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1885 – 2010

**Michigan Tech**

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

Michigan Technological University  
Spring 2010

A Financial and  
Charitable Gift Planning Guide

# Foresight

## Restoring the Past and Supporting Tech's Future



Ronald Staley

Michigan Tech.

"I learned how to study hard," he recalls, "and I remember working hard. I wouldn't be where I am today without Michigan Tech."

With his dual degree, he says that he was able to understand building construction and such critical business principles as overhead, return on investment, balance sheets, and income statements. That capability set him up for creating a new business niche—historical preservation—for his employer, The Christman Company, a construction firm headquartered in Lansing.

In 1988, the firm began to restore

Ronald Staley, who earned an associate's degree in civil engineering technology in 1977 and a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1980, has high praise for

the Michigan State Capitol. Staley led the day-to-day work of a nationally recognized team of experts during the four-year project. When it was finished, Staley approached the company president, who also was a Tech graduate. "I realized that there weren't any general contractors who specialized in historic preservation work—that it would be a differentiating business sector." He was directed to codevelop a marketing study and business plan, relied on his Tech education to do so, received the go-ahead, and started the unit in 1992.

Historical preservation has taken Staley afar. He has worked on buildings of the Keweenaw National Historical Park in Calumet; five-hundred-year-old churches in Poland; Notre Dame's famed Golden Dome; the Capitol of Virginia, which was designed by Thomas Jefferson and built in 1785; the Henry Ford Estate; Fort Mackinac; the US Capitol, including the stands for the 2009 inaugural; and, most recently, the former American embassy in Tangier, Morocco.

Staley is gratified to be entrusted to undertake "these buildings that have a history," but he doesn't live in the past. "If you stand still and look back," he says, "yes, it's exciting. But you have to keep moving. We have a great résumé of projects, but you always have to look for the next one." That said, he adds, "There are a lot of buildings I'd love to get my hands on."

He has always been an adventurous soul. As a scuba diver at Tech, he explored the depths of Lake Superior and checked out shipwrecks; and as a pilot today, he takes flight with the two airplanes he owns: a WWII era North American T-6 Advanced Trainer and, most recently, a 1981 Russian jet, an Aero L-39. Staley, who is 52, took up flying after his two children were grown.

He allows that he is part-ordinary, part-standout. "I attribute much of what I accomplished to hard work. My mentors are those who demonstrated that hard work and making the extra effort will take you far. Also, I still love to learn. That, too, comes from Michigan Tech."

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Staley and his wife, Linda, support the University's MBA program. They are also members of the McNair Society through their bequest for Michigan Tech, which is for unrestricted giving. "We'll let Michigan Tech decide the best place to put that money."

His overall goal for their support: give engineers business skills. "Engineering and business degrees are the best combination you can have."

He would also instill in students the realization that "If you have an idea, you must take the lead. Be a

self-starter. Do what makes sense. And, of course, you need good people behind you to help make it happen."

With respect to Tech's fundraising, he would like to see more of what he calls a "challenge and opportunity"—instilling a culture of giving among students. "Tech needs to encourage students early on that they need to give back."

He himself received an SBE scholarship while at Tech. "I was honored. I was floored. Thank you!"

Besides leading its historical preservation group, Staley is the

senior vice president of Christman's mid-Atlantic operations based in Washington, DC. He started working for the firm in 1985. Often immersed in his career, he allows that his wife, Linda, "kept the family going." "She supports me in everything but flying," jests this pilot. "She doesn't care to fly."

But when it comes to their giving to Michigan Tech, they are pilot and copilot: "We so firmly believe in the outcome."

## One Simple Act—Many Great Results

# Wills

*The next time you are in a line at the post office, bank, or theater consider this: only one in three people around you has a will. As you ponder the people in line with you, it does not matter how rich, poor, young, or old they may be. The simple fact is that most people in this country do not have a legally binding will or estate plan.*

While the cost of making a will is low, the price of not having one is high.

