2003 Award Recipient

James G. McKernan '48

Jim McKernan, you have been a loyal and stalwart supporter of your alma mater since you were named president of your class more than 55 years ago. Though you have pursued your career far from the WPI campus, you have managed to be an active and effective volunteer, one who has made a significant difference for this university.

After attending Hobart College and Columbia University, then serving in the Navy in the Pacific Theater, you transferred to WPI as part of the U.S. Navy's wartime V-12 program and became an active presence on campus, winning accolades for your achievements as an athlete and earning the respect and admiration of your classmates.

After receiving your degree in chemical engineering, you joined E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, where you would spend the next 34 years, working in six different states, in a variety of increasingly responsible positions in sales and sales management. In 1982, you left DuPont to start your own company, J.G. Chempac Inc. in Charlotte, North Carolina. Throughout this time, WPI was never far from your mind.

As class president, and more recently, chair of the Class of 1948's Board of Directors, you have proven yourself a tireless and devoted leader. A long series of memorable Reunions and the associated gift campaigns owe their success, in no small part, to your dedication and hard work. Your caring and compassionate leadership style has kept your class together because you included everyone at every opportunity. A continuous and generous contributor yourself, you rallied the support of your classmates, serving at various times as a class agent, anniversary gift steering committee member, and solicitor for the President's Advisory Council.

Jim McKernan, for your dedication and effective leadership, it is an honor to present you with the Herbert F. Taylor Alumni Award for Distinguished Service to WPI.