

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

ALEX SPANOS

(AEROSPACE ENGINEERING '42)
Stockton, Calif.

Profession:

Businessman, entrepreneur, philanthropist, author, chairman and owner of A.G. Spanos Companies; owner of the San Diego Chargers

Greatest accomplishment:

My wife and family. I have 10 grandchildren. Family comes before anything. My whole family works for me. My No. 2 grandson just started as an engineer, constructing office buildings and apartments. My No. 3 and No. 4 grandsons work for the Chargers. Our business is family-owned and private.

Favorite Cal Poly professor:

Harold Davidson, music professor emeritus. He had an unbelievable personality. Everyone who knew him loved him. Hal would see me and say, "How's it going, Alex?" or "Is there something you need?"

Fondest Cal Poly memory:

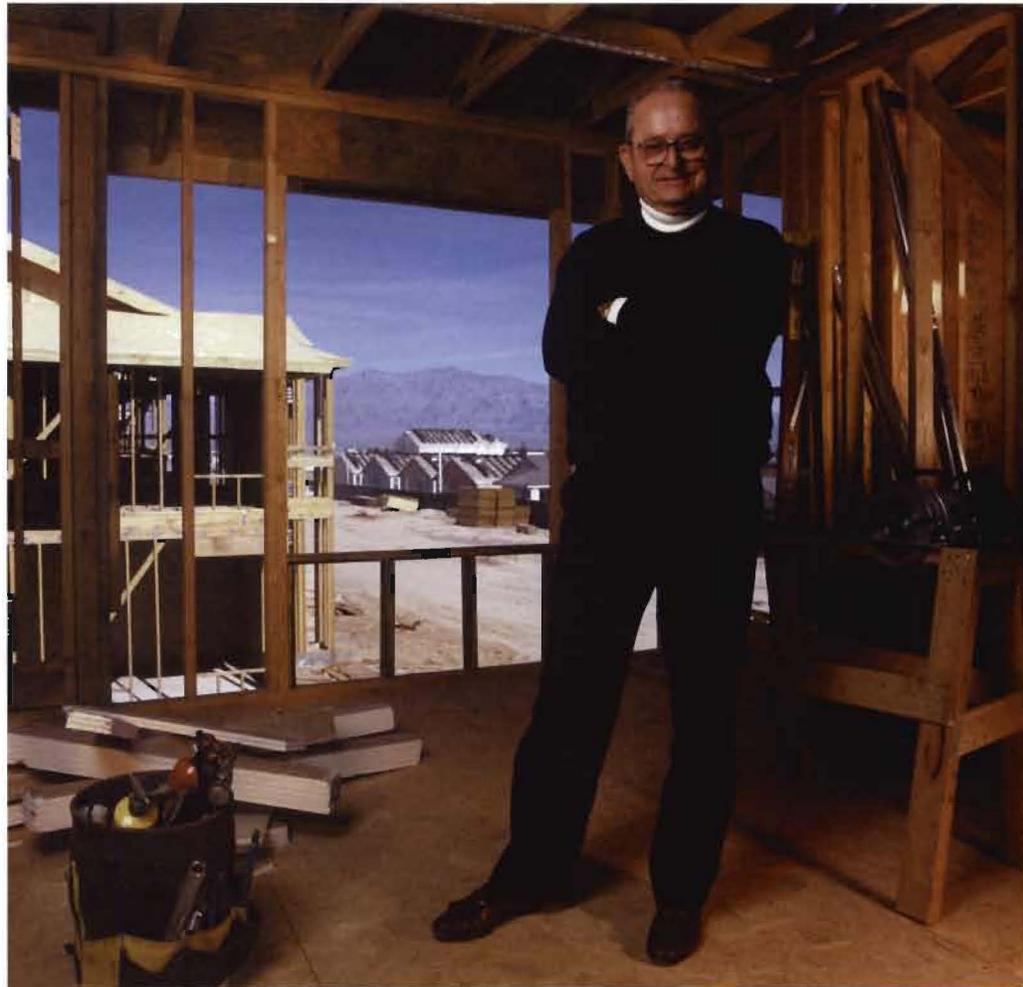
Playing in Hal Davidson's band. I was the drum major, and we performed at games and parades.

A.G. Spanos Companies is one of the nation's leading builders of apartment communities and one of the few family-owned Fortune 400 companies. Is it true that before you entered the construction business, you worked for your father as a baker, then borrowed \$800 to begin a catering company, which became the largest caterer to farm workers in the United States?

That's right. I've always tried to be the best at what I do. I took up golf at 32 in 1954, and six years later I was one of the 10 U.S. golfers chosen to compete in the British Amateur.

You've received many awards, including the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Award and the Horatio Alger Award. Why were you so honored?

I received the Statue of Liberty Award in 1986, for good things I had done, gifts



Alex Spanos at one of his apartment construction sites

Photo courtesy Alex Spanos

that I had made to deserving causes. I've always helped any way that I can. I feel fortunate I'm able to do the things I do. The Alger Award was for achieving success in business – it's a kind of "rags-to-riches" award.

You recently donated \$100,000 to create music scholarships and \$1.5 million to renovate the Davidson Music Center, which will be renamed the Alex and Faye Spanos Theater. What is your No. 1 reason for giving to Cal Poly?

When I was at Cal Poly, I had absolutely nothing. I worked for board and room, and those are days I can't forget. Hal Davidson encouraged me in every way at that time. How could I forget him or Cal Poly? When Davidson's name came up in conversations about a gift to Cal Poly, I sent a check.

You were a good friend of Bob Hope. What is your fondest memory of him?

In 1968 I went to Palm Springs, to the El Dorado Country Club, and asked the golf pro to fix me up with a foursome. About 20 minutes later, the pro came running back, all excited. I'd be playing with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope; Crosby already had a partner, but Bob needed one. When we holed out at the 18th, Bob and I had killed Crosby and his friend. From 1968 on, not a week went by in 35 years when Bob and I weren't together. We traveled the world together, golfing and singing and tap dancing at benefits.

How did you get into pro football?

From the time I was eight years old, all through high school, we worked. We weren't allowed to play sports. I always loved sports and wanted to play football. When I had the opportunity to buy the Chargers, I didn't hesitate.

– Nels Hanson