

Chester J. Mackson Ph.D.
July 1919 – May 2008



Chet Mackson, former Director of the School of Packaging, Michigan State University, died on May 21 at the age of 88. He was Director of the School from 1977 – 1986 during one of the School's most expansive, successful periods. Chet's visions led to a much expanded School in terms of staffing and student numbers, and in programs and international prominence. During his time as Director, he hired many of the faculty currently on staff and laid the foundation for the broadened programmatic mission that we enjoy today. Chet was instrumental in the building addition which added several world-class labs, a conference room and faculty offices. Prior to this, faculty had been housed in two buildings which he felt did not create a good work environment. Today the School is well known both on and off campus for its harmonious work environment and team attitude. Internationally, Chet was very aggressive, perhaps a little surprising for a small town boy from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. He was one of the pioneers and long-time board members of the International Association of Packaging Research Institutes (IAPRI). IAPRI is an association made up of 76 member organizations from all around the world. It is thriving today and just recently held its 16th World Conference in Bangkok, Thailand. Chet was the organizer of the 4th World Conference in Lansing, Michigan. It was the first one held outside of Europe and remains today one of the most successful. Together with Frank Paine he started the first packaging overseas study program for students. It was offered in London, England, and was well-received by students. Today we have four overseas study programs including England, Sweden, Spain and Japan. Chet worked with the World Bank, USAID and the UN to secure short term assignments for faculty in Mexico, Brazil, Morocco, and Korea among others. The current faculty is well traveled internationally and the School is respected globally.

Chet Mackson was an educator, an innovator and an entrepreneur. He loved his family, Michigan State University, the U.P. and a good golf match. He served MSU for over 34 years as a Professor in Agriculture Economics and as Director of the School of Packaging. He served the United States as an officer in WWII in Patton's 3rd army, was wounded in battle and received the Purple Heart. Chet is survived by Marilyn, his wife of 61 years, 6 children, 11 grandchildren and 3 great grand children.

Chet was honored by the Packaging Education Foundation in 1992 when they elected him to the Packaging Hall of Fame and again by the School's Alumni Association in 2007 when they elected him to MSU PAA Hall of Fame. One of the things he said most often, and which exemplifies his professional career was, "it is surprising how much you can accomplish, as long as you don't care who gets the credit."

Chet will be missed by the faculty, staff and alumni of the School of Packaging.

Contributions in memory of Chester J. Mackson Ph.D. can be made to the Chester and Marilyn Mackson Scholarship fund, care of the School of Packaging, Michigan State University, 130 Packaging Building, East Lansing, MI., 48824-1223.