

## Investing in Her Roots

*Alumna makes scholarship gift to impact lives of future students.*

*By Leah Sewell, BA '11*

**Jenifer L. Lucas, '75**, knows firsthand the transformative power of education. Lucas reflects over her long career to find that one of the most influential touchstones in her life came with her first exposure to higher education as a freshman at Washburn University in 1963.

That milestone represents the place where Lucas, a timid young woman from small town Kansas, got a wider view of the world, and today she remains indelibly grateful for the scholarships she received, both as an undergraduate and as a law student. Lucas recently decided to reciprocate by pledging half of her estate to fund a scholarship to aid another young student at Washburn Law, where she received her juris doctor in 1975.

"I was a spoiled only child from a small town, and had never been away from home on my own," remembered Lucas. "When I started at Washburn, I was prepared academically, but mentally, I was not prepared."

But at Washburn, she found nurture through scholarships and sorority membership. Lucas pledged Kappa Alpha Theta and began making life-long friends. Following her freshman year at Washburn, Lucas transferred to the University of Tulsa, from which she received a bachelor of science degree in English and education in 1967. She taught high school English in Oklahoma for five years. During that time, she also earned a master's degree in education and English from the University of Central Oklahoma in 1972.

However, during her teaching career, she had a revelation. "I hated teaching. I really didn't understand what I was getting into," admitted Lucas. "So I decided to go to law school, although again, I had no idea what I was getting into!" It proved to be a good decision.

Lucas applied and was welcomed back into the familiar fold at Washburn, this time at the School of Law. During her early years as a lawyer, she also taught English or corporate law as an adjunct to help repay her law school loans.

Her legal career in the energy field began at the Kansas Corporation Commission, where she served as an Assistant



General Counsel for two years. Following that, she served in the legal divisions of Cities Service Gas Company in Oklahoma City and Cities Service Company in Tulsa. She later served as the Contracts Manager for the Natural Gas Liquids Division of Cities Service Company. During the 1980s, Lucas served on the Washburn

Law School Board of Governors, and she was appointed by the Governor of Oklahoma to serve as the public member of the Oklahoma Board of Public Accountancy.

Lucas remained active in Kappa Alpha Theta, too, ultimately serving as the legal advisor to Theta's Grand Council for 12 years. In 1990, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she served as an advisory attorney for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, from which she retired in 2015. She currently resides in Kansas City, in closer proximity to her Kansas roots.

Her gratitude to Washburn never waned.

"After my parents and my Grandmother Lucas, the two things that have helped me to have a good life are my associations with Washburn and Kappa Alpha Theta," said Lucas. "Because of my law degree, I've been able to do things that otherwise wouldn't have been available, and my membership in Theta allowed me to have a huge circle of friends all over the country. The other half of my estate will go to the Kappa Alpha Theta Foundation to fund a need-based scholarship for another young Theta."

In establishing her estate plan, Lucas is confident that she will be able to make a positive impact on the lives of future students.