



# Significance

CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH CHARITABLE GIFT PLANNING



## Don and Becky Bilderback: Spreading salt and light

For Don Bilderback '69 and Becky Belcher Bilderback '68, longtime Free Methodists, Seattle Pacific University runs in their blood. The proof is in a photograph they have with 17 of their family members who attended Seattle Pacific across three generations.

One of those SPU graduates in the photo is their son, Doug Bilderback '96, who lives in Snohomish with his wife, Alisha Reed Bilderback '00, and their two sons. In 2012, wanting to be closer to family in their retirement years, Don and Becky sold their 200-year-old home (and bed and breakfast, where they hosted people from around the world) in Ithaca, New York, and moved to Seattle. For Don, after 37 years as a physicist at Cornell University, and for Becky, after 25 years working in the nonprofit sector furthering affordable housing initiatives, it was time to start a new chapter. So the Bilderbacks purchased an RV and traveled the country for several months before settling in Seattle.

Don and Becky would tell you that engaging in their local and global communities is an essential aspect of their retirement. Locally, they spend their time volunteering as board members for their condominium

## A SEASON OF NEW BEGINNINGS



After 21 years of service, autumn has become my favorite season at Seattle Pacific. SPU is blessed with a beautiful campus that is particularly stunning when adorned with fall colors. New students and faculty, along with

returning students and faculty, arrive on campus eager to start the year. New programs and initiatives are kicked off. Campus literally bursts to life, and there is a palpable sense of joy and excitement for how God will lead and bless SPU in the coming year.

This fall has been no different. As classes began on Monday, September 12, Interim President Pete Menjares shared a new vision for SPU that embraces and confirms the University's commitment to the Free Methodist Church and its Christian identity while looking forward with anticipation to the appointment of the next president, whose search is underway and whose tenure will begin in July 2023.

While there has been much debate about who SPU is, both within the SPU community and outside of it, the Board of Trustees and Interim President Menjares have made it clear that the university is more committed than ever to being a Christ-centered university. While this focus has always been a part of Seattle Pacific, what this will look like and how it will shape SPU's future are just starting to unfold. There is a real sense that this Autumn Quarter marks the start of something new for SPU, and I would humbly ask for your prayers for the University in this season of new beginnings.

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owners' association, participating in Operation Nightwatch, serving on the welcoming committee at First Free Methodist Church, and helping with FFMC's Samaritan's Sunday School Class. Globally, they have made three trips to Africa, serving once in Uganda and twice at Hope Africa University, a sister school of SPU in Burundi, where Don was born.

Suffice to say, after graduating from Seattle Pacific, the Bilderbacks have been busy spreading "salt and light" in the world, a valuable lesson they took to heart as students, and one they hope to inspire in students today. The Donald and Becky Bilderback Scholarship Endowment provides Free Methodist students that chance.

Don and Becky have also established a second endowment to help Seattle Pacific Free Methodist faculty afford housing closer to SPU. They remember how meaningful it was for them to get to know their professors in this informal setting, and hope that current students will get the same chance.

"We value the Christian education we received at SPU, and we want SPU students and faculty to benefit from the same opportunities that we received in the late 1960s," said Don.

Though the Bilderbacks emphasize they are not wealthy people, they want to be good stewards of what God has entrusted to them. By living frugally, investing wisely, and saving their money, they are contributing to their endowments via several avenues, one of which is through their individual retirement account (IRA).

With the help of two certified financial planners and an estate planning advisor,

they believed they had properly directed the IRA funds to SPU, but one day Becky read an article about retirement planning that mentioned the beneficiary designated on an IRA account takes precedence over a will. That is when they realized there was something wrong, despite all the good financial advice they have gotten over the years. Their son Doug, whom they had named a beneficiary on all their financial accounts, would in fact receive the IRA funds instead of Seattle Pacific, even though they had named SPU as the recipient of the funds in their will. "If you have a designated beneficiary," Don said, "those funds will never see your will."

While they want to be generous to their son, they also want part of their estate to

go to charity. They are now fixing the oversight by updating the beneficiary designations of their qualified retirement funds to go only to SPU and specifically naming SPU as the recipient of certain cash funds in their will. They also hope to inspire others to check on their designated beneficiaries and wills, to be sure their funds are going to the right place.

Don recalls the book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ronald J. Sider, which has a particularly poignant message that he and Becky have lived by all these years:

"Learn to live on a modest amount, and then when your income goes up, don't just spend it on yourself; spend it on the Lord's work and on helping others." Don and Becky have put those words into practice over a lifetime. Stewardship of their time and income has allowed them to give more because they have spent less. "Life is not just about us," said Don; "it's about our neighbors."

— Jennifer Hunt, Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications, Office of Alumni, Parent, and Family Relations



Don and Becky Bilderback take a stroll down memory lane on campus.

## PHILANTHROPY SPOTLIGHT



### Dale and Marcia Thuline: **Their legacy lives on**

Dale Thuline '70 and Marcia Lerew Thuline '73 had deep roots with Seattle Pacific. Dale's father, Horace, graduated in 1949, his grandfather, Winfred, in 1919. Numerous other siblings, children, nieces, nephews, and cousins are also Seattle Pacific alumni.

Dale, MD, and Marcia, RN, were lifelong supporters of the University, as well as many other Christian ministries and organizations.

# Joel Martin: Driven by wonder



Read more about SPU Falcon Racing Baja SAE and sponsorship opportunities at [spu.edu/baja](https://spu.edu/baja).

“

I will never forget the wonder I felt when I was able to physically hold a component I had designed.”



