Common ground:
An appreciation for Berkeley

Though they came from very different backgrounds, Don Lee ’51 and Harold Burns ’50 have much in common. Both are military veterans, both pursued careers related to the built environment (civil engineering for Don, architecture for Harold), and both avidly support their alma mater, UC Berkeley.

Even the ways in which they’ve honored their academic home are similar: Don and Harold both established named, endowed scholarships in their respective areas of study at Cal, enabling future generations of students to build their knowledge, experience, and skills — as they strive to build a better world.

Scholarships provide vital assistance to many Berkeley undergraduates — in 2013–14, about 5,100 undergrads received scholarship help. Of course, scholarships are just one of many ways in which donors can support Berkeley. As you consider your charitable giving plans, our team can help you meet your philanthropic, financial, and estate planning goals while also finding meaningful ways to support Cal. Like Don, Harold, and so many other alumni and friends, you have the power to help Berkeley build upon its promise.
The life story of Don Lee ’51 has taken many twists and turns — from a tiny rural village on one side of the Pacific to a successful engineering career on the other. Wars, language barriers, family loss, and other hurdles met him along the way. And though he encountered many obstacles — or perhaps because of them — his story can serve as the textbook example of the American Dream.

That dream was fueled in large part by his education at UC Berkeley. It’s one of the reasons he’s remained a steadfast donor to the university over the course of his adult life.

“Don feels that I got a lot out of Cal,” says Don, who is now 88 and remains connected to Berkeley through his generous philanthropy. “It prepared me well, so this (my giving) is payback.”

Born in southern China in 1927, Don lived in a small village until the age of 11. His mother passed away when he was a toddler, and his father, Suey, sent young Don to live with relatives and then traveled to the U.S. to build a new life for his family after the Japanese army invaded China. Don eventually joined his father, making the transpacific journey by sea on his own — with memories that are less than sunny.

“I got motion sickness coming over,” says Don, who recalls sleeping in third class on the ship, next to the engine room. The 21-day trip from Hong Kong to Honolulu was followed by a smoother passage to San Francisco, but more challenges awaited Don in California.

Sent to the immigration station at Angel Island, Don remained there for a month. Authorities interrogated the boy a half-dozen times. “They wanted to make sure I was who I claimed I was,” he recalls, but he remained focused on the possibilities that the U.S. held for him. “Compared to my situation in China, America was a modern and developed country with the promise for better opportunities.”

Don soon reunited with his father in San Antonio, Texas, where Suey now worked in the grocery business. With no English skills whatsoever, Don enrolled in elementary school, where he recalls being in a kindergarten class with seats too small for his preteen body. Eventually he settled into his new life, but following America’s entry into World War II, the Lees moved again when Suey found a more stable job in Southern California.

Though he’d always imagined returning to China after the war, the lure of college was irresistible to Don. Following high school, he enrolled in Compton Junior College, where he realized he had an aptitude for all things engineering-related. When Don learned of Berkeley’s highly regarded School of Engineering, he applied to Cal and was accepted. “To this day, I feel that it was an honor to be accepted at Berkeley,” he says. Don eventually earned a B.S. degree in civil engineering, graduating in 1951.

At Cal, he also met his future wife, Jeanette ’52, whom he first encountered in an elective dance class his senior year. The couple married in 1952.

Before he could begin his career, however, the Korean War loomed. Don was drafted into the U.S. Army, serving two years as part of the Army Corps of Engineers. After the war, he began a long and successful career as a civil engineer, including a stint at California’s Department of Transportation. In 1975 he founded an Oakland-based construction firm, with clients including local military bases, the BART transit system, and even his alma mater — where his firm helped strengthen the facade of the Campanile.

