

MSU alums stand firm against school brass

By MIKE ARNHOLT

They're the friends of the university, the former students who are proud of the Green and White and who often reach into their pockets to hand over a few dollars or a few thousand dollars to their alma mater.

They belong to the Michigan State University Alumni Association, an independent collection of more than 33,000 grads, and many of them are fighting mad.

At issue is their independence, an independence only recently granted by the university's eight-member board of trustees, which MSU President Cecil Mackey would like to take away.

It was only last July when the MSU Alumni Association achieved its independence by a unanimous vote of the eight-member MSU Board of Trustees. In August, Texas Tech President Mackey moved to the top job at MSU and has been attempting since then to bring the organization back within the fold of the university, much like the situation at Texas Tech.

He proposed to the alumni, specifically, to have a direct role in picking the alumni group's chief officer, to control the alumni publications and keep an eye on the group's finances.

His designs on the alumni group were thwarted last Saturday as the alumni association's board of directors voted 12-4 not to bow to what some members feel are Mackey's pressure tactics. The four votes backing the Mackey position came from Mackey

himself and the university's provost and two of the university's trustees.

THE FOCAL POINT of this stewing controversy is Jack Kinney, the alumni association's president. Kinney has been active in university matters for the last 25 years and has guided alumni affairs in East Lansing since 1953.

"An independent alumni group provides a constancy of purpose," Kinney says. "It's a kind of check and balance on the administration." He says that independence is necessary so that members can feel they are not just supporting the administration propaganda line.

MSU alums have jumped to Kinney's defense. Birmingham veterinarian Dr. William Westcott, the alumni association's chairman, supports Kinney and calls Mackey's moves "confusing."

Westcott notes that nine of the Big Ten schools have independent alumni organizations which all work to support their universities. But he quickly adds, "Support of the university is not support of the administration."

Apparently the alumni agreed with Westcott's assessment Saturday and not only rejected Mackey's plan, but moved to draft an employment agreement with Kinney — a move that makes it obvious the board wants its president to stay on and the university's president to keep his distance.

AS THE BATTLE was heating up in mid-February, Westcott outlined the problems as seen by the alumni group's executive board in a four-page memorandum to local MSU alumni clubs

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— Dr. William Westcott,
Alumni Association chairman

throughout the country. The two points in the Mackey plan which prompted the most concern were the power of picking the alumni's top officer and control of the group's award-winning alumni magazine.

"The goal of our alumni publication should be to report the affairs of the university honestly and objectively and not be a 'house organ,'" Westcott wrote. "I believe that we can best achieve this objective under the present format."

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Mackey has repeatedly declined comment about his difference with the alumni group.

In an earlier effort to get the alumni group to reconsider its independence, Mackey held up an \$80,000 contribution to the alumni group which the university had agreed to chip in when the association was granted its independence. The funds represent a sizable chunk of the organization's more than \$500,000 annual budget. But the budget is balanced, Kinney says, and the alumni continue to send in their \$15 annual dues.

THE WITHHOLDING of university funding, however, is not the strongest

weapon Mackey has at his disposal. Traditionally, alums have had choice picks on football tickets and the alumni association has had the use of the university's computers for keeping accurate mailing lists of members and potential members.

Mackey appears to have the complete backing of the board of trustees to keep the tickets and the computer lists out of the hands of those who won't cooperate with his plans, according to the alums.

Eugene Morgan, president of the Detroit MSU alumni group, says he is perplexed by Mackey's moves. Morgan notes that Mackey has not attended any alumni functions and claims that he has had trouble gaining access to the university's top man.

"Maybe changes (in the structure of the alumni association) had to be made," Morgan says, "but the method he's using has just turned people off. I can't believe someone would come in and not want the alumni support."

MSU TRUSTEE Raymond Krolikowski argues, however, that there is no effort at control by Mackey, despite the wording of the MSU president's

proposals to the alumni group which in part state: "The MSU Alumni Association Inc. publications and its publications policies will be coordinated with and approved by the university."

Krolikowski defends Mackey: "There is a belief that we can achieve greater coordination by moving in this direction," the Birmingham attorney says. "Total independence doesn't necessarily enhance that coordination."

Asked why he voted for independence but has since changed his position, Krolikowski says, "I think there's probably greater concern now over whether we can attain the kind of coordination that had been projected at that time."

Coordination, to Kinney, means coupling alumni functions with fundraising efforts, something Kinney feels should be kept separate. "Our job is 'friend-raising,' not fundraising. My concern is that when you have the two together the buck comes first. We like to encourage alumni support, but we also like to think alumni are worth more than just a source of giving."

Kinney agrees that more communication is necessary, but he feels the university must make the next concession.

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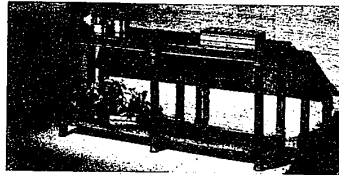
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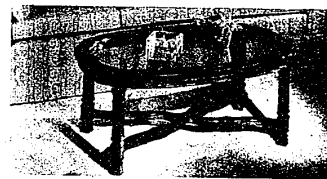
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