Wills and the reasons why people write them, or fail to write them, are legendary. In one of the most famous cases, a judge ruled that Howard Hughes died without a will, and his \$2.5 billion estate was split among 22 relatives, even though one person claimed to have found Howard Hughes' will on a church desk, and another said the will was found in a Nevada gas station. Many others who should have had a will never did. Abraham Lincoln, Sonny Bono, James Dean, and Andrew Jackson all died without one.

It is perhaps unfortunate that will-making tends to sound complicated and confusing. It needn't be. Wills are simple to make and many young people have had valid plans. Anna Nicole Smith, Marilyn Monroe, and JFK, Jr. all died with wills. Some have had some interesting provisions. Janis Joplin died at age 27 with a will she revised just two days before her passing. It included a directive that \$2,500 be used to hold a party for her friends. Author Charles Dickens' will included instructions for what not to wear at his funeral, while William Shakespeare's will took care of his "second best bed" but made no mention of his literary works.

Take time to talk with your family and your advisors about what is important to you and what passions, ideals, and good works you want to continue beyond your lifetime. It is a great opportunity to let your family and favorite charities, like Michigan Tech, know just how important they are to you.

It has never been easier or less expensive to have a will. Attorneys often charge low fees for all but the most complicated plans. Most

attorneys are accustomed to clients who are new to will-writing, so they make the process easy and simple.

Those who write wills often remark at the good feeling they experience knowing they have made a difference that will last beyond their years. If you need help finding an estate-planning attorney, call our Office of Gift Planning at 906-487-3325 or send an email to [giftplan@mtu.edu](mailto:giftplan@mtu.edu).

### Benefits of a Will

1. You determine your wishes and not a judge who doesn't know you.
2. You can avoid estate tax by making sure your priorities, and not the government's, are met.
3. You can care for your family and favorite causes beyond your lifetime.
4. You have the peace of mind knowing your life's work does not end with an unforeseen event.

## Request Our Complimentary Will Guide

The Office of Gift Planning has a booklet to help you gather the information your attorney will need to prepare your estate plan. Return the enclosed card to receive your copy of *A Guide to Planning Your Will and Trust*.

## Tech Researchers Eye Steel and Syngas



*Pictured above is a hybrid furnace used as part of an energy-efficient method for making steel, with synthetic gas as a byproduct.*

Materials science and engineering researchers are developing a new, energy-efficient method for making steel—a process that also produces synthetic gas.

The Michigan Public Service Commission has supported the inquiry with a grant of \$1.5 million, which was shared by Michigan Tech and UP Steel, a start-up company created by MSE Professor Jiann-Yang Hwang and Xiaodi Huang, a project manager and research leader in the Institute of Materials Processing.

Hwang reports, “We started this

concept back in 1991, using microwaves to do steelmaking. Iron ore and carbon, which are used to make steel, are both excellent microwave-absorbing materials. In a few minutes, they can reach 1,000 degrees centigrade.”

The team initially created small samples of a few grams each in household microwave ovens. Later, after much testing, they designed and fabricated a hybrid furnace that combined microwave and electric-arc technology that could make one kilogram of steel an hour.

The duo’s work impressed the Department of Energy enough to earn a grant to build a bench-scale model. “That was pretty successful,” Huang said. “We proved we could make high-quality steel in about twenty or thirty minutes.”

In 2001, the technology was licensed to UP Steel, based in Negaunee. “At that point, the major problem was how to scale production up,” said Huang. In 2005, the researchers completed a microwave rotary hearth furnace that can make two hundred pounds of steel in an hour. With the Michigan Public Service grant, they expect to triple production, to six hundred pounds an hour, and add another product to the mix.

“Our goal is to produce pig iron nugget and synthetic gas from the iron and coal,” said Huang. “Syngas is very valuable. It would be equal to or greater in value than the steel.”

