

Milligan, Eastman honor Hart, celebrate common legacy and common future

By Sarah Colson and Jeff Keeling

Dr. Bob Hart didn't just solve problems during his decades serving at Eastman Chemical Company. The Milligan College alumnus, who worked his way up through Tennessee Eastman Co. to ultimately serve as its president, cared for and nourished people, both at Eastman and as a community volunteer. When Eastman and Milligan honored Hart at a "Celebrating Engineering" dinner in Kingsport Feb. 25, they had much more to celebrate than Hart's impressive legacy. This fall, more than seven decades after Hart stepped foot on Milligan's campus at the height of World War II, Milligan will welcome the first class to its engineering program.

As Milligan and Eastman leaders spoke about Hart's contributions to science, to Eastman and to his community, they also looked forward in eager anticipation to the implementation of a program they said will embody the problem-solving and service-oriented values so important to both institutions. And that program's leader, Dr. Greg Harrell, spoke of how Eastman played an important role, early in his engineering career, in helping him become a better engineer and leader.

Recently graduated and working at a BASF plant in Morristown with similar structure to Eastman but on a smaller scale, Harrell said he would, "come to Eastman very, very often to learn from the best in the business at how technology and experience intersect and can improve things. The engineers at Eastman were astounding mentors of a young, new engineer straight out of school trying to learn the arts and sciences of how engineering really works in the world."

One reason a young Harrell had such a receptive mentoring community at Eastman was Hart. At 17, Hart had come to Milligan from Mary Hughes High School in Piney Flats. It was 1944, and the U.S. Navy was utilizing the entire Milligan campus for its V12 program.

While at Milligan, Hart took a pre-engineering curriculum and, after Milligan's V12 program closed in 1945, the Navy transferred



Dr. Bob Hart enjoys a moment with Eastman vice president Parker Smith at the Celebrate Engineering dinner during which Hart was honored. Photo by Jeff Keeling

him to the University of Louisville where he completed his degree in mechanical engineering. After the war wound down, and Hart completed his studies, he returned to his East Tennessee roots where he worked first at North American Rayon in Elizabethton and later at Tennessee Eastman where he rose through the ranks of engineering, manufacturing, and supervision to eventually serve as the president of Tennessee Eastman, which was then a division of Eastman Kodak.

Eastman senior vice president and chief legal officer, David Golden, thanked Hart for having created a "long legacy" at Eastman – all four of his successors as Tennessee director were in attendance – and said the evening had brought to mind themes of faith and future, in addition to legacy.

"You can't set sail for the future unless you know where you came from," Golden said, referring to legacies built both at Eastman and Milligan. Faith is an integrating principle, he added, that allows people to face the future, "with a conquering attitude to overcome what problems may come."

The future's problems, he said, are

harder than those of the past. Eastman, Golden said, "(hires) problem solvers and innovators and thinkers and collaborators," with expertise in their particular field.

Milligan, he said, is precisely the kind of institution that produces such people. "Can you think of many other institutions that are so uniquely designed to incorporate various disciplines of learning into a whole – a whole prepared to go out and solve the wicked problems of the future, and I mean that in every sense of the word."

Milligan President Dr. Bill Greer said Hart's legacy and Eastman's approach to service-oriented problem solving align with the vision for Milligan's engineering program.

"We embrace the notion that we are servant leaders, everybody is," Greer said. "In whatever role they're playing, they are servant leaders. We want our students to be trained that way so they're technically competent but that they also have servant's hearts. And that's a great combination in every field."

For his part, Harrell said Eastman's expertise and ethic helped lay the foundations for what has become a globally-recognized career in engineering.

In the mold of Bob Hart, and in the spirit shared by Milligan and Eastman, Milligan's new engineering program will produce outwardly focused graduates, Harrell said.

"Servant leaders are those people who focus their attention on solving other people's problems," he said. "What better place for an engineering school than a university that is dedicated to building people into useful tools that can analyze and solve other people's problems."

"The students that come to our program, yes, their lives will be changed through the arts and sciences of engineering," Harrell added. "We are focused diligently on giving our students the best education that anyone could have, and we are really focused on changing the world. That's what we are after." ■



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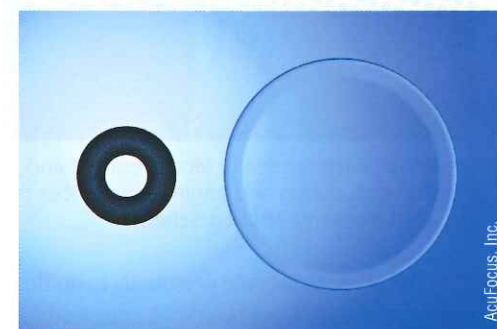
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