In Memoriam, Bud Adams Jr. ’42

We are saddened by the loss of K. S. Bud Adams Jr. ’42, the powerful and enduring owner of the NFL Tennessee Titans, CEO of Adams Resources and Energy, whom Menlo College recognized earlier this year with an Honorary Doctorate of Business. In 2002, he established the K.S. Bud Adams Jr. Endowed Scholarship at Menlo, which provides assistance on average each year for 18 Menlo students based upon demonstrated leadership and character, service, and academic achievement. These core values, coupled with a lifetime of remarkable achievements, are why Menlo College holds him in the highest esteem, as the epitome of a Menlo student, alumnus and athlete. The Honorary Doctorate in Business from Menlo College serves as a tribute to his accomplishments in Business and a champion of professional sports.

In memory of his passing, the following is excerpted from Menlo Advantage issue Fall 2009, page 8, “Best in the West, Best on the Gridiron.” Adams was an enduring figure in the National Football League. As one of the original team owners in the American Football League, he guided his franchise to new heights posting six playoff appearances, including an AFC Championship (1999), an AFC Central title (2000), two AFC South titles, and an AFC Championship appearance. He was one of only four NFL owners to reach the 350-win plateau.

A native of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Adams’ interest in sports was first displayed while at Culver Military Academy where he earned letters in football, basketball and baseball. Upon graduation from Culver in 1940, Adams attended Menlo College, lettering in both rugby and football. Adams then transferred to the engineering school at the University of Kansas where he also lettered in football.

In 1942, while still in school at KU, Adams joined the U.S. Naval Reserve. In July 1943, he was sent overseas and was assigned to a PAC-Fleet carrier unit, where he served as an aviation engineering officer. Lt. Adams was also an aide in the U.S. Navy’s Congressional Liaison Office in Washington, D.C.

In 1946, Adams started ADA Oil Company, which was a forerunner of the publicly-held American Stock Exchange-listed Adams Resources & Energy, Inc. (AE), an energy company engaged in the business of marketing crude oil, natural gas and petroleum products; tank truck transportation of liquid chemicals; and oil and gas exploration and production. Adams’ other business interests included extensive farming and ranching in California and Texas, cattle feeding, real estate, automobile dealerships and leasing.

On August 3, 1959, he and Lamar Hunt announced the formation of the new American Football League, which began playing in 1960. In 1970, the AFL merged into the expanded NFL.

Each year, Bud Adams sent holiday cards to his classmates from 1938–1942, continuing the friendships he made at Menlo College. He will be missed.