



Dennis Vernon Chastain

October 4, 1952 - November 21, 2025

Dennis Vernon Chastain
Pickens, South Carolina

Dennis Vernon Chastain, age 73, loving husband for 46 years to Jane Fields Chastain, died peacefully and unexpectedly in his sleep at home on November 21, 2025.

Born on October 4, 1952, in Greenville SC, Dennis was the cherished son of the late Artis and Sarah (Canham) Chastain.

Dennis grew up in Slater, SC, in what he believed to be the best place and the best period of time. He earned his BS and Master's Degrees from Winthrop College where he met Jane, the love of his life. He lived his adult life on his family's homeplace near Table Rock where his ancestors have been deeply rooted since 1796. He was honored to be the recipient of Upstate Forever's Extraordinary Achievement Award for his more than 40 years of work as a writer, historian, botanist, guide and conservation advocate.

Dennis was an award-winning outdoor writer, historian, tour guide and interpretive naturalist. He wrote feature articles for many years for South Carolina Wildlife Magazine and other publications. He led tours and field trips for Clemson's Master Naturalist program and several other groups. He made

a number of important discoveries including wildflowers never recorded in Pickens County, the remnants of long-forgotten roads and Native American trails, and numerous prehistoric rock carvings on Pinnacle and Table Rock Mountains. Dennis was once described by The Greenville News as a “modern day Daniel Boone”.

Dennis was the Blue Wall Vice President of the Pickens County Historical Society, a member of the Pickens County 250 Committee and a member of Upstate Forever.

Dennis is survived by his wife, Jane Fields Chastain, his sister, Dorothy Chastain Cantrell, his brother and sister-in-law David and Patricia DuBose Chastain and his niece Laurie Chastain.

In addition to his parents, he was recently predeceased by his nephew, John Chastain, on 11-16-2025.

An informal ‘Gathering of Family and Friends Drop In’ to celebrate Dennis will be held at the Heritage Pavilion at Hagood Mill (138 Hagood Mill Road Pickens) on Saturday, December 6 from 2-4 PM.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Dennis’s memory to Hagood Mill Foundation, PO Box 98, Pickens SC, 29671; or to the Pickens County Historical Society, PO Box 775, Pickens SC, 29671.

Mountain View Funeral Home is serving the Chastain family.

Previous Events

Gathering of Family and Friends

DEC 6. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Heritage Pavilion at Hagood Mill
138 Hagood Mill Rd
Pickens, SC 29671

Tribute Wall

MH

“ *When we were teenagers, Dennis would gather group of us and we would tour the waterfalls trails all around the area. He was a steward of nature even then. One such excursion introduced us to Hagood Mill's petroglyphs. I remember his wonder of those who came before us so long ago to make their marks on that stone.*

Mariel Barney Hunkeler - December 05, 2025 at 09:50 PM

RA

“ *Robert A. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dennis Vernon Chastain.*

Robert A. - December 03, 2025 at 01:02 PM



“ I met Dennis on the summit of Sassafras Mountain during the Table Rock fire of 2016. We were all trying to get a better look at what was happening out from where we located. I've read his Jocassee Journal and field notes column for the last 10+ years, having always enjoyed the tidbits I learned of the Oolenoy River Valley. Historically and right up to the modern era. Dennis probably knew more about this area than anyone and that was always intriguing to me having run and hiked up, down and across the *blue wall* for the last 15 years.

My thoughts are with the family and all those who (like me) we're inspired by his on the ground insight and heart for our beautiful Southern Appalachians.

May his memory forever live in this place and continue to inspire.

*Best always,
Tad*

<https://www.dnr.sc.gov/managed/wild/jocassee/newsletters/jocvol23no1.pdf>



Tad Lee - December 03, 2025 at 01:08 AM

HC

“ Hughes C. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dennis Vernon Chastain.

Hughes C. - November 29, 2025 at 09:52 AM

CR

“ Cynthia Roach lit a candle in memory of
Dennis Vernon Chastain



Cynthia Roach - November 28, 2025 at 06:20 PM

JG

“ Sending love and prayers to the Chastain family.
Jane, We are so sorry for your loss and are here if you need
anything. We love you!
The Gilstrap Family
(Tim, Jennifer, Dawson and Jessie Lee)

Jennifer Gilstrap - November 26, 2025 at 10:59 PM

PT

“ Patty Turner lit a candle in memory of Dennis
Vernon Chastain



patty turner - November 26, 2025 at 10:56 AM

MF

“ Maxine Poole Farrell lit a candle in memory of
Dennis Vernon Chastain



Maxine Poole Farrell - November 25, 2025 at 09:05 PM

RR

“ I can't remember not knowing Dennis. Our parents were next-door neighbors from the time. I was about six months old. The Slater Marietta community was very close knit. Dennis was very popular in our high school. All of my life I have been proud to tell people that I counted him as a friend.

Randy Reynolds - November 25, 2025 at 09:00 PM

GK

Dennis was one of those quiet fellows who made a tremendous impression on anyone he met with his incredible intellect and knowledge of SC, hunting, and the outdoors. I had the pleasure of meeting him in the Lowcountry then spending time with him in the Pickens county mountains learning about the area and hunting bears. I truly miss him and look forward to seeing him in Heaven! - Gene Kodama

Gene Kodama - December 03, 2025 at 01:02 PM

PH

“ Pat Hawkins lit a candle in memory of Dennis
Vernon Chastain



Pat Hawkins - November 25, 2025 at 08:39 PM

WJ

“ Prayers and love to all the family. John and
Wanda Cantrell Johnson



Wanda Johnson - November 25, 2025 at 06:34 PM

TJ

“ Prayers of peace to all of the family. Dennis was a true naturalist with a wealth of knowledge. We all thank him for his works in preservation of Pickens County.



