



## Connecting With Erle Nye '59

Erle Nye '59 knows the secret to life.

“But it’s actually not such a well-kept secret,” he points out. “It’s an idea that winds its way through all the major religions. Philosophers and religious leaders through the ages have all told us that the best way to serve yourself is to serve others. I really believe that. I believe life is well lived if you can look back and say, ‘I’m proud of what I did and serving others was part of that.’”

It was a lesson impressed upon Nye early in life, through the example lived by his mother’s father. “I can remember my grandfather, on Sundays in particular, had a route where he would take a little basket of groceries around to different families he knew of that needed help. I watched how he did that. He never made them feel less than they were. He made a social visit out of it, and it was never demeaning to them.

“He was a man of modest means but a very giving person, giving to his church and to people less fortunate than himself. He probably lived his religion better than anybody I know, and as a result, it became clear to me that we are put here for a purpose other

than to serve our own interests.”

When Nye enrolled at Texas A&M and joined the Corps of Cadets, he found himself among people who shared and reinforced his personal and family values. “Now if you had asked me at 18 to express those values, I probably could not have. But I knew from my grandparents and others that you told the truth, that if you said you would do something, then you did it. I knew about loyalty, about trying to do your best, about the idea of service, of being honorable and having integrity. And what I had been taught, what had been demonstrated to me by my family, was reinforced at A&M and in the Corps of Cadets. It all fits, and it’s very constructive. If you apply those same values to virtually any enterprise, it’s going to make it better.”

Nye credits his classroom education at A&M for helping him to succeed in business. “I think I got a great education, and the engineering degree

I took was critically important to me.” But A&M also provided important lessons beyond academics. “It provided me a degree of self-confidence I did not have. I have clearly seen any number of times in my life and career how my reactions, my thought processes, my belief system were all influenced by Texas A&M.

“My time there served me very well and helped me meet all kinds of challenges in the military and in business. Texas A&M is an institution that is special to me and my family. We owe a debt we can’t possibly repay. That’s why I love the idea of giving something back to Texas A&M. I know I didn’t get here by myself. I know people helped me. If you see a turtle sitting on a fencepost—you know that turtle didn’t get up there by himself. So look around at the parents, family, friends, ministers, coaches, counselors and teachers who helped you get there, and remember that now it’s your part to help others succeed.”

Nye and his wife, Alice, decided early on to do all they could to help others succeed. “We’ve been blessed, and we realized how fortunate we are, and we wanted a lot of that money to go to the kinds of efforts we found beneficial and worthwhile. We support a wide range of projects, in education, the arts and athletics.”

In addition to his charitable giving, Nye also gives generously of his time. He served 12 years on the Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System, and is past chairman of the College of Engineering Advisory Council. He also serves on the Texas A&M Development Foundation Advisory Committee and is a member of The Chancellor’s Century Council of The Texas A&M University System.

When Nye decided to financially support the enhancement project for the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center, values again guided his thinking.

“The concept of emphasizing the University’s core values through the

“Freedom, liberty, brotherhood and justice are enabled by ethical leadership. May God grant that such leadership always remain at the core of the Aggie experience.”

– Nye’s quote on the “Leadership” core value wall at the Williams Alumni Center

exhibits in the Alumni Center was something that really appealed to me,” he says. “The idea to feature those values and to put up expressions of those values through displays about former students was sort of the epitome of what The Association of Former Students was trying to do, and that appealed to me. The Association has always been a good organization but I think its role in the Aggie community has been enhanced in recent years.”

Of the many other ways in which the Nyes have supported Texas A&M,

providing scholarships to deserving students has been among the most personally gratifying. “We’ve gotten to know so many young people, and many of them are the very best of the best,” Nye says. “If you want an emotional vitamin pill, then just get to know some of these bright young Aggie students. It’s very gratifying.”

And Nye has a message for those young Aggies and the thousands of other bright students still to come: “Let’s make sure we all recognize the tremendous value that is Texas A&M.

It is a unique American institution, not like any other university that I know of. It’s unique, and in a very positive way.

“Every person who graduates from Texas A&M owes a special debt of gratitude to all those who made it what it is today. Let’s all work to keep it unique. Let’s not get caught up in the peripheral things. Let’s support A&M with our energy and with our resources. It is something truly worthwhile and I hope everybody who had the A&M experience feels as good about it as I do.” 🍷

## AT A GLANCE: ERLE NYE '59

### EDUCATION

Erle Nye graduated from Texas A&M University in 1959 with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering. He later earned a law degree from Southern Methodist University and was presented with an honorary Doctor of Science degree by the Baylor College of Dentistry. In 2004 he was inducted in the Texas A&M University Corps Hall of Honor, and in 2006 he was named a Distinguished Alumnus of the University.

### FAMILY

Nye’s wife, Alice, graduated from North Texas State University and taught elementary school. Their children are Ann Janzen, Erle Allen Nye, Jr. ’89, Pamela Kathleen Schneider ’84, Kyle Nye ’10 and Scott Nye. Erle’s father, Dr. Ira Benjamin Nye ’39, and Alice’s father, Dr. Samuel Edward Grove ’32, were both Aggie veterinarians. Other Aggies in the family include Erle and Alice’s grandson, Michael Schneider ’12, and a daughter-in-law, Lauri Schott Nye ’92.

### CAREER

Nye, a Distinguished Military Student at A&M, served six months in the Army before beginning his professional career in 1960 with Dallas Power & Light Co., a subsidiary of Texas Utilities Co. In 1980, he was named executive vice president of the parent company, where he would lead several companies under the umbrella of TXU Corp., Texas’ largest publicly held utility company. He retired as chief executive officer in 2004 and now serves as chairman emeritus of TXU.

### KEY AGGIE INFLUENCES

Harley C. “Dutch” Dillingham ’22 was an electrical engineering professor. “He probably didn’t even know how much influence he had on me. As much as faculty members and students can be friends, I always considered that he was my friend. He was a calming and supportive influence for me. Beyond school, when I got

into business in Dallas, Bill McCord ’49 took an interest in me and became a sort of mentor. He became a great friend and I did the eulogy at his funeral. I probably could recite 50 Aggies who provided me an example, an element of support, friendship or counsel, and they did it just in the ordinary course of business. It was just understood that these guys, these Aggies, would try to help you if they could.”

### ADVICE FOR INCOMING FRESHMEN

“The few years you will be here will live with you and serve you for the rest of your life, so make the best of it. Throw yourself into this thing full bore. Pursue your studies as vigorously as you possibly can. Learn as much as you can; read, visit, experience as much as you can. Completely absorb as much as you can in the academic part of A&M. Take that on with enthusiasm. Don’t view it as a requirement; inhale it, live it and make it part of your being. Take advantage of the whole University experience. View it as an opportunity to not just grow your intellect, but to grow as a person, grow in terms of character and morals and relationships. Do it with gusto, because you will be a better person for it. And as you go along this way, make sure you understand how many people are helping you. Develop a practice of expressing your appreciation as you go and, as you can, reach out to help others.”

### ADVICE FOR GRADUATING SENIORS

“Hopefully you’ve had the Aggie experience, gotten a good education, done what you needed to do to qualify yourself for a lot of opportunities. You have good values and good work habits. Now I encourage you to balance your life. Do the best you can every day, in every way you can, to develop your mind, body and spirit. Broaden your personality by reading, studying, traveling and experiencing outside your traditional background. Learn to appreciate art, music, languages, other cultures and other people. Seek to find balance in terms of employment, your family and your spiritual life. And, remember that serving others is a remarkably rewarding practice.”