The Ashtons appreciate the excellence they see at SPU, where engaging the culture and changing the world is top priority. “For us, investing in students is a way to prepare quality individuals for life and work,” says Ardis. “Seattle Pacific graduates are just first-rate.”

She was a spirited sharpshooter for the Seattle Pacific College women’s intramural basketball team that he coached. He cut a grand figure, one destined to be a big deal on campus: class president in his freshman and junior years, student body president in his senior year.

Dick and Ardis’ first date? Over the Fremont Bridge to hear the Golden Jubilee Singers at Fremont Baptist Church. They walked, of course, and on the way back stopped in for 10-cent milkshakes at The Daisy, an ice cream shop near the bridge.

Most of the times to come, they would simply sit on the couch in the parlor of Tiffany Hall girls dormitory, hold hands, and say little. “Because little needed to be said,” Ardis assures. Perhaps they admired the foyer’s tile floor, which Dick scrubbed to a shine every morning to help pay for his education. Over in the laundry, Ardis spent several hours a week to help with the cost of room, board, and education. Despite a full schedule, she counted the hours until she could again occupy the sitting room couch with her Richard.
Together they experienced a close-knit campus community of 350 students where Dick says anything required fixing, you did it yourself. “The floor of the gym needed sanding, so I sanded it. What a miserable job!” Ten years later, as alumni president, he spearheaded the effort to raise $25,000 to finish Brougham Pavilion in time for the first-ever Homecoming game. “That money,” says Dick, “was very, very hard to come by.” Finding it was good experience for the three years he would later spend on the Seattle Pacific University Board of Trustees.

But as he neared the end of his senior year, World War II was on and Dick wasn’t thinking about one day helping to direct the affairs of his alma mater. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Signal Corps and began a 20-year military career. Before he went off to train in cryptography, he and Ardis made sure they shared the same last name. Wedding bells tolled on November 27, 1942.

And thus began a love story that so far spans seven decades and the births of three children and five grandchildren. Though husband and wife are 87 today, Dick beams with the affectionate confession that he married “a much younger woman” — three-and-a-half months younger that is. It doesn’t matter that Ardis has heard the joke before. She returns a fond look, undoubtedly much like the one that first struck her husband-to-be speechless a lifetime ago.

The Ashton name is legendary in the annals of Seattle Pacific, beginning with Philip Ashton, who graduated in 1929. Dick’s older brother, Philip went on to invest 40 years in a wide range of service to Seattle Pacific, including as professor of psychology, registrar, dean of students, and vice president. He was named Alumnus of the Year in 1964 and a year later saw his name given to the University’s largest student residence: Ashton Hall. The Philip Ashton Psychology Scholarship has helped numerous junior and senior psychology majors obtain their education.

Ardis Ashton has made her own mark. A Seattle Pacific English major, she taught first through fourth grade for years. After military service, Dick Ashton went on to earn a master’s degree from the University of Washington. He worked in the Lake Washington School District east of Seattle, including as assistant superintendent of personnel.

With a deeply ingrained commitment to education, the Ashtons appreciate the excellence they see at SPU, where engaging the culture and changing the world is top priority. “For us, investing in students is a way to prepare quality individuals for life and work,” says Ardis. “Seattle Pacific graduates are just first-rate.”

Today the Ashtons live six stories up in the Pacific Regent retirement condominiums in downtown Bellevue, Washington — seven blocks from the house (still standing) in which Ardis was raised.

When the subject turns to the three charitable gift annuities that provide fixed payments to them throughout their lifetimes, Dick says: “I didn’t anticipate I’d be on earth this long, but the annuities give me greater security that Ardis will be taken care of. And without them, I doubt we could afford to live here.”

The couple is pleased with the financial contribution they make to SPU, the place that brought them together and prepared them for their work in the world. “If you can serve and give,” concludes Dick, “why not do both?” Ardis and he have received welcome charitable tax deductions for the portion of each annuity that will ultimately comprise a gift to SPU.

The Ashtons remain active at First Presbyterian Church in Bellevue, have series tickets to the theatre, follow the local sports teams, and are planning their next travel adventure.

Despite a full and active life, the Ashtons haven’t lost touch with simple, important things. After a nice dinner out on their 66th anniversary, they may sit on the couch and hold hands.

Kenzie Brister doesn’t usually identify herself as someone on the edge of trends. The Seattle Pacific University senior decorates her bedroom with twigs and leaves, and recycles bathwater by using it to flush the toilet. But now that sustainability is hip, those practices could be the next craze.

“I kind of hate that renewable energy is trendy,” Kenzie says. “But at the same time, it’s a good thing. A lot of practices in the world are destroying our environment, and it doesn’t make any sense not to be concerned.”

