

KENDALL APRIL 4, 2017 3:24 PM

What will happen to Janet Reno’s famed rustic Kendall homestead? The news is good.



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The natural oasis in the middle of Kendall where Janet Reno’s mother built a family home by hand, and where the former U.S. attorney general lived most of her life until her death last year, will be preserved and donated to Miami Dade College, the family says.

The wooded property and the rough-hewn family cottage were on the edge of the Everglades when the modest wood house went up in the 1940s. The site, around four acres, now sits a few blocks from the Palms at Town and Country mall, but in spirit and feel remains a throwback to the Miami of yore and miles away from the suburban sprawl that surrounds it. The Reno ranch and the home at its center, which is reached by a dirt road, are completely screened off from view by thickets of trees and vegetation.

“It’s amazing,” said Coral Gables attorney Alan Greer, who is representing the Reno family in negotiations with the college. “It’s like going back in time.”



Former President Clinton remembers Janet Reno

Former President Bill Clinton remembers the first female U.S. attorney general, Janet Reno, as he gives her eulogy on Sunday, December 10, 2016.

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Greer said the parties are ironing out a final agreement for donation of the ranch, which would become part of the environmental center at MDC's Kendall campus. The center, nestled in a similar natural subtropical hammock, is a half mile south of the Reno property off Southwest 112th Avenue. The Renos were well known for their love of the outdoors and environmental activism.

"We're working on all the details," Greer said. "I'm confident we're going to get there. It's in conformity with Janet's wishes."

A spokesman for the college declined a request for comment.

News of the likely donation, in the works since Reno died last November at 78, leaked out over the weekend after her lone surviving sibling, Maggy Hurchalla, hosted a Saturday afternoon party at the ranch to say goodbye to the place.

Hurchalla told attendees about the impending donation, and Coconut Grove activist Glenn Terry, a longtime Reno family friend, spilled the beans on his blog, [TheGroveGuy](#).

"It's a cool story," Terry said. "They want it preserved, and they wanted it to go to a respected institution."

Reno's will, originally drafted in 2008, left the property to a trust to benefit Hurchalla and their brothers, Robert and Mark, and stipulated that it should be sold upon the death of the latter two. But both died before Reno: Mark, an adventurer and outdoorsman who lived on the property in a chickee hut behind the house, in 2014, and Robert, a longtime opinion columnist for [Newsday](#) in New York, in 2012.

The will also gave the University of Miami first dibs on the property under the condition that it be preserved "in perpetuity."

"The homestead is a unique parcel of real estate and has historical importance," the will reads.

But UM apparently was unable to make the preservation commitment, Terry said. MDC, on the other hand, was amenable to the conditions and also geographically close.

Reno's idiosyncratic mother, journalist Jane Wood Reno who once worked for the [Miami News](#), built the house almost single-handedly in the late '40s. She and her husband, Henry Reno, a reporter for the [Miami Herald](#), raised their four rambunctious children at the home.

At Saturday's party, Terry said, "Maggy talked about how great it was to walk around barefoot and wrestle with her brothers."

The famed screened porch at the front of the house saw fundraisers for Reno when she ran for Miami-Dade state attorney and entertained such famous figures as former President Bill Clinton, under whom Reno served as attorney general.

The property is also home to about a dozen screeching peacocks, all named Horace.



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