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Yalies of the Week

Every Friday, we choose an alum who has been making headlines—for better or for worse.

August 5, 2011



When the space shuttle made its final landing last month, it left a little bit of **Edward Cheung '90PhD** behind. That was on purpose: Cheung and the rest of NASA's Robotic Refueling Mission team sent experimental equipment to the International Space Station in hopes of building the world's remotest gas station.

"Many communications satellite[s]," [Cheung explains on his personal website](#), "have a limited life due to their fuel load at launch. If they could be refueled in space, it would mean a significant extension of their operating life and savings in operating costs"—and, not incidentally, a reduction in the "space junk" that's cluttering up the cosmos.

A robotics specialist, [Cheung says his "work education" began](#) at age five in his native Aruba, where he would take apart old electrical devices and then create his own gadgets. Decades later, he cemented the connection between his country and rocket science when he named a critical component of a Hubble Space Telescope Mission the ASCS/NCS Relay Unit Breaker Assembly (ARUBA) box. "The crew would be handling and interfacing with this box during installation," Cheung recalled. "They would say the word 'Aruba' in space—perhaps for the first time." Last year, [Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands bestowed upon Cheung](#) the highest civilian order in the Dutch Kingdom: knighthood in the Order of the Netherlands Lion.

For fun, the rocket scientist collects and [restores pinball machines](#)—including one called "Space Shuttle." And he has automated many of his home electrical gadgets and appliances with a system he can control via "any phone in the world (including those inside the home), any browser over the internet, and"—eat your heart out, Dick Tracy—"from my wrist watch."



July 29, 2011