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PCI mural dedication ceremony honors artist, enhances Parkview Campus

A restored wall mural depicting the evolution of papermaking was dedicated recently in a ceremony held at the Parkview Campus CEAS building near the office of the Department of Paper Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Imaging (PCI) where the mural has been on display since last March.

Jack Young (BA '54, Secondary Art Education) designed and painted the original canvas in 1959 when he was a graduate student. The mural, which hung in McCracken Hall for over 40 years, was taken down in August 2003. It was stored in art archives until last summer when Young began restoring the 48-year-old mural with the assistance of his granddaughter, **Rebekah Johnson**, a Comstock High School sophomore. "You don't know how gratified I am by all this," Young said.



Rebekah Johnson (left), a Comstock High student, assisted her grandfather **Jack Young** (center) in restoring a mural he completed in 1959 as part of his master's program. PCI Chair **Said Abu-Bakr** (right) led a dedication ceremony honoring Young and the mural that is now displayed at the Parkview Campus

About 100 attended a ceremony led by **Dr. Said AbuBakr**, chair of the PCI department. Those attending included Young's family and friends, the Paper Technology Foundation (PTF) board of directors, CEAS administrators, many students presently enrolled in paper-related majors, WMU faculty, staff, and distinguished WMU administrators and emeriti.

Originally commissioned by the then Paper Technology Department, Young said it took about 10 weeks to complete the oil canvas, which is 4 feet high and 17 feet 8 inches wide. Done in a synthetic cubist style, the work is reminiscent of social murals of the 1930s and 1940s. "I think painting it earned me quite a few credits towards my degree," Young said.



Jack Young's restored mural depicting the evolution of papermaking is now on display in the west wing of the Parkview Campus near the PCI department

In its left to right progression, the mural begins in the lower left corner with a depiction of Ts'ai Lun, the Han Dynasty official in the Chinese Imperial Court who is credited for inventing paper around 105 A.D. Above him are Egyptians forming papyrus followed by a vat man making paper in a deckle. Below him is a worker preparing a post, or stack of papers.

In the middle of the scene are images of a worker with a hand beater used to prepare the pulp and of an apprentice being instructed by a master. The final section of the painting is devoted to the mechanization of stock preparation and paper testing that came about during the Industrial Revolution.

According to **Nichole Perk**, paper programs specialist, the date of the dedication had been selected to coincide with the annual meeting of the PTF board of directors. "We love the mural, so we wanted to make it easily accessible for as many as possible," she said.

AbuBakr credited **Barb Vilenski**, the PCI office manager, and **Jennifer Johnson**, administrative assistant for PTF, for coordinating the dedication ceremony and the refreshments that followed and **Matt Stoops**, PCI lab coordinator, and **Gerald Vilenski**, Barb's husband, for being instrumental in creating a new frame for the mural and for remounting the mural at Parkview. He also thanked Perk and the CEAS Heritage Committee. "I want to thank all who contributed to the re-dedication of this mural," he said.

Young came to WMU as an art education student in 1950 after serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. After earning his BA, he taught art in Benton Harbor and Kalamazoo Public Schools before returning to WMU for a master's degree. His experience includes a career in the design department of Sutherland Paper Company and the owner of a graphic design and marketing business, Young Marketing Services. He resides in Schoolcraft.

Opinions and ideas, please! Send your thoughts on this article or suggestions for future articles to the editor at jerrie.fiala@wmich.edu Thank you.