

A LEGAL TITAN'S SOFTER SIDE



BEING MY OWN BOSS

Knox and Priscilla Haynsworth are active board members of Clement's Kindness, the charity they started in honor of their late son. Here, patients of the Bi-Lo Charities Children's Cancer Center visit the Children's Museum. KEN OSBURN/STAFF

Knox Haynsworth Jr. turns his eye to philanthropy, honoring his son's memory by helping others



Not one to let his "semi-retirement" keep him idle, attorney Knox Haynsworth hunts, golfs and enjoys twice weekly lunches with friends and former associates, including attorney Dean Rainey. KEN OSBURN/STAFF

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Knox Haynsworth Jr. and his wife Priscilla exhibit all the little intimacies of a couple who have spent nearly their entire lives together, celebrating good times and weathering excruciatingly difficult ones.

They finish each other's sentences and pair their combined memories to recount a shared story. He touches her leg to get her attention for a question; she reaches out to squeeze his hand when she leaves.

But it was really the tensile strength of a tracking band around the neck of a downed goose that saved their 52-year union.

A hunting enthusiast, Haynsworth had shot the banded goose, a prized rarity in the

hunting world, and sent it off to be mounted.

When the box arrived on the doorstep, Priscilla opened it and, assuming the thick red band was something put on by the taxidermist, proceeded to try to cut it off. It was too tough, though, so she gave up. When Haynsworth arrived home later that day, he was horrified to discover what she had done.

"The only banded goose I've ever shot in my life, and she tried to cut the band off," he exclaimed in mock horror.

Fortunately, he could turn the band around so the mauling was hidden, and the goose is displayed proudly atop his gun cabinet.

"So we avoided a divorce," he said with a laugh.

The lighthearted fellow telling that story in the wood-paneled study of the couple's home

"When I go, I would like to feel that my life in some way contributed back to this community."

KNOX HAYNSWORTH JR.

Greenville Online.com

CLIENT TO FRIEND

Knox Haynsworth talks about how one influential client became an unexpected friend in a video at GreenvilleOnline.com.

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off Crescent Avenue might be virtually unrecognizable to the scores of attorneys and businessmen who've crossed his path over the decades of his law career.

"Knox Haynsworth can be hard as nails when he needs to be," said Wanda Rice, who was his personal secretary for several years and still serves in a managing role at his firm.

A reputation for stern, no-nonsense dealings preceded Haynsworth everywhere he went, but it was only half of the legal titan's life. Rice learned it, she said, whenever his kids would call the office and his entire demeanor shifted instantly.

"That someone that hard could be that tender was a revelation to me," she said.

Haynsworth conceded with a laugh that he probably had something of a dual personality. It's the gentler side that has come to the fore in recent years as he has shifted his focus from hard-charging pioneer in labor law to grieving father and heartfelt philanthropist.

Clement and kindness

Haynsworth was enjoying a duck hunting trip to the coast of South Carolina in November 1998 when he got a middle-of-the-night call that changed his life forever.

Clement Haynsworth, Knox and Priscilla's youngest child, was a student at Coastal Carolina University when he was struck with a viral infection. With a 24-year-old's sense of invincibility, he didn't go to the hospital until it was too late.

Priscilla was in the mountains at the family's Caesars Head home, and her older son Knox III drove her to Conway. The couple was at the hospital when Clement woke briefly from his coma.

"The only words he said were, 'Where are my parents?'" Knox recalled. They were the last words he ever spoke.

"It was all very sudden. It was just over," Priscilla said.

The next day, Haynsworth resigned his managing partnership in his firm.

"I just lost interest in managing a law firm and just wanted to give it up," he said. "The fire was just smothered out."

It's a move he's never regretted, he said.

A colleague of Haynsworth's, Kathy Helms, had six months before lost her 6-year-old daughter to cancer. After Clement's death, the Haynsworths directed memorial donations to Children's Chance, a Columbia charity that Helms had established in honor of her daughter.

