

THE CALVIN *Spark*

CALVIN LIBRARY

1863-1983

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CALVIN COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

WINTER 1993



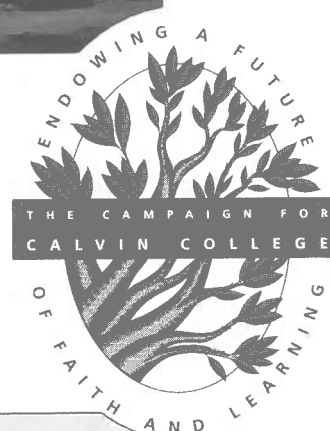
**THEATER AT CALVIN
ALUMNI IN TV
THE HEKMAN LIBRARY**

**HOMECOMING '94
INVITATION ENCLOSED**



IT'S HEKMAN AGAIN

By Bruce Buursma, '73



He was brought up to be hard-working and hard-to-please, to demand an exacting standard of excellence, and above all to be observant about his Christian faith. Those early lessons were bred in the bones of Edsko Hekman.

Hekman, a Distinguished Alumnus of Calvin College's Class of '35 and a 1993 inductee into the Greater Grand Rapids Business Hall of Fame, has attempted to live those childhood lessons — reinforced during his Calvin days — throughout his life. The promise that was predicted for him by his Calvin classmates — his senior picture in the Prism bears the legend, "Calvin uncovers a business genius in Edsko" — has been

fulfilled, according to Hekman's friends and associates. But don't expect the self-effacing Edsko Hekman to agree.

"I'm not a genius," he insists. "I was enamored with the idea of business. I have to get everything done in a plodding way. At Calvin, I learned that the glory of being a Christian was an open heart and an eager mind — and, of course, busy hands. I also learned that the essence of leadership is service, not self-advancement."

He comes by such tough-mindedness honestly. It is, he says, a family trademark, brought over from The Netherlands a century ago by his grandfather Edsko Hekman.

The elder Hekman was a cookie maker and baker who

(Top) The Hekman Memorial Library on Calvin's Franklin campus.

(Bottom) Calvin art professor Frank Spawers rendered the drawing of The Hekman Library on the Knollcrest campus, complete with the fifth floor addition.



Edsko Hekman and Calvin President Anthony Dirksen at the Board of Trustees ceremony which named the library after the Hekman family once again.



Claire Kuiper Hekman

(Right) The Hekman family enjoyed the celebration with Calvin officials after the library announcement (l. to r.) Mary Lou Buffers Hekman, Beth Hekman Bushouse, Grace Hekman Bruinsma, Edsko Hekman, Claire Kuiper Hekman, Helen Kuiper Noordewier, Donna Tinholt Hekman, Louis Hekman.



eventually built his Grand Rapids business into the nationally known Hekman Biscuit Co. He did it, remembers the grandson, on the strength of tasty cookies and a fussy Dutch expression, "*Het is steeds nog niet goed genoeg*," which may be translated as, "It's still not good enough."

The grandson appropriated that motto for his own business endeavors, as a means of quality control. "Make it right, not just about right," says Hekman. "In the race for quality, there is no finish line."

And now, Hekman has contributed a major gift to the Campaign for Calvin College that celebrates his family's longstanding relationship to the school, and is prompting the college to rededicate the Knollcrest library as The Hekman Library. It is a gift and a gesture that will symbolically "make it right" on the Calvin campus again.

The contribution is underwriting a significant portion of the \$3.5 million addition of a fifth floor to the college's library and an endowment for future acquisitions. The college's 31-member Board of Trustees, meeting on Calvin's Grand Rapids campus in late October, unanimously approved a resolution to rename the facility The Hekman Library.

"God has been gracious to the Hekman family through the generations, and the Hekmans have been

good citizens of their adopted country and of the kingdom of God," said the Rev. John Witvliet, chairman of the Calvin trustees, at a luncheon to honor Edsko Hekman and his wife, Claire Kuiper Hekman, another member of Calvin's Class of 1935. "In 1928," Witvliet continued, "the Hekman Memorial Library was dedicated on Calvin's old Franklin Street campus, a gift in memory of Edsko Hekman from his widow and their three sons. Soon thereafter, the Hekman family donated the funds to erect the Seminary building on the Franklin campus and, despite unforeseen financial setbacks related to the Great Depression, they even agreed to donate additional money when construction costs soared beyond initial estimates on the seminary. Since Calvin moved to the Knollcrest campus, beautiful though it is, something has been missing. Today, we have restored the Hekman name to the Calvin campus, to its rightful place on the library."

The gift comes exactly 100 years after Edsko Hekman Sr., in whose memory the Franklin Street library was dedicated, emigrated from The Netherlands to Grand Rapids. His three sons, Henry, John and Jelle, operated the biscuit company, as well as the Hekman Furniture Co. and the Holland-based Dutch Tea Rusk Co.

Edsko Hekman, a grandson of Edsko Sr. and son of



Edska Hekman

Edska Hekman with longtime friend and "Calvin Connection" art professor Edgar Boeve.



the late Henry Hekman, joined his family's furniture manufacturing firm, and later founded Import Motors, the exclusive Michigan distributor of Volkswagen automobiles, and the Meridian Corp., the Spring Lake-based office furniture manufacturer. He also was a partner in a Colorado cattle ranch and in the ownership of the Grand Rapids radio station WOOD AM-FM. After selling Meridian Corp. in 1990 to Herman Miller Inc., Hekman has remained active, developing a tract of land he owns at the north end of Spring Lake into a single-family waterfront neighborhood called Hekman Haven. He also owns a landscaping business.

Hekman also took a leading role in the development of Mary Free Bed Hospital and Rehabilitation Center in Grand Rapids, serving as one of the first males on that institution's board and as chairperson of the board from 1968 to 1976, during which time the hospital began its expansion and relocation to its present site alongside St. Mary's Medical Center. Hekman also was a founder of the Pine Rest Foundation.

Hekman's wife Claire is the daughter of H.J. Kuiper, who served for many years as the influential editor of the Christian Reformed Church's weekly magazine, *The Banner*. The Hekmans are members of First Presbyterian Church in Grand Haven.

The Calvin library is by far the largest and most heavily used of any West Michigan educational institution, with more than 600,000 items among its holdings. The addition of a fifth floor will increase the size of the building to 125,000 square feet and will allow the library to add nearly 200,000 additional volumes and nearly 200 more study stations. In addition to serving Calvin's 3,730 students and 500 faculty and staff, the library extends its services to the public, last year providing books, periodicals, staff assistance and computer services to more than 4,000 guest users.

Construction of the cantilevered addition began during the summer and is expected to be completed by next fall, when a dedication ceremony for The Hekman Library will be staged. Hekman said the renamed library ought not stand "as a monument to any individual or family, but rather as a bulwark of the Calvin commitment to Christian higher education — to the source of truth who inspires our dreams and enlivens our intellect." He also noted that the library at Calvin — both at the old campus and the new — is "not merely a repository of books, but a living laboratory of wisdom. My dream is that this library will continue to be a home where our children's zeal for knowledge will be fanned into the flames of a passion for ultimate truth and service."

Construction is already underway on the library fifth floor.

Bruce Buursma is director of media relations at Calvin College.