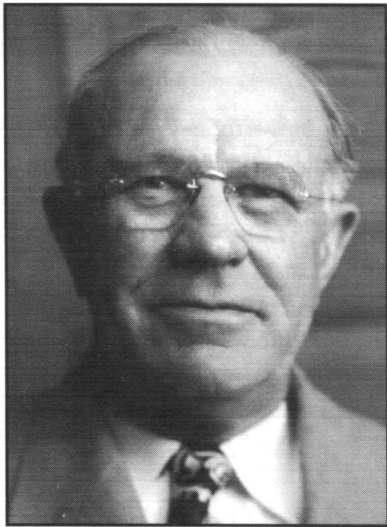




**Fred K. Conn**

*Building Levees  
Against the Rising Waters*

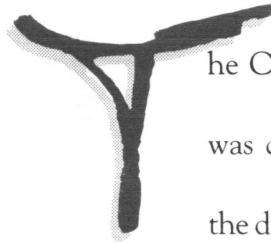
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**Fred King Conn**

*December 16, 1881 - February 26, 1970*

## PREFACE



he Conn Memorial Foundation Inc. was directed by Fred K. Conn from the day it was established in 1954 until his death in 1970. In those 16 years, he guided the philanthropic organization from the source he knew best – his own heart. • After his death, Conn's long-time accountant and business manager David Frye became president. Successive boards have overlapped with original board members and longtime friends and associates, who know and understand the founder's vision. • In their wisdom, the current board members recognize that time has a way of blurring the edges of authenticity. They know it is vital to acquaint new friends and associates with the exceptional man whose kind and intelligent stewardship they – all of us – must follow if we are to assure a sound, optimistic future for our children. • This, then, is an attempt to capture the spirit of the man.

– January 1997

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## *Building Levees Against the Rising Waters*

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### FRED K. CONN

In the spring of 1927, more than 4,000 of Tampa's faithful surged to hear the thunderous preaching of flamboyant revivalist Billy Sunday. Throughout his fist-swinging salvos, a rain storm poured steadily outside, making mud flats of the dirt streets.

Rain and unusual weather would plague the region and the nation for weeks to come – icy winds curtailed Mardi Gras entertainment in New Orleans, snow blanketed fruit trees in Georgia and South Carolina, a cold snap hit Texas, and tornadoes and earthquakes shook the Mississippi Valley.

And the waters began to rise.

Southward from Cairo, Ill., the Mississippi overflowed its banks, filling tributaries, covering its delta and threatening the fragile earthen embankments that kept the great river from inundating low-lying farmland, forests and family homes. On April 21, two major levees broke, and for the next two months the river claimed a region roughly the size of South Carolina. The infamous waters claimed 313 lives, drove more than 700,000 people from their homes and destroyed \$300 million in property.

Dispatched to reclaim the land and set people's lives back in order was a practical-minded Quaker, respected engineer and popular Secretary of Commerce named Herbert Hoover. During the relief operations, he commanded an army of 1,400 paid workers and 31,000 volunteers.

In Yazoo City, Miss., a small town on the edge of the delta, Hoover tapped a successful land and lumber mill owner – Fred Conn – as the local Vice Chairman of Disaster Operations.

Hoover could not have chosen a more resourceful leader, says Yazoo City resident and close Conn family friend Elizabeth (Lib) Tinnin. Outgoing, confident, energetic and optimistic, Conn skillfully marshaled resources and kept the community's focus on the future.

Conn's flood relief efforts and his close association with the American Red Cross during that time are often cited as the spark that ignited a lifetime of extraordinary community involvement and enduring philanthropy. Indeed, it was a flame he brought with him to Tampa the following year, a flame whose well-tended embers

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**Conn skillfully  
marshaled  
resources and kept  
the community's  
focus on the future.**

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continue to light the future for children and their families, through financial assistance and guiding leadership of the Conn Memorial Foundation Inc., which Conn established in 1954.

Newcomers to Tampa seldom, if ever, hear the name Fred Conn. As the time between his death in 1970 and the present expands, the memories of those who did know him grow hazy. And many who do remember him have only a passing notion of the depth of his compassion and the scope of his vision.

That is due, at least in part, to Conn's reluctance to stand in the spotlight. His papers are scattered with requests that his name be deleted from a news report or taken off the speakers list for an awards ceremony.

