



Cullen and Carol Lynn Looney are pictured beside a bronze statue honoring the memory of his mother, Margaret Montgomery Looney, and their son, William Kelley Looney. The three-quarter size sculpture by Arizona artist Deborah Fellows can be seen in the Will Looney Legacy Park at the Museum of South Texas History and at the Cullen Looney Law Office in Edinburg, Texas.

A Texas Legacy: The Montgomery/Looney Family of the Rio Grande Valley
“Our ancestors have given us a unique legacy. What we do with it is the gift we leave our children.”
 — Cullen and Carol Lynn Looney

It seems that a member of the Montgomery/Looney family has been connected to The University of Texas-Pan American since its inception in 1927.

State Representative W. R. Montgomery, who represented Hidalgo County in the Texas Legislature from 1923 through 1931, carried the legislation that allowed the Edinburg School District to form Edinburg College in 1927. His son-in-law, Judge James Cullen (J.C.) Looney, served on the Edinburg Regional College Board of Regents from 1952 to 1958, worked to acquire the land where the university now sits and provided oversight to a tremendous expansion of the school’s programs.

More recently, Judge Looney’s son, Cullen R. Looney, served in the state legislature from 1977 to 1981 and secured funding for a number of new buildings and programs for the university. Judge Looney’s daughter, Margaret Looney McAllen, also followed in her father’s footsteps and served on the Pan American University Board of Regents from 1983 to 1989, helping to guide PAU through its merger with The University of Texas System. She was also a founding member of the Pan American University Foundation Board of Trustees.

But the family’s legacy goes beyond the university’s governance. Judge Looney established an endowment in the early 1970s to benefit student scholarships. According to Cullen Looney, his father donated stock in a company with which he had been involved. The university held on to the stock for years until it appreciated to a sizable level, at which point the school sold the stock, invested the funds and started disbursing scholarships.

“The scholarship is not totally need-based, but we keep that in mind. We try to help those promising students who fall between the cracks,” Looney explained.

In 2002, Margaret and her husband Robert McAllen added to the family legacy by establishing the Rodolfo “Rudy” Silva Jr. Endowed Scholarship, which benefits students in the College of Education. They wanted to honor Silva, who was principal at their own children’s school. Additionally, Robert McAllen endowed the Margaret Looney McAllen Scholarship in Education in honor of his wife.

“I think it’s very rewarding to see it,” Cullen Looney said of his family’s endowments, choking up a little as he recalled one particularly memorable visit with a beneficiary. “A year or so ago, I ran into a gentleman I know. He introduced me to his wife and family. His wife looked up at me and said, ‘I went to school on a Looney Scholarship.’ She’s a school teacher. That’s very rewarding.”

“If people get a good education, they have a better chance of being able to succeed,” Looney said of his family’s long commitment to university education and urged others to invest in education through their own philanthropy. “We were fortunate to have some opportunities in this area. It’s a great way to share and give some of that back to the community and help the community going forward.”

Today, the James Cullen Looney Scholarship is invested in the UTIMCO Long Term Fund and will continue to carry the legacy of the Montgomery/Looney family by helping deserving students at The University of Texas-Pan American in perpetuity.