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PHYLLIS WEAVER

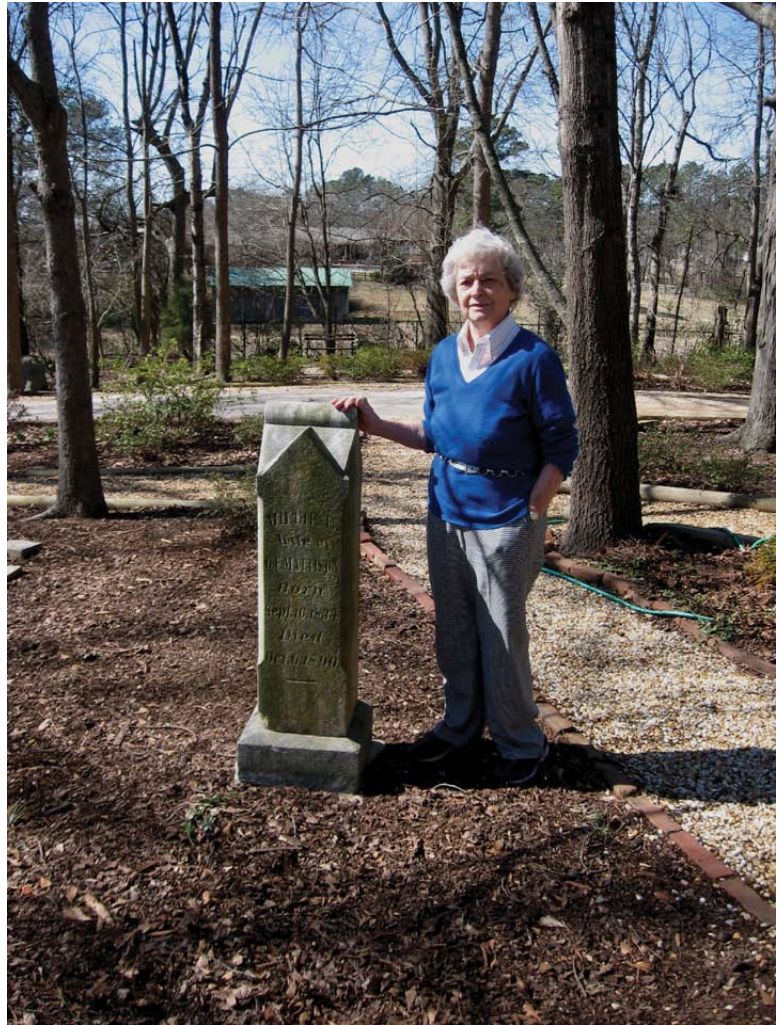
Phyllis Weaver's 2009 conservation easement along Choccolocco Creek near Oxford, Ala. was another important part of achieving the ongoing Choccolocco Creek Conservation Corridor. It also helped her preserve her half-century relationship with her land.

Phyllis and her late husband Frank, bought their land along Choccolocco Creek near Oxford from Frank's Uncle Elbert who owned the land "from here all the way across where Highway 21 runs and it wasn't built yet. We purchased the first hundred acres for \$50 an acre."

Phyllis, a native of Illinois, met Frank when he was in dental school at Washington University in St. Louis. They returned to Frank's home in the Oxford area, where his father was a doctor. Phyllis was Frank's dental assistant and ran the office.

"Frank had the love of the land," she says. "He would work the farm every day until noon, and then he would come in to do his dentistry from noon until five."

"At one point we raised corn and wheat and had some pigs, on the theory they would clean up some of the aftermath of that cultivation. In the mid-50s, our county agent, Sut Matthews, said you ought to just make it pasture and now we use it primarily to raise cattle."



Phyllis Weaver in historic cemetery near her home

Mrs. Weaver is happy she followed Sut's recommendation, "It requires no fertilization, the cows and the manure spreader take care of that. It usually stays good and moist, although the creek doesn't flood as bad as it used to. It grows a lot of clover, which helps keep nitrogen in. And we don't get broom sedge."

"The cows won't cross the creek," Phyllis says, "but they can smell an open gate. Just leave one open and off they go." They have turned up at the nearby Wal-Mart parking lot on several occasions. "Fortunately, they remember where they came from and how they got out, so usually they'll just go back they way they came with enough encouragement. I spend a lot of time riding fences."

"I know the place will always be taken good care of. I'm planning on living forever and Mike Jones, who works with me, will continue to keep an eye on things."

Mike first joined Phyllis in managing the farm when he was called in to remove a snake that had occupied a commode on the property. Mike had grown up on a farm and asked if he could just ride the property a bit. That

was about 12 years ago and he now manages the property and keeps extensive computer records regarding the herd and its management. “Of course, I still keep my hand-written ledger,” Phyllis says.

Mrs. Weaver loves her livestock and pets. She is devoted to the 150-plus cattle she raises, which are now entirely black angus. “They have nice little calves—about 25 pounds—which means that they don’t have many problems having them. I used to raise Charlois cows. They are beautiful animals but have enormous calves. Every birth means you’ve got a cow in trouble.” She recalls with affection a Charlois bull “that sat on his haunches just like a dog. People would call me up and tell me that my bull had problems—he was sitting like a dog. He just liked to sit that way. Out of season he was as gentle as he could be. I used to just lean against his back.”

Phyllis says that a great many of her herd are almost like pets and that her bullkins go to market “whole.” She says they feed up as well as castrated animals and “that way, I don’t have to feel so sorry for them.”

She also has a small herds of pygmy goats, cats (including Sheba, who occupies a perch atop a small rug on the stove—“I have to ask her permission to cook”), and Miss Kitty, a hen who was brooding in a planter (Puss and Boots, two new chicks have just hatched) by Phyllis’s front door. “She just picked out the spot and, of course, we don’t disturb her.” Miss Kitty purred when stroked by Mrs. Weaver.

“I’ve worked so hard on this place and loved it for so long, too. Frank and I first moved out here in 1950. I mixed the mud and Frank laid the block for our cabin out here. We hand-dug our swimming pool. It’s a shame we don’t always appreciate the beauty God gives us because we’re all so busy commercializing it.”



Pasture on Weaver property

