Alex G. Spanos' life might be summed up in one word: dedication. Throughout his life, on whatever path he embarked, he has demonstrated remarkable dedication. Dedication to his profession and principles. Dedication to charitable and humanitarian causes. Fierce dedication to his family. And dedication to his alma mater.

Alex Spanos, aerospace engineering alum, entrepreneur and San Diego Chargers owner, and his wife, Faye, have given generously to support the arts and athletics at Cal Poly.

One of their first major gifts—a $100,000 contribution in 2003—created the Harold P. and Rosalie Davidson scholarship endowment in memory of the beloved former music professor and his wife, both now deceased. (See story, page 6.) Then came a $1.5-million donation to help fund the renovation of the Davidson Music-Center and the Cal Poly Theatre, now named the Alex and Faye Spanos Theatre.

Most recently, the Spanoses pledged $4 million toward the first phase of the Mustang Stadium renovation. The same stadium that Alex and his brother Danny played in as drum majors in the 1941 marching band led by Davidson.

During a recent trip to campus, Spanos paid a nostalgic visit to the stadium. "I was more than a little surprised to see it hadn't changed at all in all that time. I thought after 63 years, it could use a little sprucing up." (See story, page 44.)

Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker expressed his gratitude for the generosity and dedication shown by Alex and Faye Spanos. "They have again demonstrated their selfless commitment, a commitment rooted in their hearts. They follow their hearts, and in so doing, demonstrate the good that comes from such action. Their gifts will help transform the arts, student scholarships and athletics at Cal Poly," Baker said.

Throughout his life, in every endeavor, Alex Spanos has emerged a winner: as a student, an entrepreneur and businessman, a philanthropist, a golfer — even as a tap dancer. Throughout his life, in every endeavor, Alex Spanos has emerged a winner: as a student, an entrepreneur and businessman, a philanthropist, a golfer — even as a tap dancer.

In 1941, at the age of 17, he moved from his hometown of Stockton and enrolled in Cal Poly's aeronautical engineering program. He and his brother Danny successfully auditioned for drum major positions in the marching band.

Just a year later, though, Alex Spanos enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, serving until the war ended in 1945. But that year at Cal Poly left a lasting impression and plenty of fond memories, especially of Harold and Rosalie Davidson.

"I'm sure that most everyone has had a teacher who made a lasting impression," Spanos says. "Someone who not only gave you the best of his or her knowledge and experience, but also someone who nurtured you and supported you. For me, that was Harold Davidson, my music teacher.

"Hal Davidson was not only a great teacher and a skilled musician, but he was also a rare human being. He was the kind of man who cared about his students and embraced every member of his band as his family. He gave us a feeling of pride, of belonging, of acceptance and of courage. He and his wife would invite us all for dinner, and Rosalie would treat us as if we were her children. She was as much a part of the band as he was."

"When I think of Cal Poly, I think of Hal and Rosalie Davidson and their dedication to their students and the way they nurtured them," Spanos recalls.

During his career Spanos distinguished himself in the business world, transforming a small company into a corporate giant comprising 10 companies with more than 500 employees. The companies have built more than 100,000 apartment units in 18 states, ranking at the top of the national housing industry. A.G. Spanos
Family owned. That's fairly typical for Alex Spanos. Born to Greek immigrants, whom he describes as affectionate, stern and devoted, he credits his parents with instilling in him the passionate belief that "family is everything."

He drove that point home during the morning Spring Commencement ceremony last June, when he was honored with a Doctor of Humane Letters degree and delivered the keynote address.

"Your family is your rock, your base and your rudder," Spanos said in his remarks. "Family will give you peace of mind and the courage to explore."

He also stressed the importance of keeping a positive attitude, setting reasonable goals, accepting and taking risks, and believing in oneself.

"Don't be defeated by failure," Spanos said. "Did you know that Babe Ruth held not only the world's record for home runs, he also held the record for strikeouts?"

"I've always tried to be the best at what I do. For example, when I was 32, I took up golf. Six years later, I was one of 10 U.S. golfers chosen to compete in the British Amateur."

In 1984, Spanos assumed ownership of the San Diego Chargers, realizing a lifelong dream to own a National Football League team. Another dream came true in 1995, when the Chargers made it to the Super Bowl, eventually losing to the San...
Francisco 49ers, the first team to win five Super Bowls. Not a bad a team to lose to.

With all that he has accomplished, Alex Spanos has never lost sight of his humble beginnings. Along with his belief in the importance of family is his belief in philanthropy.

"Since my childhood, I’ve believed that giving is not just a one-time act of random largesse; it’s a daily way of life," Spanos says. "I feel fortunate I’m able to do the things I do. Giving just does my heart good."

He has received many awards for his humanitarian and charitable work. Among them are the Horatio Alger Award from the Horatio Alger Foundation, Ellis Island Medal of Honor from the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Gloria Swanson Humanitarian Award from the American Cinema Awards Foundation, and Anti-Defamation League of B’nai Brith National Distinguished Community Service Award.

He was also awarded honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from the University of the Pacific and Eureka College, and in 1974 he was named a Cal Poly Distinguished Alumnus.

Alex and Faye Spanos have been married since 1948. They have four children and 15 grandchildren.