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ALL PROFILES WRITTEN BY FRANK MCINTOSH

WADE AND ROSEMARY STRICKLAND

Dr. Wade Strickland's relationship with the Satilla River imbues every part of his life. He says of the river, "I learned to swim in it, learned to fish in it, I was baptized in it, and my father taught me to hunt along it." His 2009 easement on over 880 acres has helped protect over three and a half miles of riverfront and over 500 acres of bottomland hardwoods, swamps and sloughs along the river.

Dr. Strickland also met his wife Rosemary along the Satilla, although for a time the river prevented their meeting. Dr. Strickland notes that growing up, his family's activities tended to be upstream of the old family grounds where the Stricklands' home now is as well as a lodge that is used for charitable and other events in which the family is involved. Rosemary's family's was downstream and it took a bit for the two to meet. Fortunately their paths crossed and their children and grandchildren are enjoying some of what they experienced growing up along the blackwaters and sugar sand beaches of the Satilla.

Strickland's family goes back in the area as far as Dr. Strickland's great, great, great, grandfather, Levi, the first of the family to arrive in the area from the Carolinas. Parts of the protected property were owned by his part of the family in the past, although he notes much of it "went out to the other side of the family" in the interim.

Dr. Strickland, a cardiologist who says he was always, "drawn to medicine," was also drawn to owning land and began purchasing the easement-protected tract in Brantley County, Georgia in 2002. Rosemary says of Dr. Strickland that he has a simple philosophy regarding land, "He only wants to own what touches his."

Like many families in the area, the Stricklands were "timber men." They would harvest the rich stands along the river, raft them up and float them down to Burnt Ford, "about 25 miles as the crow flies, although who knows how far by river, it's just so serpentine." Strickland's grandfather still used oxen to haul timber as tractors had not yet arrived.



Wade and Rosemary Strickland on bank of Satilla River

His father almost moved away from timber, becoming the principal of the school in nearby Waynesville. Eventually he was contacted by the Timber Protection Organization, which enlisted him to become the Forest Ranger for the area and he returned to timber.

As part of his ranger duties, he maintained a rudimentary telephone system on the ranger station property. Armed with this experience, when the local telephone exchange of 50 telephones came on the market, Strickland reports his father said, "What the heck," and borrowed \$7,000 to purchase it from "the old fellow who had owned it and had gone broke running it."

The system stayed small enough that it ran through a single switchboard "monitored" by Strickland's mother until the 1950s, when the federal government provided funding for Electrical Membership Corporations and other rural

wiring upgrades. Strickland Communications grew to 6000 subscribers and now includes satellite television service to nine counties.

Rosemary notes, “When we were poor Dad was a fisherman. Now, we own a lot of the places where we used to have our fish fries.” This relationship with the land and the Satilla helped lead the Stricklands to put the conservation easement on the property. “We were determined to do it.”

Dr. Strickland says that one of his great joys of the property is hunting on it, including regular quail hunts, “the high point of the year.” He and Rosemary also love “just seeing the beauty of it.” The easement will ensure they and future generations of Stricklands will continue to know the beauty of the Satilla.

*Satilla River seen from high bluff on
easement property*



