



# Giving Back Big

Several alumni have given gifts of \$1 million or more not only to build the McNamara Alumni Center, University of Minnesota Gateway, but to create a magnificent campus home for alumni, students, and friends. By Shelly Fling

## Richard “Pinky” McNamara

As a student in the mid-1950s, Richard “Pinky” McNamara was known as a tough Gopher halfback who sometimes studied football moves before schoolwork. More than 40 years later, the 1956 graduate of the College of Liberal Arts is still remembered for his gridiron accomplishments but is even better known for his generous gifts to his alma mater, which he credits for making him successful in business and in life.



*Pinky McNamara and his wife, Sharon ('67), at the alumni center's naming ceremony October 29, 1999.*

McNamara, who grew up poor with five brothers in a single-parent home in Hastings, Minnesota, recalls listening to Gopher football games on Saturday afternoons with his brothers, dreaming of someday playing in Memorial Stadium. Three of the McNamara boys did go on to play for the Gophers, including Pinky. At first, however, University coaches thought Pinky was too small to play in the Big Ten—until they saw him play for Stout Institute and offered him a football scholarship.

McNamara recalls wandering a bit aimlessly through the academic side of his student career, so he sought guidance from a student counselor, Vivian Hewer. Despite his football schedule and working 40 hours a week, McNamara was determined to finish his degree in four years and asked Hewer for help in getting it done. Hewer worked with McNamara for two years and then sent him to adviser Mabel Powers, who helped him design an interdepartmental major—actually four minors in political science, history, humanities, and speech.

Once he graduated, McNamara applied the patience and persistence he learned as a student and athlete to business and then

entrepreneurship. He found that he loved to turn things around—to buy floundering companies and bring them to full potential. In 1988 he founded Activar, an Edina-based umbrella company for 15 such resurrected companies. In recent years, revenues have exceeded \$100 million.

Over the years, McNamara has made numerous gifts to the University, including a 1992 gift to the College of Liberal Arts to improve undergraduate registration and advising. The advising center is now named after Hewer and Powers.

In fall of 1998, McNamara announced that he wanted to do more to improve the student experience and made one of the largest single gifts ever to the University: \$10 million to be divided among the College of Liberal Arts, Men's Athletics, and the new alumni center. The McNamara Alumni Center, University of Minnesota Gateway—recipient of \$3 million of the gift—is not only a home for returning alumni, it is also a welcoming place for prospective students and their parents and a resource for current students seeking mentors and other connections with alumni.

## Curt and Arleen Carlson

Curt Carlson ('37), founder of one of the biggest privately owned companies in the country and the University of Minnesota's largest individual benefactor, continued to remember the University even after his death in early 1999.

Carlson showed entrepreneurial tendencies at an early age, delivering newspapers and caddying at golf courses near his home as a kid. Money was short for just about everyone when he decided to attend the University in the mid-1930s, in the middle of the Depression, but he paid for his tuition with entrepreneurial zeal and sales and marketing insight. He oversaw paper routes, sold trinkets, and even launched a poster-board advertising operation catering to area businesses wanting to reach students in the fraternities and sororities.

Needless to say, Carlson's entrepreneurialism paid off in the years that followed. In 1938 he founded what



*Curt and Arleen Carlson met at the University in the mid-1930s. Curt died in February 1999.*

would become Minnetonka-based Carlson Companies, Inc., a \$7.8 billion travel and marketing company with 50,000 employees and hotel and restaurant holdings around the world. But Carlson would never forget his beloved alma mater. He credited the University with his success in business and held a fondness for it simply because the U was where he met Arleen Martin, who would become his wife and an influence in his business.

Carlson made his first gift to the University in 1952—\$500 to sponsor an economics conference. His total giving to the University is nearly \$47 million and included \$10 million in 1993 for the new Carlson School of Management and \$25 million in 1986 for the Minnesota Campaign (\$18 million of which was designated for the Carlson School). Several months after Carlson's death at age 84 in February 1999, the Carlson family announced that their husband and father had left a final gift to the University: \$10 million, including \$2 million for the McNamara Alumni Center (the other \$8 million was earmarked for the Carlson School).

