

Jackson remembered as 'public service personified'

News Tribune · 9 Nov 2023 · A1 · By Cameron Gerber cgerber@newstribune.com

Jefferson City man's legacy can be seen in the beauty of the Lincoln University campus. Services were held Wednesday for Charles Jackson, a respected voice in education, policy and community service.

Colleagues said that for decades, Jackson influenced the architecture on the campus. A longtime Lincoln University professor, former city council member and frequent community volunteer, Jackson died Oct. 31. His memory and contributions were also celebrated Wednesday by LU's Eta Alpha Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, President John Moseley and the university's board.

"Mr. Charles W. Jackson will be remembered as a quiet man who left a large and lasting impression in the lives of his family, his community and our Lincoln University," a proclamation from the university read.

Jackson came to the Capital City to teach at LU in 1957 after serving with the U.S. military in Europe, according to his obituary. He began his tenure as a building engineering instructor and retired from the university 42 years later as a professor emeriti in 1999.

His career with the university spanned multiple roles, including 28 years as a teacher, department chair and college dean and more than 14 years as director of facilities planning and design. In the latter role, he focused on construction, public safety, printing and capital improvement budgeting on campus.

Jackson also left his mark on the historically Black university by writing three grants for disadvantaged students. The Model Cities Grant and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Grant were both funded by the federal government, providing full financial assistance to students through work study.

A third grant was funded by the Nigerian National Government, allowing students to study and receive technical training in the United States.

His mark on the university and its students was further solidified with the establishment of the Charles W. Jackson Perpetual Endowed Scholarship upon his retirement.

Misty Nunn, executive director of university and alumni relations, said the Lincoln community was saddened by Jackson's death. He served the historically Black university well in his more than 42 years there, she said.

"If there was a Lincoln University event, Mr. Jackson's face was one of those faces that you were going to see there," she said. "We will definitely miss his presence on our campus, but it's still very much felt in the beauty of our campus."

She said Jackson oversaw the development of several buildings, including Memorial Hall, which houses LU's alumni center.

Jackson also represented the First Ward on the Jefferson City Council for eight years, including two as mayor pro tem, before terming out of the seat in 2002.

Former Mayor Tom Rackers knew Jackson well in both capacities: Jackson was his engineering teacher at LU in the 1960s, and they served together in city government decades later. Rackers on Wednesday echoed his comments made in 1999 at a reception in honor of the scholarship named after his former teacher: "Many of the successes we've accomplished are due to Charles."

"He was a wonderful person," Rackers said. "Not only was he a great educator, he was a well-respected volunteer for his community. He will be dearly missed."

Rackers said one of his most vivid memories of Jackson during their Lincoln days was his ability to make things out of concrete, even before it was a common practice.

"Back in those days you didn't use cement for a lot of things, but he made a diving board out of it," Rackers said. "It's something I'll always remember. You could get up and bounce up and down, and it wouldn't break. He did a lot of interesting things."

Jackson's obituary noted he was also a member of First Presbyterian Church as an ordained deacon and elder.

He also served on numerous civic boards and committees for groups, including the Jefferson City Parks and Recreation Commission, Missouri Regional Library Foundation Board, University of Missouri-Lincoln University Cole County Extension Council, Board of Governors for Capital Region Medical Center and the Three Rivers Boy Scouts of America Council.

His contributions to the community were recognized with numerous honors, including the Lincoln University National Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Award, the Jefferson City Area Chamber of Commerce William W. Quigg Award for Lifetime Leadership and Commitment to Jefferson City and the U.S. Department of Defense Certificate of Appreciation.

Jackson is survived by his wife, Betty, their daughters and numerous family members, according to his obituary.

The News Tribune recognized Jackson in an editorial at the end of his council tenure in 2002, listing many of his contributions during his time in office, including his guidance on the Dix Road/Southwest Boulevard connector and other infrastructure projects that benefited from his engineering expertise. It described him as "public service personified."

"His gentility and ethics were always admired by colleagues and the many citizens who attended public meetings," the editorial read. "Jackson was a gifted orator who always hoped the council could 'disagree without being disagreeable,' a phrase he often used."

The retrospective concluded with a phrase many in the community, including Rackers, would echo:

"Jefferson City is a finer place to live because of Charles Jackson's contributions."