Ed Harte’s Legacy Lives at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Philanthropist’s $46 million endowment created institute for Gulf of Mexico studies

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Edward H. Harte, who passed away on Wednesday, May 18, at age 88, left a giant footprint on Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi which has benefited greatly from the generosity of the former publisher of the Corpus Christi-Caller Times.

A conservationist as well as a philanthropist, in 2000, Harte donated $46 million to establish a research center at the Island University that would champion the conservation of the Gulf of Mexico. Five years later, the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI) opened its doors and quickly became a recognized authority on the world’s ninth-largest body of water, with six endowed chairs dedicated to advancing the long-term sustainable use and conservation of the Gulf of Mexico.

“Ed Harte understood the economic and social importance of building a nationally-respected research intensive University in South Texas and at the same time assuring the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico,” said Dr. Flavius Killebrew, president/CEO of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. “A quiet, unassuming man, his actions spoke louder than words. Through his generosity Ed and his family have enriched the University and the Coastal Bend community beyond measure.”

The HRI rose to national prominence in 2006, bringing together elected officials, environmental experts, and industry and business leaders from the United States and Mexico who share a vested interested in assuring the long-term sustainability of the Gulf. Last year, the HRI became an international source of expertise for world-wide media covering the April 20, 2010, explosion of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil platform off the Louisiana coast. In December, the HRI will host a second summit to address damage to the Gulf, define what a healthy Gulf should be, and to prescribe the means to assess progress to that goal.

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“Ed Harte’s passing is a great loss,” said Dr. Larry McKinney, HRI executive director. “It is a moment of sadness but it is also an opportunity to reflect upon a life well lived and to celebrate what he did for us all. The Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies would not exist but for his commitment and forethought.”

In addition to providing the funding to establish the HRI, the Harte family has contributed millions of dollars to charities and causes that benefit the Coastal Bend’s quality of life. Among those gifts was a $3.5 million contribution to help build the University’s showpiece Performing Arts Center which, in addition to providing a state-of-the-art facility for student and faculty performances, has become the principal performance venue for the Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra, Corpus Christi Chorale, Corpus Christi Live!, and the Furgason Bravo! Series.