



Q: What brought you to the United States and, specifically, to the Dallas area?

Dr. Haberecht: It was my dream to live in this great country and pursue what is called the “American Dream.” After completing university in Europe, I received an offer to work on semiconductor research in the U.S. I arrived in New York City via freighter! I eventually met Ute when I returned to Germany for a business trip, and we clicked. I had secured a junior engineering job at Texas Instruments in Dallas, and immediately after marrying, we moved to Texas. That was 51 years ago. Dallas became our home; we never moved away.

Q: Who or what have been the greatest influences in your lives?

Dr. Haberecht: I’d have to say my parents and grandparents, who stressed core values of education and integrity and reminded me to always do what I say I am going to do.

Mrs. Haberecht: Yes, I’d have to agree with Rolf. My parents and grandparents were big believers in working hard, doing your best, and giving back to others. I’ve tried to abide by those principles my whole life, and we’ve tried to instill those values in our children, as well.

Q: Dr. Haberecht, you’ve said that your career at Texas Instruments influenced your philosophy of giving back to the community. Can you please explain?

Dr. Haberecht: Yes, all of us at TI were very inspired to meet the challenging opportunities of exploring new semiconductor electronics, which changed the world and impacted everyone’s lives. One day, Erik Jonsson, co-founder of TI, told me, “We are all coming to a point in our lives when we recognize that we have a responsibility to give back to our community with time and/or financial support.” Ute and I understood his statement, and we took it from there.

Q: Dr. Haberecht, you are widely regarded as a true scientific pioneer and entrepreneur. Please explain how you developed your great interest in science and technology.

Dr. Haberecht: I have always been interested in connecting science and creation with reality, and I was lucky enough to have an opportunity to pursue my passion. I don’t look at myself as a true scientific pioneer. I received a very strong education in basic science, which resulted in a job opportunity in the U.S., specifically to do basic research in the rapidly developing semiconductor industry – propelled by the transistor phenomenon discovered at Bell Labs. This discovery and field of research was advanced by Texas Instruments and others, who turned an amazing idea into a world-changing business.



Q: There is no question that technology has changed – and will continue to change – the world we live in. Dr. Haberecht, as an entrepreneur, you have explored technological applications in many different industries. How do you view technology’s role in our society, and what inspired you to create your company, VLSIP?

Dr. Haberecht: Yes, technology has changed, is continuously changing, and will continue to change. One can look at this from a different angle, starting with the Industrial Revolution in 1765, with James Watts’ steam engine. Next came Eli Whitney’s cotton gin in 1793 and A.G. Bell’s telephone in 1876. All of these were invented over a period of 111 years.

In 1879 Edison introduced the electric lights and ushered in the Electrical Age, a seven-decade span that saw the invention of the Benz gasoline engine, the electronic vacuum tube, and, in 1946, ENIAC [Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer], a 100-foot long computer weighing 27 tons.

The invention of the transistor in 1947 ushered in the Electronic Age, which covered a three-decade span. This period gave us the first transistor radio, the microchip, the DOD [Department of Defense] Internet, the hand-held calculator, video games, wireless phones, the first international fax (six minutes per page) and the first implanted medical devices.

In 1977 we entered the Information Age, with Apple, IBM, single optical fiber and the World Wide Web. In 2000 the world had 600 million personal computers.

This brought us to the Bioelectronics Information Age, which – in a very short period of time – dramatically expanded to include miniaturization, major medical applications involving DNA, biocompatible implanted functions, and communications between the human body and doctors and researchers via electronic devices.

It’s quite amazing when you understand how quickly things are changing. While it took more than a century for both the steam engine and the telephone to be invented, the world now is changing exponentially from decade to decade. The pace has just exploded.

It has always been my goal to participate as an entrepreneur in the ever-changing electronic world. With the unwavering support of Ute and our two children, I participated as an entrepreneur, co-founding VLSIP nearly 30 years ago. A large portion of the company’s business is focused on medical devices used for cardiovascular disease, neuro-stimulation, and medical imaging, all of which are areas of enormous growth.

Q: The Wild-Hare Idea Program you established at UT Southwestern is among the medical center’s most innovative and rewarding endowments. Can you please explain what motivated its creation?

Dr. Haberecht: Many great discoveries begin with imaginative, out-of-the-box ideas that are, as yet, far too controversial for traditional funding. Ute and I have always been impressed by the high quality of research being done at UT Southwestern, and this program is exciting because it provides an opportunity to help launch an idea that might otherwise disappear into the closet. Ute and I brought the Wild-Hare proposal to Dr. [Kern] Wildenthal and Dr. [Charles] Sprague nearly two decades ago, and it was enthusiastically accepted.

Mrs. Haberecht: We are very happy to see young scientists have a chance to explore where their novel ideas may take them.



Q: Mrs. Haberecht, you both have been great champions of education. Can you please explain the role that education has had in your own life, and tell us what educational opportunities you hope to create for others?

Mrs. Haberecht: My parents and grandparents were very much interested in books and education and instilled in my sisters and me the importance of both. I still hear my father’s voice saying, “Education and books will open many doors for you and bring joy to your life.” With this in mind, Rolf and I have supported education and educational institutions in the Dallas community such as the Lamplighter School, St. Mark’s School, and the Episcopal School of Dallas with volunteer time and financial donations. Of particular interest to me was Erik Jonsson’s visionary program to introduce computers to third and fourth graders at the Lamplighter School, in order to study student receptivity to learning with computers. The success of this project here in Dallas was reported on the front page of *The New York Times* in 1982, which was such a thrill for us. Today, computers are an integral part of everyday classroom life across the country, and we were very proud to be part of a pilot program that helped turn that wonderful idea into a reality.



Q: Dr. Haberecht, you have served a leadership role at Southwestern Medical Foundation for many years. Why have you continued to support the organization with such loyalty?

Dr. Haberecht: I have been privileged to serve at the Southwestern Medical Foundation in various leadership roles. This involvement has led to a great and sincere appreciation for, as well as loyalty to, both the Foundation and UT Southwestern. With the kind of high-quality research being done at the medical center, the possibilities are endless.

Q: What do you think the future holds for you personally – both as a couple, and as individuals?

Dr. Haberecht: We have our roots in the Dallas community. Our children, Michael and Caroline, were born and raised in Dallas. We fulfilled the American Dream here. Going forward, we will continue to support UT Southwestern and the Foundation and want to encourage others, including industries, to do the same.

Q: What was your reaction upon hearing that you were being honored with the Charles Cameron Sprague Community Service Award?

Dr. Haberecht: Ute and I do not expect accolades for the work we do, but this is a great honor that we are extremely proud to accept. After hearing of our nomination for this prestigious award, we were both humbled and practically speechless.

Mrs. Haberecht: Yes, this is a truly wonderful honor, made even more so because of how highly we think of Southwestern Medical Foundation’s leadership. ■