

Nancy and Matthew South create separate endowments to honor

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— Nancy South



Above: Nancy South (Speech Communication, '81) met her future husband, Matthew (Aerospace Engineering, '83), at Cal Poly in 1979.

Right: Nancy and Matthew South both established endowed gifts in support of Cal Poly.



COURTESY OF NANCY SOUTH

their time at Cal Poly and support future students

A Legacy of Giving

Nancy South (Speech Communication, '81) and her husband, Matthew (Aerospace Engineering, '83), met in 1979 while they were both students at Cal Poly. "He came by to see one of my roommates who wasn't home. We started talking and we just hit it off," Nancy South remembers. Although they were in very different majors, they had a lot in common. "We had the same twisted sense of humor, we were both photographers, and we both loved music."

Matthew South graduated in March of 1983. A week later the couple got married and took off to spend three months backpacking through Europe for their honeymoon.

Nancy South says her degree in speech communication served her well after graduation. "I had no fear after so much experience speaking in front of groups. It really prepared me for almost anything," she said. "I also learned how to be a critical thinker at Cal Poly, and that enabled me to have quite a diverse career."

The couple started making donations to Cal Poly as soon as they had enough money to cover their expenses. "I'm sure it started with a phone bank call from a student, and then it just became an annual thing for us."

In the late 1990s the Souths chose to name Cal Poly as a beneficiary in their estate plan, but it wasn't until 2014 that they began working with Cal Poly to choose how they wanted to support the university. Nancy South's sister had recently died, and her brother-in-law had set up an endowed scholarship in her memory.

"Up until then, I thought an endowment was something only uber-wealthy people could do. I didn't think you could do it for less than a million dollars," Nancy South said. "And when I learned you could start one at Cal Poly for \$25,000, I thought, 'Gee, I can swing that!'"

Nancy South chose to designate her gift to the Communication Studies Department's general fund so it could be used to fund projects that the department chair selects as the greatest need each year. Having served as a board member at nonprofits, she knew how useful unrestricted funds could be. "There are often things that aren't as popular to fund, and I wanted to be able to help the department take care of those types of needs."

She says setting up the endowment was simple. "I thought I'd have to go through an attorney or something like that, but we handled most of it by email. I don't think it took more than a month to set it up," she said. "The hardest part was coming up with a name."

A couple of years later, Matthew South also chose to begin an endowment supporting unmanned aircraft projects in the Aerospace Engineering Department. With the endowments in place, the Souths have a specific fund to direct their contributions when they pass away. They both plan to add to their respective endowments upon their deaths.

Nancy South says it's nice to know that they'll leave a legacy, but she has also enjoyed seeing her gift in action. "I'm thrilled to see how much good my gift is doing to help students in the department," she said. Last year, the fund was used to send a student to a conference and to support senior projects and public presentations.

"My husband and I are not millionaires — he spent his entire career working for the federal government — but we can do our part," Nancy South said. "This is something we could afford. And I'd love to challenge other alumni to consider what they can do, too."



Allie Blaising received funding from the Communication Studies Department general fund last year to attend and present her research at a premier international human-computer interaction conference in Glasgow, Scotland. She said, "During my week at the conference, I was able to connect and network with remarkable scholars and industry leaders, receive valuable feedback on my research, initiate new collaborations, and ultimately grow immensely as a researcher. It was an honor to represent CLA, and I hope to one day pay this opportunity forward by sponsoring future communication studies students."

Endowed Gifts Make a Lasting Impact

When you make an endowed gift, your contribution is invested with, and becomes part of, Cal Poly's endowment. An annual distribution is made for the purpose you designate, and, because the principal remains intact, the fund will generate support in perpetuity.

If you are interested in naming Cal Poly in your estate plan or beginning an endowment, contact the CLA Advancement team at 805-756-6246.

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