Kenzie, who was awarded the 2008 Bauman Engineering Endowed Scholarship, spent this summer at Shoal’s Marine Laboratory on Appledore Island, off the coast of Maine. The laboratory is a partnership between two universities in the Northeast. Kenzie and four other interns worked on a series of sustainable engineering projects that included researching a solar hot-water heating system, investigating how many buildings could run off solar power, and researching the best places to put compostable toilets.

“I’m glad to have experience working on engineering projects,” Kenzie says. “I find it encouraging to know that the things we work on are actually helpful to people.”

At Seattle Pacific, Kenzie excels academically. On top of that, she has volunteered with the homeless program at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Seattle, and she has spent a summer ministering to the homeless in San Francisco.

“Kenzie has a heart for the homeless and the poor,” says her close friend and fellow senior Amber Lundgren. This concern also led Kenzie to help start a chapter of “Engineers Without Borders” at Seattle Pacific University.

“Kenzie embodies living in a Christ-like manner,” says Professor and Director of Engineering Programs Elaine Scott. “Her concern for the environment shows that she really takes to heart the idea of being a student of the world.”

The Ashtons enjoy a picture-perfect rose garden at their retirement condominium.

**Dates to Remember**

**SPU at Warm Beach Presents:**

*The World Is Flat*  
6:30–7 p.m., Reception  
7 to 8 p.m., Presentation  
Book discussion with SPU Professor Margaret Dimmick. Complimentary; no RSVP required. Questions? Call 206-281-2702.

**The Sacred Sounds of Christmas**  
Sun., Nov. 30, 2008  
4 & 7 p.m.  
Benaroya Hall, Seattle  
Join us for Seattle Pacific’s premier downtown choir Christmas celebration. Tickets are on sale now for $17 and $20 through Ticketmaster: online at www.ticketmaster.com, or by phone at 206-292-ARTS.

**Leave a Legacy, Not Just an Inheritance**  
7–8:30 p.m.  
Upper Gwinn Commons  
A popular and entertaining speaker, Bruce Bickel will suggest ways to help the younger generation learn the character, principles, and values appropriate to handle their inheritance. Dessert and beverages provided. RSVP by calling 206-281-2702 or email sp@spu.edu. This event is FREE.

*Significance* | www.SPU.edu | SPU | Autumn 2008 | Significance.
Payments You Can Count On

When you create a gift annuity with Seattle Pacific University, you receive your quarterly payments like clockwork. When the payment date rolls around, your check will be in the mail. Or, if you prefer, the money will be transferred directly to your bank account. As the saying goes: “You can bank on it!”

For example, if John and Mary Donor contribute $25,000 in cash, marketable securities, or real estate for a gift annuity, the first thing they will receive is an immediate charitable income tax deduction for the portion of their contribution that represents the “gift” to SPU.

Next, John and Mary will receive $1,600 every year for the rest of their lives. The amount is based on their ages and the annuity rates in force when they obtain their annuity. Since they stipulated quarterly payments, John and Mary’s annuity will be paid in $400 installments at the end of each calendar quarter — regardless of what happens to the economy, or if one of them dies. Every quarter, $400. And an added bonus is that part of each $400 payment is tax-free!

Of course, not only will John and Mary receive the regular, fixed annuity payments for the rest of their lives, they will also have the satisfaction of knowing that some of the $25,000 they gave will help SPU fulfill its mission of engaging the culture and changing the world by providing a premier Christian education for its students. And that’s a great feeling.

There are plenty of uncertainties in life, but a gift annuity payment from SPU isn’t one of them. Would you like to learn more about SPU’s charitable gift annuity program? Please give us a call at 206-281-2702, or email spf@spu.edu, and we will be happy to send you more information.

Beneficiary Designations — Simple and Effective

In our next issue, we will explore the joys of giving through beneficiary designations. By designating one or more charities to receive a gift through your will, revocable living trust, life insurance, or retirement plan assets, you can leave a future legacy of love and support for the causes you have cared about during your lifetime. Beneficiary designations are quick and easy to complete and can be altered at any time should your circumstances or charitable interests change. You will also meet some dear friends of SPU who have found great satisfaction in helping grow the University’s endowment through beneficiary designation gifts. Learn more in the February issue of Significance.

Kristi Nelson has been with Seattle Pacific University since 2002, serving in the offices of Annual Giving and Undergraduate Admissions prior to joining the Gift Planning team. Kristi earned both a bachelor’s degree in Christian theology and master’s degree in business administration from Seattle Pacific.

During her years at SPU, Kristi was involved in leadership, sports, service, and music. She met her husband, Jesse, during their time on the SPU crew team together. They live in West Seattle and enjoy reading, hiking, and biking in their free time.