

The Leader

A newsletter for benefactors, alumni, and friends of Saint Mary's University



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Couple quietly leaves \$5 million estate gift to Saint Mary's

Saint Mary's University recently became the beneficiaries of more than \$5 million from the Lucille G. Stiever estate - the biggest estate gift in university history.

Although Lucille G. Stiever and her husband, Robert J. Stiever '49, who preceded her in death, will never hear the thanks or get to know the many students who will benefit from the scholarship support generated from this gift, this is exactly the way this humble and generous couple would have wanted it. Friends and neighbors describe the couple as quiet and unassuming.

Robert joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and served in the Asiatic Pacific Theatre before his honorable discharge in 1946. He graduated from Saint Mary's in 1949. He also pursued graduate studies at both Marquette University in Milwaukee and the University of Minnesota.

Robert married Lucille Giblin of Caledonia in 1961. Lucille grew up near Caledonia on a farm originally purchased by her grandparents after their immigration from Ireland.

Stiever Gift continued on page 4



Robert Stiever '49



Lucille Stiever

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.”

Former professor honors family, late father with scholarship and bequest

Orest Ochrymowycz '57, Ph.D., has been padding along Saint Mary's paths and terraces for 70 years — and paving a way for future students to do the same.

Fleeing Ukraine after World War II in 1949, Orest's parents, Leo and Sophia, brought him and his three siblings to the U.S. by way of a United Nations relief agency. Dropped into the small town of Wabasha in southeast Minnesota, Leo began providing for his family by working as a farmhand.

"He wanted to learn English and become meaningfully and significantly employed," Dr. Ochrymowycz said of his father. "But, he couldn't speak English and wasn't going to learn it by talking to cows." A groundskeeping and janitorial job opened at then Saint Mary's College. Leo accepted that role, which ultimately changed his life, and the lives of his entire family.

At 16, Dr. Orest Ochrymowycz began milking cows on a dairy farm owned by then Saint Mary's College. The farm later became the Old Village (Ek Family Village). He worked 10-hour days, six days a week, earning 50 cents an hour.

Meanwhile, while working as a janitor, his father — an educated professor of classics who taught and spoke several languages while living in Ukraine — would spout off Greek and Latin poetry to the seminarians who would stop and talk with him. "They couldn't figure out how this janitor pushing a broom down Saint Mary's Hall could quote Greek and Latin authors," said Dr. Ochrymowycz.

Two years later, Saint Mary's administration quickly needed a substitute German teacher. Someone suggested Dr. Leo Ochrymowycz.

"President Ambrose Grobell took away his broom and gave him a piece of chalk," Dr. Ochrymowycz said. "He could barely speak English, but because he was teaching German, that wasn't a problem. Five years later, he became department chair."

Dr. Leo Ochrymowycz would go on to teach for nearly 30 years before retiring in the late 1970s.

"He continued to teach a couple of classes part-time, but just couldn't seem to leave the place," Dr. Ochrymowycz said. And, because he helped bring soccer — a sport he loved to play growing up in Ukraine — to the university, he never really had to leave.

"He would buy cheap bouncy balls and teach us how to control them," Peter Klein '76, recalls. Klein was on the first university soccer club team, which soon became an official college-sponsored team. "He told me later that he did that so we'd learn how to control the ball. If we could learn to work with something that was uncontrollable during practices, we'd have no problem guiding the normal-weighted soccer ball down the field during games."

After Dr. Leo Ochrymowycz died, Klein and a few of those inaugural teammates requested that the college name their training and game space Ochrymowycz Field.

"Dr. Leo was the teacher who had the biggest impact on my life. He truly cared. He taught me how to think out of the box and to innovate when you don't have what you need. Through soccer, he showed us a passion and a love for life," he said.

Dr. Orest Ochrymowycz followed in his father's footsteps, graduating from Saint Mary's in 1957 and returning to teach in 1962. For nearly 40 years, he'd walk the steps of Saint Mary's Hall, just as his father had, uttering greetings in six languages — Ukrainian, English, Polish, Russian, German, and Spanish.

When his father died in 1983, Dr. Ochrymowycz started a scholarship fund.

"So many of us were part of this place," he said, mentioning that while he and his father taught at the college, so, too, did his first wife, Jane. Additionally, his two brothers also graduated from Saint Mary's. What started out very humbly has grown substantially, he says, in part thanks to others who have also donated to the scholarship fund.

"We're so very grateful for what Saint Mary's did for our family," Dr. Ochrymowycz said, so much so he has also left a bequest to Saint Mary's. "I just love the place. It's been home, a second home, to us all."



Orest Ochrymowycz



Leo Ochrymowycz

Stiever Gift continued from page 1

She was very proud of her Irish heritage. They enjoyed the farm and country home for many years, and also had a residence in St. Paul, Minn.

Robert was an economist and accountant for the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and retired after 40 years. Lucille retired from the Ramsey County Public Library after 30 years as the office and property manager.

Robert was a hobbyist and sports fan who enjoyed baseball, hockey, football, fishing, stamp and coin collecting, snowmobiling, and investment finances. Both Stievers stayed abreast of current events and local politics. They also loved traveling extensively and never missed the Minnesota Twins spring training camp each year.

Both Robert and Lucille were lifelong learners, and both were avid readers. It was their desire that their estate gift be used for undergraduate students on the Winona Campus with financial need so that more students would be able to afford a college education.

Saint Mary's looks forward to many years of providing scholarships from this generous gift.

ABOUT THE LEADER

The stories and successes shared in each issue of *The Leader* highlight the extraordinary impact benefactors are making on the programs and people at Saint Mary's through their leadership gifts. *The Leader* is a quarterly publication.

For more information about any of the stories printed in this publication or how to make a gift to Saint Mary's University, contact:

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Leadership Society

Vision, compassion, and commitment are all characteristics of leadership. Each year hundreds of alumni, parents, and friends provide leadership support to Saint Mary's. The Leadership Society recognizes generous individuals and organizations who give \$1,000 or more to Saint Mary's University on an annual basis. The generosity of this group enables Saint Mary's to enhance

the outstanding academic, leadership, and service-learning experiences we offer our students. Whether left unrestricted to the Saint Mary's Fund or designated to specific initiatives, leadership gifts make a real difference in transforming the lives of our students.

2020-2021 Leadership Society Honor Roll

Gifts of \$1,000 or more received between June 1, 2020 and Oct. 1, 2020.

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Dr. Jeffrey T. '77 and Christine Bonk

Judge Arthur J. '71 and Kate (Fromelt) CST'71 Boylan

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