

Dr. Peterson

Dinner Honoring Ernest Scheller Jr.

6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 21, 2012, Biltmore Hotel

This evening is the culmination of a very special day for the Georgia Tech community. We are privileged to be with Roberta and Ernie Scheller, as well as their family members and special friends. Today we celebrate Ernie Scheller's legacy, a lasting investment in educational opportunities for others, and specifically, within the Georgia Tech community.

This is a week of celebrations. At halftime of last Saturday's football game against Virginia, we honored the 1951 and 1952 football teams. The 1952 team, the same year Ernie graduated, won the national championship. That was also the first year that women were enrolled full-time on Tech's campus. I understand Monday was Ernie's 83rd birthday. I won't ask anyone to sing, but we do hope all of your birthday wishes come true.

On Tuesday, we celebrated 100 years of cooperative education at Georgia Tech. What started as an experiment with 12 students working for 15 cents an hour has now expanded to a program of 5,000 undergraduate and graduate Tech students. At our celebration event on campus, Dr. Keith Hollingsworth, president of the Georgia Tech Co-op affinity group talked about how much the program meant to him. His father's grocery store folded his first semester at Tech. Co-op was a way for him to work hard and not only pay his way through Georgia Tech, but also to send money home to help support his family.

Ernie Scheller also worked his way through Georgia Tech, supplementing the \$400 in tuition fees that his father was able to provide. He was a table manager at his fraternity house. He joined ROTC and the Georgia Air National Guard. He worked as advertising manager of the Yellow Jacket, a campus humor magazine, and he set up a silk-screening business in the basement of his fraternity house.

His undergraduate experience at Tech instilled in him perseverance and persistence. I think he personifies many Georgia Tech graduates. They are hard-working men and women who learned the value of hard work, appreciate the opportunities their Georgia Tech education gave them, and are committed to giving back. As many of you may know, Georgia Tech is a national leader in many areas, but the one that I am the most proud of is our leadership position among public institutions in terms of the percentage of alumni who give back to their alma mater.

Through their generosity, the Schellers have set a new standard in leadership giving, but it didn't begin with this remarkable gift. It is the punctuation mark of a lifetime of giving back, of investing in others by providing them with educational opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise. Throughout his leadership at Silberline (*pronounced like "silver" with a short "l"*) Ernie Scheller also made it a priority to create numerous opportunities for his employees, as well as others in the community, to earn their college degrees.

For years the Schellers have been leading benefactors of the College of Business, including substantial support for the Technology Square facility across the street, as well as the seven-figure gift that established the Ernest Scheller Jr. Chair in Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Commercialization. This latest gift is an investment in people, including endowed chairs, professorships, undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships. This will help Georgia Tech continue to attract the best and the brightest, and prepare business leaders for our state, our country and our world.

For years to come, new students, especially those enrolling in the Scheller College of Business, will want to know who Ernie Scheller Jr. is. They'll come to learn that he is a successful businessman and leader in his community who makes it a priority to invest in the lives of others. That he's a man of vision, perseverance and persistence.

And of course, that he's a Ramblin' Wreck from Georgia Tech. On behalf of the entire Georgia Tech community, thank you.