

Gary Vilella is making the kind of gift to Boston University that could have spared him a lot of grief as a teenager. A retired vice president of human resources at Goodrich Corporation, Vilella (CGS'69, SMG'71) has established an endowment for one or more students to attend the College of General Studies.

When Vilella began his freshman year at CGS, he'd been working in factories and driving dump trucks to make a living. Having sold his car and possessions to cover first-semester tuition, Vilella wasn't sure he'd have the funds to finish the year.

"I came from a family of very limited means," says Vilella. "I really didn't know I was going to pursue education beyond high school. In fact, there was

a time when high school was in question, in terms of what my goals were." Vilella, who grew up outside Williamsport, Pa., says neither of his parents attended high school, "so they thought that I should get an education, but they didn't really know how. My dad died when I was 16, so he wasn't around to kick my butt."

When Vilella finished high school, he moved in with family friends in Worcester, Mass., and began working odd jobs. After meeting a BU professor at a Christmas Eve gathering who encouraged him to consider college, Vilella applied and was accepted to CGS, which "gave me the opportunity of a lifetime that I never knew I would have."

Vilella scraped by with part-time work, earning a small academic scholarship, and making careful use of other limited resources. He graduated from the School of Management with a job

offer from the Radio Corporation of America. The industrial relations trainee position kick-started his human resources career in industries ranging from medical to defense and aviation.

Before retiring from Goodrich (now part of UTC Aerospace Systems) in 2012, Vilella had used his varied business skills around the world, for example, offering pro bono antidiscrimination mediation for the state of Utah and assessing staff training programs at a manufacturing facility in the mountains of Java.

Vilella never forgot his college struggles, and they were on his mind when he established the endowment. Such support, he says, would have eliminated financial uncertainty and freed up his time for more academic exploration. "I stressed each semester about how the next semester would be paid," he says. The small academic scholarship he received partway through his studies "not only helped, it meant someone cared enough to consider me for assistance." And although Vilella believes "there's a huge benefit to being able to finance at least part of your own education," he also says that "life presents enough pressures; you don't need the financial burdens as well."



COURTESY OF GARY VILELLA (2)

As a BU student, Gary Vilella scraped by working part-time, earning a small academic scholarship, and making careful use of other limited resources.

The endowment comes after years of giving. Early in his career, Vilella's philosophy was, "Maybe I can only give \$50 or \$100, but I want to give back." He says he planned to include BU in his will until the University started the Century Challenge. According to the terms of the challenge, when a donor establishes an endowed scholarship fund of \$100,000 or more, BU matches the income distributed from that fund for scholarship purposes for 100 years after the fund's activation. BU will match funds for the first \$100 million of endowment support pledged to the Century Challenge.

"The Century Challenge became a catalyst for me to do something now—see it, benefit from it—rather than wait until I die and will some money to the University," says Vilella. "It doesn't preclude me from doing other things, but it gives me a chance to feel more ownership for what I was able to do." ■

Alum's gift gives CGS students a boost

BY
JULIE
RATTEY

Vilella and his wife, Sue, live in Vancouver, Wash. Before retiring from Goodrich (now part of UTC Aerospace Systems) in 2012, Vilella had used his business skills around the world.

