

Benefactor

Winter 2008

Ric Weiland, '76: Innovator in Technology and Philanthropy

After learning to program his first computer in the eighth grade, Ric Weiland was hooked. He continued to gain expertise in this new technology in the years that followed and majored in electrical engineering at Stanford. Weiland began working on software development with his childhood friends, Bill Gates and Paul Allen, while still a student. He became one of the first five employees at Microsoft, where he influenced the shape of the future technology giant.

Weiland continued to design products for Microsoft until he retired in 1988. But his lifelong passion for innovation did not stop there. He became a philanthropist who tapped into his diverse interests to fund projects at the forefront of research—several of which have had a long-term effect on Stanford. Though he died tragically in June 2006, his legacy of giving continues. Weiland planned for Stanford and 19 other charitable institutions in his will. His bequest to Stanford is expected to approach \$60 million, which will be the largest estate gift ever left to Stanford.

For Weiland, philanthropy was a true calling—and he put just as much work into it as he did his job at Microsoft. Stanford professor and friend Dr. Paul Yock agrees. “He was a meticulous philanthropist. He thought deeply about where his money could have the greatest impact.”

Early on, Weiland understood how multidisciplinary programs could be vital in building the university of the future. His gifts to Stanford over the past decade helped make that vision a reality. “Ric was interested in promoting collaborations wherever he could,” says his partner, Mike Schaefer.

For example, he created the Weiland Family Fellowship in Bioengineering to further work at the intersection of biology and engineering. He also supported Stanford Graduate Fellowships because he admired the flexibility that they offered to students.

Weiland established professorships at Stanford in fields that pioneered breakthroughs in medicine and science. The Martha Meier Weiland Professorship in the School of Medicine honors his mother. The professorship is held by Dr. Yock, a cardiologist who has invented devices for heart patients and has also helped develop Stanford's bioengineering and biodesign programs. He and Weiland became close friends.

“My young sons loved playing with him,” he recalls. Among Weiland's many other talents, “he made paper airplanes that were aerodynamically perfect.”

The Richard Hershel Weiland Professorship in the School of Humanities and Sciences, which honors Weiland's father, is held by Stephen Shenker, a theoretical physicist who focuses on quantum gravity. Weiland also made gifts to The Stanford Fund; the Hoover House Circle; Symbolic Systems; the Feminist Studies program; and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community Resources Center.

Weiland's bequest to Stanford will go even further to strengthen the university's multidisciplinary programs. He directed his gift to several schools—including humanities and sciences, engineering, business, and medicine. And like most of the gifts made during his lifetime, Weiland's bequest to the schools is unrestricted—allowing the respective deans to determine how to best apply his gift.

In the School of Humanities and Sciences, plans are under way to establish a Weiland Fellowship Program, providing funding for graduate students who would be encouraged to work across fields. Weiland also earmarked unrestricted endowment funds for the LGBT community, undergraduate education, and the university's general purposes. As Schaefer puts it, with this bequest, “the true work begins.” ■



“[Ric Weiland] was a meticulous philanthropist. He thought deeply about where his money could have the greatest impact.”

—Paul Yock,

the Martha Meier Weiland Professor of Medicine and Professor of Bioengineering