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## Everyone on Board

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# EVERYONE ON BOARD

WITH 21 CEDARVILLE ALUMNI, THIS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP RECEIVED BROAD FAMILY SUPPORT

BY JEFF GILBERT '87

Charles and Florence Kirby started their family in 1926. Three generations and 21 Cedarville graduates later, their descendants gave back with an endowed scholarship.

Verne Kirby '55 was the first Kirby to arrive at Cedarville in 1953, the same year Baptist Bible Institute relocated and became the new Cedarville College. He graduated two years later and began a career as a church planter for Baptist Mid-Missions serving in locations from Kentucky to Alaska to Hawaii.

Many family members followed — Verne's kids and grandkids, his brother Stanley's kids and grandkids — until the most recent one graduated in 2012. None of them have

accumulated great wealth, but they are rich in the best kind of way: the Kirby family combined has contributed almost \$90,000 of God's blessings to start a unique endowed scholarship.

**None of them have accumulated great wealth, but they are rich in the best kind of way.**

"Your faith has to enter in and trust the Lord that He knows what He's doing," Verne said. "We try to help in any way we can."

Nineteen branches of the Kirby family, representing 21 Cedarville alums, have funded the annual Charles and Florence Kirby Family Scholarship, named in honor of Verne and Stanley's parents. The scholarship will award

about \$3,750 annually to a student based on need. The only requirement is that the sophomore, junior, or senior, regardless of GPA, is a hard worker.

Stanley, the older of the two brothers, and his sons, Linden '74 and Mark '80, saw the potential of what could be accomplished with an endowed scholarship.

"When I realized how many of our family had connections to Cedarville," Linden said, "I said, 'We have to do something, and we have to do something that involves everyone or gives everybody the opportunity.'"

## PROSPECT-TO-CEDARVILLE PIPELINE

Charles and Florence raised Stanley and Verne in Prospect, Ohio, a town of 1,000 people a little north of Columbus. The town, at least when Mark grew up there, was known for its Fourth of July celebration, Abe's Tastee Freez, and countless happy memories for Kirby kids.

Verne wanted to stay in Prospect and raise his family on a farm. But God had a different plan. A missionary visited his church and got him thinking about Bible college. Verne's travels began.

After two years at Piedmont Bible College in North Carolina, Verne and his wife, Helen '69, arrived in Cedarville. Verne graduated with a theology degree and began his missionary career.

All five of Verne's children attended Cedarville, as did Helen over two furloughs. Stanley went to Ohio Wesleyan, but four of his six kids came to Cedarville.

Stanley, who at 96 is three years older, is a veteran of World War II and returned to Prospect and made his life there. He was a rural mail carrier for 23 years, taught geometry, and coached the boys' basketball team at Marion Pleasant High School for 31 years. He won a state championship and is a member of the Ohio High School Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame.

"The money I spent on my kids going to Cedarville was beneficial," Stanley said. "I'm just hoping the money that I would give now will be beneficial to their future work and in support of God's Word."

## GODLY HERITAGE

Linden and Mark grew up 100 yards from their grandparents Charles and Florence. Linden remembers that he would often sleep at their house and walk to elementary school the next morning. Grandma stood in the doorway, watched Linden walk to school, and prayed for him.

"She told me that more than once," he said. "And her prayers, I believe their prayers, made a difference in my spiritual life."

As the scholarship planning progressed, an obvious question was what to name it. Everyone agreed that the parents who first sent a Kirby to Cedarville should be honored.

"They were wonderful, solid Christian people who deeply impacted all our lives," Linden said. "Our family just loves Grandpa and Grandma and emulates them and realizes that their Christian example made the difference for us."

Linden and Mark's grandparents didn't live to see this day, but their dad and uncle have.

"It's an interesting thing that we can do that," Stanley said. "I haven't got too many more years to look back and say, 'I wish I'd done that.'"

## FAMILY COMMITMENT

An endowed scholarship needs \$50,000 to start and begins paying out on the earned interest after three years. However, enough money in addition to the endowment fund was given and pledged to start awarding the scholarship now. The first scholarship, worth half the \$3,750 annual amount,

was awarded in January for the spring semester to Mackenzie Lord '22, a management major from Lone Tree, Colorado.

After the details of the scholarship were completed, Linden, who is a retired church planter and lives in Colorado, began contacting family members on his side and Verne's side. The response thrilled Linden. Kirbys who did not attend Cedarville contributed.

"I would like to emphasize the unity of the family and the cooperative effort," Linden said. "I don't even know the range of gifts, but it didn't matter to us. It's more than their relationship to Cedarville. It's their relationship



Vern and Stanley Kirby

to the family, and their relationship to Christ. And they're saying, 'We love our parents, we love our grandparents, we love our great-grandparents, we love the Lord, and we love Cedarville in the sense that the motto is for the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ.'"

Mark has worked at the same Christian school in Lakeland, Florida, since he graduated from Cedarville in 1980. His children made it through Cedarville with lots of scholarship help from various sources.

"My own kids were more excited about doing this," he said. "They know how they got through was with scholarship help, so it was neat to think we can bond together as a family and make this happen for some others, too."

And because of that, students for years to come will benefit from the generosity of one family who went all in on the value of a Cedarville education. You have to suspect that Charles and Florence would be very proud.

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**Jeff Gilbert '87** is an assistant professor of journalism and advisor to the student newspaper, Cedars.