



Greetings from Tigertown!

August has arrived, and with it comes the onset of a new semester. It's a season ripe with possibilities, just like the sweet, ripe peaches at the roadside stands. I love the enthusiasm and excitement that the beginning of the Fall semester brings, from freshman move-in to the first day of class. Those milestone moments are ones that students remember for a lifetime. They can be life-altering experiences, as Cheryl and Jim Begley share in this month's newsletter.

Cheryl Begley '84 and her husband Jim, both first-generation college students, emphatically state that being college-educated changed the course of their lives. "Even back in the late '70s and early '80s, when it was not as common for high school graduates to go on to college, we both instinctively knew that going to college would open doors for us," Cheryl said. "I remember having conversations as early as high school about how we believed that a college education would offer us new paths. We both were very career-oriented from early on."

"Neither of our families could help support us much financially, so we each were fortunate to receive scholarships and grants that enabled us to live out our goals of attaining college degrees," Jim added. "In high school we both excelled at math and kept hearing that computer science and technology was the next 'big thing' coming, so that was the area we each wanted to explore if we could in college."

Cheryl and Jim began dating while attending Southside High School in Greenville, South Carolina, where Jim was a member of the math club. "The math club





## Clemson Legacy Connection

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came to Clemson one night a week for about six weeks to learn computer programming,” Jim recalls. “I remember getting a behind-the-scenes tour and seeing Clemson’s mainframe computer, and a big printer which had been programmed to play ‘Tiger Rag,’” he said. “That was my first experience of seeing a large computer in person.”

Cheryl and Jim stayed together despite attending different universities. While Cheryl chose Clemson, Jim enrolled at Georgia Tech. They spent many weekends visiting each other despite Cheryl not having a car. She lived in Clemson House most of her time at Clemson and has stayed in touch with wonderful friends and roommates throughout the years. “The campus became my second home,” Cheryl reflected.

“I initially majored in computer science, a burgeoning field at the time, but after a few semesters, discovered that I wanted a more hardware-oriented experience, so I switched majors to computer engineering,” Cheryl said. “I loved the idea of being an engineer. My dad had a two-year engineering degree, and I inherited his desire to understand how things work. I knew having a computer engineering degree would set me apart as a female in the field.”

The Begleys were married in 1987 and have lived and worked in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina since their college graduations. Jim accepted a job with Data General and felt that the rapid growth in technology fields in that area at the time would offer them both good career opportunities. Cheryl joined Jim in Raleigh after her graduation in December of 1984 and began working for Nortel in computer engineering. “We didn’t have a grand plan,” Jim said, “but we knew that we wanted to blaze a new trail for ourselves.”

Cheryl continued her career with Nortel for nearly 20 years before deciding that she wanted to work in software project management. She became a certified project manager and, in 2004, began working for SAS Institute as a project manager in the research and development division of the company.

“What is really remarkable about Cheryl,” Jim said, “is that she’s been working for nearly 40 years and has only worked for two companies during that time. She’s a very devoted and loyal person.” Cheryl believes that she “got lucky, in that both companies were excellent to work for



and offered her great opportunities.”

Jim laughed as he said, “I’m not as loyal, professionally, as Cheryl; I’ve probably worked for 10 different companies.” After spending more than 20 years in software development, Jim moved into technology leadership, currently working for Epic Games as director of enterprise architecture. “Computer graphics flipped a switch for me and has become something I really enjoy,” Jim said.

A few years ago, Jim established a scholarship endowment at Georgia Tech. Cheryl thought Jim’s idea of giving back to the university that gave him so much was brilliant, and she established a scholarship endowment for first-generation students at Clemson: the *Cheryl Waddell Begley ’84 and James L. Begley Scholarship Endowment*. “I wouldn’t have been able to attend Clemson without the scholarships and grants that I received,” Cheryl said, as Jim chimed in with “Same for me at Georgia Tech.”

“We know things have changed a lot in the past 40 years since we were students, but one thing remains the same: It’s not easy to be a first-generation college student,” Cheryl said. “It’s a lot to navigate and figure out. And if we can make it any easier, that’s what we want to do — to support students who need that assistance to help chart a new path.”

Cheryl and Jim firmly believe that what’s coming next for future generations is exciting — just as the dawn of the computer age was a hallmark of their college years. “It’s hard for young people today to imagine life without computers, just as we couldn’t have imagined life without television and radio, which our parents didn’t have when they were young,” Cheryl said. “I used to think change was negative; I would visit Clemson after I graduated and see the changes on campus and miss what used to be. But then I came to realize that change and progress is healthy.”

“We want to be a part of positive change,” Cheryl said. “We asked ourselves: How can we support what is coming next? We don’t know what that will be, but we know that our education changed our lives for the better and want to help the next generation be equipped to handle whatever that next ‘thing’ is. I am a die-hard Clemson fan who is very proud of my Clemson



degree. I hope future graduates value their degree as much and will also consider making a gift to help the University or help other students.”

Cheryl and Jim look for ways to help make positive change in other ways besides their endowments: Cheryl volunteers at a local animal rescue, fostering and finding homes for kittens and special needs cats. They both enjoy hiking and active travel adventures that provide chances to see nature up close. They have enjoyed hiking in national parks across the American and Canadian Rockies, including Grand Teton, Yellowstone, Glacier, Banff, and Jasper National Parks. They are both still enjoying work with no immediate plans to retire and consider their vacation time a chance to truly recharge to be able to continue solving problems and helping others.

Just as the Begleys have chosen to help first-generation college students discover “what comes next” in our world, we sincerely hope you will consider how you can assist the next generation of Clemson Tigers. Please reach out to our Planned Giving team to help you explore how you, too, can make a difference in the lives of future Clemson students, faculty, or other vital programs through a strategic and planned gift arrangement. We would be honored to assist as you help future students blaze their own trails and chart their own paths.

Our [website](#) features useful online resources to guide your thought process. For information about general estate planning, our free [Wills Guide](#) is available to help you make plans before visiting with your attorney. We would love for you to stop by our office, or you are most welcome to contact us directly by emailing us at [giving@clemsun.edu](mailto:giving@clemsun.edu).

GO Tigers!

Gratefully Yours ~  
JoVanna