



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Eric L. Jones, Ph.D.

Mechanical Engineering Hall of Fame, 2008

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1957

MSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1958

Ph.D., ME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1963

Managing Director (Retired)

CenterPoint Ventures

Eric L. Jones came from humble beginnings, born in Lacy Lakeview, a small community just outside of Waco, Texas. He graduated from high school at age sixteen and took a trip to Austin with a friend who was enrolling in The University of Texas at Austin. Eric instantly knew that this is also what he wanted to do, and enrolled in mechanical engineering at UT. When Eric told his parents, they said there were no resources to pay for college. Eric got a job and continued working throughout his educational pursuits, earning his BS, MS and Ph.D. in mechanical engineering, all from UT Austin. While at UT, he was president of both Tau Beta Pi and Pi Tau Sigma, and he was a Sigma Xi and in intramural sports.

Eric's business career was broad and rewarding. He started his career at Hughes Aircraft in California and worked on missile design and development there and at Texas Instruments (TI). He spent the next twenty-five years at TI, rising to the ranks of corporate vice president and president of TI's Data Systems Group before leaving TI in 1985 for a second career in venture capital.

His engineering background, management ability, and people/leadership skills served him well in partnership roles with venture capital firms, including Sevin Rosen Funds, Memphis-based SSM Ventures, Verity Ventures and CenterPoint Ventures. Eric routinely served as an active chairman, providing guidance in strategic and operational decisions, recruitment of senior management teams, partnerships and financing. Eric and his teams shared in the success and development of various companies to include Tobin Data Graphics/GITI, VTEL Corporation, Tivoli Systems, Inc., Active Power, Motive Communications, Dazel Corporation, NetBotz, Fuego, 360 Commerce, and Integral Wave Technologies.

Eric had the versatile skills necessary to help many entrepreneurial companies develop in the 1990s and 2000s, and because of this, he was personally responsible for much of the extensive economic development in Austin during this time. He not only funded budding businesses but also stepped in to administer firms as well as recruit management teams for them. Eric was recognized as the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of The Year in 2006, as a Supporter of Entrepreneurship, and in 2008 was the recipient of The University of Texas Mechanical Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni Mechanical Engineering Hall of Fame award. Eric was a proud lifetime member of the Texas Exes and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). He served on the Cockrell School of Engineering Advisory Board and helped critique business plans for future UT entrepreneurs as a judge of business plan competitions. In 2015, Ernst & Young honored him at their annual awards dinner for all he had done for entrepreneurs in Central Texas.

In spite of all of his successes and accomplishments, those who knew Eric will agree that his most admirable quality was being an all-around ego-free, good guy. Family and friends came first, including his precious dog, Shasta. He loved fast cars and traveling, especially if that travel meant a trip to an Indy Car race! He was also a fan and staunch supporter of UT and SMU athletics.

Eric's proudest accomplishment was his family: his wife, Joye Jones, and three children: Steve Jones and wife April and granddaughters Lauren and Meagan; Derek Jones and granddaughter Katrina and grandson Benjamin; and Lance Bergstrom with Catie Brooks.