



# Significance

CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH CHARITABLE GIFT PLANNING



## Lynwood Swanson: From quantum to legacy

Lynwood “Lyn” Swanson describes his beginnings simply:

“I grew up as a country boy.” He was born at the tail end of the Great Depression, on a 20-acre farm in California’s San Joaquin Valley. His father worked on a ranch growing peaches, grapes, almonds, and other crops. He and his two sisters grew up on a stretch of road crowded with relatives — so many, in fact, that it carried the family name: Swanson Road.

“It was a pretty simple experience,” he said. “We didn’t have everything we thought we needed, but we got by.” That early life of modest means instilled a resilience and practicality that would later anchor a career defined by innovation, success, and a commitment to giving back to teachers and students.

In high school, a chemistry teacher ignited a fascination with science. Lyn majored in chemistry, then inspired by a college physics professor, shifted his sights toward physics. Graduate school at UC Davis followed, where he studied how light interacts with molecules. Next, Lyn grew interested in studying the fundamentals of quantum mechanics. That shift led him to a postdoctoral position at the University of Chicago, one of the epicenters of modern physics at the time.

## A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR ESTATE PLANNING



There are many reasons to have a well-written estate plan — even if it is just a simple will. A thoughtful estate plan provides clarity for your loved ones, ensuring your final wishes are known

and honored rather than left to the laws of the state in which you live.

Is there also a biblical basis for having an estate plan? Yes. While Scripture does not contain explicit commands regarding current-day wills and trusts, it clearly affirms the principles of stewardship, family provision, and generosity.

A foundational biblical truth is that all things belong to God (1 Chronicles 29:11–12; Psalm 24:1). We are temporary stewards — managers of the resources he has entrusted to us (1 Corinthians 4:2). Estate planning is an extension of this lifelong responsibility, allowing believers to ensure that what God has entrusted to them continues to be managed according to his purposes, even after death.

Scripture also emphasizes the importance of providing for one's family (1 Timothy 5:8) and leaving an inheritance for future generations (Proverbs 13:22). In addition, the Bible encourages cheerful and intentional generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6–7). Through estate planning, believers can leave a lasting legacy of generosity by directing a portion of their assets to ministries and charitable organizations that reflect their Christian values. This reflects an eternal perspective — storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matthew 6:19–21).

In this issue of *Significance*, we highlight the stories of individuals who share Seattle Pacific's values and have chosen to include a gift through their estate plan to further SPU's mission. If you would like to explore how a future gift could support the work of SPU, I would be glad to connect with you.

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CONTINUED FROM COVER

“I felt like a boy among men,” he said. “There were very famous physicists there. I was intimidated.” But he found his footing, publishing his first scientific papers. Lyn's specialty became field emission, a quantum phenomenon involving electrons escaping metal surfaces under intense electric fields.

That niche field unexpectedly pulled him to Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon, home to an internationally respected research institute devoted to field emission. In 1960, Linfield hosted a global symposium that drew scientists from Germany, Japan, and across the United States. Lyn presented one of his first major papers there and eventually joined the institute as a full-time researcher. The work was intense and collaborative. Papers flowed. Recognition grew. “We became internationally recognized,” he said. “That was an exciting time.”

He moved to the Oregon Graduate Center in Beaverton in the early 1970s, entering what he calls “probably the most stimulating period of my life.” He supervised doctoral students from around the world and expanded research into charged particle beam systems.

In 1971, Lyn co-founded Field Electron and Ion (FEI) Company, a designer and manufacturer of cutting-edge microscope technology. The company grew rapidly, becoming one of the world's largest charged particle beam manufacturers. The company was ultimately acquired in 2016 by Thermo Fisher Scientific, a global supplier of pharmaceutical, medical, and biotechnology equipment. “It's satisfying to see basic research eventually help humanity,” said Lyn. “Many researchers never see tangible results. I was fortunate.”

Deeply impacted by early educational experiences and teachers, Lyn had built a thriving career and wanted to give back by investing in students beginning their journeys to become tomorrow's leaders and scientists. In 1987, Lyn joined the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, one of SPU's financial partners, as a trustee. Over 30 years, Lyn helped guide its growth from a \$90 million estate to a multibillion-dollar foundation supporting science and education across the Pacific Northwest.

Lyn married his high school sweetheart, Karin, and raised four children. His two sons, David '94 and Jonathan '95, followed in his



Lyn keeps his mind sharp by playing the piano.

footsteps with interest in science. Looking for a college with quality science programs, Christian faith, and a robust soccer program, they both landed at Seattle Pacific University. During this time, the Swanson family's life was filled with many trips to SPU for soccer games and track meets.