"Apparently an enormous amount of money, thousands of dollars, went to Children's Chance from Greenville," Haynsworth said.

In response, Helms set up a subset of Children's Chance in the Greenville Hospital System. She named it Clement's Kindness.

Clement's Kindness eventually officially separated from Children's Chance in order to be able to serve a broader population. Today Clement's Kindness works in conjunction with the Bi-Lo Charities Children's Cancer Center to provide emergency financial assistance to families of children with cancer or blood disorders. The charity also helps send kids to Camp Courage and on other family excursions.

Most families are financially self-sufficient until a cancer diagnosis, but mounting medical bills and constant appointments that often lead to one parent quitting a job can squeeze a family's budget quickly.

"That fund has enabled many, many families to get through this process," said Pam Broughton, social worker at the Cancer Center and Clement's Kindness board member. "You can't help but admire a couple that puts so much time and effort and so much of their memories about their son into something that has been able to help so many people."

Surrounded in a comfortable living room by scores of family photos — kids at every age, grandkids, mementos of special family moments — Haynsworth was noticeably enlivened when talking about Clement's Kindness and the work it does.

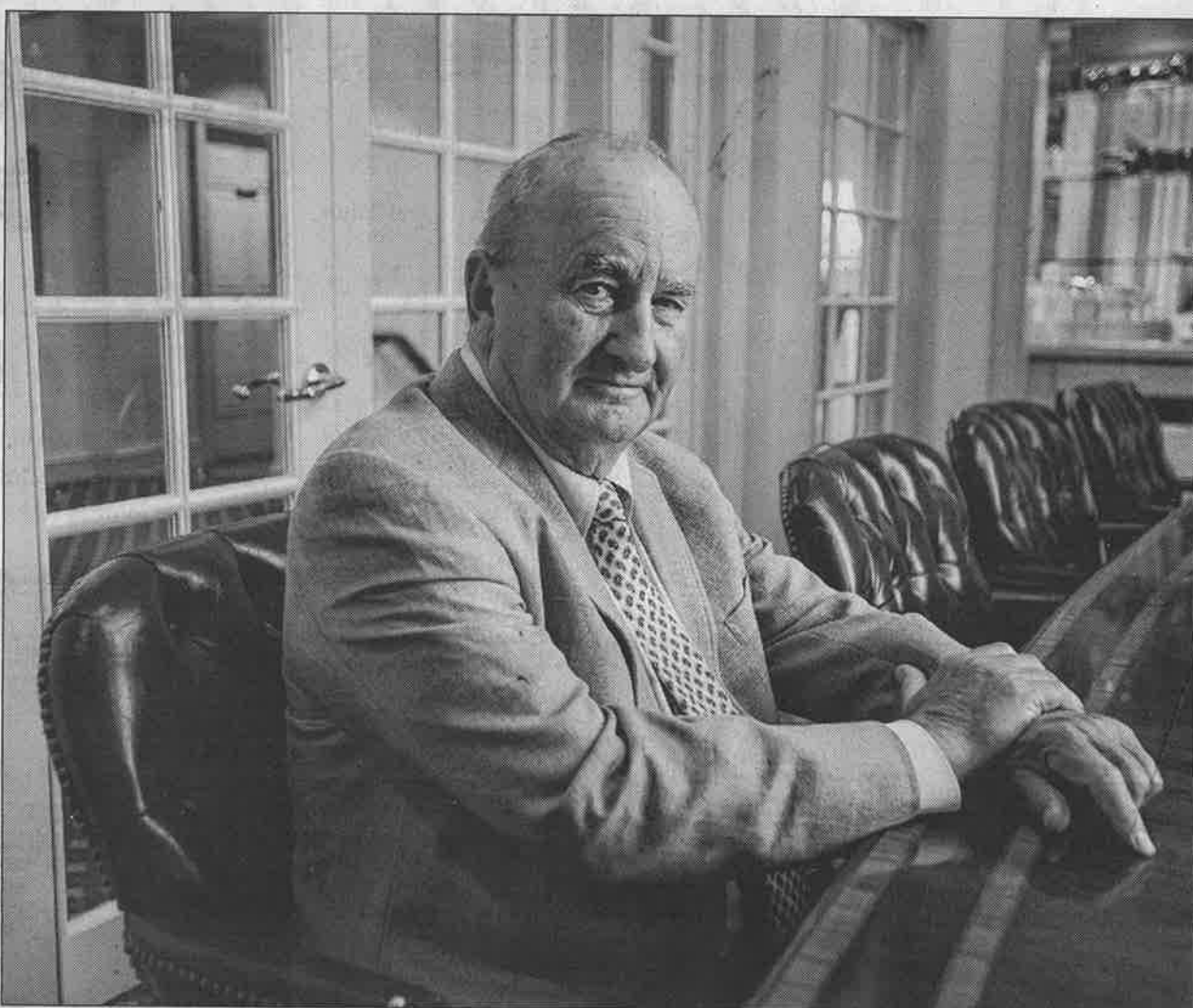
"The main function, as I see it, of Clement's Kindness is to keep these families together and get these kids cured so that they can lead a normal life," he said. "It's a wonderful way to grieve."

