

## NEWS RELEASE

May 3, 2007

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# University of Saint Mary To Honor Esteemed Board Member Charles Berkel At Commencement

*1 p.m. Saturday, May 12, 2007*

(Leavenworth, Kan.)—When Charles Berkel enlisted in the Navy in 1943, he wanted to become a Naval pilot to support his country during the second “Great War.” Poor vision precluded him that dream, but decades later his undying willingness to support and help others succeed remains constant.

At the 2007 commencement graduation ceremony, the University of Saint Mary will honor Berkel, an esteemed member of the USM Board of Trustees since 1999, with an honorary doctorate degree.

Originally from Muskegon, Mich., Berkel has dedicated much of his life to helping others as a civil engineer. After graduating from high school in 1943, Berkel enlisted in the military, traveling the globe as a Naval ensign. He got out of the Navy in 1946, and used the G.I. Bill to graduate from the University of Illinois with a degree in civil engineering. After graduating, he started working for a Chicago-based manufacturing firm, Intrusion Prepkat.

While working in Chicago, Berkel met his late wife, Antoinette (Toni) Straus, and the two were married in 1948. The couple was transferred to Kansas City in 1951, and by 1959, they opened Berkel & Company Contractors in Shawnee, Kan., a construction company specializing in concrete foundation work, which is now located in Bonner Springs, Kan. Today, Berkel is the chairman and chief executive officer (CEO) for the company he started nearly 50 years ago. He joined the USM Board of Trustees in 1999, and has shown tireless support for the university’s Catholic tradition. He and his late wife Antoinette have four children (one of whom passed away in a tragic auto accident) and four grand children.

According to University of Saint Mary President Sister Diane Steele, the honorary degree is the university’s way of giving back to Berkel, who has supported not only vision and mission of USM by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth as well.

“From time to time, we recognize individuals who embody the mission and vision of the university with honorary degrees for achievement or service,” Steele said. “Charles Berkel is a man of generous spirit, genuine humility, who has built his business on integrity, inventiveness and respect for people. Decades of charitable and professional service speak to the man he is and to his contributions to the greater Kansas City community. It is our privilege to honor him.”

Charles Berkel will be honored at 1 p.m. Saturday, May 12, 2007 inside McGilley Field House. For more information, call 913-758-6115.

*The University of Saint Mary is a private, co-educational applied liberal arts university founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations at 11413 Pflumm in Overland Park and inside Providence Medical Center at 8929 Parallel Parkway in Kansas City, Kan.*

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