



## *Two Friends of the Foundation:* George and Elizabeth Murphey

---

George and Elizabeth Murphey value family, faith, friends, and facts. “*Benefactors*” is not an adjective that they think of to describe themselves.

The facts, however, say otherwise.

The Murpheys endowed two funds, matched contributions to a third, and included the Putnam County Community Foundation in their estate planning. It’s also a fact that, although they’ve been lifelong volunteers for many organizations, this was neither a long-standing dream nor a long-range plan.

“We’re what you call “wet” Baptists. Helping others is something we believe we should do.” George says.

“But,” Elizabeth adds, “we had three children to raise.”

So even while George served as the Putnam County Community Foundation’s Treasurer in the ‘90s, even while he was a member of the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors, the idea that “someday” he and Elizabeth might create a fund was barely a flicker of an idea in the back of his mind.

The fact is, the seed germinated.

The Murphey story begins more than eight decades ago, in a farming community near Mayfield, Kentucky. George was the son of a farmer; he later met Elizabeth Stovall through friends. With the permission of his mother, the pair wed in 1948.

“Back then in Kentucky,” George says, “a girl could get married when she was 18. But a boy had to have permission until he was 21. I had served in the Army; I had graduated from college—but I was only 20 years old.”

World War II had interrupted George’s education, as it had so many others, but he was fortunate to be at the tail end of the conflict. He finished his degree in agriculture at Murray State College (later it became Murray State University) and took graduate classes at the University of Kentucky. He then taught vocational agriculture at Kentucky high schools and worked as a technician at the Paducah (KY) atomic energy plant before he landed the civil service job he wanted with the USDA Soil Conservation Services. A few moves later, and the Murpheys with their six-year-old daughter found themselves setting up house in Greencastle.

Another fact: Greencastle wasn’t expected to be their final destination. However, as Susan settled into school, and brothers Michael and David rounded out the family, Putnam County ceased to be a point on George’s career trajectory and instead became home.

“Elizabeth said we were staying,” George chuckles, “and I was lucky we did. I got to know people here, and I ended up getting to do everything I ever wanted.” Elizabeth smiles, because she already knows what George is going to add, “But I never could have done any of it without her cooperation.”

The family committed to the First Baptist Church. George joined the Rotary Club. Elizabeth became an active member of Tri Kappa, along with working for the schools and in Greencastle businesses. As he



**George and Elizabeth Murphey 1948**

*(Please turn to other side)*

“got to know” people, George found himself increasingly involved in community activities, known for his integrity and plain speaking. “I give people my advice, but I always tell them it’s worth what it cost,” George says, half-joking.

After 27 years with the Soil Conservation Services, George started a successful farm management consulting business, indulged his passion for politics with the local Democratic Party, and served on the Greencastle Board of Works for more than nine years.

Lives have downs as well as ups, however; and it is a fact that George and Elizabeth had their share of both. Their beloved daughter lost a valiant struggle with cancer in 1992. Later, when George received an inheritance from his childless sister, Mary, he and Elizabeth realized another fact.

Thanks to the inheritance, the fact was that they could afford the kind of monetary gift to the Community Foundation that George had dealt with as a volunteer.

The first fund they endowed was in memory of their daughter, the Putnam County Memorial Cancer Research Endowment. They dedicated this fund to honoring the memories of all those who struggled to survive cancer and to provide funds for cancer research. Any memorial contribution to the fund above \$25.00 is announced in the Greencastle *Banner Graphic*. Each year grants are made from the fund to support cancer research. Next, the Murpheys named a fund for the woman who had made this generosity possible, and established the Mary Murphey Nall Scholarship. In keeping with their heritage, this scholarship is for students from a Graves County (Kentucky) high school who are majoring in agriculture at Murray State University. But the fact is, once begun, the Murpheys were hooked on using the Community Foundation as the way to make an impact on the needs of county residents.

Having memorialized his daughter and his sister, George wanted to honor his wife, the woman who, in his words, was “the wind beneath my wings.” Because Elizabeth was committed to Tri Kappa, the Murpheys promoted the Tri Kappa Scholarship by offering to match donations.



“I think that stirred up some interest,” George says, “and helped the fund grow. They (Tri Kappa) do a lot of good, but I wanted to do it for Elizabeth.” Elizabeth just shakes her head. “There’s a lot of his ideas I was never sold on,” she smiles. “But I stayed married to him anyway.”

To wrap things up, the Murpheys developed an estate plan that would include the Community Foundation as a beneficiary. “I don’t know why anyone who wants to be helpful in Putnam County would do anything else,” George says bluntly. “If you’re going to give money away, you ought to give it to an organization that will do a good job of managing it and supporting a variety of causes. I think the people who work in the Foundation are doing the best they can.”

Elizabeth agrees.

**That’s a fact.**

**NOTE:** *Written by Anna Lyon Baker, this is the second in a series of stories about Foundation “friends” who have made a positive impact on the quality of life in our community. The Community Foundation welcomes suggestions of other people who should be recognized as Friends of the Foundation, and we remain deeply grateful for the friendship and support of so many people, near and far. Thank you!*

THE PUTNAM COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION 2 South Jackson Street Greencastle, IN 46135

Phone: 765.653.4978 Fax: 765.653.6385 [www.pcfoundation.org](http://www.pcfoundation.org)