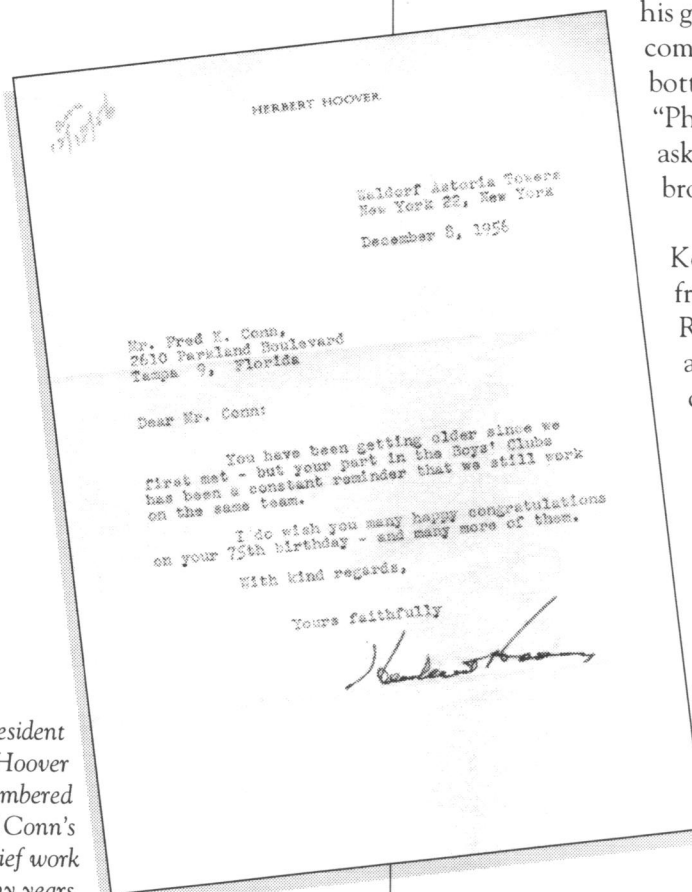
In 1957, James Cope, then-president of Florida Christian College, wrote Conn a cheerful letter telling him that

his good deeds were the subject of an upcoming radio broadcast. Penciled at the bottom of the letter in Conn's hand: "Phoned Mr. Cope thanking him and asked him to please kill this suggested broadcast. This he agreed to do."

At the same time, says T. Paine Kelly, a Tampa attorney who was a friend and colleague at the American Red Cross, a part of Fred Conn did appreciate public recognition of his contributions.

So, in spite of his protests of the former and because of acceptance of the latter, the story of Conn's business and charitable work found its way into brief news reports and awards speeches. It was a story of success that began very early in life.

Former President  
Herbert Hoover  
remembered  
Fred Conn's  
flood relief work  
for many years.







*A young Freddie Conn looks intently toward a long and prosperous future.*

## A NATURAL TIMBER MAN

**B**orn in Russellville, Ohio, on Dec. 16, 1881, Alfred King Conn was the only child of Samuel A. Conn and Emma King. As a young man, he followed naturally and skillfully into the business of his father – lumber.

“In the early part of 1900 my father and his associates made extensive purchases and sales of timberland in northeast Louisiana, [including] Concordia, Catahoula and Tensas Parishes, Louisiana,” Fred Conn wrote years later.

William (W.C.) Falkenheiner, a retired district judge in Vidalia, La., adds that Samuel Conn’s company scouted and purchased property for wealthy Northern businessmen and at one time represented the family of President William Howard Taft.

In 1907, at the age of 26, Fred Conn organized the Bayou Land and Lumber Co. to buy and sell hardwood lumber – largely to furniture manufacturers in the central states. But, wrote Conn, “I suddenly found in my enthusiasm I had oversold my ability to buy. This made it necessary for me to get into the production of hardwood lumber.”

This he did, establishing the Bayland Saw Mill Co. And, over the next several decades, he and his partners purchased thousands of acres of hardwood, primarily in the Mississippi Delta and Louisiana. At one time, Bayland was reported to have owned or leased approximately 100,000 acres of valuable, workable land.

Conn became a well-known figure in the lumber industry and served as a director in both the Gum Lumber Manufacturers Association and the Hardwood Manufacturers Association.

By mid-1927, however, his sawmill interests were saturated with flood waters.

