2004 Award Recipient

James L. Bartlett Jr. ’39

Jim Bartlett, you are aptly described as an engineer-entrepreneur, who has spent the last six and a half decades merging your technical expertise with a keen sense of business acumen. The results have been pioneering developments in a wide range of technical fields, the founding of six businesses, and a remarkable career that has garnered the admiration and pride of your alma mater.

After receiving your degree in mechanical engineering from WPI in 1939, you joined the B.F. Sturtevant Co. as a research engineer and eventually became assistant director of research. After the company was sold to Westinghouse Corp., you were a product engineer at Trane Co., where you designed fans and blowers for heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems.

In 1951 you joined AiResearch Manufacturing Co., rising through the ranks to become chief engineer of the Rex Division. At AiResearch, you honed your skills as a designer, developing components for small gas turbine engines, environmental systems for the Boeing 707, and an advanced air-breathing engine that burned liquid hydrogen.

You left AiResearch in 1958 to help found Cosmodyne Corp., which became one of the nation's largest manufacturers of equipment for storing, transporting and handling liquefied gases. A decade later, you sold your interest in the company and joined Cordon International as a senior vice president and director. Your career took a brief detour in 1970 when you retired to become a rancher in the Santa Ynez Valley of California. But two years later, you decided to return to the business world as president and owner of Hydranautics, a manufacturer of equipment for offshore drilling rigs and shipyards. Under your direction, the company also entered the field of reverse osmosis desalination. Over the next 10 years, it became a major supplier of that technology in the United States and the Middle East.

When Hydranautics became a subsidiary of Rohm and Haas in 1984, you established your own company, Bardex Corp., to continue your interest in making equipment for offshore platforms and heavy-load moving. A few years earlier you had been instrumental in reacquiring Cosmodyne and consolidating it with several other cryogenic companies. You later formed a new company to make semipermeable membranes for reverse osmosis ultrafiltration and nanofiltration.

Most recently you helped form another new company, Pacific Design Technology Inc., which designs and builds fluid circulation cooling systems for military and space applications. One of their recent projects was supplying the integrated pump assembly part of the electronic fluid cooling system on the Mars Exploration Rover program.
With your lifelong interest in religion and social welfare, you have served as an elder and clerk of the session of the First Presbyterian Church and as chairman of the Rehabilitation Institute Foundation, both in your home town of Santa Barbara, Calif. At WPI, you and your wife, Shirley, have generously supported students through an endowed scholarship with preference for American students of Hispanic descent, and through support of the Campus Center and a soon-to-be-built admissions and financial aid center.

Jim Bartlett, for your remarkable accomplishments as an engineer-entrepreneur, and for your lifelong concern for the welfare of others, it is an honor to present you with the Robert H. Goddard Alumni Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement.