



In the late 1990s, Alabamian Harry Smith had no ties to Union University. But someone invited him to a university-sponsored luncheon that was hosted on the top floor of the Memphis office building where he works. As he made his way to the event and stepped aboard the elevator, he encountered a man carrying a box — a rather large box.

"It was almost as big as he was," Smith says with a smile. "We got off the elevator and we were heading to the same room."

The man hoisting the box was Union president David S. Dockery. People in authority usually ask others to perform such tasks.

the nurse anesthesia program, the construction of White Hall science facilities and the foundational discussions about the Doctor of Pharmacy program.

But he also served as board chairman during what was probably the greatest crisis in Union's 188-year history. The 2008 tornado that struck campus left behind more than \$40 million in damage and a series of complicated, urgent logistical problems that threatened Union to its core.

Dockery asked Smith to join the planning effort for rebuilding what amounted to about 75 percent of Union's on-campus housing. That massive job had to be completed quickly enough to accommodate students in the upcoming fall

# Harry Smith and the Gift of Servant Leadership

"I thought that was really neat," Smith said. "He's a great leader, and I think he's a servant leader."

Since that initial luncheon more than a decade ago, Smith has learned a great deal more about Union's president, its mission and opportunities to touch thousands of lives through higher education.



Smith himself has exhibited extraordinary servant leadership during a career that began in accounting and led to the CEO position at Schilling Companies, Inc. He has devoted time to more than 25 boards and managing committees in West Tennessee. Among those many terms of service: more than nine years on the Union University Board of Trustees.

"They're all different," Smith says of the boards on which he's served. "I think (the Union board) is one of the neatest I've been on in terms of the camaraderie, the fellowship and the chemistry."

Smith devoted four years to Union as board chairman, but he is quick to cite the work of others when the discussion turns to Union's growth.

"Union does a great job of taking an idea to reality," Smith says. "Everybody works together."

As a board member, he helped oversee a variety of major developments, such as the inception of

semester. Fourteen new on-campus apartment buildings were ready for students in August of that year.

"We would meet in the basement of the architect's office just about every night and work on the plans," Smith recalls. "You don't go through many things in your life where you can see God working to that extent. If you went in today and said 'We're going to do something like that in seven months,' there would just be no way."

Harry and Beth Smith have been married for 47 years. They have one daughter and three grandchildren. His oldest grandson earned a football scholarship to the University of Alabama, starting at right guard as a redshirt freshman on the team that won the BCS national championship in 2009. His second grandson also plays football for the Crimson Tide.

Smith was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Union in 2009, and he maintains close connections with Union.

Whether he's praying for Union students on GO Trips and study tours, contributing hours of expertise on a board or providing timely financial support to the university, Smith contends that outside of giving to the local church, there is no better Kingdom investment anyone can make.

"I have really come to appreciate how strong and good a Christian university can be," Smith says. "At a school like Union, you've got people who are going out into all walks of life. I've come to learn how important it is to invest in that." ■