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President Abram Brubacher, 1915-1939: One of the longest serving presidents, President Brubacher was responsible for greatly strengthening undergraduate and graduate education while doubling the size of the downtown campus.

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To show their appreciation for his years of teaching and friendship, former students of Ronald Forbes have launched a campaign to raise funds to refurbish and name a classroom in his honor, as well as create a scholarship endowment. If Forbes had his way, however, he would be honoring his students.

“I have been deeply moved by the feelings of so many of my former students,” said Forbes, a professor emeritus of finance who retired from the University in 2000 after 31 years of service. They were remarkable in helping new graduates with advice, interviews, and, in many instances, jobs. Our alumni were also extremely generous to me in many important ways — from spending time discussing the latest innovations in finance to providing information and data for research.”

Forbes admitted to “a special affection for the many students who worked on the various database projects we carried out for more than two decades. These projects were vital sources of information on the tax-exempt bond market, and issuers of bonds, investment bankers, and institutional investors relied on them. They required absolute integrity, and students working on them were really employed 12 months every year.”

Neil Flanagan, B.S.’87, was one of Forbes’s database workers — a job he sought out at the end of his sophomore year and held through graduation. The database position was “on-the-job training for Wall Street investment banks’ two-year analyst program that was one of the most sought-after and difficult jobs to obtain when I graduated. UAlbany was one of only a few non-Ivy League schools whose graduates made it to the final interview rounds, and Dr. Forbes’s students were always hired.” recalled Flanagan. He is now a senior managing director with Bear, Stearns & Co., Inc.

Like Flanagan, School of Business Interim Dean Paul Leonard was one of Forbes’s students. “Ron devoted his life to helping his students. He offered difficult courses — really difficult courses! — to prepare students to be able to perform successfully in the very competitive world of investment and commercial banking,” Leonard said.

Leonard and his wife, Kristine, are major contributors to the Forbes Initiative. The named classroom, Leonard said, “will provide a modern teaching facility for future finance students, and the scholarship endowment will provide support for students in perpetuity.”

John Levato, assistant dean for Alumni Relations and Development and Career Services and also a former colleague of the retired educator, said: “If you were one of his students, you knew you were the most important thing in his life. Ron was a tough taskmaster, but his students knew he was training them to be successful.”

— Carol Olechowski
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DONOR PROFILE

Mary Kays, B.A. ‘39: At Home in the Adirondacks

“I have always loved learning. That’s why I think this place, which is my most valued possession, should go to an institution where there is a love of learning.”

— Mary Kays

Mary Kays with Associate Vice President Sorrell Cherry at her home in Essex County.

Mary Kays admits she has “meandered a lot” during her lifetime. It’s the way she’s preferred to do things.

Growing up in Pottersville and later in Oldsmarville in Essex County, Kays, B.A. ’39, C.A.S. ’72, first aspired to be a trapeze artist. She eventually came to earth and enrolled at the New York State College for Teachers, UAlbany’s predecessor institution, on a Depression-era Regents scholarship.

After graduation, Kays served in the Air Corps, then went on to a career as a French and history teacher and a guidance counselor at four different school districts in the Adirondacks.

In between teaching and guidance counseling, she also worked as a French-English secretary for a Dutch diplomat in New York City and at Macy’s department store in what would today be customer service.

Kays also earned a certificate of advanced studies in guidance counseling from UAlbany and became director of guidance at the Bolton Central Schools in Bolton Landing, N.Y., where she retired in 1973.

“I’ve been a wanderer,” Kays confessed. “I can’t claim that I was a great achiever, but I’ve done some interesting things, and met some interesting people.”

Now 85, she lives quietly in Oldsmarville in a charming old farmhouse that has been in her family since 1940. The home includes 100.5 acres in the Town of Minerva in Essex County and an additional 16 acres in the Town of Chestertown in Warren County.

Kays, who has turned down many opportunities to sell the property, recently bequeathed it to the University in memory of her late uncle and mentor, Walter Scott Beadnell. It was Beadnell who encouraged her to try for the New York State College for Teachers, UAlbany’s predecessor institution, on a Depression-era Regents scholarship.

