



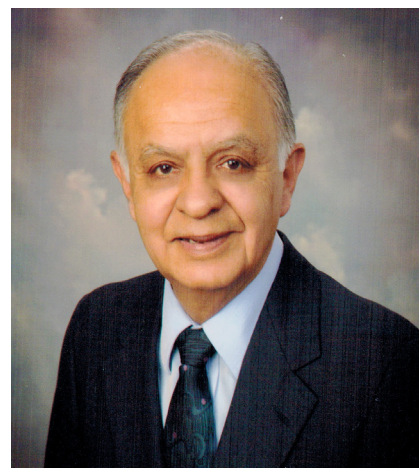
Pillar & Post

A Chance to Give Back

Born in Trinidad as the son of a miner, Ron Lopez would spend his early years moving wherever his father's work would lead. Childhood would include time spent in Wyoming, Nevada and Utah, before eventually returning to Trinidad.

"When we moved back," Ron said, "I attended what was then, Centennial Junior High—before later graduating from Trinidad High School in 1964."

During these formative years, his mother, Rachel, would have a powerful impact on Ron and his three younger brothers. "During my freshman year, our dad left the home," he explained. "Our mom ran the household, guided us, enforced discipline—all while working as a waitress. To this day, I'm amazed how she kept everything together for us."



Ron Lopez



Ron's mom, Rachel Padilla

"And she always encouraged us in school," he added. "However, given our limited financial resources, the possibility of a higher education seemed doubtful. But then I learned about Trinidad State—it was a more affordable option."

It became a powerful motivator. "I worked summer jobs to earn money—including one at TSJC, right after high school graduation, where I was part of the grounds crew," he said.

The hard work paid off, as Ron would enroll at TSJC that fall.

"I absolutely loved my first year there, both academically and socially," Ron said. "I liked my instructors, especially Curtis Babcock and Professor Morris Taylor. My friends and I also supported Trojan football and basketball—and we enjoyed the game room and weekend dances at the Sullivan Center. It was a blast!"

After Trinidad State, he would continue his education at Western State College. "The idea of a professional career became a huge motivator for me. I liked Accounting and was determined to get a 4-year degree in that field."

At a certain point, however, the expense of a college education would again become a factor. “I ran out of money while I was at Western State,” he explained. “And with some trepidation, I visited the Dean and asked about a loan. To my surprise—through a privately endowed fund—they processed a loan the very same day and encouraged me to continue on!”

“That’s a moment I’ll never forget,” Ron added, “and I’ve often wondered how things would have turned out for me, had they not been so helpful to a guy in a bind. The loan was for \$600—a lot of money to a guy like me back in those days! I was able to pay back that loan some four years later.”

While at Western State, Ron met Shari Addington and they would be married the following summer in southern Indiana, where she was from. Their marriage meant relocating, and Ron would ultimately earn his Accounting degree from the University of Evansville in 1970 by going to night school. Shari would earn her degree from UE as well.

After starting in an entry level position at Whirlpool Corp. in Evansville, Ron and Shari would move to Jasper where he joined Kimball International. “We manufactured everything from pianos and organs to wood furniture for the home and office,” he said. “I eventually worked my way up to an Assistant Controller position. Later, I moved to Spencer Industries—a plastics manufacturer. I finished my accounting career as their Controller.”

“And so, as it began at good old TSJC,” Ron added, “I put my Accounting degree to use! It helped me enjoy a good career, and to raise a wonderful family.”

Throughout their lives, Ron and Shari would make trips back to Trinidad each summer to visit family and friends. “Despite living in southern Indiana for over 50 years, Trinidad remains my spiritual home. I’d always make it a point to stop by and visit the TSJC campus.”

“These visits also gave me the idea about helping a student who might be in a tough spot like I was,” Ron said. “I got some help once, our children each earned their degrees—now it was time to help someone else fulfill their dreams. And what better way to do it than by helping someone in my own home town? And, by extension, help the College as well?”

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In 2013, Ron decided to visit Toni DeAngelis at the Foundation. “She was very courteous and helpful, and with her guidance we set up the **Rachel Padilla Scholarship Fund**. I named the fund in my mother’s maiden name—I wanted to honor everything she did for us four boys while we were growing up.”

The **Rachel Padilla Scholarship Fund** is available to all students, whether it be those pursuing vocational training or those continuing on toward a 4-year degree.

“On two other occasions, Toni also secured matching contributions for the Fund,” Ron noted, “which is a great way to increase any fund’s balance! And I’ve also received appreciation letters from several fund recipients. It’s heartwarming to know you’re helping young people pursue their dreams—as you once did, too!”

Retirement is treating Ron and Shari well. “We’ve been married for 52 years, with a wonderful son and daughter. Shari continues to teach in the local school system, while I play golf, read, and work around the house and yard. We have a lot to be grateful for,” Ron said.

To learn more about the ways to create a scholarship at Trinidad State, please contact Toni DeAngelis at 719-846-5520 or toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu.

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“I believe that TSJC is a critical component to the well-being and long-term success of Trinidad,” Ron added. “I wish them both continued success!”