



Gold Star Hall, Memorial Union

## Insights

### Memory of Soldier Sparks Giving



📌 Donald Sparks

*It was a warm summer evening* in 1966 when 11-year-old Cathie Betts Fowler faced her fear of riding the Tilt-A-Whirl.

She was at the Glidden, Iowa, street fair with her twin sister, Connie Betts Mills, and their friend Esta Sparks under the supervision of Esta's big brother, Donald.

Don, who was home on break from Iowa State, eased Cathie's trepidation by offering to go on the ride with her. "I just remember that he was so nice," said Fowler. "When you're a sixth-grader and look up to this college boy, you get a little crush, at least for the evening."

That night no one imagined Don would face an enemy ambush in Vietnam three years later, and the details of his ultimate fate would remain unknown to this day.

Don grew up with Esta and two other siblings on a farm in Glidden, where he was active in the FFA and 4-H. A fun-loving kid and talented student at Glidden-Ralston High School, Don enjoyed going to basketball games with friends and teaching his little sister how to drive a tractor.

He attended Iowa State on an Army draft deferment and did well in his classes, receiving a bachelor's degree in farm operations management in 1968. Soon after graduating, he was drafted and went to basic training.

On June 17, 1969, Don and another soldier were leading their platoon through hostile territory near Chu Lai when they were ambushed. The two soldiers lay under

*Continued on Page 2*

#### Inside This Issue

Chris Onken, who grew up on a family farm in Iowa, aims for a career related to agriculture. Iowa State donors are making his dream possible. "I wouldn't be where I'm at right now if it weren't for donors," he said.

# Memory of Soldier Sparks Giving

*Continued from Page 1*

heavy enemy fire for almost 12 hours as the enemy thwarted attempts to reach them. Don was presumed dead and listed as missing in action.

Then nearly a year later, American soldiers discovered a Viet Cong soldier carrying two letters from Don dated April 11, 1970, 10 months after it was thought he had died. One of the letters was to his parents in Glidden.

This began a decades-long search to discover what happened to Don. Reports indicate he survived the ambush and became a prisoner of war. While the U.S. Department of Defense has provided the Sparks family with the few facts known about Don's time as a prisoner – including a story of how he tried to escape but was recaptured – the trail of his fate has disappeared. A military tribunal ruled in 1979 that Sparks died in captivity.

"Growing up in the '60s, you were very aware of the local guys being drafted to go to Vietnam," said Fowler. Her family and the Glidden community have shared the heartbreak felt by the Sparks family during these long, uncertain years.

As she grew up, left home, earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and got married, Fowler always knew she wanted to do something to commemorate Don's sacrifice.

The idea came to her when she was establishing a scholarship in memory of her sister, who received a



Connie Betts Mills (left) and Cathie Betts Fowler



*Don, Connie and I were all farm kids from Carroll County.*

The scholarships are a way for me to honor my farm background and to give back to kids like us who grew up on a farm in a rural community.

– CATHIE FOWLER



Gold Star Hall and think of him. If they see his name on the wall and they have the scholarship in his name, his legacy will live on."

bachelor's degree in journalism from Iowa State in 1976. Connie passed away in 2005. Although Cathie didn't attend Iowa State, she has fond memories of visiting Connie and their older brother, Ron Betts (B.S. 1970, Ph.D. 1978 biochemistry and biophysics), in Ames and going to basketball games at Hilton Coliseum.

Cathie was working with the Iowa State University Foundation's office of gift planning on an estate bequest to create the Connie Betts Memorial Scholarship and the Cathie Betts B.S.N. Scholarship when she recognized "the something" she could do for Don.

Cathie also established the Donald L. Sparks Gold Star Memorial Scholarship for Iowa State students from Carroll County studying agriculture-related fields, much like Don. Along with the scholarship funds, student recipients will receive the story of Don's life and service to his country.

"I want his sacrifice in Vietnam to never be forgotten," said Fowler of her former Tilt-A-Whirl companion. "I want future generations to walk through the



**Is there someone who has made a meaningful difference in your**

**life?** Consider honoring that person with a gift to Iowa State in their name. It's a thoughtful way to acknowledge your relationship and extend your support to Iowa State students. To learn more, contact the office of gift planning at 800.621.8515 or visit [isugift.org](http://isugift.org).

THOMAS PAUL FRANK  
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JEFFREY MARTIN KROMMENHOEK  
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JAMES A. LASCHE



## *Gold Star Hall*

is the “memorial” in the Memorial Union.

In World War I, when a family had a son or daughter in the service, they displayed a card with a simple blue star in their window. When a life was lost, the card with the blue star was changed to one with a gold star – hence the name, Gold Star Hall.

