

Seasoned Engineer and Innovator William E. Harris Recently Featured on Close Up Radio

KATY, TX, UNITED STATES, July 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Long before he calibrated microwave instruments for the defense industry or helped University of Houston physicists chart the ozone hole, William (Bill) E. Harris was a teenager threading pipe at a Texas chemical plant, determined to outwork a math teacher who told him he wasn't cut out for physics.

He proved that teacher wrong. And he kept proving people wrong for the next four decades.

Harris' story reads like an engineering fable: The kid who taught himself trigonometry with a slide rule so he could take high school physics without the prerequisite, and then walked away with an A. The college student who scored a grade so high on a grueling, all-day pre-med exam, one his professors was certain the grade had to have been a fluke and made Harris retake it. The results didn't change.



That pattern, unconventional paths leading to uncommon results, defined his career.

At the University of Houston, Harris split his coursework between pre-med and engineering, chasing a childhood fascination with the diagnostic beds from "Star Trek." He revived a dormant IEEE student chapter, helped write its student council bylaws, and led a five-person team that built a microprocessor from scratch (an effort that earned national recognition in IEEE's Spectrum Magazine and a write-up in the local Houston paper).

While working in a university physics lab to help pay for tuition, Harris redesigned faulty wire-wrap electronics into a functioning printed circuit board — a skill so rare at the time, professors

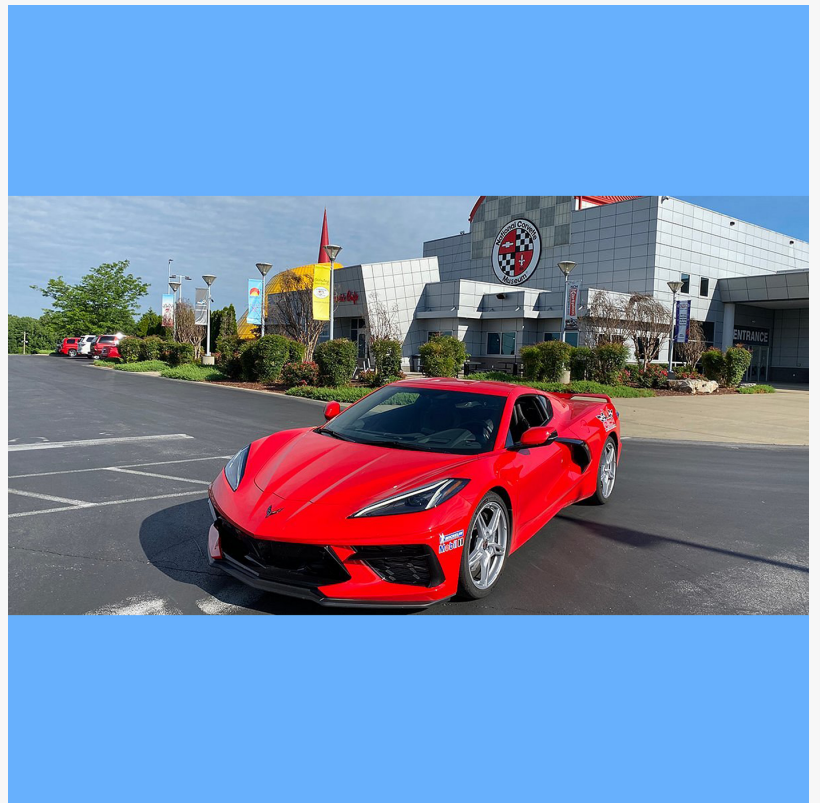
and researchers across departments began requesting his help.

After graduation, Hewlett-Packard recruited him, placing him among the company's most sought-after new hires. When Harris arrived at a required HP training class in California without having read the assigned prep material, he took the entrance exam anyway, scoring the highest grade in the class. While his early assignments included automated testing for IBM's production lines, he made his first mark as "the plotter guru." After diagnosing repeated equipment failures in the field, Harris earned the title by redesigning a mechanical component from aluminum to titanium. HP ended up implementing his fix company-wide and featuring it in an internal design publication.

Harris' reputation for solving what others couldn't led HP to hand him one of its most technically demanding assignments. Microwave instrumentation was a specialty tied closely to defense contracts and required a mastery of Fourier analysis, Smith charts, and precise calibration processes.

Colleagues describe him as someone who has always been able to translate complicated physics into plain language, whether explaining how radar calculates speed or how the human eye actually processes images upside down. Joining NASA's Johnson Space Center, Harris also contributed to the space shuttle's Wake Shield program.

When he's not solving complex problems, Harris was busy restoring cars and studying his own



family's history, which traces back to German farmers, coal miners, and a Revolutionary War soldier. He is also a founding-era member of the National Corvette Museum.

Now retired, Harris spends his time tackling long-delayed home projects, including replacing all 35 windows in the house he's lived in for three decades. He remains an outspoken voice on topics ranging from food science to emerging aerospace technology.

"Everything is connected," Harris explains, reflecting on a career that moved fluidly between chemistry, electronics, and physics. "You learn one thing, you get better at it, and it leads you into something else." Those who worked alongside him say that philosophy, more than any single credential, explains how this plant operator became one of HP's most valued field engineers, and later, a contributor to some of the world's most closely guarded technical projects.



About William E. Harris

William (Bill) E. Harris is a Texas-based engineer whose more than 40-year career has included work in chemical plant operations, aerospace instrumentation, defense-related microwave systems and NASA's space shuttle program. A former Hewlett-Packard field engineer, he has held technical roles supporting IBM production systems, university physics research, and classified government projects requiring strict nondisclosure agreements. He is a founding-era member of the National Corvette Museum and remains active in engineering and automotive communities. He is now retired and lives in Texas.

Close Up Radio recently featured William E. Harris, retired process control systems engineer, in an interview with Doug Llewelyn on Tuesday July 28th at 12pm Eastern

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