The \$2 million will be recognized in the naming of the Curtis L. and Arleen Carlson Heritage Gallery. Connected to Memorial Hall by the reassembled Memorial Stadium Arch, the Heritage Gallery is a 2,600-square-foot tribute to the accomplishments of the students, alumni, and faculty of the University over its 150-year history. The gallery will include timelines, memorabilia, inventions, photographs, videos, audio, and the stories of artists, scientists, and entrepreneurs who studied or taught at the U and worked to better the world.



*Kenneth and Helen Heggenhaugen became acquainted when she asked him to donate to the Memorial Stadium fund.*

## Kenneth and Helen Heggenhaugen

**K**enneth and Helen Heggenhaugen both grew up in south Minneapolis. He sat behind her at South High School (her maiden name was Heggen), but they didn't become more than acquaintances until they were students at the University in the mid-1920s. Helen was raising money for the Memorial Stadium fund drive and persuaded Kenneth to donate \$10.

Helen earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in the early '30s and then taught at Minneapolis South for three decades. Kenneth earned his degree in business in 1931 and went on to work for the State of Minnesota in various bureaus and agencies. Throughout the Heggenhaugens' lives and marriage they have been strong advocates of education.

Their passion for the University is due in part to Dr. Raymond Scallen, who earned his degree in medicine from the University in 1952 and whom the Heggenhaugens claim saved Kenneth's life when he was dying of a heart condition some 20 years ago. They decided to commit \$1 million of their estate to the University, which will be recognized in the Kenneth B. and Helen E. Heggenhaugen Conference Center inside the McNamara Alumni Center. According to their wishes, the remainder of their estate will be used to set up an unrestricted endowment fund to benefit medical students, research, and education.

Helen died in 1993, and Kenneth is now in his 90s. But a poem they wrote and had inscribed on their "builders" plaque hanging in Northrop Auditorium, captures their lasting feelings for the U:

*When once we're born into this world, / we never really die. / Our earthly deeds keep living on, / though moldering we lie. / What better way to commemorate, / the physicians who keep us here, / Than to improve the art of healing, / Throughout the future years.*

## Jim Johnson and Maxine Isaacs (for A.I. Johnson)

**A**lfred Ingvald Johnson never attended the University of Minnesota—his formal education ended in the eighth grade—but he believed strongly in the opportunities the U offered young people, and his family has ensured that students will continue to benefit from his legacy.

A.I. Johnson died at the age of 79 in 1977 after a long career in public affairs. He was born and raised in rural Benson, Minnesota, in 1898. He worked in various business enterprises there and eventually ran for and was elected to nearly every office in Swift County. He was a state representative for his district from 1941 to 1958 and was a key figure in the merger of the



*A.I. Johnson served in the Minnesota House of Representatives for 18 years.*

Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties. He was Speaker of the House in the 1955 and 1957 sessions (in one case, a member thought to be too ill to attend was carried in on a stretcher so that he could vote, giving Johnson a 66–65 victory). From 1959 to 1965 Johnson served as a University regent.

In 1987, 10 years after Johnson's death, his family established the A.I.

Johnson Scholarship Program, which awards two scholarships a year to students interested in studying public affairs. The scholarships cover all tuition fees, books, and living expenses for one year plus a one-quarter internship.

More recently, Johnson's son, Jim Johnson ('56), and daughter-in-law, Maxine Isaacs, made a \$1 million gift to the McNamara Alumni Center in honor of A.I. Johnson. The gift will be recognized in the A.I. Johnson Great Room, a state-of-the-art, multimedia meeting room in the alumni center. ■

*Fund-raising for the McNamara Alumni Center and plaza continues. For information on becoming a donor, please call the University of Minnesota Foundation at 612-624-3333.*