When the Memorial Union opened in 1928, the names of the Iowa Staters who died in World War I were carved into the walls. In 1959, the names of WWII casualties were mounted on two bronze doors in the zodiac foyer. In 1984, the bronze doors were removed, and the names from World War II, Korea and Vietnam were engraved into the limestone inside Gold Star Hall – including Donald L. Sparks.

DONALD LEE SPARKS  
RICHARD CLAIR SWIFT  
KENNITH WALKER TAPSCOTT  
LARRY LEE THOMAS  
RICHARD MARK WELCH

# Community, Caring and Giving



**Chris Onken** grew up in Carroll County on a family farm outside of small town Lidderdale, Iowa, helping raise corn and soybeans. During the fall and spring, he would work as much as he could operating the combine during harvest, and tractors during field tillage and planting. His passion for agriculture led him to Iowa State University, where he chose to pursue a major in agricultural studies and a minor in agronomy, as well as to participate in intramural sports and take part in the Agronomy Club.

Onken plans to find an agricultural-related career post-graduation, working in agronomy, precision farming, seed sales or farm management, but would ultimately like to produce crops for a living on his family farm. He notes that growing up in Carroll County helped set him

up for success because the communities in the area are exceptionally supportive of their residents. "Everyone is so kind and will do anything to help you reach your goals," Onken said.

Iowa State University donors extend this community of support. As a scholarship recipient, Onken knows how important investments in students are.

"I am very appreciative for the support I have received from my community and through scholarships," he said. "They've helped me to save money, which I will be able to put toward the start of my agricultural career upon graduation. I wouldn't be where I'm at right now if it weren't for donors."



## *It's Not Too Late to Make an Impact in 2018*

With this year's tax reform, you may be wondering whether your charitable giving can still provide you with tax benefits. We'll help you navigate the tax law and provide a list of gifts that can benefit you in our new brochure, ***2018 Charitable Giving in the Wake of Tax Reform***. Request your complimentary copy using the enclosed reply card.



## Does Your Will Need an Update?

### *Unlike cherished traditions,*

such as ringing the Victory Bell after gridiron victories, a will doesn't gain integrity with age. That's because your will reflects the time when it was created, and your life might look quite different now. Or perhaps, like Cathie Betts Fowler (see cover story), you've discovered that your will can be a means to honoring someone special to you – and ensure they'll never be forgotten.

A will is a statement about your life. It reveals who and what mattered most to you, and it's the final gesture by which you'll be remembered. Updating this key document is time well spent.

Here are a few situations that should trigger an update:

- ❑ **New marital circumstances.** This could mean your own, your children's or your grandchildren's.
- ❑ **Birth.** You may want to provide for a new child or grandchild after your lifetime.
- ❑ **A loved one's passing.** Your carefully crafted plan can be profoundly affected by the passing of a family member.
- ❑ **A move to another state.** Different state laws control the steps for making a valid will. Contact an estate planning attorney in your new state to review and update your will.
- ❑ **A new or deepening relationship with an institution such as Iowa State.** Create a lasting legacy at Iowa State with a gift in your will. Simply ask your attorney to add one sentence (see back cover) to your existing document.



**Use your will to make a difference at Iowa State – and a lasting statement about your Cyclone values.**

To learn how easy it is, contact the office of gift planning at 800.621.8515 or visit [isugift.org](http://isugift.org).



## **FOREVER TRUE, FOR IOWA STATE CAMPAIGN**

It's not every day that a gift in your will can make a difference today, but right now it can.

When you include a gift to the Iowa State University Foundation in your will or provide another future gift such as making Iowa State a beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy, your gift counts toward the *Forever True, For Iowa State* campaign.

Iowa Staters are known for rolling up their sleeves and doing what they can to get things done. But not everyone can afford to contribute today. That's why making a planned gift to Iowa State is a great option. You'll join others who are passionate about Iowa State and who want to enhance the student experience, fortify groundbreaking research and accelerate the university's contributions to the world. You'll help move the needle toward the university's aspirations – without giving up any of your assets today.

## *Your Gift Matters*

Please let us know about your future gift to Iowa State. We want to make sure it counts toward the campaign, and more important, we want to thank you for your generosity.

## HOW TO REMEMBER IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST

Share the following language with your estate planning attorney to add to your will or living trust.

*I give, devise and bequeath to the Iowa State University Foundation, a not-for-profit corporation existing under the laws of the State of Iowa and located at Ames, Iowa, \_\_\_\_\_ (percent of my estate, dollars, property, securities, etc.) to be used for \_\_\_\_\_ (however you wish for your gift to be used) at Iowa State University.*

## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

The Iowa State Foundation is acknowledged by Iowa State University as the preferred channel for administering trust and estate gifts that benefit the university. This is accomplished by using the name Iowa State University Foundation in your legal documents. Please contact the foundation for additional information.

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