He sold most of the properties – save about 11,000 acres still managed by the Conn Foundation. Much of it went to a subsidiary of General Motors, Fisher Lumber Co., for wood paneling and sideboards – the source of the company’s famous “Body by Fisher” label. Both Bayland Lumber and Bayou Land and Lumber were dissolved by 1936.

Selling the land, he admitted years later, was hasty at best. The government’s flood control program, established after 1927, greatly enhanced the value of the land.

*"I suddenly  
found in my  
enthusiasm I  
had oversold  
my ability  
to buy."*

*- Fred Conn*

Conn wrote in 1964: "Having lived a life of something over eighty years during which time I could enumerate in detail pages of mistakes I have made, I think as I look back over and analyze those mistakes, the greatest of them all was selling the rich, alluvial hardwood land."

But back in 1928 Conn had other things on his mind.

In February, 5-year-old Lib Tinnin was flower girl at her Aunt Mattie (Margaret) Crawford and Joe Coker's wedding, held at the Conns' stately two-story home on Madison Street in Yazoo City. Mattie was the daughter of Conn's business partner E.B. Crawford, and during her teen years she lived with the Conns and attended the local high school.

"She was as close to a child as he ever had. And she thought of him as a second father,"

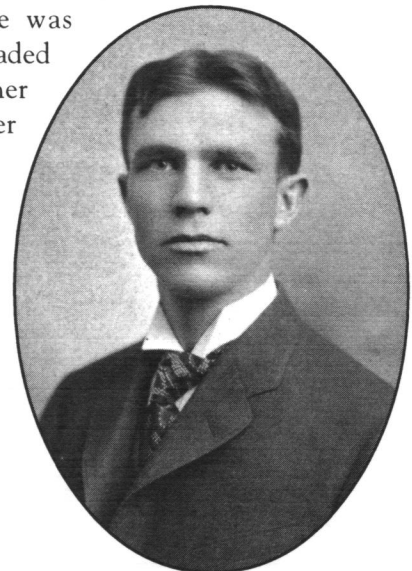
says Tinnin. So close was Mattie that Conn persuaded the young woman's father to allow Conn to give her away at the wedding.

"You've already given away two daughters," Tinnin recalls the story she heard as a child. "This one's mine."

For a wedding gift, Conn gave Mattie the Delta Hotel, one of two popular lodgings in the heart of Yazoo City.

Later that year, with flood recovery well under way, the Mississippi lumber business under water, and their beloved Mattie under

the loving care of her new husband, the Conns left Yazoo City for Tampa. Before leaving, Conn gave his home to Joe Coker's mother.



*With his father's guidance,  
Conn was an early success  
in the lumber business.*

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*“He picked  
your mind  
for everything  
and anything  
you might  
know.”*

*- Paul Elsberry*

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## TAMPA BOUND

**N**o one seems to know why the Conns chose Tampa. Some say Fred Conn had a health condition that demanded a warmer climate and the soothing qualities of the “salt air.” Others say his wife, Harriet Fichter Conn, and her sister, Edith Fichter, who worked for Conn and moved with them to Tampa, had relatives nearby.

Whatever the reason, he was soon making lasting impressions.

Paul Elsberry, a Hillsborough County farmer and former Conn Foundation board member, met Conn during his first years in Tampa. An eager young man with two years at the University of Florida under his belt, Elsberry took a job at a respected brokerage firm. In those days – long before the advent of personal computers – his task was to post stock market figures on a board for easy reading by walk-in customers.

One day, Account No. 1156 came in, sat down and “started asking questions,” says Elsberry. And Conn’s questions seldom ceased.

“He picked your mind for everything and anything you might know. He did things to provoke you and set you to thinking,” Elsberry says. “He prodded others to learn.”

The questions spanned broad topics – and generations. Paul Elsberry’s son Ross, who came to know Conn as a teenager, notes that the questions were often loaded.

“He was usually trying to see what was going on in your head,” he says. “If you were driving in a car, he’d ask you, ‘What was that back there?’ or ‘What was that man’s name?’ – when he knew the answer. He just wanted to see if you’d been paying attention, how you thought, what kind of person you were.”

James Gray, a Conn Foundation board member and retired banker, says the same method of personal inquiry characterized Conn’s investment strategy: “If he was interested in a certain stock, he’d read up on it, then call the president of the company. If he still wasn’t satisfied, he’d get on a train and go up and see him.”

