

The University of Alabama in Huntsville

25th Anniversary

Superconductivity Breakthrough

Wilson Hall – UAHuntsville campus

January 29, 2012 — 2 p.m.

- Welcome everyone to our campus.
- Twenty five years ago today, Jim Ashburn, a young UAH graduate student at the time, made a huge advance in superconductivity research. A quarter century later, we're here to recognize that achievement.
- I have read the account of Jim's efforts. Working 16 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Stopping only long enough to eat one meal a day and get a little sleep.
- Jim's discovery demonstrates that a combination of intelligence, focus, ambition and persistence will result in astounding results. It also points to the importance of the human factor in scientific discovery. A lot of intuition goes into astounding discoveries.
- Jim was a young man who had a drive for excellence. He had a penchant for mathematics and physics.
- It was 20th century philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Bertrand Russell that said: Physics is mathematical not because we know so much about the physical world, but because we know so little; it is only its mathematical properties that we can discover.
- What perhaps makes Jim's discovery most remarkable is that he was working at a state university, with far fewer resources than other scientists around the world who were seeking a similar outcome.
- Jim has brought great honor to our university, and it is on this 25th anniversary that we are honored to recognize his achievement. Momentarily we will unveil a historic marker to forever recognize his accomplish on that fateful day in 1987.
- We welcome Jim Ashburn and his family back to the campus. It's a privilege to have you with us today.