**Joel Martin, SPU Class of 2024, has three homes. The** one he calls simply “home” is in Papua, Indonesia, where he grew up and where his parents have been missionaries for over 30 years. Then there’s what he calls “my U.S. home.” When SPU is not in session, he lives in Vancouver, Washington, with his older brother and his family, and his parents, when they are on furlough.

Finally, there’s “my now home” — the SPU campus, where he is a Mechanical Engineering major in his junior year, a resident advisor in Hill Hall, and a student worker in the Registrar’s Office.

Joel was initially drawn to SPU because of his older sister, Kara Martin ’15, who graduated with a degree in nursing and is now in SPU’s DNP program. “Getting to see the campus when my parents dropped her off and I tagged along was part of what drew me,” said Joel. “Living overseas I didn’t get the opportunity to visit multiple schools, so familiarity with a campus was important.”

Joel has been the grateful recipient of multiple SPU scholarships, without which he would not be a Falcon. In his freshman year alone he was awarded the Trustees Scholar Award, Faith for the Future Merit Scholarship, Church Match Scholarship, Falcon Legacy Scholarship, Early Success Award, Ministry Scholarship, and SPU Advantage Award. For his sophomore year, he was awarded engineering scholarships funded by the Bauman, Robert W. Burwell, and Walter Cheung Wai Lee endowments; for his junior year, he was awarded scholarships funded by the Burwell and Howard M. Winegarden endowments.

Joel believes his calling is to apply the prosthetic design process to serving people in need, a calling that began several years ago, when an accident seriously injured his right arm.

Joel is no ordinary student. Every quarter since he started, he has made the Dean’s List. One of his professors, James Walker, said, “In both his writing and his interaction with the other students, Joel stands out in his academic excellence, his thoughtfulness, and his commitment to his faith.”

Another professor, Matt Basinger ’03, said, “Joel is the ideal student, committed, inquisitive, willing to ask tough questions, encouraging to other students, extremely intelligent. Both inside and outside the classroom, he is a joy to be around.”

For Joel, a highlight of the program has been Baja Racing. Each year a student-led, cross-discipline team builds a single-seat, offroad racecar and races it against about 100 other schools around the world. The team does all its own fundraising and marketing. “It’s an incredible opportunity, and something to put on my résumé,” he said. “It also gives me something to motivate me when I’m up at 2 a.m. studying for my differential equations exam.” Team members practice engineering skills and gain practical experience prototyping, testing, fixing, and redesigning. “I will never forget the wonder I felt when I was able to physically hold a component I had designed,” he said. “Though my coursework is challenging and demanding, that feeling of wonder drives me, and my calling focuses that passion. My education at Seattle Pacific University is preparing me to fulfill that calling.”

Top photo: Joel designed the axle spline adapter in the transmission that he is holding, which was used in SPU’s 2018–19 Baja racing car.

As medical professionals, and with Dale’s pilot license, Marcia and Dale spent nearly four years in Free Methodist missions and participated in many short-term missions around the world, supporting the poor and orphans with the love of Christ in India, Brazil, Guinea, Haiti, and Panama.

In the 2011 issue of *Significance*, Marcia and Dale said it was SPU’s focus on students

serving the community and the University’s commitment to excellence that gave them confidence in investing in SPU. As a part of their generous support of their alma mater in their lifetimes, they were Wellspring Society members through making SPU the designated beneficiary of a retirement account.

After they both passed (Dale on October 3, 2018, and Marcia on April 3, 2022), their

IRA provided substantial contributions to the Winfred N. and Evangeline C. Thuline Family Scholarship Endowment, the Wesley Lingren University Scholars Endowment, and the Burton D. Dietzman Scholarship Endowment.

SPU is exceptionally grateful for Marcia and Dale’s faith in their alma mater and generous support through their estate. Their legacy will continue to live on in our students.

**NATIONALLY RANKED** — Seattle Pacific continues to be recognized as a “Best National University” by *U.S. News & World Report*.



Orientation leaders helped new students move into Ashton Hall in early September.

# Will you leave a legacy that counts?

A bequest is one of the easiest gifts to make. With the help of an advisor, you can include language in your will or trust specifying a gift made to family, friends, SPU, and other worthy causes as part of your estate plan.

## A bequest may be made in several ways:

- a gift of a percentage of your estate through your will or trust
- a gift of real estate through your will or trust
- a gift of all or part of your individual retirement account
- a gift of all or part of your life insurance policy

## Some reasons why you need a will:

- **Decide how your estate will be distributed**  
 If you don't have a will, your estate may be distributed out of alignment with your wishes.
- **Decide who will care for your minor children**  
 A will allows you to choose who will care for your minor children in the event of your death.
- **Minimize estate taxes**  
 Drafting a will allows you to explore tax-savvy ways to pass on your estate.
- **Make gifts and donations**  
 In addition to providing for your family, a will also allows you the opportunity to provide for charitable causes you care about.

## Did you know that two out of three adults don't have a will?

Our free resources have everything you need to help you plan your legacy. Request copies at [spu.edu/estateresources](http://spu.edu/estateresources).



## We'd love to know!

If you have already provided for SPU through your will or other planned gift but have not yet informed us, please complete and return the attached envelope today.

**Questions?** Contact Bryan Jones, director of the Office of Endowments and Gift Planning, at 206-281-2250 or [bryan@spu.edu](mailto:bryan@spu.edu), or visit [legacy.spu.edu](http://legacy.spu.edu).

## A tip from Don and Becky (see cover story)

A beneficiary designated on an IRA account takes precedence over a will. If you've listed a designated beneficiary, those funds will never see your will, so be sure to change the beneficiaries to match your will.