

**PROFILES OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONORS  
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**ALL PROFILES WRITTEN BY FRANK MCINTOSH**

## **TOM BERRY**

Tom Berry's great aunt Martha Berry was the founder of Berry College near Rome. It is now the largest campus in America, covering some 28,000 acres of rolling foothills.

She was a woman of vision. One day, students at the fledgling college were planting oak trees along the road that would lead to the administration building that would be built someday. One student remarked that it would take 35 years for these trees to grow up, so why were they planting them. Martha replied, "We won't have an administration building for 35 years, but the trees will be ready for it."

Tom continues the forward-thinking of his great aunt. He is the donor of a 340-acre conservation easement in the Big Texas Valley in Floyd County near Rome, Ga. that protects almost a mile of stream banks along Cabin Creek. He shares Martha's love of the land and some of her vision for the future, too.



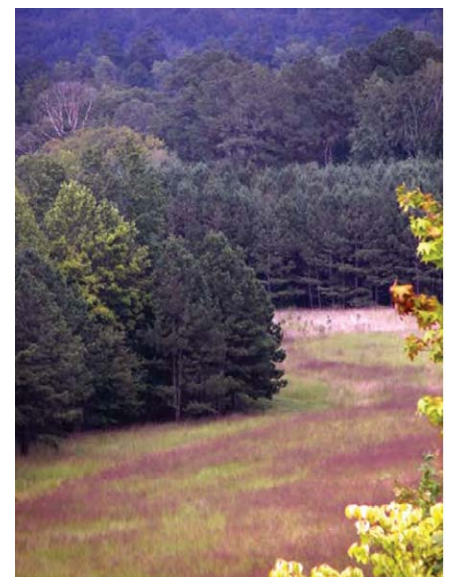
*Tom Berry and canine friends*

In addition, he and some cousins and other donors have been protecting a significant part of what was once Lavender Farms, a 3,500 acre tract owned by their grandfather. (The tract was originally acquired in exchange for the Possum Trot tract that is now a part of Berry College.)

Tom is planning to add another 160 acres to his protected lands and notes, "A lot of people don't know about conservation easements but if they did, they'd do it. I had no idea going in how incredibly rewarding it would be to protect this land."

Between the easements that have been put in place already and those that are in the works, almost 2,300 acres, or around two-thirds of the old Lavender Farms, will be protected by Berry and other donors.

Tom notes that this land, without the benefit of conservation easements, would almost certainly have been developed in the fast growing region around Rome. Land values—around \$300-\$350 an acre in the mid-80s—have risen dramatically as these verdant valleys fill up with newcomers. Tom is an avid hunter and the property is managed for turkey, quail and deer. The land has rich pastures, too, upon which cattle once grazed. Some of that part of the property may be returned to use for cattle production.



*Meadow on Berry land*