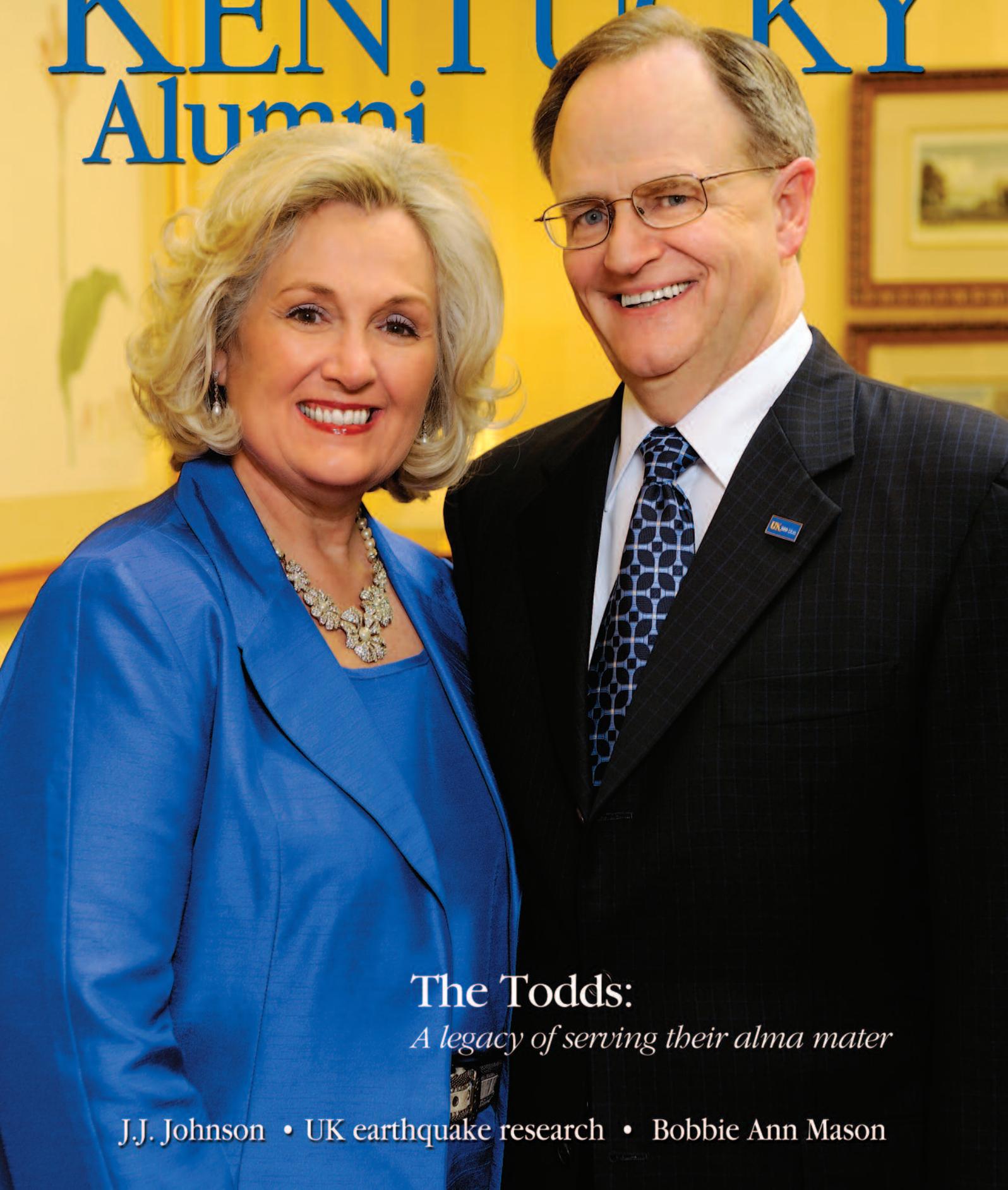


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The Todds:

A legacy of serving their alma mater

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The Todds

A legacy of serving their alma mater

By Kelli Elam



When Dr. Lee T. Todd, Jr. became president of the University of Kentucky, both he and his wife, the former Patricia Brantley (Patsy), knew it was an opportunity of a lifetime — a chance to serve their alma mater like never before. They both also realized that the opportunity would be for a limited time.