Young Knox, hard knocks

Anyone who grew up with Haynsworth might have been surprised years later to see him turn out so well. A confessed mischief-maker, Haynsworth said he spent his youth pulling pranks that, though mild by today's standards, left a wake of ill repute in his path.

Throwing eggs at houses, aiming for neighborhood cats with his BB gun, getting in fights he often lost. "I used to call them all lies, but I'm outnumbered. Too many people remember about it," Haynsworth said. "It astounds them I was able to make it to the age of 78."

When Priscilla was eager to buy the house where they now live, Haynsworth joked that if any of the same families were still in the neighborhood, "we wouldn't have it."



Knox Haynsworth started out as an associate in his grandfather's firm and went on to become a titan in labor law, working to keep unions at the height of their power from spreading into the South. HEIDI HEILBRUNN/STAFF

Transforming from a boy who was once bribed by neighborhood peers to stay home from the Saturday matinee to a fiercely loyal friend — "If you have his friendship, you have it for life," Rice said — Haynsworth said the due goes largely to his mother. He credits her for guiding him through his turbulent youth.

After Haynsworth's father died in a Civil Air Patrol plane crash when Haynsworth was only 9, his mother, Elizabeth, raised him alone (his sister was about 10 years older and married shortly after their father's death).

"She got me through those years," he said. And then, he added sheepishly, "she shipped me off to The Citadel. They straightened me out in a matter of months."

He spent two years there before transferring to the University of South Carolina. Though he hailed from a long lineage of attorneys — his grandfather H.J. Haynsworth founded the firm that is now Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, and his cousin was federal Judge Clement F. Haynsworth Jr. — he said he had no interest in pursuing the family business.

"The last thing in the world I wanted to be was a lawyer," he said. But a friend convinced him that law school would give him three more carefree years of fun, so he enrolled at USC Law.

It was during law school that he met and wooed his eventual bride. The quick-witted Priscilla was an ideal match for the charismatic young man, and the two wed in 1960.

Haynsworth insisted — and Priscilla said he's been insisting for years — that she's the one who proposed to him.

"I really didn't," she said. "I one day said to him — we were at lunch — 'If you're going to marry me, you need to tell me because if you're not, I'm going to Atlanta and I need a roommate.'"

"One of the very few times that he was speechless," she said with a laugh.

Following the law

After graduation from law school, Haynsworth

became an associate in his grandfather's firm. One of the jobs designated to the newbie attorneys was sorting and distributing the mail.

"None of the lawyers liked to handle labor cases," he said, so when letters arrived from the National Labor Relations Board, attorneys who had handled recent cases often shooed Haynsworth and his unwelcome delivery to the next guy in line.

Haynsworth asked each in turn if he could help on the case.

"Eventually after about a year, I'd had as much labor law experience as anybody in the firm," he said.

