

Opening remarks about Dr Clyde Eugene Connell
Made at the Annual Connell Lecture
Whitehead Auditorium, Valdosta State University
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Dr Clyde Connell had retired because of poor health when I came to Valdosta State more than 20 years ago, and, sadly, he died during my first spring here. I did meet him and had several brief conversations with him, certainly not enough to say that I knew him well. However, I have gleaned much about Clyde Connell through close associations with colleagues and friends he mentored during his long service as department head.

During these early years at Valdosta State, formative ones for me, I had the privilege of working with a diverse group of professionals, who despite disparate interests, abilities, and motivations worked exceedingly well together for the greater good of Valdosta State and the *higher* education of its students. They all had the utmost respect for Clyde Connell. They were dedicated teachers with high academic standards, and it is not mere coincidence that they were all mentored by Dr Connell.

Clyde Connell was shaped by the environment of southern Georgia. He grew up in the hamlet of Naylor just 14 miles distant, to the east of Valdosta. He roamed the woods and fields and waded, swam, and fished in the creeks and rivers. He graduated from Valdosta State, earned a doctorate from the University of Georgia in ecology and ornithology, and subsequently returned to Valdosta State to teach. As department head his dedication was renowned and infectious, and his unassuming leadership highly effective. I strongly suspect he must have seen his department as analogous with an ecosystem, vitally composed of multiple, diverse components each with unique attributes and an essential role, and I am certain he must have found this particular diverse assemblage of biologists captivating!

Last December, Dr Ed Sheeley, who many of you know and respect, retired after 35 years of excellent, dedicated service to Valdosta State. It was often remarked when Ed retired that an era had drawn to a close. This is true! For he *was* the last of that group who held in common mentorship by Dr Connell and immense respect for this truly decent and selfless human being. Dr Connell was fascinated by ecology and evolution, and it is entirely fitting that we gather this evening to consider the origins of humankind.

Thank you.

Richard Carter