



# Gordon College and Digital Equipment Corporation Salute **KEN OLSEN,** Servant Leader

BY DANIEL TYMANN

Gordon College breaks ground for its new Ken Olsen Science Center, paying tribute to one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's leading pioneers in computer science.



Ken Olsen shares a moment in the A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel with Richard Gross, past president of Gordon College (left), and current president, R. Judson Carlberg (right).

Top left: Ken Olsen prepares to cut the clock tower cake, a four-tier construction designed to represent the clock tower of the Digital Equipment Company headquarters in Maynard, Massachusetts.



Participating in the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Ken Olsen Science Center are, from left: Richard Stout, chair of the Division of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science; Payette Associates principal George Marsh; Aulikki Olsen; Ken Olsen; President R. Judson Carlberg; Board of Trustees Chair Kurt Keilhacker; Bowdoin Construction Corporation Vice President Chris Keeley; and immediate past Board Chair and Trustee Peter Bennett.



The 21-piece Compaq Big Band—originally the DEC Big Band—entertains guests on the quad.

**Saturday, June 17,** Gordon College broke ground for its state-of-the-art Ken Olsen Science Center as former Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) employees, friends and the Gordon community gathered to pay tribute to Ken Olsen—one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's leading pioneers in computer science and founder of DEC.

Over 100 Gordon College faculty and staff volunteers welcomed visitors, directed parking, and led guided tours in trolleys and golf carts. “The teamwork and energy of the Gordon community were extraordinary,” says R. Judson Carlberg, president of Gordon College. “We all felt we were contributing to a special moment in Gordon’s history.”

Olsen, a longtime supporter of the College, joined Gordon’s Board of Trustees in 1961. The College named the 80,000-square-foot Science Center after Olsen in recognition of his many contributions to both the students and the academic community of Gordon, including a naming gift for this building.

The Ken Olsen Science Center is the College’s most ambitious building endeavor to date and will feature research and instructional space dedicated to science and technology. It will also include the Digital Equipment Corporation Loggia of Technology—a breathtaking lobby for the Science Center featuring Olsen’s personal memorabilia from Digital Equipment Corporation. The Loggia of Technology will also display many of Olsen’s and DEC’s contributions to the history of the computer industry.

Bill Gates, chairman and chief software architect of Microsoft Corporation, wrote in a congratulatory letter, “As an inventor, scientist and entrepreneur, Ken Olsen is one of the true pioneers of computers. He was also a major influence on my life. My interest in software was inspired by the DEC computer I first used as a 13-year old at the Lakeside School.”

Win Hindle, retired Digital senior vice president and longtime friend of Olsen, said of the Science Center project, “This is a wonderful tribute to Ken Olsen. A college he has loved and served for years, that is based

on his Christian tradition and that emphasizes science—it goes to the heart of what Ken believes in, which is excellence. I think all the Digital employees who are here would agree that Ken hasn’t been honored enough in the world.”

The tribute began with a service in A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel—the pews filled with former DEC employees, technology and business leaders, and computer innovators. “Gordon College is deeply grateful Ken Olsen has allowed us to have this day of festivities in his honor,” said President Carlberg. “Ken has deliberately avoided the spotlight and recognition for his contributions to others. I firmly believe his commitment to servant leadership is the reason there has been no end to what he has accomplished and continues to accomplish through projects such as the Ken Olsen Science Center.”

Dr. Armand Nicholi, author and professor at Harvard Medical School, Gordon trustee emeritus and spiritual advisor to Olsen, praised Olsen’s “quantitatively gifted mind” as well as the simplicity of spirit expressed in the décor of his office: “No carpet, only linoleum. He also drove a small, inexpensive car and had no designated parking spot.”

Mr. Bob Nadeau, chairman of the Town of Maynard, Massachusetts, presented a commendation from the town, setting aside June 17 as Ken Olsen Day in recognition of the contributions Olsen and Digital Equipment Corporation brought to the community during the company’s tenure at the “Old Mill” location in Maynard. Also speaking was Mr. Robert Everett, former president of MITRE Corporation, who worked with Olsen on first-generation computer technology during their early days at MIT.

President Carlberg read greetings from Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healy.

A DVD presentation, *A Salute to Ken Olsen*, highlighted Olsen’s outstanding personal qualities as well as his prominence as an inventor, scientist and



Visitors disembark from trolley cars on their way to the registration tent.



Hundreds of DEC guests and Gordon faculty, staff and friends mingle on the quad at a reception following the ceremonial groundbreaking.



entrepreneur. Former employees and industry colleagues spoke of Ken's profound love for people, a love rooted in a deep desire to empower others and to give them the freedom to take risks and to dream big. "Ken gave us the liberty to think," said Jack Richardson, Digital leader from Canada.

Olsen says of his own leadership style that his great delight was to "encourage others, lead others, help others, facilitate others in order that they would be the inventors, the builders, the engineers, and that they would know the fun and the excitement, the thrill of building things and doing things that no one else has done before. This is indeed even more satisfying than doing it myself."

Employees spoke frequently of the unique "DEC culture." According to Win Hindle, "It wasn't that the products weren't important—or the software, or the customers—but what differentiated us from other companies was the culture that was generated within the firm. And that culture was largely generated by Ken Olsen. People loved working in an environment where they had freedom, and where merit counted more than politics."

Rose Ann Giordano, former Digital vice president, concurred: "The culture of DEC was unique, especially for its time. It was a culture that fostered individual innovation. It gave people an opportunity to grow, to make mistakes, and to learn from those mistakes."

"It really was a most unusual company," said Peter Koch, president of the Digital Alumni Association. "Ken engendered a tremendous culture of people stepping up to the plate and coming forth with new ideas. People talk about how they've never been in another organization that was like Digital, and that's unfortunate. The values Ken espoused and lived are so important: ethics, integrity, 'Do what you say you're going to do.' Ken was the driver; he was really the model for that everywhere in the company, and everybody knew it."

A ceremonial groundbreaking for the Science Center took place following the tribute. Participating were Ken Olsen and his wife, Aulikki; President Carlberg; Board of Trustees Chair Kurt Keilhacker and immediate past Board Chair and Trustee Peter Bennett; Payette Associates principal George Marsh; Bowdoin

Construction Corporation vice president Chris Keeley; and Richard Stout, chair of the Division of Natural Sciences. Construction is expected to take 18 months.

Groundbreaking was followed by cutting of the commemorative Digital clock tower cake, a four-tier construction designed to represent the clock tower of the DEC company headquarters in Maynard. The 21-piece Compaq Big Band—originally the DEC Big Band—donated a performance for the reception, which took place on the quad.

The Ken Olsen Science Center is central to the College's Heart of Discovery campaign—a \$30 million campaign to provide a state-of-the-art science center to educate the next generation of Christians for the challenges of science and technology discovery at Gordon College. Ken Olsen has always been "fascinated by the ways in which Christianity and science are alike—they're both basically a search for truth."

"Perhaps no other group has anticipated this day more than the science and mathematics faculty of the College," said President Carlberg. "After years of ingenious improvisations to ensure their students have a first-rate education, they now will have the facility and equipment they need. This new facility will also be vital to recruiting new students in the sciences."

Dr. Craig Story, biology professor, says, "Building the Science Center is absolutely critical to Gordon's future competitiveness in the market of education. I'm so thankful people have seen the vision of what Gordon can be in terms of the sciences." Retired biology professor Dr. Richard Wright predicts "an explosion of opportunities for students to do research because of the tremendous expansion of space. I'm very grateful there are people who are able to make a real difference in the lives of students, and in the whole College, by their giving." And Sarah Childs, chemistry major, says the project "shows the Gordon science program is worth investing in. It's strong and the students are dedicated."

*For information on the Ken Olsen Science Center, or to contribute to the Heart of Discovery campaign, contact Dan Tyman, Gordon's vice president for the advancement of science and technology, or Bob Grinnell, vice president for development, at 978.867.4232.*



*Dr. Richard Stout, chair of the Division of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science, expresses appreciation for a science building that will expand opportunities for Gordon students and provide a home for the sciences at Gordon.*



*Guests enjoy a buffet luncheon on the quad.*



*Crowds pour from the A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel following the Salute to Ken Olsen presentation.*