In his position as trustee of the Murdock Trust, Lyn coordinated many large contributions to Seattle Pacific in support of student programs and research. At SPU's 2015 undergraduate commencement ceremony, Lyn received an honorary doctor of science degree for his achievements in science, philanthropy, and contributions to Seattle Pacific students and science programs.

Over the years, Lyn has made significant gifts to SPU, most recently helping the University purchase a fluorometer for the College of Applied and Natural Sciences. The instrument is used in classes to visualize and interpret data, opening new opportunities for peer-reviewed research.

Now at 91, Lyn enjoys playing the piano and spending time with his children and 12 grandchildren. He has also included Seattle Pacific University as a beneficiary in his will, ensuring SPU's nationally recognized science programs grounded in Christian faith will continue and thrive. “Faith and science are important to me,” he said.

“Many colleges were founded by churches, but have moved away from that connection. SPU is instead leaning into faith, and that's encouraging to my dad!” said Lyn's daughter, Cami Nyquist. “He has seen firsthand how important both science and Christian education are to our world, especially in these times.”

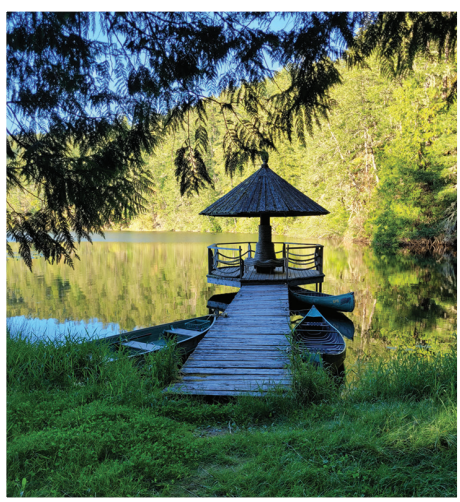
## PHILANTHROPY SPOTLIGHT

### Ken and Lois Mogren: Living out their Christian faith



After serving in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II, Ken Mogren and his new wife, Lois, moved from their hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota, to Seattle, where Ken began his engineering career at Boeing. During these early years, he generously shared his time and leadership as a church elder and as a board member for several Christian organizations, including North American Indigenous

# Summer Bialek: Exploring the natural world



“  
I am so grateful to  
study ecology in such  
a beautiful state and  
could have never  
done it without the  
financial support from  
my scholarships.”

— SUMMER BIALEK '27  
ECOLOGY MAJOR

## It's a sunny summer morning on Blakely Island in the

San Juan Islands. Summer Bialek '27 stands on the balcony of Seattle Pacific's field station, taking a deep breath of the crisp air, fresh off the salty waters of the Pacific. She has a full day ahead, cooking meals for the research students and professors, participating in data collection for SPU summer courses, and exploring the island's forests.

This experience as a student worker at SPU's Blakely Island field station last summer solidified Summer's vision for her future working in ecology. "The island's lush forests, sparkling lakes, and views as far as the eye can see are enough to convince anyone that we must do all that we can to protect our natural world," she said. "Learning hands-on at the field station gave me a strong sense of purpose, and my passion for nature and conservation burned even brighter afterward."

Summer's love for the natural world began as a young child, exploring national parks on long cross-country road trips with her family and caring for many pets. So when it came time to decide what to study in college, ecology was the easy answer. Her dream was to study at an out-of-state school with a robust ecological program surrounded by natural beauty — but she doubted that was a financial possibility. That is, until she applied to Seattle Pacific and received her scholarship offer.

"The generous scholarships I received not only made SPU affordable, but also allowed me to pursue my degree with almost no debt," said Summer. "I am so grateful to study ecology in such a beautiful state and could have never done it without the financial support from my scholarships."

Coming from the midwestern suburbs of Chicago, Seattle Pacific University offered a big change in natural scenery. "The snow-capped view of Mount Rainier from my residence hall never gets old," she said. She joined SPU's Outdoor Recreation Program, going on regular camping and hiking trips around Washington with fellow students. She also participated in SPU's annual Study Abroad program in Belize, studying marine life with SPU students and professors while snorkeling along the second largest coral reef in the world.

