Charles W. Seely ’55 can’t imagine what his life would be like without his ties to Texas A&M University. “When I left A&M as a petroleum engineer, I felt like I was prepared and could handle anything that came my way,” he says. “I cannot imagine any other experience, education or university that could have given me such a well-rounded education. It gave me a strong confidence in myself and a wonderful attitude that I could compete against the best the world has to offer.”

He has indeed competed successfully at the highest levels, first in the corporate oil industry, then as an independent oil and gas producer and as the founder of three successful plastics companies. But he is also a man of great personal integrity, as indicated by a quotation from Seely that is inscribed on one of the Pillars of History in the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center: “True success can only be achieved by allowing integrity to dominate one’s life.”

He says there is no substitute for personal integrity: “One of the most important things that has governed me is that if I say I’m going to do something, then nothing is going to keep me from doing it, if it’s at all physically possible. You’d like to think people know they can trust you, and that although you are going to make some wrong decisions, they can trust in what you say and what you do. You want them to know that you are not trying to take advantage of them in any way.

“I’m from the old school, and I don’t enjoy doing business with people if I have to watch what they do. Being an independent oil and gas producer, I have many different partners, and many of the partners I had back in the ’60s and ’70s I still have today, because if they say they are going to do something, then a handshake is good enough.

“And that is the type of thing that we learned at A&M, the same type of values that I grew up with in Rockwall. A lot of the training we got at A&M, I didn’t even realize I was getting it at the time. These values were instilled into you and it just seemed like common things at the time. Much of it occurred from the Corps of Cadets, so one of the things we have to do is maintain the Corps at all costs. General Van Alstyn is doing a good job with the Corps. We just need to give him all the help and support he requires because without the Corps, I think A&M would probably lose much of its uniqueness and conservatism. I hope one or more of my grandchildren have the opportunity to attend A&M as a member of the Corps.”

Throughout the years, Seely has practiced his personal values in many ways. Religion has played a big part in his life, starting with being chaplain of the Student Senate at Texas A&M. In the past 10 years, he has made 11 trips to Syzran, Russia, to work in an orphanage and a church. Among the many positive results of that work was the addition of three grandchildren—Slava, Valya and Sasha—who were adopted into the Seely family. And seven other Russian orphans are now attending various Russian universities with Seely’s support.

He has also given much back to his industry. He is a past chairman of the Fort Worth Section of the Society of Petroleum Engineers, a past president of the North Texas Oil and Gas Association, and the founding chairman of the 3,300-member Texas Alliance of Energy Producers Association.

And he has always been there for his alma mater. He has served on the Development Council for Texas A&M’s College of Science since 1984 and is past chairman. He has been a member of the Board of Directors of the 12th Man Foundation, and he also serves on the President’s Council of Advisors and on
the Development Board for the Texas A&M University Press. He is a past president of the Fort Worth Tarrant County A&M Club and served five years as a Class of 1955 agent.

He also served on the Board of Directors of The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University for six years, including serving as president in 1984, and he has been a firm supporter of the effort to enhance the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center.

“Since I was president of The Association of Former Students during the planning stages of our Association’s building, I feel very close to it and want to maintain that close feeling,” he says. “It is imperative that our building never fall into disrepair. It must be kept up-to-date with current technology to meet the needs of our increasing younger Association members. This building gives a central point for all Aggies to stay connected.”

He knows well the importance of staying connected, reflecting on his first days on campus in 1951 as a lonely, homesick 17-year-old. “My mother and father took me down in a 1950 Studebaker and dropped me off at Dorm 15,” he recalls. “That was a very lonely feeling, to have been left there. There was a whole lot to enjoy at that time. There weren’t any girls, for one thing. But to be in a military unit for the first time, and to be subjected to everything that a freshman was subjected to, well, that was just not much fun. But the one thing that helps separate the A&M campus from all others is the friendly greeting heard all over campus. We may not think of speaking as a tradition, but that friendly greeting of ‘Howdy!’ gives a warm atmosphere that makes homesick freshmen and visitors feel welcome and at home.”

Seely believes the entire nation could benefit from a greater emphasis on the types of values that were, and still are, instilled at Texas A&M. “I think it is absolutely wonderful that I come from a university that is known as having conservative values,” he says. “I want to see these conservative values continued and maintained, and I would like to see them used to help this nation. Aggies have always been there in the past and I just know they will be in the future.”

At A Glance: Charles W. Seely '55

**FAMILY**
Charlie Seely lives in Fort Worth with his wife of two years, Joann. Together they have five children: Lea Anne Seely ’80, who has a bachelor’s in management from Texas A&M; Sheri Van Sickle, a Baylor graduate; Charles “Chuck” Seely Jr., who attended A&M for a year before graduating from Baylor; Keith Rayburn ’96, a Baylor graduate with a master’s in math from A&M; and Kevin Rayburn, a Hardin-Simmons graduate. The Seelys also have nine grandchildren.

**EDUCATION & CAREER**
Charlie Seely grew up in Rockwall and received a Bachelor of Science degree in petroleum engineering from Texas A&M in 1955. He was a Distinguished Military Graduate and went to work for Mobil Oil Corp. He then served two years as a U.S. Army officer at the Guided Missile School at Fort Bliss before returning to Mobil. He joined Newmont Oil Co. as a reservoir engineer in March 1962 and became chief engineer in September 1963. He moved to Armer Oil Co. in June 1965 as production manager, becoming president in July 1973 and serving in that capacity until January 1976, when the company was sold. He then became an independent oil and gas producer and is currently chairman of Seely Oil Co. He is also chairman of three companies that he founded in 1974 that manufacture plastic products. Companies led by Seely have been Aggie 100 honorees on multiple occasions.

**KEY AGGIE INFLUENCES**
“One of the people that certainly had a great influence on my life was Robert L. ‘Bob’ Whiting, who was head of the Department of Petroleum Engineering. One of the main things I remember about him was his optimism. It didn’t seem like there was anything he or we couldn’t make happen. “A lot of the upperclassmen I met were also influential on me. I could see how they conducted themselves so much better than I was able to at that time, which must have been due to a lot of good Aggie training, and I was hopeful I would eventually be able to do some of the same things.”

**HIS ADVICE FOR ENTERING FRESHMEN**
“You’re probably not going to like it, but one of the best experiences you can come up with is to join the Corps of Cadets. If you can take it, if you can stay there, then you are going to come out and think you can tackle anything that the world has to offer. And get involved. There are so many different activities on campus. Find one you enjoy and be a part of it.”

**HIS ADVICE FOR GRADUATING SENIORS**
“I absolutely have loved being my own boss, and the best way to get there is to go to work for a big company, in the field you want to stay in, and learn as much as you possibly can. There is essentially a university of practical experience that is available through all the people in their different specialties. If things are going well, if you think you’d enjoy that life, then stay there. Otherwise, after five years or so, go to work for a smaller company that allows you to do more things, because when you finally go out on your own, you’ll need good, strong experience in what you studied, but you are also going to need to know other things, like in the legal arena, in accounting, in decision-making. The more you can get that before you get out on your own, the better chance you have of making it.”