to you. A way to bring clarity, opportunity and light into someone else's life.

It's your lens. Your legacy.

And like John, you have the power to shape both.

Through a current gift, planned gift or estate gift provision, you can shape the future. You can honor a loved one, champion a cause close to your heart or — like John — continue a legacy of love and purpose that will endure long after you're gone. You can help move Clemson [Fiercely Forward](#).

If you'd like to explore how you can create a gift that reflects your values and vision, we would be honored to connect with you. Please reach out to me at jovanna@clemson.edu, call 864-656-0663 or visit our [website](#) to learn more about the many ways you can make an impact and help us launch lives of significance.

As spring fills our days with light, I hope you will take a moment to consider the view ahead — and the difference only you can make. **Because what you choose to see... can change everything.**

Gratefully,

JoVanna King