

Carol and Lawrence E. Tannas, Jr. create an Endowed Chair

By Matthew Chin



Lawrence E. Tannas Jr. and his wife Carol on their 50th anniversary

Fifty years ago, newlyweds Carol and Lawrence E. Tannas, Jr. were just starting out their life together. Lawrence, an undergraduate UCLA Engineering student, drove from their Santa Monica 40-foot mobile home to campus in a green 1941 Ford, which had a clutch that always gave them trouble. Carol walked to work a few blocks away and was an administrative assistant at System Development Corporation.

At UCLA, Tannas was a very involved student. He was president of the Engineering Society (ESUC) and served as the editor of its bulletin. He was also president and house manager of Zeta Psi fraternity. Tannas worked under his mentor, Dean Russell O'Neill, then a professor, on an analysis of handling the world's seagoing cargo, long before the 40-foot container became the international standard shipping unit.

Tannas received his bachelor's degree in 1959 and his master's in 1961. Mrs. Tannas, too, has close ties to the School. Dean L.M.K. Boelter once presented her with the "PHT" degree, for "Pushing Hubby Through."

From modest beginnings through Mr. Tannas' long and distinguished professional career, the couple has maintained a productive relationship with UCLA Engineering for more than a half-century.

After receiving his master's degree, Tannas started his career at GE Research Laboratories. Following his stint at GE, he worked at several large engineering corporations while specializing in advanced concepts in guidance, control and navigation.

At Honeywell, Tannas' ideas were used for the guidance display in the Apollo 13 Re-entry Vehicle. At Martin Marietta, he developed the cockpit for the SV5 Manned Space Vehicle, which was a predecessor to NASA's Space Shuttle. At while working for Aerojet ElectroSystems, he refined and perfected a manufacturing process for electroluminescent displays. And at Rockwell International, Tannas developed the world's first practical liquid crystal display (LCD).

For the past 25 years, Tannas has been a consultant in the electronics industry, specializing in electronic information displays. He also works on advanced concepts and, as of late, most of his work has focused on the development and application of resized LCDs in aviation and avionics.

In the 1980s and 90s, Tannas brought his expertise to UCLA Extension, where he taught engineering short courses on information display technology. Now, after a distinguished career in private industry — in which he remains very active — he and his wife have come full-circle to UCLA Engineering.

With the creation of a \$1 million endowment, they have funded the Carol and Lawrence E. Tannas, Jr. Endowed Chair in Engineering. The holder of the chair will be a recognized leader in electronic information display engineering and applied research. For Tannas, establishing this endowed chair is a testament to both his long relationship with UCLA and a continuing professional commitment to advancing electronic information display technology.

Tannas noted that the Society for Information Display (SID), the world's largest professional society in its field, started as a UCLA Extension course in the early 1960s. He joined the organization soon after. He became a fellow of SID in 1983 and served as the organization's president in 1988-89.

"I started at UCLA, SID started at UCLA, and UCLA still has the passion of a multi-disciplinary school," he said. "Therefore, it is my passion to do what I can to promote, enhance and continue the role that UCLA has played in the now multi-billion-dollar industry of electronic displays."

The endowment was created through a charitable-lead trust, which is in the form of a piece of industrial property. The School will receive funds from the trust over a 10-year period.

"Carol and I believe strongly that establishing this endowed chair at the Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science is only a small token, considering how much the experiences at UCLA have impacted our lives," Tannas said

When the chair is fully funded, the remaining value of the property will revert back to the Tannas' three children. This method allowed Mr. and Mrs. Tannas to make a very significant gift to the School, while at the same time providing a largely tax-free inheritance for their children.

This past summer, Mr. and Mrs. Tannas celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a four-week road trip down memory lane throughout the Western United States and Canada. They made stops in some of the greatest national parks on the planet. This time around, however, they had no trouble with the clutch.