Payne Family Establishes Endowment For Golf Team

Whenever the Sam Houston State University golf team hosts a tournament, it brings recognition and generates revenue for the golf program.

However, there are expenses incurred in hosting a tournament such as fees for the golf course and meals for the teams that participate.

Money is also needed when the Bearkat golf team plays in out-of-town tournaments to pay for transportation, lodging expenses, meals and entry fees.

Collegiate golf players will often speak about the great times they had while participating in tournaments, how it helps develop poise, leadership, confidence, and enhances the lessons learned in the classroom, thus rounding out a valuable educational experience.

One such former Bearkat golfer is Howard Payne of Houston. He, his mother and wife have decided to honor the memory of his father by establishing the H. M. Payne and Floy Murphy Payne Endowment Fund. The $50,000 fund will provide financial assistance to help defray expenses for golf tournaments sponsored by SHSU and to assist with expenses for Sam Houston students to participate in golf tournaments at other locations.

Herman Mason Payne, known all his life as “Humpy,” was born in 1902 in Texarkana, Texas.

He entered Austin College in Sherman on an athletic scholarship with plans to become a physician. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree, he began studying for a medical degree. However, when the Great Depression hit in 1929, he had to quit his studies and get a salaried job. He was employed by Humble Oil and Refinery (later renamed Exxon) as one of the first Registered Petroleum Engineers.

In 1939, he married Floy Murphy, also known as “Foxie,” who happily embraced her role as homemaker. The couple became a part of the Humble Oil family and lived in Humble Oil Camps that were scattered around the East Texas forests. They moved almost 20 times before settling in Kilgore. Her family describes her as “the typical loving mother who cooked three meals a day for her

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family, sewed clothes for all three children, hand monogrammed her son’s shirts, kept the house clean, and loved her flower and vegetable gardens.”

The Paynes had three children --- Howard Payne, Norma Payne Murphy and Jean Payne Bartlett --- all of whom attended Sam Houston State.

Howard earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, and Norma earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in the 1960s. Jean earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Houston, and later returned to SHSU to earn a master’s degree in math education.

Humpy and Foxie’s extended family included Bearkats, as well. Their daughter-in-law, Diane Buchanan Payne, graduated in 1963, and a son-in-law, Larry Murphy, graduated in 1964. A grandson, Brian (Larry and Norma’s son), is a 1996 graduate in criminal justice.

Humpy was a strong believer in a college education for everyone. It brought him a tremendous amount of joy that all three of his children were college graduates. He was also grateful that he himself was able to attend college and earn a degree, and he knew that he would not have been able to do so without the athletic scholarship he had been awarded as a young student.

The Paynes’ oldest child, Howard, began his academic career at Kilgore Junior College where he was the manager for the football team and played on the golf team. He transferred to Sam Houston State and played on the first Bearkat golf team under Coach Ronnie Choate, who currently serves as the Sam Houston State golf coach.

“I had some great golf moments while playing the golf tournaments that Coach Choate entered the team in,” said Howard.

While attending Sam Houston, Howard met his future wife, Diane. She, too, had been born into a family that held higher education in high regard, and she decided to become the fourth generation of educators in her family.

In 1970, Howard purchased Southern Spring Manufacturing, Inc., the business he still owns and operates today, although he is semi-retired. He also continues to enjoy his hobbies, which include golf, flying his airplane, hunting, and fishing.

Diane taught school for a while before devoting her full time and attention to her family. After their youngest child entered high school, Diane became interested in teaching again. She returned to Sam Houston and earned her master’s degree in English. Her desire for continuing her education led her to Baylor University where she completed her doctorate in education administration in 1998.

Earlier this year, Foxie, Howard and Diane discussed ways that they could honor Humpy’s memory. They decided that one of the most meaningful tributes would be to help deserving students complete their college degrees and become whatever they wanted to be with the H. M. Payne and Floy M. Payne Endowment Fund.

Funds from the permanent endowment will be used to defray expenses for golf tournaments at Sam Houston, to assist members of the golf team to participate in tournaments at other locations, and, with excess funds, to award golf scholarships, a minimum of $1,000 each.

