

# Promoting Success

## THROUGH

# Giving

Memories of his time as a student at Georgia Tech inspired **William W. "Bill" Dowdy**, ChE '54, MS ChE '63, to include a special gift to Georgia Tech as part of his charitable estate planning. Dowdy and his wife, Katherine, have established what will one day become an unrestricted endowment fund for the School of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering.

Many of Dowdy's favorite stories about Georgia Tech include experiences that led him to develop a strong work ethic. Although he was a good student in school while growing up in the Red Bank area of Chattanooga, Tennessee, nothing had prepared him for the rigorous academic demands of Georgia Tech. He completed his first quarter with a 1.8 GPA.

"Back then, there was a saying," Dowdy recalls. "Look to your left, look to your right; one of you won't be here next year." It appeared that Dowdy was one of those students destined not to make it past the first year. However, after learning he would lose his co-op assignment due to his poor grades, combined with the fear of disappointing his father, he begged for a second chance.

Fortunately, James Wohlford, the director of the co-op division at the time, believed in Dowdy's ability to succeed and allowed him to spend the next quarter working. "My first experience as a co-op was a blessing, and it gave me the opportunity to understand what I was doing wrong in the classroom," Dowdy says. "When I returned to campus, I was better prepared to be a good student." After finishing the next quarter with a 3.6 GPA, he earned a 3.0 GPA or higher for every quarter thereafter.



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"Something that was very influential to me and drove me to succeed was the peer pressure that I experienced at Georgia Tech," he says. "Five others entered as co-op students in chemical engineering at the same time I did, and we all knew each other very well." Over the years, these six students established a bond built upon friendly competition that endured well beyond their graduation. Dowdy credits much of his early success to the discipline he learned from his friends.

Dowdy also fondly recalls Professor **H. Clay Lewis**, who was known to inspire fear in many students. "You had to make a favorable impression on Dr. Lewis, and he wanted us to be confident and stand up to him," Dowdy says. "He taught us to be prepared to prove we were right, and he worked hard to incorporate real problems into his lectures. I made an A in all three of his classes, and I respected him and appreciated the way he made us think about practical applications of complicated chemical engineering principles."

Dr. Lewis often asked a recurring question, recalls Dowdy. The professor would present a challenging problem to the class, and he would "bet a dollar for a donut that no one could figure it out." Many times, true to his word, Dr. Lewis would arrive in class with a donut for the student who had proven him wrong.

After graduation, Dowdy spent three years working at the DuPont Experimental Station in Wilmington, Delaware. When faced with the possibility of an unwanted transfer with DuPont, he reached out to the school chair of chemical engineering, Dr. Homer Grubb. "Once again, Georgia Tech extended a unique opportunity to me when Dr. Grubb helped me secure a fellowship so I could return to school," recalls Dowdy appreciatively.

In 1963, after completing his master's degree, Dowdy returned to DuPont, accepting a position at the Chattanooga plant, which is where he had wanted to work all along. He remained there for the last thirty years of his career,

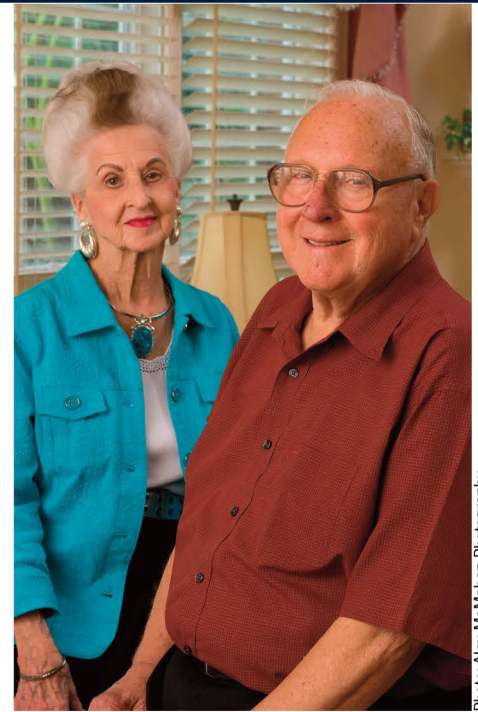


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working on the development of textile and industrial fibers, including a variety of experimental products. He retired in 1986, and he and Katherine still live in the Chattanooga area on Signal Mountain.

Memories of Georgia Tech are very important to Dowdy. He appreciates the quality education the School of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering provides to its students, and he is proud of the leaders the Institute produces. "Young people today can go to Georgia Tech and get the training and the knowledge they need to be successful in their careers," he says. In fact, Dowdy believes Georgia Tech is successful at everything it does, from developing the best academic programs to conducting innovative research. "I want to promote success," he says. "Georgia Tech meant the world to me, and I want to give back to the chemical engineering program that has given so much to me throughout my career and my life."

Katherine is just as enthusiastic as her husband is about Georgia Tech. A native of Carrollton, Georgia, she and Dowdy met through a business acquaintance. The couple celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary in July. A recognized leader in the community for her work at the First-Centenary United Methodist Church and the Garden Club of Signal Mountain, Katherine is proud of the legacy of success that has inspired the couple's generous gift. "Georgia Tech is so much a part of our lives, even today," she says, "and I am honored to be able to give back to the school that has meant so much to both of us."

*Bill and Katherine Dowdy with their cat, Precious.*