“I do have a love of learning,” Kays said. “That’s why I think this place, which is my most valued possession, should go to an institution where there is a love of learning.”

— Christine McKnight

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Names in BOLD are members of the Partners’ Club, individuals whose employers generously matched their gifts.
John A. Ether — Life-Long Educator

John A. Ether was a life-long educator who served as a teacher, principal and superintendent before joining the University’s School of Education faculty in 1962. Before his retirement in 1987, Ether mentored scores of students who themselves went on to careers in education. A group of those former students established an endowment to honor Ether prior to his passing in June of 2002.

“Dr. Ether took a keen interest in our development and always encouraged us,” said Ira Tolbert, M.S.’73, who retired as assistant provost for recruitment and retention at Binghamton University in 2000. “We enjoyed ourselves immensely with him because he had a gift with words and rhetoric, and he was well known to us for his sharp responses and wit.”

Tolbert has spearheaded the initiative to establish Jack’s Fund for Professional Educators Serving the Disadvantaged with a gift of $1,000. The fund, now close to $20,000, will support students of academic achievement whose studies would expand educational opportunities for those who traditionally have been disadvantaged.

Other members of the organizing committee include former students Mike Darcy, M.A.’73, Ed.D.’78; Jonetta Darcy, Ed.D.’87; Nancy Ray M.S.’72, who retired as assistant provost for recruitment and retention at Binghamton University in 2000. “We enjoyed ourselves immensely with him because he had a gift with words and rhetoric, and he was well known to us for his sharp responses and wit.”

“Jack Ether was one of the School of Education’s most dedicated and caring faculty members,” said Dean Susan Phillips. “He helped to prepare a generation of teachers for desegregation in the mid-1960s, winning a number of grants to aid in integrating education.”

For additional information on Jack’s Fund or to share a memory of Jack, please contact Christina Sebastian, School of Education, at 518.442.4991 or at csebastian@uamail.albany.edu.

— Christina Sebastian
Robert A. Martin Jr.

Doctoral student Robert A. Martin Jr. was all but finished writing his criminal justice dissertation and had even accepted a job at the University of Alaska when he died last summer in a motorcycle accident. Establishing an endowment in his memory “just came naturally,” according to his father, Robert A. Martin Sr.

“A fellowship was actually Rob’s idea,” the elder Martin explained. He said that after the death of his wife, Dorothy, nearly five years ago, he and his son had “started talking about what we might do if something happened to either one of us. So it just came naturally when he was in the accident.” Originally, they had been thinking of a fellowship in memory of Dorothy.

Robert Sr. said his son was deeply engaged in the life of UAlbany’s School of Criminal Justice, where he was pursuing his doctorate after working as an assistant district attorney and public defender in Fulton County and teaching criminal justice at Fulton-Montgomery Community College for 10 years.

“To fund the Robert A. Martin Jr. Fellowship in Criminal Justice, the elder Martin has bequeathed to the University his home and 140 acres in the Town of Galway in northern Saratoga County. The fellowship will support an enhanced award for a doctoral student and will allow the School to be competitive in recruiting top candidates, School of Criminal Justice Dean Julie Horney said.

“The students, faculty and staff of the School were deeply affected by Rob’s death,” Horney said. “The Robert A. Martin Jr. Fellowship provides a wonderful way to honor his memory and assists the School in our efforts to maintain and build upon our standing as one of the top criminal justice programs in the nation.”

Robert Sr. is already supporting an annual fellowship to assure that current students in criminal justice can benefit now, even before establishment of the permanent endowment in his son’s memory.

— Christine Hanson McKnight

Editor’s note: For more information, please contact Dr. Sorrell Chesin, Office of University Advancement, at 518-437-4770.
Photo: Marguerite Hill

...to make gifts in honor of their own moms. In turn, these gifts advance the endowed funds, bringing IFW’s endowment to nearly $280,000. A particularly popular method of giving, Honoring Our Mothers, allows IFW supporters to make gifts in honor of their own moms. In turn, these gifts advance the academic and professional aims of UAlbany students or employees who are mothers and demonstrate financial need.

— Carol Olechowski
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