

# HERITAGE ANCHORED

by Bruce Buursma '73



Edsko and Claire Hekman stand by the cornerstone symbolizing the link between the Franklin and Knollcrest campuses.

It was a bright and luminous day in every way.

The retired President of Calvin conjured glowing images of the Hekman Library — past and present. The benefactor of the library's crowning fifth floor addition, Edsko Hekman, called the facility a "shining symbol of Calvin's special role in higher education. . . (pursuing) knowledge in order to better understand God." And the sun bathed the Knollcrest campus in a shimmering light that warmed both skin and soul.

With incandescent images and sparkling metaphors, the Calvin community cel-

ebrated the restoration of the Hekman name to the library with a pageant of psalms and oratory on a glorious autumn morning.

"The Hekman Library today becomes a visible link from Calvin's years on Franklin Street to the future," said current Calvin President Anthony J. Diekema during a service of praise and thanksgiving that attracted an overflow crowd to the College Chapel. "The heritage is anchored. The dream becomes reality."

The former President William Spoelhof, who was a Calvin sophomore in 1928 when the original Hekman Library was dedicated

on the six-acre campus on Franklin Street, told a moving "Tale of Two Libraries" during a ceremony to rededicate the building's cornerstone.

"The two (Hekman libraries) are separate in time," Dr. Spoelhof said, "but they are one in being and spirit — a spirit infused by her users to dedicate the use of the holdings to enrich their own understanding of the 'riches of Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'"

Dr. Spoelhof drew a vivid picture of both libraries, recalling a stroll he took with the Knollcrest architect William Fyfe upon the



The cornerstone dedication was part of the celebration on October 21, 1994. Retired President William Spoelhof said that the original Knollcrest

greensward between the original Hekman Library and the men's dormitory.

"The bright lights of the interior of the library disclosed, through the completely glazed back wall of the structure, the books, carrels and people at work within the building," Dr. Spoelhof remembered. "I happened to say, 'Bill, that's the prettiest scene on the whole campus.' He tucked that in his memory and when the new library was built he had created a reprise of that inner-campus scene on the Knollcrest campus."

And now, the former President continued, "the beauty of the transported scene is magnified many times. . . From the outer north edge of the inner campus, there is no prettier sight on the Knollcrest campus than the whole structure aglow with lights and crowned by the illuminated band of fenestration which circles the new fifth floor of



Retired President Spoelhof and current President Anthony Diekema share in the celebration of the day.

the Hekman Library . . . this big gem."

Dr. Spoelhof, who presidency coincided with the acquisition, planning and construction of Calvin's 370-acre Knollcrest campus through the 1960s and into the 1970s, noted that the structure housing the college's impressive collection of books has borne many names since it was built in 1962, including the original and functional

but uninspired LCB (Library Classroom Building).

"All were temporary awaiting this momentous day," Dr. Spoelhof said. "Many people have asked me, 'When was the original Knollcrest campus plan, begun in the 1960s, completed?' My reply is: 'On October 21, 1994. The Hekman name is back.'"

The Hekman name was inextricably linked with the college's library for thousands of Calvin students from the eve of the Great Depression, the era of Dr. Spoelhof and the late novelist Peter DeVries, to the early 1970s, an epoch of student unrest when the shift to the suburban Knollcrest campus was completed.

The original Hekman Library was created by a gift in memory of the immigrant baker Edsko Hekman who left The Netherlands in 1893 and built in Grand Rapids a biscuit company that eventually merged into the



campus plan, begun in the 1960s, was now complete. "The Hekman name is back," he said.



Retired President William Spoelhof and Rev. John Witvliet, President of the Board of Trustees, thank the Hekmans for making the dedication possible through their donation to The Campaign for Calvin College.

Keebler Co. Last year, after the baker's grandson and namesake Edsko Hekman made a gift to the \$50 million Campaign for Calvin College, designating it to substantially underwrite the addition of a fifth floor to the library, the Calvin College Board of Trustees voted to attach the Hekman name to the facility once again.

Edsko Hekman, a member of Calvin's Class of 1935 along with his wife, Claire Kuiper Hekman, is an 80-year-old business executive from Spring Lake, Michigan. He was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 1991 and was shortly thereafter inducted into the Greater Grand Rapids Business Hall of Fame. Throughout his career, he has operated an array of successful

enterprises, including office furniture manufacturing, automobile distributorships, broadcasting stations, a cattle ranch, a landscape firm and a residential real estate development. In addition, he has served on a number of civic and non-profit boards, including the Pine Rest Foundation, Mary Free Bed Hospital and the United Way.

In his remarks at the dedication ceremony, Hekman asserted that his gift pays tribute to his grandfather and to all the descendants of the Hekman family, as well as to his late father-in-law, the Rev. Henry J. Kuiper, the longtime editor of *The Banner*, for whom the fifth floor Kuiper Room is named.

"By their profession and their actions our ancestors demonstrated a stirring commitment to God and an accompanying drive for excellence," Hekman said. "We are grateful to have been shaped by them. We would be grateful, too, if this gift were to shape in great ways the minds and characters of stu-



John VanEngen, professor of history and director of the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame, presented a library dedication lecture to complete the day's activities.

dents for generations to come. . . . We dare to dream that this gift will shape students at a critical time of their lives and in the right place — Calvin."

In a dedication meditation, Calvin Theological Seminary Professor Cornelius Plantinga Jr. described the development of the library as evidence that God gives his gifts raw. "God gives us a lot of raw materials that we are called to fashion into something lovely, useful and satisfying," Plantinga said. "God doesn't give libraries whole. God gives scholarly vision and hunger; God gives business talent and the energy to make something of this talent; God gives impulses of generosity in people; God gives bricklaying and heating and air conditioning and architectural and landscaping talent — whole squadrons of people carry-

ing their raw materials in their heads and in their hands to this place so that we may today give thanks for what God has wrought through so many of his people."

And in a dedication lecture entitled "Libraries and the Life of the Mind," Dr. John Van Engen, a professor of history at the University of Notre Dame and director of that school's Medieval Institute, contended that the Hekman Library with all its volumes and holdings has a simple and profound mission.

It must "stand as a permanent monument to a higher Christian end," said Dr. Van Engen, a member of Calvin's Board of Trustees, "to education as the cultivation of the God-given capacity to seek and enact truth. . . . The library is a treasury of human voices and minds."

Dr. Van Engen said the library ought to harbor diverse voices — "persuasive, angry, informative, reasoning, coaxing, elliptical, singing" — for it is "precisely the work of Christian educators to help students hear these voices in all their power or beauty or rawness and to struggle with them toward a Christian mind.

"The Hekman Library," he concluded, "must awaken in the minds of countless students the voices of human beings both good and bad, the wisdom and foolishness of all ages and peoples, and above all the abiding Wisdom of the Word made flesh."

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An all-campus picnic was part of the celebration.