More recently, Don found a different way to strengthen Berkeley: through philanthropy. He has created a named, endowed scholarship fund, the Don Y.F. and Jeanette Lee Family Scholarship. This fund benefits students in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and uses a gift of real estate as well as gifts from his IRA account. Real estate is a smart way for Don to give because it frees him from the inconvenience and hassle of selling the property on his own. And gifts from his IRA account take advantage of the new tax law enacted in December 2015, which made the IRA Charitable Rollover a permanent part of the tax code.

By design, it’s not a full scholarship. “My philosophy is that if the scholarship gives 100 percent, the meaning isn’t as significant,” Don says. “I feel that students will have more attachment to it if they have to put forth some of the effort to keep going.”

In addition to honoring Jeanette, the scholarship also reflects the love for UC that the whole family feels — Don and Jeanette’s sons have degrees from Berkeley, Davis, and UCLA, and Don’s granddaughter is a UC Santa Cruz graduate.

Helped by his Berkeley education, Don Lee has lived the American Dream. And through the scholarship he has generously created, other aspiring engineers will be able to pursue dreams of their own.
Harold Burns B.A. 1912, J.D. 1914

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Bakersfield, Warren wore many different hats over the course of his long and storied career. He was district attorney of Alameda County, attorney general of California, governor of California for three terms, a Republican vice-presidential candidate, and, as the 14th chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, one of America’s most influential jurists (Brown v. Board of Education, Miranda v. Arizona, the Warren Commission). As governor, Warren presided, with UC President Robert Gordon Sproul, over an unprecedented expansion of the University of California system. Warren was a strong and sometimes controversial chief justice. After he delivered the unanimous opinion of the court in Brown v. Board of Education, which ended legal segregation in public schools, a virulent but unsuccessful campaign to impeach him lasted for years. He left an enduring legacy and some memorable quotes, including: “Everything I did in my life that was worthwhile I caught hell for.” Learn more about Berkeley’s famous alumni at www.berkeleywalloffame.org.

Earl Warren B.A. 1912, J.D. 1914

Few Berkeley buildings have engendered as much loyalty among their resident faculty and students as North Gate Hall. Home to the architecture department from 1906 to 1964 (and now journalism), the redwood structure recalls the shingled homes that once dotted Berkeley’s hills and exemplifies simplicity and harmony with nature. It’s the kind of place one can’t help but love.

Harold Burns ’50 is among the generations of architecture students whose affection for the “Ark,” as the hall was commonly called, runs deep. It was in this intimate space that he spent countless hours meeting the demands of his studies, forming the ideals that would shape his career, and making lifelong friends. These memories prompted him to make a generous bequest gift to Berkeley last year.

“I met so many nice and interesting people who are still my good friends,” says Harold. “The old Ark made us feel like family. We’d work 12 hours a day for three hours of credit, but then we could sit on the patio and play bridge.”

Harold, who grew up in southeast Louisiana, served in the U.S. Navy from 1944–46. He trained in San Diego, then toured the Pacific aboard the USS Simon Newcomb (AGSC-14), a minesweeper converted into a coastal survey ship. He attended Louisiana State University on the G.I. Bill from 1946–47, then transferred to Berkeley.

While studying architecture, he lived in the perfect lab — a house designed by Bernard Maybeck, a luminary of American architecture whose hallmark features include bright colors, handcrafted details, and integration with the landscape. Maybeck, in his 70s at that time, lived around the corner.

“I often saw Mr. Maybeck working in his garden, but was so in awe I couldn’t get up the courage to introduce myself,” says Harold. “One of the great regrets of my life.”

Another regret? Not saving a piece of cardboard he’d found with Maybeck’s handwritten instructions and color samples for painting the kitchen red and blue. “I hung it on the wall of my room but didn’t ask my landlady if I could have it when I moved out,” Harold says.

While Harold missed the chance to rub elbows with Maybeck, he made up for it through daily interactions with his classmates and professors. He particularly remembers charrettes, assignments in which professors gave students 24 hours to solve an architectural problem. Harold and his friends would first fill up on 25-cent martinis and $1.50 meals at a favorite Oakland eatery, then hunker down in the Ark until the moment their drawings were due.

