

Hekman donation helps fund Calvin library addition

By Tracy L. Sypert
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Calvin College's \$3.5 million, fifth-floor addition to its library will be named after local businessman Edsko Hekman, who college officials say is contributing a "significant portion" of the cost.

The college's 31-member Board of Trustees voted today to name the library for Hekman.

"We hope that the future of all Calvin students will be benefited and that this can be used not only as a repository of books but as a living laboratory of wisdoms," said Hekman, who has achieved success in a variety of businesses since graduating from Calvin in 1935.

He is founder of Import Motors and former president and chairman of the Meridian Corp.

Today's announcement marks the second time a member of the Hekman family has received such an honor. Calvin's library at its former campus on Franklin Street was also named for a Hekman. The former campus now serves as the Grand Rapids Public Schools' administrative headquarters.

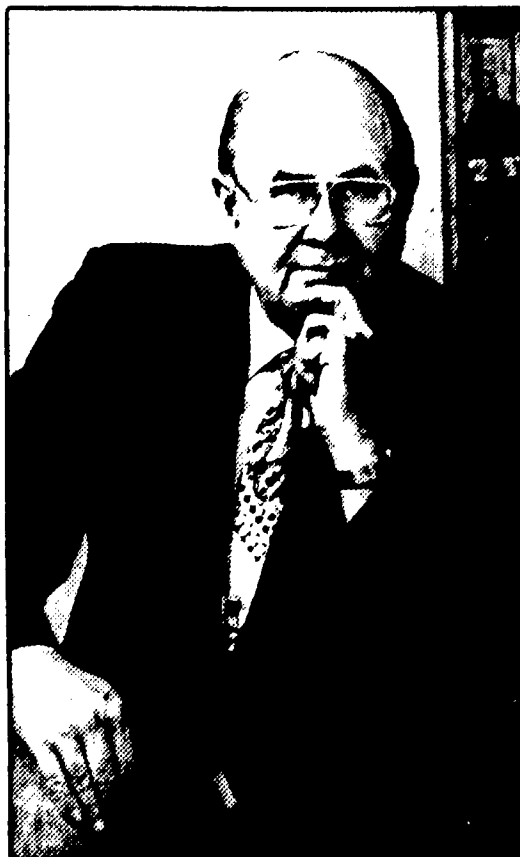
The Franklin Street library was named for Hekman's grandfather, Edsko Hekman Sr., who immigrated to Grand Rapids from the Netherlands 100 years ago. The senior Hekman founded Hekman Biscuit Co., Hekman Furniture Co. and the Holland-based Dutch Tea Rusk Co.

Hekman said it's "quite a touching thing" to know that the family name will be returned to the Calvin library.

He is a committed Calvinist, but the college holds a special place in Hekman's heart for other reasons, too. It is where he first dated his wife, Claire, who graduated from Calvin with him.

After earning his business degree, the younger Hekman worked with his family's furniture manufacturing firm. After that business was sold he founded Import Motors, a Volkswagen dealership, and Meridian Corp., the Spring Lake office furniture manufacturer.

Hekman also was a partner in a Colorado cattle ranch and the



Edsko Hekman: Library is a "living library of wisdoms."

WOOD AM-FM radio station. Since selling Meridian in 1990, Hekman has remained active, developing a tract of Spring Lake land into single-family, waterfront homes.

To future Calvin students burning the midnight oil in the building that bears his name, Hekman counseled them to keep their faith strong and hold onto their dreams.

"It was all pretty young and rough when Claire and I graduated. In 1935 things were not good," he said. "We always had dreams, but it took a long time to bring them to fruition. We're now humbled by the resolution to rededicate this library."

According to college officials, the Calvin library is the largest and most heavily used of any West Michigan educational institution, with more than 600,000 volumes. The new fifth floor will boost its size to 125,000 square feet and will allow the addition of 200,000 volumes and 200 more student study stations.

Construction began this summer and is to be complete in a year.