And the questions spanned the continent: During the late 1950s and ’60s, Judge Falkenheimer was a member of a Louisiana levee board created after 1927 to help control flooding. The area was also the focus of oil and gas activities. Conn, still an active landowner, was a rapt student.

“He used to drop by my office, sit down with a yellow pad

*“He felt it  
necessary to have  
a personal  
interest in  
anything he had  
a hand in.”*

*- George Ericksen*

and ask questions,” Judge Falkenheiner recalls of Conn’s visits to Louisiana to check land investments. “He asked about local business, crops, the economy, weather conditions and, to some extent, the social conditions. I remember him scribbling on those yellow pads. His visits could last two hours, and I always enjoyed them – though I was a little exhausted when he left.”

He took it all in quickly and completely, says Tinnin, who quotes a Yazoo City friend as saying, “Mr. Conn could drive 70 miles an hour from Yazoo City to Belzoni and count every shingle on every house he passed.”

## THE PERSONAL TOUCH



is thoroughness, business acumen – and the degree to which he committed himself personally to everything he did – are perhaps best summed up in his activities related to the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC).

According to a 1945 Palm Beach Post article, Conn owned considerable interest in the railroad when it fell into receivership in 1931. When he heard other railroads were trying to buy it, Conn threw himself into an intense study of investments – to arrive at a simple lesson: “If the government is selling, you buy; if the government is buying, you sell.”

Conn organized other relatively small investors, who aligned themselves with larger FEC investors.

Tampa attorney and former Foundation board member George Ericksen, who represented Conn throughout the FEC dealings, says, “He didn’t send me to the hearings, he *brought* me. ... He enjoyed the business of mental fencing and the people who were involved in it. And he felt it necessary to have a personal interest in anything he had a hand in.”

It took decades to resolve the FEC issue; and Conn became a director of the successfully reorganized FEC in the 1960s.

As freely as Conn tapped others’ minds, he also offered himself as a resource, says Herbert McKay, who set up his own stock brokerage business in the basement of the Wallace Building, where Conn maintained an office for years.

“The first day I went into business, he stopped by to say hello and said, ‘If you ever have anything you need to ask me, I’ll help you any way I can.’ And I did. Every once in a while I’d go upstairs and talk with him. Mr. Frye was Mr. Conn’s bookkeeper at the time, and I can still see him sitting in the office with his celluloid hat on.”



*David B. Frye served as president of the Conn Memorial Foundation after Fred Conn's death.*

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***“Fred deeply  
treasured  
David’s knowledge  
and ability.”***

***- George Ericksen***

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## LONGTIME LOYALTIES

**F**red Conn had hired David Frye in 1933 – fresh out of college with a degree in business administration. Frye quickly established a reputation for meticulous record-keeping and superb administration of Conn’s real estate holdings, land leases, investments and charity work.

“David was an extraordinarily able manager,” says Ericksen. “He knew what was going on in the charities and investments. And Fred deeply treasured David’s knowledge and ability.”

Frye never worked for anyone else. After Conn’s death, he became president of the Foundation, leading it until his own death in 1992.

Such longtime loyalties were the rule rather than the exception in Conn’s world. His papers are filled with correspondences he maintained with people he had known in his early days in the lumber business.

He wrote personal, cordial notes to sons and daughters – grandsons and granddaughters – of longtime friends. Lib Tinnin says he wrote her son every year on his birthday, a date he shared with the older gentleman.

When Conn reached a milestone in age or received a well-publicized award – such as the Outstanding Citizen award from the Civitan Club or the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the University of Tampa – scores of congratulatory telegrams and notes poured in.

Politicians (including former president and relief-effort boss Herbert Hoover), college professors, farmers, business and professional leaders, and distant relatives lauded his accomplishments and humanitarianism.

*Close friend  
and fellow  
Boys Club  
supporter  
Charles C.  
“Stretch”  
Murphy helps  
Fred Conn  
celebrate his  
80th birthday.*





*Edith Fichter Conn assumed a quiet but active role in her husband's community concerns.*

## MISS EDITH

Even as a young teenager, Ross Elsberry says, he felt lucky to know this kind, attentive, even-tempered man, who he viewed as a loving, if somewhat stern, grandfather. But it was “Miss Edith,” as Conn’s second wife was affectionately known, for whom the youngster had a soft spot.

