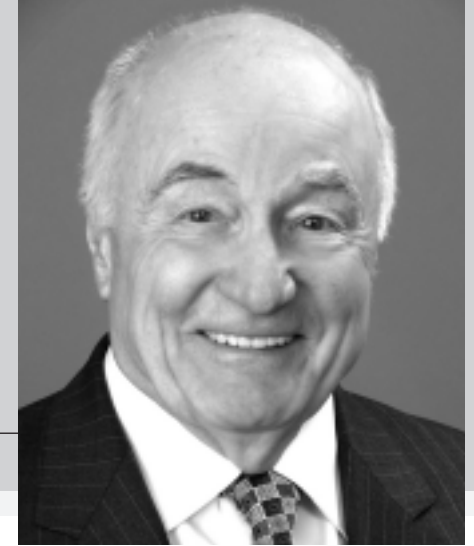




DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

George T. Richards '54



To George T. Richards for his passion and support in advancing the study of the Civil War era at Penn State.

George Richards has a passion for history. Although he majored in commerce at Penn State and excelled in business—his career culminating as president and CEO of his own company, Vitex Packaging—his passion was always the study of the Civil War era.

More than a decade ago, Richards' love of Penn State and his Civil War interest came together. After a visit to Penn State's Civil War Center in 1999, Richards, along with his wife, Ann, began a commitment to advancing Civil War-era scholarship at the University by making a gift in 2002 that ensured future generations would continue to study and research this tumultuous time in our nation's history. The Center was renamed the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center in their honor.

"The Center can play a big role in real scholarship, unbiased scholarship. It's not pro-Union or pro-Confederacy," said Richards. "Many things are still a mystery around that time period, and the Center is training people to tell what the real story is."

The George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center provides enhanced scholarship and training of graduate students and is recognized nationally as a leader in Civil War-era scholarship. The Center's area of study and expertise covers myriad issues related to the Civil War, including slavery and emancipation, constitutionalism, western expansionism, and the struggles of labor. The Center also offers public lectures, tours, and workshops to enhance general Civil War knowledge.

"I think it's very important that the Civil War is better understood, not just by scholars, but by everyone," Richards said.

Richards' passion for the Civil War began early on with stories of his great-grandfathers' service in the war. His two great-grandfathers served in the Union Army, and one kept a detailed diary that provides a well-documented account of serving in Arizona—an area of the United States that most people don't associate with Civil War fighting, Richards points out.

In addition to serving on the Board of Visitors for the George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center at Penn State, Richards was appointed in 2010 as a

presidential counselor, a group of advisors that meets with President Graham Spanier twice a year to discuss important issues facing the University.

Richards also established the Bart Richards Award for Media Criticism in the Penn State College of Communications in honor of his father, who served as editor of the *New Castle (Pa.) News*. The award honors distinguished contributions to the improvement of print and broadcast journalism through responsible analysis or critical evaluation.

Professionally, Richards' career in business leadership spanned 40 years before he retired in 1998 from Vitex Packaging, a manufacturer of flexible packaging materials including tea packages. Building Vitex Packaging into a self-sustaining company with three plants in the United States and a strong international customer base is a crowning achievement of his professional career.

"We were a fair-sized company," said Richards, "and I'm proud of the company and the people I worked with."

Richards has been actively involved in community service, serving as president of The Tea Association of the USA from

1991-93, as well as serving on its board of directors and as an executive committee member. He sat on the board of directors of The Mark Twain House and Museum, Hartford's Mark Twain Days, and Connecticut InfoLine, a service of the United Way of Connecticut, as well as three corporate boards.

Currently, Richards is the managing director for Richards Associates, a commercial real estate firm in Granby, Conn. In addition to his Penn State degree, Richards earned an MBA from Harvard in 1958.

Richards is a life member of the Penn State Alumni Association and lives outside of Hartford, Conn., with his wife, Ann. They have four grown children and 13 grandchildren.

