

A Chip Off the Old Block: Family Behind Utz Brands Endows GW Law Scholarship



Michael Rice, JD '68, and his wife, Jane, created the Rice Family Foundation in 2017.

MORE THAN A CENTURY ago, Bill and Salie Utz founded a potato chip operation in their Hanover, Pennsylvania, kitchen and began selling their product door to door. Today, Utz Brands, Inc., is the third-largest branded salty snack platform in the United States, producing over 3.3 million pounds of snacks each week and generating more than \$1.4 billion in annual sales.

Bill and Salie's grandson and his family are still

involved in managing the now-public company. With deep roots at the George Washington University, these alumni recently created a need-based scholarship to GW Law, the Rice Family Endowed Scholarship.

"My grandparents founded Utz, and they instilled in us an obligation to give back to the community," said Utz Chairman Emeritus and Special Advisor Michael Rice, JD '68.

Rice started his family's

GW tradition, although a law degree wasn't originally part of his career plan. Indeed, unsure of what he wanted to do with his life, he dropped out of college during his sophomore year. His father immediately put him to work at Utz shoveling potatoes in the potato cellar.

"By spring of that year, I said I didn't want to do this, and I decided to complete college and then get a law degree," Rice said. He passed the Pennsylvania Bar exam

after graduation, but never planned to practice law as a career.

"I wanted the skills that come with a law degree," he said, describing his GW Law education as "extremely valuable" in preparing him to join the leadership team at Utz. Rice and his wife, Jane, a former Utz public relations director, created the Rice Family Foundation in 2017. Their daughter, Stacie Rice Lissette, JD '92, serves as director of the family foundation.

GW is truly a family affair: Stacie's husband, Utz Chairman Dylan Lissette, BBA '93, studied business economics and public policy at GW. Their daughter, M. Payton Lissette, BA '18, earned a degree in communications at the university.

"My father and I both had really great experiences at the law school," said Rice Lissette. "We were so blessed that we were able to go to GW Law, and we felt really fortunate that we didn't have to go into debt to do it. We are conscious that this is not necessarily the case for others.

"We wanted to create this scholarship to pay it forward and give someone the same opportunity we had," she said.

GW President Ellen M. Granberg expressed gratitude for the family's support of student scholarships, a top university priority. "GW Law offers unmatched exposure to some of our nation's most respected legal scholars and practitioners," Granberg said. "This generous gift helps support talented students who face financial challenges, allowing them to focus on their studies, take advantage of only-at-GW opportunities, and gain a meaningful hands-on legal education, particularly



Michael Rice and many of his GW Law Class of 1968 classmates have maintained their friendship for more than a half century. Pictured at a recent gathering are, from left: D.C. Superior Court Senior Judge Robert Tignor, Michael Rice, James Stein, Dolph Sand, Martin Snider, and Larry Thomas.

in nonprofit and government service where funding is more limited.”

Rice’s decision to study in the nation’s capital was driven by his admiration for the early U.S. presidents that grew out of learning to read with a set of childhood books given to him by his mother. He still keeps in touch with a sizable group of law school friends. “In those days, classes were divided alphabetically, so I knew everyone from R to Z,” he said. “A group of us have gotten together regularly through the years to share special occasions and stay in touch with each other.”

He and Jane were married between his first and second years of law school, and he was still a student when Stacie was born. To support his new family, he took a job at the Census Bureau and switched to night classes at GW Law.

GW’s connections to the Washington, D.C., community

influenced Rice Lissette’s decision to attend GW Law. Even though her family was based in Hanover, her parents spent a lot of time in Washington when she was growing up. The city felt like home.

“I loved studying law in the nation’s capital. My professors were awesome, and my classmates were such a diverse group of people. And I loved the clinics. That kind of hands-on experience, to be able to use the skills I was learning, was really meaningful.” Today, she serves on the school’s Clinical Law Advisory Council.

Rice, his wife, and his daughter are deeply committed to providing opportunities for others. By supporting education in particular, Rice Lissette said, “you provide people with the ability to create their future.”

GW Law Dean Dayna Bowen Matthew hopes the Rice/Lissette Scholarship will inspire others to pay it forward.



Stacie Rice Lissette, JD ’92, serves as director of the Rice Family Foundation.

“The incredible success and generosity of the Rice family through the generations is a shining example of the impact that a GW Law education can have on students and entire families,” she says.

“We’re grateful beyond words for the wonderful opportunities they’re creating for our students. They are truly building an enduring legacy here at GW.”