“We knew it wouldn’t last forever,” said Patsy Todd. “We knew that while we had this opportunity we had to make the most of it every single day.”

That’s exactly what they have done.

Todd returned to UK as a successful businessman having launched two worldwide technology companies. After serving as senior vice president of IBM’s Lotus Development Corp., he became the 11th president of the University of Kentucky on July 1, 2001. It was a position he never dreamed he would be in, and now, nine and a half years later, it still sometimes feels like a dream.

“It really has been unbelievable,” said President Todd, “particularly based on where we started. To be in this position at this place has meant so much. There are so many memories here, from walking on campus as students, as a member of the faculty, and then in this position. Sometimes, I still have a hard time believing it all.”



UK President Lee T. Todd, Jr. delivers the state of the university address.

“This really is something we never dreamed would happen,” Patsy Todd said. “But once it actually happened, it has been more than we could have ever dreamed. When we moved into this house (Maxwell Place), it really felt like we were coming home. It was no longer a house on campus, it was home.”

Todd said the full realization that he was actually the president of UK hit him during a Wildcat basketball game at Rupp Arena when people began congratulating him.

“I realized how excited I was about it. We had about two months before I actually took office and that was a great time to begin building a foundation. I started talking to people on campus and my mind was just racing with thoughts and ideas. Having that time was really a great opportunity and a blessing.”

When Todd announced his resignation effective June of this year, it signaled the first

of many meaningful “lasts,” such as the last time spending the holiday season at Maxwell Place, or the last time helping students move into campus housing at the start of the fall semester.

“We are at peace (with the decision),” Patsy Todd said. “We’ve discussed it and always thought that we would know when it was time. Once he actually announced it, I felt sadness and excitement. I felt sadness because this wonderful opportunity will come to an end and excitement for all the possibilities to come.”

For Todd, reflection on his tenure as president starts with people.

“Great people are the key to any success — surround yourself with great people and success will usually follow,” he said. “We have been so fortunate here to be surrounded by extraordinary people. From the students, to the faculty and

staff, the people on this campus are second to none. Sometimes, I’ll be sitting in a meeting and think to myself, ‘This is one of the last times I will have the opportunity to work with these people.’ That is something I will really miss. Anything that we’ve done here has started with great people. There are so many, far too many to name them all.”

Under Todd’s leadership, the University of Kentucky has forged ahead despite harsh economic times. He has stayed committed to helping his alma mater achieve greater prominence at the same time improving the quality of life for the citizens of Kentucky. In December 2005, he announced the university’s Top 20 Business Plan. The plan is a quantitative analysis highlighting what it will take for UK to achieve its state-mandated goal of building a Top 20 public research university by the year 2020. Widely hailed as the first business plan by a public university in the nation, UK’s plan garnered widespread national attention. It has been featured by national media outlets and recognized by peer institutions, as several higher education leaders have visited UK’s campus to learn more about the business plan approach. The Top 20 Business Plan also gained support throughout the Commonwealth.

“When I have time to think about our legacy here, I imagine the Top 20 Plan will be a big part of it — at least I hope it will be part of it. It’s something I will be remembered for and I hope that it has changed the way people think of higher education and the realization that the investment in education pays off. The plan has had a profound change on our ability to recruit people to campus,” said Todd. “It let people know that we are serious. I’m very pleased with that.”

Todd also launched the “Commonwealth Collaboratives,” an initiative that combined the university’s research and outreach missions. The Collaboratives feature 47 research projects aimed at solving the state’s problems in health care, education, economic development, environmental conditions and quality of life.