“We just hit it off,” he says, reminiscing about spending many happy weekends with Miss Edith – reading on the sun porch, feeding her pet birds, walking through the garden of the Conns’ handsome Parkland Estates home.

Few who knew Conn did not also know Edith. He married her in 1940, about a year after the death of her sister, Harriet, Conn’s first wife.

Edith worked for Conn over the years, and both she and Harriet were directors in the early Bayland Lumber Co. Her distinctive signature appears on many documents – and sadly fades with years and waning health on Conn Foundation meeting minutes. Edith Conn died in 1969.

While Fred Conn was most visible and vocal in charitable and foundation pursuits, Edith Conn’s touch was presumed in every endeavor, says Ericksen, “He saw to it that her concepts were involved in it. He didn’t quite see the feminine side – she brought that to the Foundation. She was interested in women who had been, as she had been, on their own.”

Friendly and cordial, the Conns preferred small dinners and at-home visits, eschewing the busy social swirl. One reason may have been Fred’s profound hearing loss, which required two hearing aids.

“It frustrated and distressed him,” says Doyle Frye, a Foundation board member and widow of David Frye. “I think it was part of the reason he withdrew somewhat from public activities.”

Conn was a disciplined man who, at 82, prided himself on a precise routine: “early morning walk, two good, hearty meals a day; a few hours at the office; then early to bed and dreamland.”

He kept to his routine on his many business trips, says Ericksen, with whom he sometimes passed the time playing gin rummy. Ericksen adds that Conn often rushed to be the first passenger off a plane and that he loved grape-



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*“Those pictures  
give you a  
good idea of  
what he  
was thinking.  
They’re pictures  
of people.”*

*- Ross Elsberry*

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*The Conns read through congratulatory letters  
during another birthday celebration.*

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fruit, with a decided preference for the “bud half” of the fruit.

Conn also traveled for pleasure. Scrapbooks are sprinkled with photos of favorite trips with friends to Europe, Hawaii, and other scenic spots throughout the United States.

“Mr. Conn had a camera which had been made in Germany for spies,” Ross Elsberry says. “It was a nice, slim camera, and he took a lot of pictures with it. Those pictures give you a good idea of what he was thinking. They’re pictures of people.”

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*"It was all a  
surprise; he rarely  
told you anything  
in advance."*

*- Doyle Frye*

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## A PASSION FOR PEOPLE

People were indeed Conn's greatest passion, and his life is highlighted by vignettes of small and large good deeds toward them. Yet he kept his spiritual passions private. A 1953 radio broadcast noted that he and Edith attended church regularly. And Conn maintained a warm, close friendship with Presbyterian minister Rev. Dr. Oswald Delgado long after he moved his ministry from Tampa to Winter Park. In fact, Conn counted numerous leaders from various denominations among his longtime friends and correspondents.

One member of this ecumenical group, Dr. Marcus Bach, wrote about Conn in 1963: "With little pretense of being religious in an orthodox sense, Fred Conn lives by spiritual laws with the determination that characterizes all of his living. ... he demonstrate[s] the truth of the principle that the law of abundance always rewards the good steward. To be a custodian of God's treasures, be they health, wealth, or happiness, you must treat them as sacred trusts; when you freely share them with others, they return multiplied to you."

And he did freely share his trusts, in private gifts as well as public endowments.

Lib Tinnin recalls that as a new mother in the early '40s, she was despondent, fearing her husband was about to be sent to war.

"Mr. Conn knew I was upset and he came by," she says. At odds with how to console her, Conn presented her with a set of ice tea spoons to match her silver pattern.

Doyle Frye remembers when her husband developed a visual problem and his doctor recommended that he visit a clinic in Boston.

"One day David and I were on the golf course about 4 in the afternoon, when we were called and told to catch a plane at 7 that night," she says. "We got into Boston at about 5 in the morning and were taken straight to the clinic. Mr. Conn arranged the whole thing, including the car at the airport and renting us a brownstone. David's treatment was a great success, and we stayed for three weeks touring the town. It was all a surprise; he rarely told you anything in advance."

As generous as he was with others, Conn could also be selectively frugal. Friends share a collective memory of his appearing around town in a dated, fading Chrysler. His



*Businesslike but cheerful, Fred Conn focused much of his energies and his philanthropy on programs for children.*

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***“Go raise the  
money you need and  
get it over with.”***

***- Fred Conn***

---

chauffeur, George Curry, appealed to him to upgrade, but Conn was satisfied with repairs and patches.