“It was a lot of pressure,” he recalls, “but the fun part was peeking through a large crack in the exhibit hall door to see if my design was on the wall.”

Harold eventually established his own firm in New Orleans — grounded in what he learned at Berkeley.

“I always felt that Bay Area architecture was personal, livable — not grand or pretentious, but built at human scale,” he says. Those principles influenced his practice, which focused

Continued on next page
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Please call me/us for more information or to plan your legacy. Our team of planned giving professionals can provide you with more specific ideas.

See your impact doubled when you create a new endowed scholarship

You can see your support matched dollar for dollar when you partner with fellow alumni to support Cal students. A generous bequest from Berkeley honors student Ruth (Janke) Johnson ‘38, C.Mult. ‘39 has created the Ruth Johnson Undergraduate Scholarship Match Program, which will match 50 new scholarship funds of $100,000. Having treasured her Berkeley education throughout her life, Ruth sought to help make the Berkeley experience possible for many others — a vision that will only be fulfilled with your support. Please call the Office of Gift Planning at 800.200.0575 to learn more about this special opportunity to double your impact.

A Note from the Executive Director

Both Don Lee and Harold Burns are grateful for the Berkeley education that set them on paths to fulfilling careers. Combining math and creativity to create structures that benefit society, both men appreciate all that it takes to plan out and build something great. Both also recognize how a carefully planned gift will help build a strong and enduring Berkeley.

Gifts made through wills or living trusts are the foundation of planned gifts. We are excited to announce that Berkeley has launched a new bequest commitment program in which estate gifts are now acknowledged in a donor’s personal campus lifetime giving, class campaign giving, and Berkeley’s capital campaigns. In the recently completed Campaign for Berkeley, $120 million in bequest commitments were made to Berkeley. So, although we have always recognized the significant role that bequest gifts play in accomplishing Berkeley’s mission, these amounts were not counted in fundraising totals. With revised counting standards made by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), and in keeping with best practices among our peers for higher-education philanthropy, we are excited that estate gifts will now be recognized during donors’ lifetimes. These gifts are the building blocks that will secure and strengthen Berkeley’s extraordinary future.

Bequest gifts can be made in a number of ways, with a gift provision that designates Cal as a beneficiary of an estate percentage or an estate asset such as real estate (as Harold did), or as a beneficiary of retirement accounts, brokerage accounts, or life insurance policies. To count the gift, the donor and donor’s spouse (if applicable) must be a minimum of 70 years old by the end of the upcoming campaign, and the gift may be deferred only until after the lives of both spouses.

We would welcome the opportunity to help you plan a gift that exemplifies the commitment and passion that you have for this great university. If you have already included Berkeley in your will, living trust, retirement plan, or other deferring giving technique and have not notified our office, please contact us so that we may count the gift in your lifetime giving totals as well as in our campaign totals. Reach out anytime by calling 800.200.0575 or emailing ogp@berkeley.edu. Also, visit us at planyourlegacy.berkeley.edu.

Fiat Lux!

Kevin T. Crilly, J.D.
Executive Director, Office of Gift Planning
UC Berkeley

Since his first exposure to Asian art in San Francisco, Harold has avidly collected Japanese prints, black ink sumi by well-known Berkeley professor Chiura Obata, and works by local artists. He is also devoted to the opera, ballet, symphony, and museums. When asked why he made Berkeley a significant beneficiary of his generosity, he said, “I’m a Golden Bear — Berkeley was generous to me — that’s why! I am most grateful for my Berkeley experience. It directed my whole thereafter.”

Vol. 29, No. 1
Produced by External Relations
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This newsletter offers only general gift planning information. We urge you to seek the advice of an attorney in developing your personal estate plan, as the Office of Gift Planning may not render tax or legal advice to friends and alumni of the university. If you would like more information concerning charitable giving as a component of estate planning, we would be happy to provide you with more specific ideas.

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