Other notables from his presidency include UK’s operating budget increasing from \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion, despite state funding remaining flat. The campus has flourished as Todd’s administration oversaw construction of four new residence halls (the first new one since 1967),

a new \$570 million UK Chandler Hospital, solely financed through the hospital's own revenue stream, a new UK College of Pharmacy, a 286,000 square-foot facility that is the largest academic building in Kentucky and among the largest in the nation, and successfully completed a \$1 billion capital campaign.

"Our growth, particularly in this economic climate, has been phenomenal," Todd said. "Again, it comes back to great people with a great commitment to this university."

The university has also made tremendous strides in research, scholarship and student recruitment and retention during Todd's time as president. Total research expenditures in science and engineering fields have increased from \$212 million in fiscal year 2001 to \$367 million in fiscal year 2008. Undergraduate enrollment has increased 11.2 percent, retention rate has reached a record 81 percent, and graduation rate has reached a record 61.4 percent.

"One of the things we are most proud of is the change in attitude and culture about higher education in the state of Kentucky," he said. "People do now believe that we can compete nationally for the best students and faculty. It's all about attracting the best people."

President Todd also brought a new level of acclaim to Kentucky by serving on several national committees, boards and commissions.

For Patsy Todd, she felt a commitment to students immediately upon becoming UK's first lady.

"I wanted students to know that there was someone they could talk to about anything," she said. "Sometimes a conversation can change so much. It's our job, our most important job, I believe, to support our students."

She took that job to heart, quickly becoming known as "First Mom."

"I am very flattered by that," she said of the nickname. "We have always been a very close-knit family, so when we came back to campus, our children (Troy Todd and Kathryn Norman) realized that they would have to share us. But we have all enjoyed it so much. I wanted students to feel welcome on campus, like they were with family. I feel, and Lee does too, a responsibility to these children when they get to campus."

One of the ways Patsy Todd made the campus more welcoming, particularly Maxwell Place, was to make it more aesthetically pleasing. The Todds have opened the

grounds of the presidential home for the entire community to enjoy.

"I wanted it to be more open to the entire campus," she said. "I wanted it to be a place that's relaxing, where people could come and not feel like a guest, but like they were at home. We took fences down and removed a lot of thick growth so we could see out, and more important, people could see in, too."

The Todds aren't sure exactly what the future will hold once they are no longer president and first lady of the University of Kentucky. They might spend some time in Maine, to relax a little bit before making plans.

"One of the things that surprised me about this job early on was the sheer volume of the job — something could be done every second of the day," Todd said. "There simply aren't enough hours in the day. So, it will be quite a change to be able to take some time to relax a little bit."

Todd said he would like to be involved in education policy in Kentucky, economic development, and K-12 math and sciences. Patsy Todd plans to continue her involvement in Women in Philanthropy at UK.

"No matter what else we do, we both want to support this university through fundraising," said Patsy Todd. "It's something that is very important to us."

"We'll still be around," Todd added. "We live here. This is home."

Natives of Earlington, Ky., the Todds each earned undergraduate degrees from UK in 1968, in his electrical engineering and hers in human environmental sciences. Patsy Todd earned a master's degree from Simmons College in Boston, Mass. in 1973. She began her career in education in Massachusetts where she taught nutrition at the high school level. She serves on numerous boards and committees, including as a founding member of the Women's Circle, the primary endowment program of the University of Kentucky Center for Research on Violence Against Women, and is co-chair of the University of Kentucky's Women & Philanthropy. She also serves as co-chair of the University of Kentucky Undergraduate Advisory Board.

After graduating from UK, Todd went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1970 and 1973. While at MIT, he received six patents for high-resolution displays for data conferencing. He returned to UK in 1974 as an electrical engineering professor where he had an active display devices research program. He won several teaching awards, including the UK Alumni Association Great Teacher Award. He is a member of the UK Alumni Association Hall of Distinguished Alumni.



Patsy Todd wanted UK students to feel like they were with family.

Photo: Courtesy UKPR