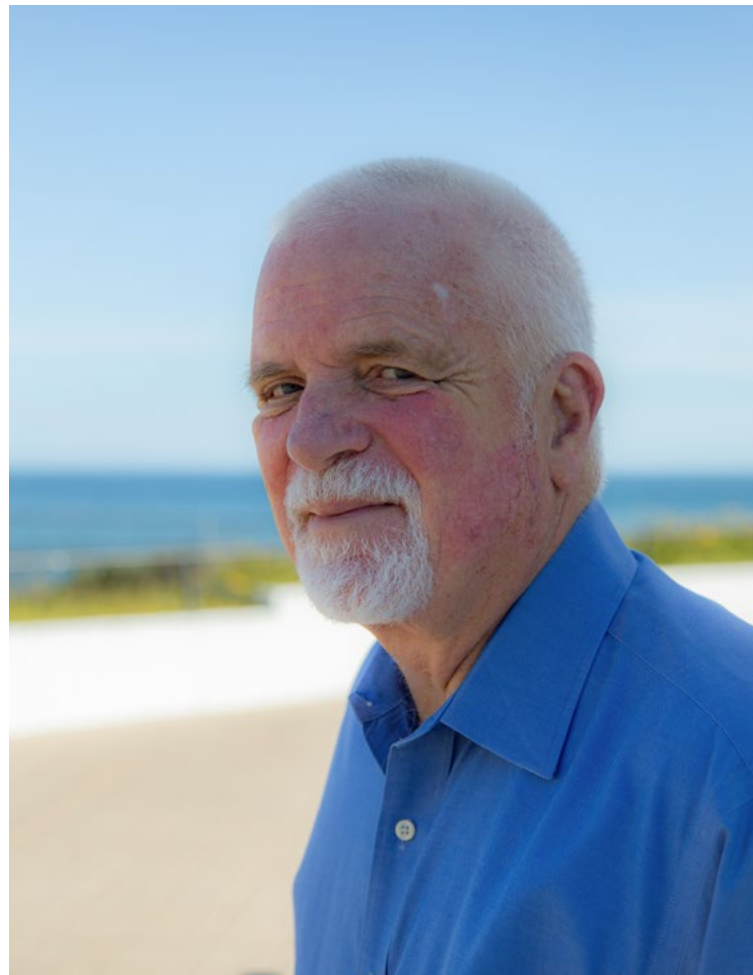


champion
of
engineering



JIM FRANK:

AN
ENGINEERING
FAMILY'S
LEGACY
OF GIVING

Low-key is the word **Jim Frank** uses to describe the Raintree Foundation, which was established by his late father, **Harold Frank**, a major donor whose name adorns Harold Frank Hall at UC Santa Barbara. The elder Frank, who died in 2012, was an electrical engineer who graduated from Washington State University and, after working in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II, started a company, Applied Magnetics, which became a leading manufacturer of magnetic recording heads used in computers, and was once the second-largest employer in Santa Barbara County.

Low-key also describes Jim Frank himself, who now runs the foundation with his daughter, Jessica, and Ellicott Million, who was Harold's right-hand person for nearly fifty years. Now retired from CMC, the successful, employee-owned company he started in his garage to provide equipment and training for search-and-rescue teams, Jim says he would have to go into Raintree's financial records to "have any idea" of how much it has donated to UCSB since being established in 1993. Suffice to say, it is a significant amount, enough to have established the family within UCSB's Gold Circle Society, comprising the university's premiere philanthropists.

The Raintree Foundation helps UC Santa Barbara recruit and enrich COE faculty and has endowed the Harold Frank Scholars Fund to inspire student entrepreneurs in the college's Technology Management Department. We caught up with Frank this fall.

Convergence: *Why do you describe the Raintree Foundation as a “low-key” nonprofit?*

Jim Frank: My dad never really looked for recognition as an individual. He was more interested in what he could do to benefit other people, and we continue to follow that philosophy today. There are some major foundations in Santa Barbara that are well known and have well-earned reputations. We’re a small foundation and pretty focused.

C: *Your father died in 2012, yet, you continue to provide important support to UCSB. Why is it important to you to support education generally, and the College of Engineering specifically?*

JF: My dad was very intelligent and made good decisions. When he set up the foundation in 1993, he decided what it should support. So, we have that connection and are basically honoring his legacy. Engineering is important to us; it was my dad’s heritage, and it is mine. There is a lot going on in the world, and I think that the survival of humans will depend on intelligent decision making, and the best way to ensure good decisions is to educate people. That’s why the Raintree Foundation supports education at every level, from young kids in elementary school who are doing a backyard project with the museum, to the Wilderness Youth Project, to students at the highest level of university education.

Further, our support has to do with my father’s legacy. His name is on the building there. He was honored by the school, and we want to support that.

C: *Why has the foundation consistently directed its gifts to the College of Engineering’s discretionary Dean’s Fund, which is used primarily to recruit and retain top faculty?*

JF: We’ve had multiple discussions with [recently retired dean] **Rod Alferness**. He’d say, “This is what we’re doing, this is why we’re doing it, and this is how it will help students,” and my answer has consistently been, “You’re the dean. You’re there every day. You’re seeing everything. You’re in such a better position than I am to figure out where to direct the money.” Our support gave him the freedom to do what he thought was best.

C: *Are there any particular aspects of the College of Engineering that resonate strongly with you?*

JF: Whenever I visit the campus, I am just so amazed at what the engineering students today are doing. And I love that there are so many female students, because there were no women at all in my aeronautical engineering program at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Seeing that and listening to the students talk — they are over my head almost immediately — and seeing

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how bright and creative they are makes me feel positive about the future.

C: *Your father, a German-born first-generation college graduate who attended Washington State University, felt a particular kinship with other first-generation students. Is that focus still reflected in the Raintree Foundation’s philanthropy?*

JF: We’re maybe not so concerned with the particulars of someone’s background as we are with the goal of ensuring that all students get the opportunity to study and pursue a career. We want to provide the resources that can make those opportunities available.

C: *You are an entrepreneur, and your father was, too. Do you think there’s anything like a genetic predisposition to entrepreneurship?*

JF: I think it has to do more with role models. For instance, my dad was my role model as an engineer and an entrepreneur. That’s what I knew. Someone who doesn’t have that role model might not know that the opportunity is there, so we try to give those opportunities to as many students as possible.