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A Life Well Lived

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The late William Hoben, dean of the University of Dayton School of Business Administration for 23 years, never led an extravagant life, said longtime family friend Tom Westendorf, University of Dayton registrar.

Hoben lived his life simply, comfortably and charitably, and in the end, the conscientious accountant gave almost everything he had right back to those who consistently came first during his tenure at the University: students.

This fall, the University awarded the first scholarships from three endowed funds Hoben established through a planned gift from his estate, Westendorf said.

True to his unassuming nature, the 1950 accounting graduate named the funds for three couples who were important him: Robert and Karen Chelle of Dayton, David and Stacey Fitzgerald of Atlanta, and William and Susan Ringo of Indianapolis.

“That’s just how Dean Hoben was,” said Westendorf, whose father taught night school with Hoben. “He was a one-of-a-kind individual who, if you met and got to know him, he was a lifelong friend. … He always wanted to help. He knew everyone, and he had so many friends. He was a true gentleman, deeply religious, and thought the world of the Marianists. In fact, Dean Hoben was the first person to ever be made an honorary Marianist. He was very proud of that.”

David Fitzgerald, a 1971 management graduate who also has an MBA from the University of Dayton, called Hoben a mentor and friend.

“He was sort of a god on campus,” Fitzgerald said. “He was a mentor while I was a student, a terrific adviser. After I graduated, I would go to him for advice, and I also got occasional stock tips from him. I will say that the advice was always better than the stock tips.”

After Hoben died, it was a surprise to Fitzgerald that he was one of those for whom the scholarships were named; he was not surprised, however, that Hoben had chosen to give in someone else’s name. Hoben was always quiet about his generosity and the things he did to help others, neither wanting nor expecting recognition, Fitzgerald said. That seems to have rubbed off Fitzgerald, who several years ago made a major contribution toward the William J. Hoben Business Learning Laboratory in Miriam Hall.

But if attention is drawn to his giving in Hoben’s honor, Fitzgerald deflects it.

“I guess I learned from the master,” he said.

Hoben started the new scholarship funds with a $300,000 bequest, said Nancy Stork, assistant vice president for gift planning.

“Today, through the impact of many completed bequests, trusts, and other planned gifts, the University offers programs of excellence, world-renowned faculty, scholarship awards, and state-of-the-art facilities to our students,” Stork said. “Gift planning allows people to create meaningful legacies at the University of Dayton and make a forever difference in the lives of our students. That is exactly what Dean Hoben did while he was living, and through his giving, he continues to do so even though he has passed.”

The gifts seem to reflect Hoben’s commitment to helping students reach their full potential while growing personally and spiritually.

Though he routinely dismissed students who didn’t deliver academically, those who demonstrated commitment and renewed seriousness got second chances. Bob Belvedere ‘69 of Rockville Center, N.Y., was one such student.

"I was the first one in my family to go to college," Belvedere said. "My father was a truck driver, and there wasn’t a lot of money, so I had to work a lot. There were also times I decided to go to a party rather than open a book. Dean Hoben told me, ‘You’re
smart. You’re not trying. You’re capable of doing better.’

"After a couple of terms on academic probation, Belvedere was dismissed from the University. He went home, worked, saved up some money and came back.

"I begged (Hoben) to give me another chance, and he did," Belvedere said. "No one else would have done that. I was there another three semesters, and I never got anything below a B-plus. I made the dean's list the last term."

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