


[◀ BACK TO PREVIOUS](#)

- [Search News Archives](#)
- [Event Calendar](#)
- [Contacts for the Media](#)
- [Experts at Lehigh](#)

[Home](#) > [About](#) > [News](#)
 [E-Mail This Article](#)

## A promise kept

*Rich in character and history, the Beato name lives on at Lehigh, thanks to the efforts of a loving grandson.*

As his 90-year-old grandfather lay dying, Fernando Beato promised him he would make the family name known in the United States. Eduardo Beato Fowler, who graduated from Lehigh in 1908 only to return to his home country of Cuba to become the chief engineer of Havana, replied, "Fernando, you are going to have a hell of a time. This isn't Cuba. This is a big country."

Overflowing with pride for the man who not only raised him, but also instilled in him a strong work ethic and the values of honesty, integrity and respect for country and other people, Fernando (Fred) Beato kept his promise. Just as his grandfather had done in Cuba, Fred succeeded in spreading the Beato name across the country, and he made a special place for it here, at Lehigh. Every bag and cover for drums and percussion instruments at Lehigh bears the name Beato, and the orchestra bags send a special message: "Eduardo Beato Fowler, Alumnus, Class of 1908."

Fred started Beato, Inc., now an international company that manufactures bags and covers for drums and percussion instruments, 15 years ago. Well known in the music business, Beato bags cover many instruments in the United States and overseas.

"After my grandfather passed away, I wanted to come to Lehigh out of respect for him. He carried this symbol in his pocket wherever he went," says Fred, as he pulls a worn, brass piece resembling a keychain that reads "Lehigh 1908" from his pocket. "So I always wondered what Lehigh was all about."

### Making a difference

In 2000, Beato traveled from California to Bethlehem to take in the ambiance of the place where his grandfather once lived and studied. During his visit, he was inspired to find a way to pay tribute to the man who raised him. He knew that if his grandfather had been able, he would have come back to Lehigh to find a way to share with future generations of Lehigh students how the education earned here can make a difference in their life and in the lives of others.



**Fred Beato proudly carries this keepsake from his grandfather's days at Lehigh.**



**David Diggs, a lecturer in the music department, left, and Fred Beato are surrounded by instruments with Beato covers.**

"I thought, since my grandfather is no longer with us, what can I do? I decided to donate bags in memory of my grandfather," Beato says. "And not just one bag—I knew I wanted every drum and percussion instrument in Lehigh's music department to have a Beato drum bag and orchestra cover for as long as my company is making them."

When asked how Lehigh could thank him for his generous in-kind gifts, Beato responded, "If there's any way you can put a plaque on a wall in honor of my grandfather, it would be incredible." So that's exactly what the university did. To thank Beato for his generous donation, Gregory Farrington, Lehigh president, recently presented him with a plaque that will hang in the Alumni Memorial Building in honor of Eduardo Beato Fowler.

Beato says he is particularly thankful to the alumni association's Susan Meyers, who introduced him to Susan Vengrove, director of development of the arts, who helped make his dream come true. The plaque reads: "In loving memory of Eduardo Beato Fowler, Civil Engineer, Lehigh University, Class of 1908. Chief Engineer, Havana, Cuba 1926-1933. Presented by his grandson, Fred Beato, 2004."

As Beato talked about his grandfather during his recent visit to Lehigh, his whole face lit up, revealing the depth of his love and admiration. His father passed away when he was only one, leaving his grandfather as his primary father figure.

"My grandfather's accomplishments in his life and his values were the foundation that gave me the confidence to believe I could also accomplish great things," he says. "This belief kept me going when times got really tough growing up and I needed to believe in myself."

#### **Leaving his mark on Havana**

Eduardo Beato Fowler, (the Fowler came from his Canadian relatives on his mother's side; the mother's maiden name always goes after the father's name in Latin countries), came from Cuba to attend Lehigh in 1904 with the goal of becoming the chief engineer of the railroad system in Cuba. There were ties between the Bethlehem Steel Corporation and Lehigh, so a lot of Cubans came to attend school here at that time.



**Gregory Farrington, Lehigh president, left, presents Fred Beato with the plaque honoring his grandfather.**

After building and sketching elaborate models of railroads, Eduardo went on to far surpass his dream. In the early years of his engineering career back in Cuba, he was involved in building two important Cuban harbors, Havana Harbor and the Santiago de Cuba Harbor. Later, as chief engineer of Havana, he and an associate engineer designed and built all of the bridges on the Carretera Central, the highway that runs the entire length of the island of Cuba.