Tonya Bishop Jordan - November 25, 2025 at 06:02 PM

RC

“ Robin C. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dennis Vernon Chastain.

Robin C. - November 25, 2025 at 05:51 PM

RW

“ Jane, I am so sorry for the loss of your precious husband. Hugs and prayers for you! Love you, Ruth Ann

Ruth Ann Wilson - November 25, 2025 at 04:02 PM

CB

“ Jane, my heart goes out to you at this news. My first memory of Dennis was through the Master Naturalist class when he introduced himself to us as the Doctor of Scatology! Over the years since then he has popped up at so many events across the Upstate, always with a kind word and a great story or memory to share with all of us. He will be greatly missed.

Cindy Blair - November 25, 2025 at 06:40 AM



“ Jane and other family members are in my thoughts and prayers during this sad time.

Ed Ninestein - November 25, 2025 at 03:44 AM



“ *I am sorry for there loss he was distant cousin*

Karla Phelps - November 24, 2025 at 06:28 PM

JM

“ *Dennis was a mentor and friend to us, among so many. His wisdom of the natural world enriched my husband's books and I was honored to feature Dennis as a "Champion of Nature" last year, in my newsletter. What a friend of these mountains and what a friend to Mother Earth! Thank you for all your fine work, Dennis. We who love the natural beauty of the Upstate are forever in your debt. Condolences to Jane and his family.*

Jeanne Malmgren - November 24, 2025 at 06:25 PM



<https://jeannemalmgren.substack.com/p/champions-of-nature>

Jeanne Malmgren - March 07 at 12:56 PM

LB

“ *Sending my love and condolences to you, Jane. You were so good to me when I became a widow not long ago and now you know this grief. I am grateful for your and Dennis' friendship. Dennis touched so many lives.*

Lee Gordon Brockington - November 24, 2025 at 06:13 PM

KP

“ *Mrs Chastain! We are so sorry to hear about your husband Dennis passing away! We will keep you in our prayers! The Powell's Kaye Ricky & Lacie*

Kaye Powell - November 24, 2025 at 06:03 PM

GJ

“ I certainly I second Wayne Kelly's comments! He became a lifelong friend in the search for Native America artifacts South Carolina. and there much that Dennis didn't know about his beloved Blue Ridge mountains!

The finest thing now, to sum up Dennis, I don't he ever made an enemy. There a few times some people would like for him to talking though.....!

We have lost a tremedous friend, mentor abd lover of our state.

He will be sorely miss missed!

Goodbye, Dennis

gene johnston - November 24, 2025 at 04:06 PM

DD

“ Deborah Dugas lit a candle in memory of Dennis Vernon Chastain



Deborah Dugas - November 24, 2025 at 03:49 PM

RS

“ Renee Stewart lit a candle in memory of Dennis Vernon Chastain



Renee Stewart - November 24, 2025 at 03:27 PM

DC

“ Dorothy Cantrell lit a candle in memory of Dennis Vernon Chastain



Dorothy Cantrell - November 24, 2025 at 02:02 PM

CT

“ Jane,I’m so sorry for your loss. I loved talking and seeing you on Sunday’s. He will be missed by many I’m sure. Prayers to you now and through out the coming days. 🙏

Connie Trotter - November 24, 2025 at 12:00 PM

WK

“ Our good friend, whose vast storehouse of knowledge of our history, lore, and flora and fauna was unsurpassed, is profoundly missed. There was no one like Dennis Chastain. This loss to Pickens County and the South Carolina Upcountry is irreplaceable. Our Blue Wall Vice President was a foundational cornerstone of the Pickens County Historical Society. His contributions to us and this place were immeasurable. Wayne Kelley

Wayne Kelley - November 24, 2025 at 11:57 AM

FR

“ Dennis is a gem, a rare treasure, who will be missed by many. Condolences to Jane and his family.

Francine Robertshaw - November 24, 2025 at 11:12 AM

RB

“ We are so sorry for your loss Dorothy Chastain and family. I didn't know your brother but I know he will be missed by many. Praying God will surround you with his love and comfort during this sad time Curtis & Rachel Atkins Branch and Virginia Atkins.

Rachel Branch - November 24, 2025 at 11:11 AM

TF

“ Taylor (Bentley) Hayes and family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Dennis Vernon Chastain.



Taylor (Bentley) Hayes and family - November 24, 2025 at 10:55 AM

JG

“ Janet Buchanan Gravely lit a candle in memory of Dennis Vernon Chastain



Janet Buchanan Gravely - November 24, 2025 at 10:50 AM

SK

Jane so sorry for your loss, many fond memories of you and Dennis at Jeni Lee's! He will be missed and never forgotten an icon!
Sam Kleckley

Sam Kleckley - November 25, 2025 at 06:54 AM

SK

Jane - this is such sad news. I met you and Dennis years ago when he worked with me when I was at DHEC to reclassify several streams in the area. He was a fountain of knowledge about the upstate. He took my husband and me to a "secret" place to see Oconee Bells in bloom. Please accept my condolences. You and South Carolina have lost a great human being.

Sally Knowles, Columbia, SC

Sally Knowles - November 25, 2025 at 11:17 AM

JF

Dennis was a great writer and a valued contributor to South Carolina Wildlife magazine. His feature stories were always a favorite with our readers. I am sad to learn of his passing and send my prayers to his family and friends.

*Joey Frazier
editor-in-chief
South Carolina Wildlife*

Joey Frazier - November 26, 2025 at 09:11 AM