The process could also take advantage of America’s vast coal reserves and reduce dependence on petroleum. “If all the steel in the US were made this way, it would produce gasoline equal to a quarter of total US consumption,” Huang said.

### Michigan Tech’s McNair Society

Named after Fred McNair, president of the University from 1899 until 1924, the McNair Society honors alumni and friends who leave a legacy for Michigan Tech by providing for a bequest or a planned gift through their estates. We welcome the following new members to the McNair Society:

**Anonymous '60**  
**Donald '62 and Karen DeGenaro**  
**Frank R. DeSautel '49**  
**William Leder '68 and Jerri Gray**  
**Mark '77 and Connie Lentz**  
**Alan '66 and Barbara '68 Stevens**  
**Robert E. Turunen '46**  
**Joseph Wildberg '67 and Carol Ellstein**

Michigan Tech is grateful for their foresight and generosity. Please notify our Office of Major Gifts and Gift Planning if you have provided for the future of the University through your estate and have not previously informed us. We would be pleased to recognize you, too, as a member of the McNair Society.



### Online Help

Our website provides helpful wills and estate planning information to assist you in creating a plan that is right for you. Visit [www.mtulegacy.org](http://www.mtulegacy.org). While there, sign up to receive our free monthly eNewsletter!

## Pill Splitting: When It's Safe and When It Isn't



Dear Savvy Living,

*Is pill splitting safe? I have several friends who split their prescription pills to save money, and several who don't because they don't think it's safe. What can you tell me?*

— Split Decision

Dear Decision,

Splitting your pills—literally cutting them in half—is a simple way to save money on your prescription drugs but be sure you talk to your doctor first, because not all pills can be split. Here's what you should know.

### Savings and Safety

The reason pill splitting is such a cost cutter is because of a quirk in the way drugs are manufactured and priced. A pill that's twice as strong as another may not be twice the price. In fact, it's usually about the same price. So, buying a double-strength dose and cutting it in half may allow you to get two months worth of medicine for the

price of one. But is it safe? As long as your doctor agrees that splitting your pills is OK for you, you learn how to do it properly, and you split only pills that can be split, there's really no danger.

### What to Do

The first step is to talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find out if any of the medicines you use can be safely split. It's also important to find out whether splitting them will save you enough money to justify the hassle.

The pills that are easiest to split are those with a score down the middle. However, not every pill that's scored is meant to be split. Pills that are most commonly split include:

- Cholesterol lowering drugs like Crestor, Lipitor, and Pravachol
- Antidepressants like Celexa, Paxil, and Zoloft
- High blood pressure medicines like Monopril, Prinivil, Univas, Zestril, Avapro, and Cozaar

Having the right equipment helps. Don't use a knife to cut your pills in half. It can cause you to split them unevenly resulting in two pieces with very different dosages, which can be dangerous. A proper pill cutter only costs around \$5 to \$10 and is available at most pharmacies and large discount stores.

For convenience, you might be tempted to split the whole bottle of pills at once. But check with your

doctor first. It's possible that exposing the interior of the pills to the air could reduce their effectiveness. Also, pills are only safely split in half, and never into smaller portions.

### Unsafe Splitting

Many medicines, because of their ingredients or design, cannot be split safely. Pills that should not be split include:

- Blood thinners (Coumadin, Warfarin)
- Chemotherapy drugs
- Anti-seizure medicines
- Capsules of any kind that contain powders or gels
- Pills with a hard outside coating
- Extended-release pills that deliver medication over time in your body
- Pills that are coated to protect your stomach

Again, your doctor or pharmacist will know which drugs can and cannot be split.

*Savvy Living is written by Jim Miller, a regular contributor to the NBC Today Show and author of "The Savvy Senior." Any links in this article are offered as a service and there is no endorsement of any product. These articles are offered as a helpful and informative service to our friends and may not always reflect this organization's official position on some topics.*



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