

Burkart Estate Gifts \$1 Million to UTRGV for Endowed Academic Scholarships

RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS – OCT. 13, 2021 – Jon and Elizabeth Burkhart, a vivacious couple known for their unique wit and penchant for world travel, believed strongly in the power of education.



A young Elizabeth and Jon Burkhart, shortly after their marriage in 1960.

Elizabeth, a native of the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), attended The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) legacy institution Pan American College. She considered her time there to be a stepping stone to what she would accomplish through her storied career. Though her work took her away, Elizabeth held a strong affinity for the region and would return to visit family whenever possible. Jon also had fond memories of his time in the RGV. It was here that he began his career in television broadcasting and met Elizabeth.

Over the years, the Burkharths impressed on their family and friends the importance of higher education and its role in their successes. Though neither graduated from UTRGV, they believed in the mission of the university—the first major public university of the 21st century, which serves as a model Hispanic-Serving

Institution of higher learning. In an astounding expression of their support, the Burkharths bequeathed more than \$1 million to UTRGV for endowed academic scholarships. From a steppingstone to an enduring financial resource for college students in South Texas, the Burkharths' legacy will undoubtedly live on at UTRGV.

About Jon and Elizabeth Burkhart

Jon Mac Burkhart was born and raised in Corsicana, Texas. After graduating from the University of Texas in Austin, Jon moved to South Texas to begin his radio and television broadcasting career. It was there that he would meet his lifetime love, Elizabeth Flores.

Elizabeth spent much of her childhood and adult life in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). She is the oldest of 12 children born to Pablo M. and Helen G. Flores. Elizabeth graduated from Donna High School in 1954 and then entered the Marine Corps. After she departed from duty, Elizabeth attended UTRGV legacy institution Pan American College for three years.



Elizabeth and Jon Burkhart

Jon and Elizabeth eventually moved from the RGV to Wichita Falls, then settled in Houston, Texas. Jon became the lead technical director of a major television station, and Elizabeth rose through the ranks to become an assistant vice president of a financial institution. A highlight of Jon’s career was serving as a

senior technical director for a television network’s coverage of humankind’s first landing on the Moon. He also served as technical director during the Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea, Barcelona, Spain, and Atlanta, Georgia.



Barbara Bush, Jon Burkart, President H. W. Bush, and Elizabeth Burkart. The photo features a personal inscription by President Bush.

Elizabeth’s achievements in finance gained national attention, and she was called to Washington D.C., where she served in several high-level political positions under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. While Elizabeth worked in D.C., Jon remained in Houston. The couple made their long-distance relationship work through frequent travel, both domestic and abroad. Upon retirement, the couple settled in Maui, Hawaii, and lived in their definition of paradise for 20 years. They spent their final years close to Jon’s family at Arbor Acres in Winston Salem, North Carolina.

Although they moved away from the region, Jon and Elizabeth continued to reflect fondly on the Rio Grande Valley and often returned to visit family in Donna. In recognition of her achievements, by way of a formal proclamation, City of Donna Mayor Jose Yanez declared January 27, 1985 as Elizabeth Flores Burkhart Day. UTRGV is proud to continue sharing the Burkharths’ legacy through their endowed academic scholarships.

A Legacy Gift to The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Though they had no children of their own, Jon and Elizabeth filled the role of surrogate parents to Elizabeth’s younger siblings. They especially encouraged their pursuit of educational opportunities. The Burkharths served as an example of what can be accomplished through education, motivation, and opportunity.

The legacy gift was announced during a press conference Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021 in McAllen, Texas. “UTRGV is proud to continue sharing the Burkhart commitment to higher education through their endowed scholarships fund,” said Dr. Kelly Nassour, executive vice president for Institutional Advancement. “This will help many UTRGV students on their academic journeys to long and fulfilling careers.”

The legacy of Jon and Elizabeth Burkhart will have a lasting impact on students in the RGV. The gift through their estate will live on in perpetuity, providing a permanent fund that opens the doors to success for students in South Texas.



Family members of Jon and Elizabeth Burkhart gather to celebrate the announcement of the \$1 million in endowed academic scholarships bequeathed by the Burkhart family to UTRGV. From L to R: Diana Flores, Robert Flores, Belinda Burkhart, Anne Coltrane, Joseph Coltrane, Michelle Lopez, Samuel Lopez, Delia Lopez, Michael Lopez, & Adriana Lopez.