

Always for the Students

Bill '63 and Mary Hearn at one of Bill's retirement celebrations. They are pictured with the Texas State Maritime Academy Corps of Cadets Honor Guard.



When William “Bill” Hearn ’63 was hired by Texas A&M University at Galveston in 1974, campus was only two buildings. General Rudder had just granted admission to women and non-Corps members, and the student population was taking its first steps as an integrated group.

By Stephanie Jeter '06

In the 33 years since then, Hearn has not only connected the campus through a multi-tiered student affairs program, he's become what many attest to be the most knowledgeable person on campus. Hearn is looked to as both a mentor and helpmate. Described as a natural-born leader, kind and persistent, his peers say it's not a stretch to accredit the success of TAMU-Galveston to the man with an Aggie Ring.

And so it continues. Even after Hearn announced his retirement as associate vice president for student affairs and administration in January, the applause and appreciation keep coming.

Hearn came to Galveston to be the university's counselor. He spent his first several years split between land and sea; several summers he hopped aboard the Texas Clipper to serve as the counselor on university training cruises. That's where he and Steve Curly, TAMU Galveston regents professor in the general academics department, met.

Curly taught English on the ship; Hearn made sure all the students were connected. To help fuse the split between student groups, Hearn held movie nights on the deck of the ship, Curly said. The stretched piece of canvas became a welcome for all to join.

"I don't know anyone who has worked harder than Bill Hearn. He's an amazing and inspirational leader," Curly said.

Inspirational, because in 23 years, what he started as a nightly movie on the ship deck transformed into an entire student life office with counseling, career planning and placement. There is now student financial aid, a residential life culture, international student services and disability services.

Yet even with his vision and success in education, Hearn's work has always been about others. "He sacrificed a lot for students, and he did it willingly," Curly said.

It was he who encouraged TAMU Galveston students in Aggie traditions. He brought campus Muster, Silver Taps, intramural sports, residential life and student-led leadership to the seaside campus. He understood that Sea Aggies needed to share the same Aggie Spirit as the Ags in College Station, said Todd Sutherland '90, TAMU Galveston's director of student activities. Hearn understood the need for unity.

"He built every student affairs department from the ground up, from the very foundation," Sutherland said. "He'd figure out how to get everything working. Bill was student affairs."

One afternoon, Hearn showed up at Bonfire stack where Sutherland was working as an advisor. Sutherland was only a few days into his new position as director of student activities when Hearn pulled him aside.

"He told me that I had the best job in the world," Sutherland said. Hearn encouraged Sutherland to serve the students, and to do what he could to make the very best out of them. "You could hear the passion he had," Sutherland said. "It has never been about titles with Bill, but always how we can best serve the students. That's what his entire career here has been. That's who he is."

Other things draw attention to his character. University Director of Communications Karen Bigley '93 said the word she'd use to describe Hearn is integrity. Hearn's spare bedroom at home was often filled by students who couldn't get housing. He spent time at hospitals and funeral homes. After Hurricane Rita's bluff, Hearn got campus back together.

Though always humble, Hearn wasn't timid in his position. Hearn has been behind the campaigns for multiple campus buildings including the library, gymnasium and student life center.

"Wherever he was, whatever he was in charge of, whomever he was in charge of, people respected how he would lead and how he would communicate," said Grant Shallenberger '86, assistant vice president for student affairs and auxiliary services at TAMU Galveston. "At some point of his career, he has probably run everything."

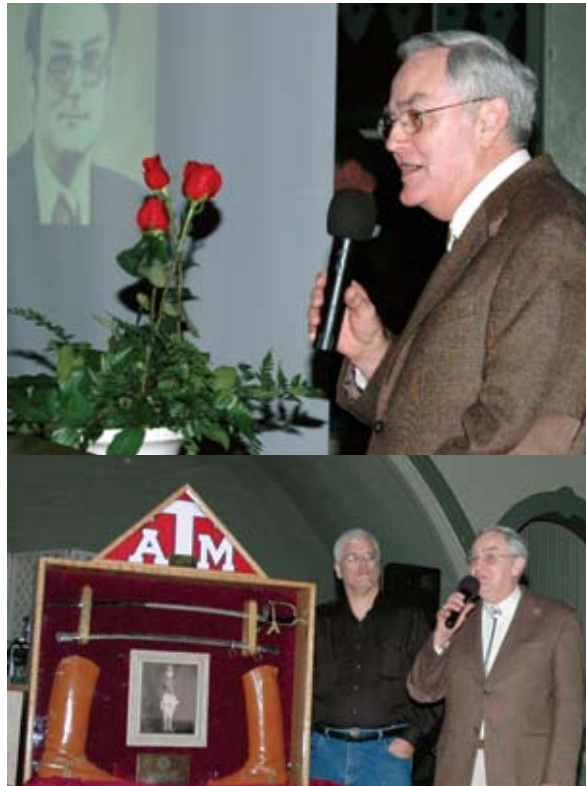
Hearn ran the Corps of Cadets and new student recruiting and enrollment services. He has been head of ship operations and twice interim CEO of campus.

