

Alumni couple's bequest to Tulane's Latin American Library caps decades of giving

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Dr. Penny (NC '69) and James Morrill (A&S '69) have named Tulane's Latin American Library as the beneficiary of a substantial estate gift that will help grow its collections and increase scholarly access. (Photo courtesy of the Morrills)

A couple whose longtime philanthropy has helped solidify the Latin American Library (LAL) as one of Tulane University's crown jewels is now making it the beneficiary of a large bequest.

The estate gift from Tulane alumni James Morrill (A&S '69) and Dr. Penny Chittim Morrill (NC '69) will bolster their two existing funds: the Jim and Penny Morrill Endowed Fund for Mesoamerican Art History, established in 2010 to support the acquisition of library materials in that field; and the Jim and Penny Morrill Endowed Fund for Research at the Latin American Library, created this year to bring scholars from outside the New Orleans area to use its collections.

In making their bequest, the Morrills want to ensure that their alma mater's library will continue to serve as a premier resource for Latin American studies. "The LAL is one of a number of jewels in Tulane's crown," Penny Morrill said. "Our greatest motivation for giving has been gratitude. Jim and I acquired a love of learning at Tulane, and we want to share that passion."

For the Morrills, the pursuit of knowledge knows no bounds, and the LAL's rich holdings merit wider exposure. "Jim and I believe in communication across borders," Morrill said. "We hope to nurture conversations that will promote greater understanding. It's exciting to imagine the dialogues that will take place as scholars and artists come together to study Mayan glyphs, Cuban-American radio soap operas, the Pan-American Life Insurance Group papers, or Spratling silver design drawings. What a vast array!"

"The wonderful legacy of Jim and Penny Morrill has only grown with their substantial bequest to the LAL," said Dean of Libraries and Academic Information Resources David Banush. "Their gift will help us continue that mission long into the future."

For anyone considering an estate gift to Tulane, Morrill advised: "Follow your passion! Jim and I urge alumni and friends to get involved. We have gained so much by giving. We love staying connected to the exciting research occurring at Tulane's library." (Interested donors are encouraged to contact the [Office of Gift Planning](#) for information on estate gifts.)

The Morrills' generosity to Tulane stretches back decades, with a special focus on William Spratling (1900-67), a famed silver designer and former Tulane School of Architecture instructor who revitalized the silver industry in Taxco, Mexico.

Starting in 2004, the Morrills have made major donations that launched and continue to grow the LAL's Sutherland-Taxco Collection. This unique assemblage, which Penny cultivated for Tulane, features original silver design drawings and a host of other research materials that document the work of Spratling and other

figures in Mexico's silver and crafts industry.

In 2018, Penny Morrill assisted the LAL's head, Hortensia Calvo, in acquiring Spratling's personal archive, now named the Ulrich Family Collection of William Spratling Papers. The collection was obtained through a lead gift from the Zemurray Foundation and complemented by contributions from the Morrills and several other donors.

"The acquisitions have made Tulane and the LAL the chief repository for all things Spratling and Taxco silver," said Calvo, the Doris Stone Librarian and Director of The Latin American Library. "The Morrills' extraordinary generosity over so many years—and now through their impactful estate gift—helps to guarantee that the LAL will remain a vital source for education and research."

After receiving her bachelor's degree, Penny Morrill earned a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate from the University of Maryland. She has written numerous books on Mexican art history and has served as an adjunct professor at George Mason University.

James A. Morrill graduated from Tulane with a bachelor's degree in history and earned a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University. He retired from Lincoln Financial Group as vice president of federal relations.

In 2012, Penny Morrill was inducted into the Paul Tulane Society, which honors individuals and organizations that have donated \$1 million or more to the university. Both Morrills serve on Tulane's President's Council and the National Campaign Council for the Washington, D.C., area. The NCC supports *Only the Audacious, The campaign for an ever bolder Tulane*, the most ambitious and comprehensive fundraising effort in Tulane's history.