

MENTORING

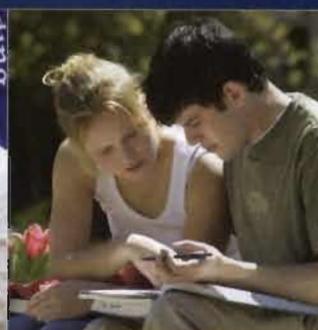
Men•tor (mēn'tôr) n. A trusted counselor or teacher, especially in occupational settings.

TEACHER

COACH

FRIEND

ADVISOR





Joe (left) and Victoria Cotchett with Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker
(Photo by Chris Greene/ImageWest)

DESTINATION > OPPORTUNITY



Education is the Initial Journey, Doing for Others is the End Result

Joseph W. Cotchett (ENGR '60) and his wife, Victoria, look at life as a series of journeys – education, discovery, giving back – that enrich the soul and lead to a higher destiny for themselves and others.

It is the journey to “give back” that has brought Joe Cotchett full circle to his alma mater, Cal Poly. The couple recently donated \$2 million and bequeathed an additional \$5 million to support science and mathematics teacher education initiatives at Cal Poly through the University Center for Teacher Education and the College of Science and Mathematics.

To honor them, the university has renamed its landmark “clock tower” building the “Cotchett Education Building.”

The Cotchetts have a long, distinguished history of community and

civic involvement. The Hillsborough residents have spearheaded new community initiatives, contributing time and countless resources to numerous organizations throughout the state. The list of awards they have received for their “giving back” is extraordinary.

“When I first enrolled at Cal Poly, it was the start of an incredible journey, leading to a destination that allowed me to help others,” Joe Cotchett says. “Victoria and I want to give back so that others may experience this journey, to become part of the special academic arena of Cal Poly. Our goal is to help others less fortunate in the inner cities of our state to realize their potential as productive citizens.”

Joe Cotchett believes one way to ensure success is to support teaching, research, program development, student learning and outreach in teacher

education at Cal Poly.

A portion of the gift to Cal Poly will fund the Cotchett Summer Institute for science and math teachers. The program aims to give K-12 teachers from urban schools the skills to enhance their teaching of science and math. The gift will also permit renovation of a University Center for Teacher Education science and mathematics teaching laboratory in the Cotchett Education Building, create a new professorship, and establish student scholarships and fellowships.

Being an advocate comes naturally to Cotchett, who is considered one of the best trial lawyers in the nation. In what he calls his “journey” of nearly 40 years in the legal arena, he has built a reputation as a relentless defender of the less fortunate and a crusader for ethics in the legal profes-



(Photos by Chris Greene/ImageWest)

University Center for Teacher Education Dean Bonnie Konopak and College of Science and Mathematics Dean Phil Bailey

sion. For the past dozen years he has been named one of the 100 most influential attorneys in the country by the *National Law Journal*.

His cases are consistently high profile, resulting in articles in such newspapers as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*,

of their savings in the Charles Keating-Lincoln Savings & Loan financial fiasco. In more than 100 trials in the past three decades, Cotchett has won at least \$7 billion in court awards and settlements for his clients, most of them considered underdogs.

He is still at it today, leading the

others. An author of several books on the law, he also lectures at schools across the country.

Victoria Cotchett studied painting at the St. Martin's School of Art in London for two years before earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in art history at Cal State Hayward. Also an author, she has written *The Aesthete's Guide to London Museums* and *Art in Japan*.

She has penned articles for several art magazines, including *Artweek Magazine* and *Le Metier*, and her byline as an art critic has appeared in several Northern California newspapers, including the *Palo Alto Weekly* and *San Mateo Times*.

She was appointed by President Clinton to the Advisory Committee on the Arts of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in

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San Francisco Chronicle and *Los Angeles Times*. *USA Today* described him as a "legend in legal circles."

He is probably best known for winning a \$3.5 billion jury verdict in the early 1990s for 23,000 plaintiffs, most of them elderly, who were bilked out

charge with a series of lawsuits across the country to make corporations and their executives accountable – to make them accept responsibility for what he calls "the meltdown in corporate ethics" at such firms as Enron, Worldcom, Qwest, Homestore and

Gift To Support Science and Math Teacher Education

Washington, D.C. She also is a founding director of the Weigand Museum of Art at the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, California.

Her civic and community work includes having served on the boards of the San Mateo County Hospital Foundation, Women's Protective Services, Families in Transition and the Peninsula Humane Society. She also has been actively involved in assisting Bosnian refugee children, bringing a Bosnian refugee family to the United States, and sponsoring extensive medical care and education for refugee children.

Since his graduation from Cal Poly in 1960 with a degree in engineering, Joe Cotchett has never considered slowing down. To him, that is not an option. After leaving Cal Poly, where he was an ROTC cadet, he became an Army Airborne Special Forces officer, retiring as a full colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves. He attended Hastings College of the Law, where he earned a Doctor of Jurisprudence in 1964, shortly thereafter launching his own law firm.

"The thought that has stuck with me over the years, which I first embraced in my undergraduate days at Cal Poly, still rings true today," Cotchett says. "It is what should guide us all in the formal learning process of our youth, and it is something that is especially true at Cal Poly: Education is the initial journey, not the destination; doing in life for others is the end result."

According to Victoria Cotchett, Cal Poly graduates are seemingly blessed with a lifelong readiness to undertake new journeys of discovery, an attribute the Cotchetts' new program will tap into to help educate inner-city children.

"Inner-city teacher education is the point where our society comes to grips with reality as it looks to the future," she says. "We can think about a society that is moving forward, but we cannot do so without all boats rising. We cannot afford a split society of 'haves' and 'have-nots' in a grand order. We need to focus on the future."



Joe and Victoria Cotchett (center), with school children from Guadalupe, watch chemistry magic show. (Photo by Chris Greene/ImageWest)

Joseph W. and Victoria E. Cotchett's \$2 million gift to the University Center for Teacher Education will fund important new programs in science and math teacher education.

The Cotchetts share Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker's conviction that California must invigorate its math, science and technology education programs for the K-12 level to reverse the decreasing numbers of students majoring in these fields. Specifically, their gift will fund:

- An endowed professorship
- Scholarships and fellowships for students
- Renovation of a classroom into a math and science teaching lab
- Program development for new and experienced teachers in math and science education.

The new programs will be administered by the University Center for Teacher Education in collaboration with the College of Science and Mathematics.

The initial contribution will be supplemented by an additional \$5 million bequest to support math and science education, with a special emphasis on improving teaching in inner-city schools.

The Cotchetts' combined gift and bequest represent the largest gift from an alumnus in support of Cal Poly's Centennial Campaign.