A recipient of the Silver Star for service in Vietnam, Hearn "is an incredible person," Shallenberger said.

TAMU Galveston's Corps of Cadets Honor Guard was recently named after him. And when Hearn announced his retirement, student affairs developed an endowment in his name. The Association of Former Students contributed \$10,000 in celebration of Hearn and his commitment.

Hearn is always, even in retirement, for the students.

He and his wife, Mary Summers Hearn, continue to live in Galveston. 🌹



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Porter S. Garner III '79 (right), Executive Director of The Association of Former Students, presents Narit Paul Jivasantikarn '71 with the 2008 Outstanding International Alumnus award.



Narit Paul Jivasantikarn '71 named 2008 Outstanding International Alumnus

Narit Paul Jivasantikarn '71 of Lampang, Thailand, graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering. He came to Aggieland for an education, but said he left with much more.

"It's my passion, the Spirit of Aggieland," Jivasantikarn said. "I was proud to be a student at Texas A&M."

Armed with undeniable Aggie Sprit, Jivasantikarn returned to Thailand after graduation to build the first private institution for vocational education in his hometown of Lampang Province.

Since then, Lamp Tech College has educated thousands of Thai students, changing their lives and the country forever.

To honor Jivasantikarn's joint dedication to educational excellence and Texas A&M University, he was recognized as the university's 2008 Outstanding International Alumnus at a College Station ceremony Feb. 27.

Jivasantikarn's story is extraordinary. Supported by his mother and father, and encouraged by a Peace Corps volunteer, Jivasantikarn left Thailand and enrolled in a junior college in East Texas. While accompanying fellow students on a tour of Texas A&M, he said, it didn't take long to decide that College Station was where he belonged, and he transferred.

"I was a really gung-ho Aggie," he said. "I went to every football game in

1967. I enjoyed it. Even when we lost a game, we stood tall."

He said memories of singing the *War Hymn* and *The Spirit of Aggieland* still gives him strength in tough situations. "It made me successful," he said.

Before launching Lamp Tech College 26 years ago, Jivasantikarn spent about 10 years in the Thai business industry working for major corporations and building a construction business. He said he noticed something during that time: Not everyone was getting a chance at an education in his hometown.

At that time, the government was the only avenue for higher education for technical employment, Jivasantikarn said. The number of students who wanted an education outnumbered the number of seats available. Jivasantikarn thought he could make a difference.

"So I went to the bank," Jivasantikarn said. Using borrowed money, land donated by his family and Aggie tenacity, he built his the school from the ground up. Lamp Tech College now offers full curriculum in 14 major fields, including electronics, mechanics, accounting, architecture and marketing, gaining a national reputation. Enrollment jumped from 400 the first year to 4,000 today.

In 2000 and 2004, Lamp Tech

earned the prestigious King's Award, a recognition given to institutions that achieve and maintain the highest standards in vocational education.

An accomplished artist, Jivasantikarn designed one of the buildings himself, and as a devoted Aggie, he made his school colors maroon and white.

"I have maroon and white everywhere in my school—buildings, flags, frames, offices. Even my office is maroon and white," he said.

Texas A&M President Dr. Elsa Murano said Jivasantikarn is a wonderful example of the impact Texas A&M has around the world.

"His achievements embody the core values of Texas A&M that are so important to the Aggie family," she said. "We appreciate all that he has done for his country and for the great example he sets for students and former students."

To hear Jivasantikarn tell the chain of events, he's just a regular Aggie. As an Endowed Century Club member, his work within The Association of Former Students improves Texas A&M University. Back home, Jivasantikarn's hard work, passion and enthusiasm creates a new future for the people of Lampang Province, Thailand. 🇹🇭