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Storied Giving

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Three quarters of a century ago, the great-grandfather of Louis "Bill" Feldmann III '68 '70 boarded a train in Cincinnati bound for Dayton and St. Mary's School for Boys. Two weeks later, the homesick boy spent his pocket money on a one-way ticket home.

Last Thursday, Feldmann spoke of returning home to the campus that has educated or employed 11 members of his family. To honor his father, Louis W. Feldmann Jr. '55, the family's first UD graduate, Feldmann is endowing a scholarship through the gift of a life insurance policy.

Feldmann was inducted, along with 22 other members, into the Leo Meyer Society in a ceremony in the Kennedy Union ballroom April 10. The society recognizes individuals who have followed the steps of Father Leo Meyer — the University's founder, who purchased John Stuart's land with a St. Joseph medal and a promise of future payment with interest — and have made commitments to the University through a deferred gift arrangement.

Those present or represented by family members at the induction ceremony also included Raymond and Beulah Horn, James Gress '66, Ted and Deanna Kissell, and Neil and Judy '62 McManus.

This year's inductees have committed close to \$4 million in promised gifts to the University, according to Suzanne Kronke, director of gift planning. There are 462 Leo Meyer Society members.

Father Joseph Tedesco, S.M., spoke in his invocation of UD's strong-willed founder and how the gifts of friends and graduates continue to sustain "the heart that beats here and the blood that pulses here."

That includes the blood of generations. At the reception, Feldmann told stories of his father — with two jobs and a growing family — returning to school after World War II to earn a business degree.

"When we were toddlers, my dad would drag us up to campus to study," said Feldmann, who was joined at the ceremony by mother Emma Ann and brothers Richard '78 and Robert '73. "That's my earliest memory. I must have been 4. He would drag us across the lawn at Albert Emanuel library."

The most important story to tell, Feldmann said, was how he took an unneeded life insurance policy and turned it into a scholarship endowment plan worth 20 times the initial amount he felt he could give.

"I'm not a millionaire," he said. "I wanted to do something. My job is to tell this story and let others know they can do the same thing I'm doing."