

## A legacy of generosity

Donald '70 and Jane (Lorang) CST'72 Rysavy built successful and meaningful careers around helping people. And now, with a generous estate gift commitment — which will establish a First Generation Initiative Endowed Scholarship in their names — that legacy of helping others will continue long after they are gone.

The couple knows that college costs can be daunting.

“We both came from large Catholic families and because we were the oldest in our families, there was virtually no chance of getting financial help from our parents,” Donald Rysavy said. “Both sets of parents were great people, but lower middle class. With seven kids in one family and six in the other, and just trying to make ends meet, there wasn’t any extra cash.

“Both of us had to really scramble to be able to get to college and yet it was expected we would go to college one way or the other,” he added. “The First Generation Initiative really resonated with me. When Jane and I were going to school, we worked every summer. I was fortunate to stay at home, and with loans and scholarship, I managed to get through.”

As a National Merit finalist, Donald Rysavy had the added bonus of being offered a full-ride scholarship and his choice of colleges. He started out on a science track at Saint Mary’s, but was destined for another path.

“To be honest, I wasn’t mature enough to diligently stay with it,” he said. After being called into the academic dean’s office, where Donald was told he was in danger of losing his scholarship, he did some major reevaluating and began studying history and philosophy.

From there, he said, only good things began to happen, starting with meeting Jane at the start of his junior year. “She went to the College of Saint Teresa in the nursing program, and she was a dutiful scholar,” he said. “My grades improved significantly, and a big part of it was because of her. We studied together as much as we dated.”

He also recalls two professors, Father Andrew Fabian, OC, Ph.D., OP, AFSC and Bill Crozier, Ph.D., encouraging him to take the LSAT and apply to law school — advice that would change his life.



After attending law school at the University of Minnesota, Donald Rysavy took a job with an Austin, Minn., firm and was made a partner at Hoverston, Strom, Johnson, and Rysavy Law Firm within a couple of years. For 21 years, he worked in litigation and served as a prosecutor for the City of Austin.

Then, in 1995, after an opening on the bench, Donald was appointed to serve as a Minnesota Third Judicial District judge. He continued his judicial career for 19 years until his retirement.

“Being a judge was where I was supposed to be,” he said. “At that district court level, you can see everything from conciliation cases to first degree murder cases, and I did.”

Jane Rysavy also had a successful career, starting out as a psychiatric nurse at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis and, after moving to Austin, teaching nursing at Austin Community College (now Riverland Community College). She worked her way up to director of the program before retirement.

With their estate gift, the Rysavys know they’re helping many First Generation Scholars start out their lives and careers on a positive note. “I’ve always been a proponent of casting bread on the water,” Donald Rysavy said. “A little act of kindness in the beginning can grow to something tremendous. This program has as much potential as anything I’ve seen to be able to do that. It has the potential to not only help the individual who gets the scholarship, but also their families and their communities. Maybe they’ll go on to do things above and beyond what we could have ever done.”