– Mary A. Dempsey

Dunner Endowed Lectureship: Commemorating A Patent Law Giant



Legendary patent law attorney Donald Dunner (left) taught at GW Law for nearly 50 years.

ATTORNEY DONALD R. Dunner was more than a leading practitioner of intellectual property law and talented GW Law adjunct professor. He was an influential pioneer who helped shape the very fabric of the patent appellate practice in the United States, particularly within the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The legendary patent law attorney passed away in 2019, but his legacy will live on at GW Law. To honor his vast contributions to the profession and to generations of students, GW Law; Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner (Finnegan); the American

Bar Association (ABA); the American Intellectual Property Law Association; and the Federal Circuit Bar Association are partnering to create The Donald R. Dunner Endowed Memorial Lectureship.

“Don Dunner taught for nearly 50 years at GW Law,” said Dean Dayna Bowen Matthew, the Harold H. Greene Professor of Law. “We believe this lectureship will not only honor his work in the profession but reflect his steadfast dedication to learning and passing on knowledge about patent law to future practitioners.”

The lectureship will be supported through a \$250,000 endowment, with donations

coming from Dunner’s former partners, colleagues, and students. Once fully funded, the endowment will allow Dunner’s impact to resonate at GW Law in perpetuity, inspiring future generations of patent lawyers.

“Don gave so much to the profession,” said J. Michael Jakes, a partner at Finnegan, which Dunner joined in 1978 and helped transform into an intellectual property law leader. “I’m hoping this lecture will do that as well. It will serve as a way to further understand and study IP law. And it will bear his name, so that his legacy will go on and people will remember what he did for the profession.”

Dunner’s prominence in patent law dates back to the 1970s, before the establishment of the Federal Circuit. Back then, he was a recognized authority on the Federal Circuit’s precursor, the Court of Customs and Patent Appeals. He also wrote the highly regarded book *Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit: Practice and Procedure*, which he used to teach his course at GW Law.

Dunner was instrumental in the creation of the Federal Circuit in 1982, the court that holds jurisdiction over patent appeals in the United States. He served as chair of the court’s advisory council for its first decade and helped to draft the court’s rules.

Over his illustrious career, he argued 175 appeals before the Federal Circuit—more than any litigator in the country. He also served as president of the American Patent Law Association and the ABA Section of Intellectual Property Law.

“He loved what he did, and he did it intensely,” said Laura P. Masurovsky, a partner at Finnegan. “He did it with great passion, and he shared that and conveyed that. I learned so much from hearing him talk, practicing with him, watching him in action. He was just constantly available. He gave so much of himself to practitioners and to the profession.”

– Sarah Kellogg

A Legacy of Public Service



Ida and Irving Kator, LLB '51, both had distinguished careers in civil service.

AS A PUBLIC SERVANT FOR more than 20 years with the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and then for another three decades in private practice, Irving "Irv" Kator, LLB '51, was a tireless advocate for equal opportunity and public service.

To honor that legacy, his children—Michael J. Kator, David Kator, and Anne Kator—and his law firm, Kator, Parks, Weiser & Wright PLLC, which he founded in 1975, have established the Irving Kator Scholarship for Equal

Employment Opportunity and Civil Service Law. The scholarship will benefit students interested in pursuing careers in areas that were dear to Irving Kator's heart.

"He was a true believer in equal opportunity," said Michael Kator of his father who also served in the United States Army Air Forces. "When he served in the military, it was segregated and that affected him. He believed people should be given opportunities based on their merit, on what they

can do and not on what they look like."

Irving Kator began his career with the Civil Service Commission as a lawyer in the early 1950s, rising through the years to assistant executive director and assistant to the chairman. He helped implement the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, which established protections for government employees against discrimination. He carried that work forward at his law firm, representing government

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employees in various actions against their employer.

The Civil Service Commission was eventually dissolved and became the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Merit System Protection Board. Irving Kator's wife, Ida Kator, was also a civil servant, working for years as an industrial psychologist for the federal government.

"There should be a number of students at GW who are interested in this kind of law," Michael Kator said. "There are a lot of lawyers who get hired in Washington, D.C., who do this for the government or the private sector. We wanted to support people who care as much about equal opportunity as our father did."

The Kator Scholarship also continues the family's long history of supporting the George Washington University. With a generous minimum commitment of \$400,000, the scholarship will provide crucial financial support to GW Law students.

"We wanted to make it possible for someone who has an interest in this area of law to go through their life without starting out with a debt," said Michael Kator. "We wanted to lighten their burden."

— Sarah Kellogg