“The Department of Athletics is honored that a family with such a wonderful Bearkat history has generously established an endowment fund to benefit current student-athletes by enhancing their opportunities to participate in quality NCAA golf tournaments,” said Athletic Director Bobby Williams.
Golf Tournament Benefits Athletics Through Campaign

The Sam Houston State University Lettermen Association was organized in the 1920s, making it the oldest Sam Houston State alumni group.

While they have always been supportive in spirit, in 1992 they began making monetary contributions as well with proceeds from the first Lettermen’s Golf Tournament, which was held at Elkins Lake in Huntsville.

Former Bearkat baseball player Hootie Murray was president of the organization at the time.

“We had functioned as an organization for a long, long time, and we wanted to give something to Sam Houston State,” he said.

“Since we had all been student-athletes, it seemed logical that our fundraising efforts would go to support the athletics department,” he explained.

Invitation letters to play were sent to approximately 900 former Bearkat athletes during the first two years of the tournament. However, the tournament was so popular, the organization only had to contact approximately 35 individuals asking them to organize the teams from that time on.

“We said, ‘here’s the date, the location, put a team together,’ and that was all we needed to do,” said Murray.

Initially, the donations were designated for the athletics department’s tutorial program and equipment for the weight room.

“That way, student-athletes from both the men’s and women’s programs would benefit,” said Murray.

Today, the funds are designated for the greatest need at the time as determined by the Director of Athletics.

The contribution from that first golf tournament was just under $1,800. The association has announced that this year their contribution will be at least $10,000, which will bring their total given in the past 16 years to almost $105,000.

Approximately 10 years ago, Hootie turned over the “tournament organization reigns” to his brother Mike and former athlete Ray Burgess.

“The golf tournaments provide a way for former Bearkat athletes to give back to their alma mater, and it helps in all sports,” said Burgess. “Participants and contributors in the tournament have a varied background in sports and are very interested in the overall good of Sam Houston and its athletic programs.”

“As an organization, we are very proud that we have committed $50,000 to support Sam Houston State University athletics through the Share the Vision capital campaign,” said Mike Murray.

“It’s satisfying to know that through our annual golf tournament and the support of our donors, contributors and players, we have joined with others who care about the university and its programs to make a difference,” he added.

Some of the participants in this year’s Lettermen’s Golf Tournament were (from left) Mike McTaggert, Scott Haney, Bud Haney, Hootie Murray, Pat Harrop and Mike Ferrel.
Let’s Talk!
A Night of Conversation

Let’s Talk, a first-of-its-kind event for Sam Houston State University, was held March 27, 2008 at the Lowman Student Center Ballroom. Twenty-four renowned experts covering engaging topics came together for a rare evening filled with lively, entertaining and challenging dinner conversation. Net proceeds of $58,000 went to the Elliott T. Bowers Honors Program to fund scholarships, instructional support and operating expenses.
Thanks to the Event Advisory Board consisting of Nancy Gaertner, Chair, and Jane Monday, Co-Chair, as well as Dr. James Bankhead, Chair, School of Music; Dr. James Bexley, Smith-Hutson Chair of Banking; Dr. Genevieve Brown, Dean, College of Education; Dr. Vince Webb, Dean, College of Criminal Justice; Mr. Mac Woodward, Curator of Collections, Sam Houston Museum; Dr. Gene Young, Director, Honors Program.
Mafrige’s Gift Honors Sculptor, Soldier

A new statue of Sam Houston State University’s namesake now overlooks students as they walk to class between the Smith-Hutson Business Building and the Lowman Student Center.

The statue is a gift from Ron Mafrige, a Sam Houston business graduate who is serving as the chair of the Share the Vision capital campaign.

Mafrige’s latest gift to the university represents only a small part of the more than $2 million he has given in the past 14 years—$40,000 for a statue of Gen. Sam Houston—but it was done in typical Mafrige style. He didn’t just go out and buy any old statue that the university could put his name on.

The Sam Houston statue is a 20-foot replica of the 67-foot “Tribute to Courage” that SHSU alum and renowned artist David Adickes presented to the city of Huntsville 15 years ago, and which stands on Interstate 45 on the southern edge of the city.

Mafrige said he was making the gift of the replica to honor Adickes and M. B. Etheredge of Huntsville, a former SHSU athlete and our country’s highest decorated surviving soldier of World War II. Etheredge, 93, is a 1937 graduate of Sam Houston State Teachers College.

