

► The Executive Interview

Bill Linton, Promega Corp.: "I have vivid memories of watching Dad work on engines."

I like building things. It has been in my blood all my life. My dad was an engineer and had an entrepreneurial bent; he started and ran a couple of businesses. When I was very young, he also worked on the side as an auto mechanic. I have vivid memories, when I was a few years old, of watching him work on engines—taking them apart, putting them together. I played with tools and I would look at how stuff was put together.

I was also interested, at an early age, in what it was that made my dad's business succeed—why it was working or not working. I remember when I was about 11 or 12, I had a summer job working with my father. What struck me was that he was very good at design and engineering, but once a project was past the engineering stage, he was ready to move on to the next project. The manufacturing and marketing aspects were second tier and did not receive much attention. I was curious as to why my dad was the president of a company, but, as far back as I can remember, we only ever had one new car. I recognized the value of good engineering but realized the additional value of effi-

cient manufacturing and excellence in marketing and sales.

I've been riding motorcycles since I was in college, and I stick with Harleys. They're just great bikes—everything from the design,



Bill Linton and wife Mary with their 1924 Model T Ford.

the style, the sounds they make. You don't get them for speed, you really get them because it's a total experience. If someone asks what kind of a business I like to manage, I would say it's a Harley kind of company, or even a BMW type of company, where performance and attention to detail and quality come first. I recently bought a

1924 Model T Ford, and I am amazed at the workmanship and design that went into that car more than 75 years ago. My philosophy in business is that if you build products and services based on quality, you will find that customers and employees will be drawn to you and will stick with you for many years.

I am still running the company that I started about 24 years ago, Promega Corporation. We develop, manufacture, and sell worldwide about 1200 products in molecular biology and biological sciences. When I started the company, I had left a pharmaceutical company I'd been with for three years and I was looking around for something else, but I was unable to find a job that would give me the challenge I sought. I considered that this might be the time to start my own business and see how it goes. At the time, I thought I would try it for five years and then do something else—but I'm still at it. It was an 18-hour-a-day job to get the business going. It was just me

for the first year and a half. I hired the first employee in January of 1980, and throughout that year, I hired another three people. The business has continued to grow organically, and today we have 750 employees with more than half of our business outside North America. And it continues to challenge me daily, just as it did 24 years ago. ■

Industry items

NextGen Sciences (www.nextgensciences.com) has received a grant from the U.K. Department of Trade and Industry of \$228,000 for development of an automated 2-D gel electrophoresis system for protein separation. ... **Tripes** (www.tripos.com) announced the appointment of two vice presidents, Elizabeth Holbrook (North American sales) and Deepak Thakkar (worldwide marketing). ... **Structural Bioinformatics** (www.strubix.com) recently was granted U.S. Patent No. 6,436,933 for a family of druglike molecules that inhibit the activity of anthrax lethal factor. ... **LabVantage Solutions** (www.labvantage.com) has signed a software and services agreement with the **National Cancer Institute** (www.nci.gov) to perform high-throughput genotyping analysis. ... **Chemical**

Computing Group (www.chemcomp.com) has signed a distribution agreement with Ryoka Systems (RSI, Tokyo) that will expand RSI's role as the sole distributor of CCG's Molecular Operating Environment software. ... **Maybridge** (www.maybridge.com) and **Synaptica** (www.synaptica-research.com) have announced an agreement whereby Maybridge will undertake a medicinal chemistry lead optimization program for one of Synaptica's therapeutic programs. ... **Biovu** (www.biovu.com) has named Carole Kenyon as its chief operating officer. Kenyon is operations director for Pharmaceutical Profiles (www.pharmprofiles.com), an early-phase clinical development company. ... **Myriad Genetics** (Salt Lake City, UT) and **Genetic Technologies** (Melbourne, Australia) have signed a strategic alliance.