"When President Gerardo Machado appointed my grandfather chief engineer of Havana, he was in charge of all government engineering," Beato says proudly. "There were many important civil projects including, but not limited to, the famous Malecon in Havana Harbor that is a recognized landmark, the completion of the Cuban capitol building, the upscale residential districts of 23rd and 5th Avenues in Havana near the famous Hotel Nacional, and the Avenida del Prado, which is the commercial center of Havana."

And interestingly, Eduardo also developed two popular residential areas in Havana, El Nautico and Orfila. These developments incorporated the unique American-influenced architecture he was exposed to while at

Lehigh verses the traditional Spanish/colonial architecture. Just before the collapse of Machado's government, he was in the process of redesigning the complete waterworks, sewer, and aqueduct systems in Havana. When Machado's government was overthrown, Eduardo Beato retired and the project was shelved.

Although Eduardo had a high profile job in Cuba, he wasn't interested in living a high profile lifestyle. "My uncle told me a story about a day when he and my grandfather (his father) were walking in the park across from the Presidential Palace and President Machado passed, stopped his motorcade and said to my grandfather, 'I need you to come to the inaugural party tonight.' Once the motorcade passed, my grandfather turned to my uncle and said, 'I'm not going to go to that.' He didn't want anything to do with rubbing shoulders with politicians or making the social scene," Beato says.

### **A love for the land and his family**

Instead, Eduardo preferred to spend his free time on his farm in Cuba, where he brought in things from all over the world.

"He had cattle from Wisconsin, trees from New England, California and Japan, pineapples from Hawaii, oranges from California, mangos from Cambodia and the Philippines. He was especially proud of his mamonsillo's from China—everything was beautiful! Wild guinea would eat from his hands, and he made his own butter and candy. He loved nature, and he was very entertained by his land and his family," Beato recalls. "Then Castro came in 1959 and took everything away from the people and turned the once richest country in Latin America (Cuba) into a third world country."

Castro also split up young Fred and his grandfather. "My grandfather and mother sent me to the United States from Cuba in 1962. Like most Cuban parents at that time, to avoid their sons being recruited into the communist Castro youth camps and inevitably the military, they sent their children abroad. I didn't see my grandfather or my mother again until they joined the other family members in California in 1968. My grandfather was 84 years old by then. When I saw him get off that airplane in '68, I was no longer a child, but I felt the same connection, only it was even stronger," Beato says.

He also tells many stories about his grandfather's strength of character and integrity. "They don't make people like him anymore," he says. "My grandfather always wore a suit and a bowtie in public—even at the grocery store. One time he forgot his bowtie, and he made me drive him all the way back to get it before he could finish his shopping," Beato says.

Eduardo Beato Fowler was also a man of his word, a trait evidenced by the way he reacted to the news of his father's death that he received while he was still at Lehigh.

"My grandfather was very close to his father, who was a doctor in Cuba who actually worked with Dr. Finley when he discovered a cure for yellow fever. My great-grandfather became gravely ill while my grandfather was finishing his finals at Lehigh. The family didn't tell him for fear he wouldn't finish his exams and would rush back to Cuba to be with his ailing father. The night he completed his finals, my grandfather went out with his friends to celebrate and got very intoxicated. Later, he received news of his father's death. In his grief, it occurred to him that he was throwing up in a gutter about the time his father had died. Tortured by his guilt, he swore never to drink a drop of alcohol again, and he never did."

Thanks to Beato's overwhelming love for his grandfather, Eduardo Beato Fowler's name lives on at Lehigh, on all the music department's drum and percussion bags in the Zoellner Arts Center, and now on the wall of the Alumni Memorial Building.



"My grandfather really loved this school and I wanted to give something back to Lehigh as a tribute to him and the education he earned here. It is with sincere appreciation to President Greg Farrington, Susan Vengrove, David Diggs, Susan Meyers, and the other faculty and staff at Lehigh who listened to my story and so generously gave of themselves to share this personal tribute with current and future students," Beato says. "I hope that in some way it can inspire them to go forth and achieve great things with their lives and honor the memory of someone who inspired them, too."

*--Elizabeth Shimer*

*Posted on Monday, September 13, 2004*

[BACK](#)

[Recommend This Page to a Friend](#)

[LEHIGH HOME](#) | [CAMPUS DIRECTORY](#) | [NEWS](#) | [EVENTS](#) | [SITE MAP](#) | [SEARCH](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

©2002-2007 Lehigh University, 27 Memorial Drive West, Bethlehem, Pa. 18015 Tel.(610) 758-3000

[Copyright](#), [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) applicable to this site.