Finally, recalls Herbert McKay, a group of Tampa businessmen who had benefited from Conn's financial advice over the years cast together and traded in the car for a brand new Lincoln.

## THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY



s deliberately and wisely as Fred Conn built his fortune, he called upon the same skills and processes in giving it away.

Children, education and disaster relief efforts were his top priorities. He is most readily associated with the local Red Cross and the Boys Club of Tampa (now the Boys & Girls Clubs) – to which he devoted many tireless hours. He was ultimately elected President for Life at both organizations.

As to what events and/or circumstances prompted Conn to take action, T. Paine Kelly says simply: “He as motivated by what he could do for people.”

Ericksen adds, “Fred was not very much interested in contributing just to resolve operating deficits. He was more interested in providing capital resources so they could operate successfully and gather energy and steam to continue or expand.

“His concept was: If you want to keep it alive, build a building. Let the public know you have a sense of permanence.”

Build he did – and not without a certain flair. For example, says Foundation board member James Gray, “The story goes that he went out to Florida College one day to see about something. He came across some kids playing basketball in the dirt and said, ‘You boys need a gym.’” Within a year, they had a gym.

Through direct gifts, challenge grants or matching funds, he was responsible for the West Tampa Boys & Girls Club, the American Red Cross building, the gymnasium at Florida College, the recreation hall at MacDonald Training Center, the Interbay Boys Club swimming pool and the Tampa Oral School at Dale Mabry Elementary School. He also funded the Conn Cottage at the Florida's Sheriff's Boys Ranch in Live Oak and contributed to the Margaret Coker Convalescent Home in Yazoo City, asking that it be named for Mattie, the property manager's daughter he helped raise.

Conservative and intolerant of excesses, Conn exhorted self-sufficiency and discouraged individuals and organizations from borrowing money. Rather, he prodded them to “go raise

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**Conn's generosity  
reached well  
beyond the  
Tampa Bay area.**

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*Fred Conn died Feb. 26, 1970,  
at age 88 – just four months  
after the death of his beloved  
wife, Edith. He is buried  
in Georgetown, Ohio.*

the money you need and get it over with.”

He was notorious for challenging other individuals, boards and organizations to meet his faith in the future of their organizations.

“Mr. Conn was a great man and extremely generous,” says friend T. Paine Kelly. “But he wanted others to be generous, too. His contributions were usually qualified and included a provision that they must be matched.”

In that way, says Kelly, Conn's gifts not only strengthened the organizations financially, but also strengthened their leadership and their circle of supporters.

The \$62,500 he gave to Florida College for its gym, for instance, was matched by the College's board of directors. Beyond that, there are precious few local organizations he or the Foundation have not had a hand in – and an award from: the YMCA, The Childrens Home, Humane Society, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, University of South Florida, University of Tampa, Suncoast Girl Scout Council, Mary Help of Christians School, St. Peter Claver Day Care Center, Salvation Army, Southwest Florida Blood Bank, Florida Society for the Prevention of Blindness, to name a few.

And Conn's generosity reached well beyond the Tampa Bay area. He was an early supporter of the Piney Woods Country Life School in Piney Woods, Miss., a pioneering school primarily for African-American children. He and/or the Foundation have made generous gifts to numerous other organizations outside the area: Bethune Cookman College, Daytona Beach; Berea College, Berea, Ken.; Florida Southern College, Lakeland; Rust College, Holly Springs, Miss.; Young Life of Florida, Winter Park; Eckerd College, St. Petersburg. And he was a founder of Webber College in Babson Park.

The list of organizations and individuals who benefit from Fred Conn's benevolent spirit will continue to grow well into the future through the Conn Foundation, just as it surely began long before the disastrous flood of 1927. And yet that defining event in our nation's history lends itself to an ironic analogy: After the flood, Congress created an ambitious and expansive flood control program. And as the levees rose along the Mississippi to protect future generations – ultimately increasing the value of the natural resources – Fred Conn was busy building strongholds in the Tampa Bay area and carefully cultivating its resources to assure a sound and prosperous future for generations to come.

His tools: an intractable curiosity and intelligence, a gifted head for business, a resolve to commit his time and talents to his community, and an insistence on nurturing resources for the long haul. Governing it all – a kind and unselfish heart.