Over the next decade, Haynsworth would establish himself firmly as a specialist in the newly growing field of labor law, working exclusively for employers, often during union campaigns.

In 1969, he became embroiled in a hospital strike in Charleston, a tense situation that intertwined union efforts at expanding into the South and the civil rights movement.

In the spring of that year, about 400 hospital employees went on strike demanding collective-bargaining rights. Haynsworth and an associate in the Thompson Ogletree and Haynsworth firm, Jim Baldwin, represented the hospital.

The union had paired with a civil rights organization, creating a charged situation of racial tension.

The previous year had seen the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in the midst of the sanitation workers strike in Memphis and, closer to home, the deaths of three black student demonstrators in what became known as the Orangeburg Massacre.

"It was so awful," Haynsworth said, recalling the stress of the situation, which included an intense presence of law enforcement from local, state and federal agencies to prevent violence.

Longstanding public policy prevented state agencies from engaging in collective bargaining, so Haynsworth and Baldwin said their role was to argue in court for mea-

sures to control picketing that would block the hospital entrances and could lead to violence.

"If it had been a private company, our role would have been much broader. We would have been trying to help them convince the employees that they didn't need a union," Baldwin said. "We never got that far because it was against public policy. We were pretty limited to ... keep(ing) a lid on it."

Haynsworth feared the 113 days of the strike might have been his last in labor law.

"I would have bet you anything I wouldn't be practicing labor law after that," he said. "I thought my name was mud, to tell you the truth."

The ordeal, though, proved otherwise, he said. Asked to speak all over the country about his experiences, Haynsworth garnered a slew of new clients in the process. He marked it as a significant turning point in his career.

"It was the horse we rode," he said.

Going his own way

In 1972, deciding they wanted to conduct business a little differently, Haynsworth, Baldwin and Jim Miles struck out on their own to create a new firm.

"I just knew he could do it, I guess because they had the right motive," Priscilla said. "It wasn't to make money. It was really to right what they thought was wrong."

Haynsworth and Baldwin said their role was often part attorney, part human resources consultant. Typically called in by a company in the few months leading up to a vote by employees on whether to join a union, the attorneys said they often spent time in those days helping employers learn how to better — and legally — communicate with their workers.

"It was the right thing to do, and it was the best way to keep the unions out," Haynsworth said. "Everybody wants to be treated with dignity and respect. A lot of times it boils down to that."

The firm, buoyed by unions' regular efforts to

make headway into the South and its own remarkable success in rebuffing them, grew from its initial three lawyers to more than 70 spread over eight regional offices, all of it overseen by Haynsworth as managing partner.

"He lived and breathed this stuff," said Rice. "It was about winning and winning for the right reasons. He was just passionate about it."

The job was not without its trials, often requiring extensive travel, four or five days a week for weeks on end.

Haynsworth acknowledged that laid most of the work of raising the couple's three children on Priscilla's sturdy but occasionally burdened shoulders.

"I knew, and I explained to the children, that he's gone not because he wants to be gone, not because he doesn't want to be there, but this is the nature of his job," she said.

"You can't make it hard on him, although I did. There were times I did make it hard on him," she admitted with a laugh.

In 2004, the firm, which at that time was known as Haynsworth Baldwin Johnson and Graves, merged with Ogletree Deakins, another firm that had gotten its start in Greenville and grown into a national labor and employment law powerhouse.

Haynsworth calls himself "semi-retired" now. He has an office at the firm, and he's there most days he's in town, though he now focuses primarily on client relations rather than active cases.

And he spends time working for Clement's Kindness, where he and Priscilla both serve on the board and stay active in special events.

After reflecting on career and family, Haynsworth said he's proud of the things he's accomplished and honored to leave behind what he hopes is a fond legacy.

"When I go, I would like to feel that my life in some way contributed back to this community," he said.



The Haynsworths with Susan Reid, left, chair of Clement's Kindness, a charity they founded. KEN OSBURN/STAFF