

## Protecting a National Treasure

# G. Wayne Clough, Ph.D. '69



Photo courtesy of the Georgia Institute of Technology

12th Secretary of the Smithsonian: G. Wayne Clough

On Friday afternoon, March 14, as Wayne Clough (pronounced “cluff”) traveled on a train bound for New York, his cell phone rang. On the other end was Roger Sant, Regents Chairman of the Smithsonian Institution, with important news. The museum’s board, who had interviewed Clough earlier that day, had unanimously elected him the 12th Secretary of the Smithsonian. Clough clearly hadn’t expected to receive word so soon: “I was in a car with a gaggle of young girls. There was lots of noise, and Roger Sant calls and says, ‘This is Roger.’ I asked, ‘Who?’” recalled Clough, who added, “I was surprised — and gratified.”

At the news conference held in the Smithsonian’s Castle the next day, Clough said his appointment “comes with an enormous responsibility. This is a treasure of our country, and it needs to move forward.” Indeed, steering the Smithsonian in the best of times is a formidable challenge, and even more so now. The institution sits in need of an estimated \$2.5 billion to restore leaky structures that endanger its collections.

Often referred to as “the nation’s attic,” the Smithsonian is the largest museum complex in the world, with 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research centers. A repository of American history, it houses everything from moon rocks to the Hope Diamond, the original Star-Spangled Banner, the Wright Flyer, space capsules, and over 137 million artifacts, works of art, and scientific specimens. Last year alone, more than 24 million people from around the world visited the museums and zoo, and there were nearly 183 million virtual visits via [www.smithsonian.org](http://www.smithsonian.org).

Clough’s credentials to protect and serve the Smithsonian are impressive. As president of Georgia Tech since 1994, he’s set records as a fundraiser, boosted student enrollment, increased support for research, and established several campuses abroad, all of which have transformed the Atlanta school into a Top 10 public university. For his teaching and research, he has received nine national awards from the American Society of Civil Engineers and was twice-awarded civil engineering’s Norman Medal — in 1992 and 1996. He currently serves on the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and on the National Science Board.

Clough is the second Smithsonian Secretary from Berkeley. Ira Michael Heyman, a former law professor and chancellor, served from 1994 to 1999 and is credited with extending the museum’s reach far beyond the Beltway by, among other things, launching the first website and initiating traveling exhibits.



Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Castle

He also oversaw the groundbreaking for the National Museum of the American Indian.

“I know the Smithsonian, for many people in their minds, is about the past,” said Clough. “But it is not. It is about America’s future....we need to reinvigorate the excitement about the Smithsonian.”

— Lisa Harrington