Mafrige has established an endowment in the College of Business in the name of Glenn Adams, one of his classmates who also served as president of his company, and James E. Gilmore, retired dean of the College of Business. Mafrige earned his business degree in 1960.

Although Mafrige enrolled at Texas A&M to play football before transferring to Sam Houston State, his next donation was a tribute to the many baseball athletes he has admired. It was a collection of baseball memorabilia that includes items from some of the greatest names in the history of the sport—Mickey Mantle, Rogers Hornsby, Joe DiMaggio, Bob Feller and Hank Aaron.

Other donations indicate Mafrige’s broad interests—historical items relating to Gen. Sam Houston and Santa Anna, and a priceless “Gone With the Wind” collection now in the Theatre Center.

Other individuals who have been recognized by his contributions include long-time and now-retired football coach Ron Randleman, business dean R. Dean Lewis, long-time business vice president Jack Parker and a number of former professors. The Athletics Complex strength and fitness center is named in honor of Randleman and the field house for Mafrige.

One of Mafrige’s greatest gifts has been his service as national chair for the university’s first-ever capital campaign, which has raised more than 80 percent of its $50 million goal only two years into a five-year campaign.

In addition to his monetary support, Mafrige serves on the COBA Advisory Council, the President’s Circle, and the Sam Houston Memorial Museum board. He is a member of Delta Tau Delta and a Life Endowed member of the Alumni Association.

In appreciation, SHSU has presented Mafrige with the Alumni Service Award, the Distinguished Alumni Award, and one of the College of Business Administration’s first inductees into its hall of honor.
Recognition Opportunities
Available On Alumni Wall of Honor

The naming of all rooms in the John R. Ragsdale Visitor & Alumni Center is complete, thanks to the generosity of several special alumni who have chosen to support Alumni Association programs through this manner. The Alumni Association is grateful to those alumni for their vision and thoughtfulness. The alumni and the rooms which will be named in their honor include:

- Robert & Gay Rod: Alumni Board Room, $50,000
- Diane & Alan L. Tinsley: Entry Plaza, $25,000
- R. H. & Kelley Bond: Lobby Area, $25,000
- Bobby & Karen Gray: Director’s Office, $15,000
- Eleanor Smith Garrett: Assistant Director’s Office, $10,000
- Ed McCrory: Event Coordinator’s Office, $7,500
- Martee Leonard Rush: Assistant’s Office, $7,500
- Chester D. & Pamela G. Crawford: Multipurpose Room, $5,000
- Ronny Carroll: Concourse, $5,000

Alumni and friends of the university who would like to be recognized on the Wall of Honor in the Center still have a chance to be included. The listing is limited to 500 names, and honoring opportunities can be purchased for $500 each.

All donations will be endowed to create a permanent fund to support Alumni Association activities and initiatives designed to engage alumni with the university.

John R. Ragsdale, for whom the Visitor & Alumni Center is named, is the inspiration for the naming campaign.

Ragsdale, an SHSU alumnus who owned and operated 23 Burger King restaurants in the Houston area for over 30 years, generously donated $1.25 million to Sam Houston State University last year, most of which was designated to support the work of the Office of Alumni Relations.

For additional information about the Alumni Association Endowment Campaign, contact the SHSU Office of Alumni Relations at 936.294.1841.
My family and Sam Houston State University have had a relationship that is now approaching 70 years. It began with my parents’ attendance in the 1940s and continues to this day.

My father was a professor in the business school for a short period of time under J. Roy Wells and would later serve on the Alumni Board. Our family has endowed scholarships, provided funding for the construction of a building and sustained a habit of always supporting the university.

It has been a true pleasure to watch the amazing growth of SHSU over the past few years. Today as I walk the campus, I see a true confluence of energy, enthusiasm and academic growth. I cannot wait to see what the future has in store for Sam Houston State University.

E. Don Walker Jr. is the owner of Presidio Title Company in San Antonio. He is a friend and supporter of the university, a recipient of the SHSU Alumni Service Award, a member of the President’s Circle, and chair for the San Antonio region of the Share the Vision capital campaign. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1969 from The University of Texas at Austin. He and his wife, Denise, have two daughters.