A million dollar gift from Maxine Clippert of Camden to the School of Forest Resources carries on the legacy of her late husband, George, who loved the land and UAM.

The late George Clippert had a lifelong love affair with the land. He learned it from his grandfather on summer trips from his home in Michigan to the bayous of south Louisiana.

“My grandfather owned a sugar plantation,” Mr. Clippert used to tell friends. “I can still remember riding out into the fields with him to look at sugar cane. He would always tell me ‘Son, take good care of the land and it will take good care of you.’”

Mr. Clippert took his grandfather’s advice and for more than half a century took care of the land, managing timber holdings in seven southeast Arkansas counties. In 1949, Mr. Clippert became president of Southern Pulpwood Company, Inc., of Camden.

In the 1960’s, as his business grew, Mr. Clippert began hiring graduates of the Arkansas A&M forestry school, beginning a relationship that lasted until his death in 2006.

Even though he had no direct connection to the school, Mr. Clippert and his wife, Maxine, became generous benefactors. In 1999, the Clippets, along with their children, Nancy Clippert Broach and David Clippert, made the largest single donation in school history with a $1 million gift to establish the George H. Clippert Endowed Chair in Forestry. In December, Mr. Clippert’s legacy continued when Maxine presented a second $1 million dollar
gift to help pay for the construction of a new building for the School of Forest Resources.

“George Clippert was a special person and a great friend of this institution,” says Chancellor Jack Lassiter. “This gift from Maxine Clippert is a fitting tribute to Mr. Clippert and a lasting legacy that will live on for generations to come.”

Maxine Clippert’s gift, in combination with funds released by Governor Mike Beebe and the state legislature, will allow the School of Forest Resources and the Arkansas Forest Resources Center of the University of Arkansas to dramatically increase their research capabilities and continue a tradition of excellence in forestry education.

It’s doubtful Mr. Clippert could have envisioned the current School of Forest Resources when he came south from Michigan in 1948 at the invitation of his father-in-law, the late Henry Hearnsberger of Fordyce.

Mr. Clippert had been a bomber pilot and flight instructor in the Army Air Corps during World War II and during pre-flight training in Fayetteville, he met his future wife, Maxine Hearnsberger. The couple married in 1944 and moved to Dearborn, Michigan after the war, where Mr. Clippert planned to join his father in the brick business.

That was before Mr. Hearnsberger called. “My father-in-law was in the cross-tie business in Fordyce,” Mr. Clippert said. “There was a labor shortage after the war. International Paper needed pulpwood, and he prevailed on me to come south and work for him.”

Mr. Clippert moved to Arkansas in 1948 and a year later was in charge of the business, which he built into one of the most successful timber production and management enterprises in the region.

“Mr. Hearnsberger gave me the opportunity,” Mr. Clippert liked to say. “He threw me the ball and let me run with it.”

Maxine Clippert’s latest gift reinforces something Mr. Clippert told UAM officials years ago. “In the course of 50 years at Southern Pulpwood, I’ve had a number of UAM forestry graduates work for me. I’ve been very fortunate in life to be successful in business and what I’ve managed to achieve I owe to forestry. UAM has the only forestry school in Arkansas and I feel a special kinship to the program. I’ve always thought it was a great school and something we ought to support.”