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*"We have a  
responsibility to  
Mr. Conn's legacy  
to continue in a  
manner that he  
would approve."*

*- Sheff Crowder*

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## THE CONN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

In a world that combines the complex, demanding needs of social services with the complex, demanding solutions of finance – an awkward juxtaposition at best – the Conn Memorial Foundation of Tampa has an elegant, clearly stated understanding of its role: "Not 'I give, you take...' Rather, 'I have resources, you have skills. Together we can accomplish our goals.' We need to be sure our grants are good grants and that care is given to the relationship. We are investing for an outcome."

It has a simplicity and directness that would please Fred and Edith Conn, who established the Foundation in 1954. Today it is the oldest and largest private foundation in the area, with \$17 million in assets and more than \$600,000 in gifts made annually to local charities.

From the beginning, children, youth and family programs topped the Foundation's list of concerns, followed by education, human services and disaster relief; then program, capital support and agency expansion. The Foundation focuses on needs throughout the Tampa Bay area.

Its president, Sheffield Crowder; a thoughtful seven-member board; and director of services, Rosalie Hennessey, O.S.M., take very seriously their responsibility to carry out the Conns' wishes. While they acknowledge that changes are inevitable with time and new individuals, "We have a responsibility to Mr. Conn's legacy to continue in a manner that he would approve," says Crowder.

With its community investment in mind, the board strongly advocates self-reliance, accountability and responsibility in applicants. They do so by promoting matching gift opportunities, by asking for an appraisal of the success of a funded program from its sponsoring agency, and by encouraging applicants to look to their own boards and in their own local communities for financial support.

These are concepts as important today as they were for Conn, says board member James Gray, "We tell applicants they're going to be measured. How many on your board give? If your directors don't care, how can we?"

In its leadership role, the Foundation often finds itself counseling applicants on how to improve operations, leverage partnerships and plug into other funding sources.

Respecting the "fine line between our role as a change

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*"The hope is to  
improve all  
foundations. If  
we're all doing  
well, it's good  
for everyone."*

*- James Gray*

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agent and imposing our will," Crowder says, "we want to go beyond just funding agencies, to providing leadership in developing specific non-profit agencies, as well as the local non-profit community. A lot of good comes out of that. It's amazing how resourceful a dollar can be."

Striving to constantly improve the level of wise stewardship, the Conn Foundation has also taken a leadership role in the Funders Forum, an organization designed to maximize the strengths of area funding sources (and therefore their impact in the community) through management, development and collaboration.

"The hope is to improve all foundations," says Gray. "If we're all doing well, it's good for everyone."

George Baxter, president of the Community Foundation, notes that – as the largest local private charitable foundation, together with its role in the Funders Forum – the Conn Foundation does indeed "take a leadership position, and is recognized for that."

"It is an inspiration for other philanthropists in this community," agrees Herbert McKay, chairman of two other private foundations, William and Ruby Saunders Foundation, and the David Falk Foundation. "It is a good influence in this community."

While its primary function is to biannually make the hard choices of selecting fund recipients, the Foundation also must administer its investments wisely, with an eye to rapidly growing community needs (and shrinking public funding). Like other private foundations, it falls under strict government guidelines to donate a minimum of 5 percent of its total worth – regardless of earnings.

That means carefully monitoring the securities that are the basis of the Foundation's assets – and an occasional visit to the Foundation's 11,000 acres of farmland in Louisiana. While the Foundation employs a capable property manager to tend to the details, Crowder says he and the board are becoming well-educated on the nuances of soybeans, milo, corn, wheat, cotton, timber, oil – and catfish.

Over the years, the Conn Foundation has made a visible difference in the Tampa Bay area, which can be seen in the physical landscape, from the Performing Arts Center to Florida College's gymnasium, and in a wealth of successful programs, like Metropolitan Ministries, the University of Tampa, Alpha House, San Antonio's Boys Village, The Children's Home, Divine Providence Food Bank, Young Life, Boys & Girls Club, Salvation Army, and individual student scholarships.

But the true extent of Fred Conn and the Foundation that bears his name may never be fully known. For who can measure the ultimate value of the education, self-esteem, self-reliance, confidence, health and hope that are fostered by the structures and programs he built?



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THE CONN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, INC.

5401 Kennedy Blvd., Suite 530

Tampa, Fla. 33609

(813) 282-4922