SPU allowed her to pursue her love of learning beyond ecology as well. "SPU has transformed me into a naturally curious person with an insatiable hunger to know more about everything," said Summer. "The liberal arts aspect of SPU allowed me to take a wide variety of classes, expanding my knowledge in a diverse range of subjects and instilling an intrinsic sense of wonder for the world."

Summer plans to use the knowledge, skills, and experience she's gained at SPU to make a difference working in environmental science in the Pacific Northwest. "The ecology program at SPU has been phenomenal, and the smaller class sizes have allowed me to grow personal connections with many of my professors, who have consistently encouraged me and stoked my curiosity for the natural world. Their support allows me to feel confident about entering the post-grad working world."

For SPU donors, Summer has this message: "Thank you for allowing me to pursue my dreams and receive an education that will equip me to make a difference in the world!"

Ministries, Youth for Christ, and Christian Business Men's Connection.

Lois devoted her early years to raising their young family. She had attended college in Minnesota and hoped to become a teacher, but those plans were paused while their children were small. Once all three were in school, Lois resumed her education at Seattle Pacific, graduating with a teaching degree in

1967. She then taught elementary school for 18 years in the Highline School District.

Over time, Ken and Lois's appreciation for Seattle Pacific University deepened. They joined the Wellspring Society and the President's Circle, and several of their children and grandchildren also attended SPU. In retirement, they especially enjoyed volunteering at SPU Phonathons to help

raise scholarship support for students.

In addition to their annual giving, Ken and Lois arranged a final gift to SPU through their estate. After 77 years of marriage, Lois passed away in 2022 at age 98. Ken passed away in 2024 at age 101. The legacy gift they planned with such great care has now come to the University where it is helping current students receive the scholarship support they need.

**NATIONALLY RANKED** — Seattle Pacific continues to be recognized as a “Best National University” by *U.S. News & World Report*.



**PLANNING YOUR LEGACY:**

# Are your estate plans up to date?

One of the most effective ways to care for your family is with a current estate plan. While each family’s situation is different, when it comes to providing for your heirs, there are several important questions to consider and options you have for leaving your legacy:

**WILL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Have there been significant life changes with your family (marriages, divorces, births, deaths, etc.) since you last updated your will or trust?
- Are you certain that your assets (cars, house, boats, RVs, etc.) are properly titled? Titling issues may cause assets to be unintentionally distributed to someone else. If married, it may be important for both spouses to be listed on titles so that if one spouse passes, the other may still have legal access to the assets.
- Will your plan cause unity or division among your heirs?
- What legacy will you leave for your family? For your community?

A current estate plan is vital to making sure your wishes are carried out and can help you leave a lasting personal legacy.

**INHERITANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- Who is dependent on you for financial support? Are you married? How many children and grandchildren do you have? Do you have any heirs with special needs?
- How much is “enough,” and what is an appropriate inheritance for each heir?
- Who will receive your assets? Will your assets go to the people you intend, or unintentionally be distributed to someone else?
- What else do you really desire for your heirs beyond money — college education, social responsibility, etc.?
- What charitable institutions have been most important to you, and do you want to include them in your plans?

**BEQUESTS**

Bequests made through your will or trust are common ways to provide from your estate for heirs and favorite charities. You can make a bequest of a dollar amount, specific asset, or percentage of your estate.

**BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS**

By completing a simple form, you can designate heirs and charities as the beneficiary of retirement plans, financial accounts, and life insurance policies.

**GIVE IT TWICE TRUST**

You can set up a special charitable remainder trust that will pay income to your heirs and then leave the remaining principal to a charity.


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**If you would like to discuss how you may be able to support Seattle Pacific in your estate plans, please contact Marlon Sandlin at 206-281-2631 or [msandlin@spu.edu](mailto:msandlin@spu.edu).**

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**Give Big.  
 Give Strong.  
 Give Falcon Strong.**

**Our free resources have everything you need to help you plan your legacy. Request copies at: [spu.edu/estateresources](http://spu.edu/estateresources)**

**You’re invited to join us in person (or online) for this year’s Giving Day on Wednesday, April 8!** Seattle Pacific will host its annual Giving Day filled with new and exciting activities such as pep rallies; games; fellowship with students, leaders, and faculty; and more...

**Together, we’ll celebrate SPU and help raise financial support for:**

- Student scholarships
- Student spiritual formation, programs (e.g., Athletics), and campus safety
- Faculty/staff innovation and research, recruitment, and retention
- Campus buildings, facilities, and capital investments projects

 **LEARN MORE AT [givingday.spu.edu](http://givingday.spu.edu)**



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