William H. “Bill” Flores ’76 remembers that no sooner had he joined the Corps of Cadets than he was ready to quit. “My parents dropped me off here Thursday before class started and by Sunday I was calling home and telling my dad I was going to quit the Corps,” Flores recalls. “He asked me to just take it a day at a time. And that’s the way I lived my entire freshman year, one day at a time. I made a decision to stay in the Corps every day of my freshman year.”

That repeated decision to stick it out for one more day paid off for him, as he benefitted from leadership and learning opportunities—by the time of his graduation, he was a Ross Volunteer and a member of the Corps staff, and he was a student leader outside the Corps as well, serving as MSC vice president and as the student body’s vice president of finance. It has paid off for A&M as well, as Flores and his wife, Gina, are now among A&M’s most generous benefactors, giving of their time, money and energy to help perpetuate the Aggie Spirit. “Because of what they are like when they come out in the workforce and the difference they make in the world, we ought to do everything we can to help A&M produce that kind of graduate,” Bill Flores says. To that end,
the Floreses have funded endowments, scholarships and other donations. First-generation college students are one emphasis of their giving.

“One thing that Gina and I observed was that when John (the younger of their two sons) came back from Fish Camp, he was different,” Bill Flores says. “We watched the transformation from high school student to the beginnings of a Texas Aggie. And he formed his first Aggie Network at Fish Camp, a group he is still close with today. Then I read an article about students from under-represented groups that come to A&M but don’t fit in and they stay to themselves. It’s one thing to say we’re going to invite underrepresented groups into our University, but if we don’t do anything where they can mix in with everybody else, they’re not going to come out of their shells.” So the Floreses created an endowment that will put about 200 first-generation college students through Fish Camp free of charge. “We thought, if we can get those groups to Fish Camp, those barriers will break down and they’ll form their own diverse Aggie Network, and we could begin to draw those folks into the Aggie family and they will continue to grow and blossom.”

The Floreses are also consistent supporters of the Mays Business School (of which he was named a 2003 Outstanding Alumnus) and of the College of Education. Gina Flores comes from a family of educators and taught in both public and private schools. She didn’t attend A&M—“The first yell practice I ever went to, I thought, what the heck is this?”—but she now bleeds maroon and serves on A&M’s College of Education Advisory Board and is a member of the Friends of the Sterling C. Evans Library. “We figured, if we can start supporting Aggie educators, then they are going to go back and inculcate Aggie values into younger people coming up,” Bill says. Gina adds that for Bill, no child is ever too young to start learning Aggie values. That brings a laugh from Bill, who agrees: “I’ve reached out to all the nieces and nephews, trying to get them inoculated.”

“And he’s already taught one 3-year-old to Gig’em,” his wife adds with a laugh.

The Floreses are also focused on young people just about to leave A&M. They are supporting The Association’s project to enhance the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center, and the Great Hall of the building will be renamed Flores Hall in their honor. “Helping The Association with this building project would do more to help connect it to the current generation of Aggies who are here,” says Bill, the immediate past president of The Association’s Board of Directors. “If we do that well enough, when those people come out, they become people that want to give back, and when they give back, they just keep this cycle going.”

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**At A Glance: Gina and Bill Flores**

**CAREER**

He started with a Big 8 accounting firm before transitioning to the energy industry. He is now president and CEO of Phoenix Exploration, a Houston oil and gas company. She began her career teaching English in public high schools before transitioning to private Christian schools, where she taught elementary and middle school.

**HOMETOWN**

Both are from Stratford, about 80 miles north of Amarillo. They knew each other there but didn’t start dating until 1977, after he had graduated from A&M.

**FAMILY**

Two sons, Will, 26, and John ’06, 24.

**MAJOR INFLUENCES**

Bill Flores credits three men who had a special influence on him at A&M. Phil Young-dahl was a business professor who took an interest in Flores’ future and convinced him to major in accounting. J. Wayne Stark “always gave me some kind of advice about how to enhance the potential of my career, and he encouraged me to think beyond Texas A&M and beyond just an accounting degree.” And John J. Koldus “taught me how to be a gentleman and rounded off my rough edges.”

**IN MEMORIAM**

In 1978, Bill’s brother Pat Flores ’77 was killed in a work-related accident, just before he was to graduate from A&M. Bill and another brother, Mike Flores ’79, endowed a scholarship in Pat’s memory. “After that we started getting letters from the students that the scholarship helped, and that just reinforced for us the importance of helping.”

**EDUCATION**

He graduated from A&M in 1976 with an accounting degree, then completed his MBA at Houston Baptist University. She attended Texas Tech and finished her education degree at Sam Houston State.

**ADVICE FOR FRESHMEN**

Get an engineering degree in almost any discipline, a business degree in accounting or finance or IT, or a degree in education or architecture. “Any of those and you’ve got tools for your toolbox that will always give you a job where you can make a difference.”

**ADVICE FOR GRADUATING SENIORS**

“Stay close to their Aggie Network that they formed. And give back early and continue the habit of giving back. It will grow to be a passion if they start early.”

**Correction**

In the May-June Texas Aggie, John Bethancourt ’74 was misidentified in a Q&A with Harold J. ’46 and Reta K. Haynes. Mr. Haynes credits Bethancourt with educating him about the role The Association of Former Students plays in the entire educational process. Texas Aggie regrets the error.