quickly established himself as a student leader, attaining membership in the elite Ross Volunteers and serving as Corps Commander his senior year.

Kruger was also involved in the MSC’s Town Hall series, but the MSC has special significance to him for another reason: It’s where he first met the woman who would become his wife.

On a Sunday afternoon in March of 1952, Kruger and some buddies went to the MSC for coffee. While there, one of the buddies spotted a girl from his hometown. The young lady from McKinney had just been selected as sweetheart of the Fish Ball.

“Later, I told my friend from McKinney I’d like to have a date with that girl,” Kruger said.

In the fall of 1952 another friend, who knew Patti, arranged for her to be Kruger’s date on a trip to Dallas. According to Kruger, it took him five years to convince her to marry him, but Patti recalls being impressed from their first meeting.

“They introduced me to him and he was really impressive,” she recalled. “You had to see it. He was really sharp.”

Decades later, she clearly is still impressed by him, and she makes a point of noting his integrity. “You can depend on Weldon,” she says. “He will be there. He has very high standards, and always has since I’ve known him.”

After earning his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Petroleum Engineering and serving in the U.S. Air Force, Weldon and Patti married in 1957, forming a tight partnership that carried them successfully through his three decades in the volatile international energy business.

As a boy, Kruger worked at service stations, pumping gas. By the time he retired in 1986, however, he had ascended to the executive ranks of a forerunner to today’s ExxonMobil, serving as president of Esso Middle East and later as corporate vice president for natural gas.

In appreciation for the opportunities a Texas A&M education provided, the Krugers give generously of both their financial resources and time to Texas A&M. In addition to their recent gift to the building enhancement project, they are Endowed Century Club members.

Connecting With Patricia and Weldon Kruger ’53

P atti and Weldon Kruger ’53 are supporting The Association of Former Students building enhancement project with a Pillars of History gift, a designation most fitting two individuals who many would describe as pillars of the Aggie Spirit.

As loyal and generous donors to organizations across the Texas A&M campus, the Krugers well understand the power of education to change lives and actively do their part to ensure Aggies from all walks of life have the opportunity to unleash that power.

Weldon Kruger grew up in Brenham, Texas during the depression, working at a service station and other odd jobs to help with family expenses. By the time he approached college age, he knew education was the key to changing his direction in life.

“I had done enough work at odd jobs and felt I needed an education to avoid being a manual laborer the rest of my life,” Kruger said. “I wasn’t sure I could go to college because my parents didn’t have the financial means.”

Despite the lack of funds, Kruger’s parents, other family members and teachers encouraged him to obtain as much education as he could. One teacher in particular, Howard Perry ’44, took a special interest in Kruger and encouraged him to apply for scholarships. As a result, Kruger was able to attend Texas A&M, with the help of a scholarship, an opportunity that changed his life and ultimately the lives of many future Aggies.

Kruger reported to campus in the fall of 1949 and found himself, and his fish buddies, bunking 16 men to a barracks and attending classes at the Annex, now known as the Riverside Campus.

“After World War II, when the veterans were coming back, A&M didn’t really have room on main campus,” Kruger explained. “I also heard they wanted to separate the veterans from the 18-year-old freshmen, which was probably a wise idea.”

During his fish year Kruger and his buddies only visited the main campus for parades, Muster, football games and other such activities. Once firmly rooted on the main campus, however, he
and have funded numerous scholarships across the campus. Weldon is past chair of both the Board of Directors of The Association of Former Students and the Board of Trustees of the Texas A&M Foundation, and was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 1996.

As a recipient of one of their scholarships, Daniel Canizales ’09, commanding officer of Company C-2 in the Corps of Cadets, is one of many Texas A&M students who have benefitted from the Kruger’s generosity of both resources and spirit. An agricultural economics major from Austin, Canizales, like Weldon Kruger, is the first from his family to attend college and has enjoyed a close relationship with the Krugers since his freshman year.

“They are great people,” Canizales said. “I am constantly taking notes from them – on their generosity and genuine character, and the way they live their lives.”

Canizales earned his Aggie Ring in September 2008 and asked the Krugers to present it to him. It was an appropriate request, considering the Krugers insisted on purchasing the Ring for him.

“We were at dinner one evening and they offered to pay for my Aggie Ring,” Canizales recalled. “I was astonished and never expected anything like that from people who had already given so much to me.”

Canizales will graduate in December 2009 and will be commissioned into the United States Marine Corps. Like Weldon Kruger, he will serve his country and says he will follow the Kruger’s example of generosity and do what he can to give back to Texas A&M.

The Krugers enjoy their involvement with students at Texas A&M and believe it helps keep them young. Weldon works with the commandant on various committees, serving on the Board of Visitors for the Corps and the Corps Development Council. In addition, he works with the International Programs Office as part of the International Board and on the development council for the Vice President of Student Affairs.

While Patti graduated from the University of Texas, her blood runs the same deep maroon as Weldon’s. “When I came here to visit as a senior in high school, I thought it was wonderful,” she said. “Everybody was friendly and spoke to me. I would have come here in a minute, except they didn’t allow girls. And now I don’t even yell for Texas when we play them, which pleases Weldon immensely.”

Much about Texas A&M has changed since Weldon Kruger first spotted his bride-to-be in the MSC, but he’s quick to note that students today – male and female – remain passionate about sustaining the university’s many storied traditions.

“It’s really gratifying, with the change from a military school to coed, that all these traditions have been carried on,” he noted.

Through his long affiliation with The Association of Former Students, Kruger understands the need for growth and expansion of the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center. “I completely understand why the building needed to be enhanced and we certainly support what they are doing.”

Through their gift to the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center, the Krugers will ensure that future generations of Aggies will know the history and tradition of Texas A&M and The Association. Perhaps more importantly, through their example, future generations will see the character and integrity of Texas Aggies.