BENSON J. LAMP
1925–2012

Elected in 1998

“For research and development of harvesting machinery and commercialization of agricultural equipment worldwide.”

BY CARL W. HALL

BENSON J. LAMP, founder, president, and general manager of BJM, Inc., and an internationally recognized leader in education, research, design, and development in agricultural mechanization, died on September 14, 2012, at the age of 86. He possessed an innovative spirit—one of getting things done.

Benson was born on October 7, 1925, in Cardington, Ohio, and raised on a farm in Franklin, an experience that undoubtedly influenced his education and professional work. He entered the Army Air Corps in World War II at the age of 18 and was honorably discharged on V-J Day as a second lieutenant (navigator). He married Martha Jane Metz on August 21, 1948, and they raised four children.

He studied agricultural engineering at the Ohio State University (OSU) College of Engineering, where he received a BS cum laude in 1949 and MS in 1953. He began his academic career there in 1949 as an instructor in agricultural engineering and rose quickly to associate professor. He went on to earn a PhD at Michigan State University in agricultural engineering with minors in mechanical engineering and mechanics. After receiving his PhD he spent 26 years in industry, advancing from an agricultural research engineer to vice president of Ford Motor Company. He also became a PE early in his career.
Benson joined Massey-Ferguson, Ltd. in 1961 as a research engineer in Detroit. When he left the company in 1966 he was a marketing and product manager for tractors in Des Moines. At that point he joined the Ford Motor Company, where he advanced through the following positions: worldwide equipment product planning manager (in Troy, Michigan), manager of marketing plans for North American Ford tractor operations, marketing manager for Europe (stationed in Brussels, Belgium), worldwide marketing manager of Ford tractor operations, vice president of marketing and business development, and vice president of Ford Aerospace and Communications Corporation (in Dearborn).

His focus at Ford was on developing a strategy to expand internationally in light industrial and construction markets. To that end he introduced a common marketing concept for all companies with local dealers in 14 European countries in the early 1970s; coordinated marketing efforts in new markets in the mid-1970s; and developed a universal marketing plan in the late 1970s for a new family of tractors that was used in 30 different countries and was so successful that it was expanded into operators’ and service publications, saving the company thousands of dollars. As vice president of Ford Aerospace and Communications, he implemented a marketing plan that brought four separate operating systems into a single business. And he was instrumental in establishing business for Ford with the emerging market in China.

In 1986 Benson retired from industry and accepted a position as adjunct professor at OSU in the Department of Agricultural Engineering, where he taught both an introductory course and a professional development course for senior engineering students. He worked for several small companies on a consulting basis and formed a company, ACA, Inc., to make and distribute a portable PTO (power takeoff) dynamometer for tractors. Then in 1990 he founded BJM, which grew into a real estate and farming business.

He was also active in many professional societies. He chaired a number of committees of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE; now the American Society
of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, ASABE) before becoming ASAE president. He was a member of the American Management Association, American Society of Engineering Education, Equipment Manufacturers Institute, and Institute of Industrial Research, among others. He helped these organizations implement strategic plans, encouraged cooperation of members with different views, and inspired others to do the same in their deliberations.

Benson also received many honors and awards, the most prominent being membership in both Tau Beta Pi and Sigma Xi as well as his election to the National Academy of Engineering. In 1956 he was named Professor of the Year at Ohio State University. He was presented with a Distinguished Alumnus Award by both Ohio State University and Michigan State University. In 1993 he was awarded the ASAE McCormick Case Gold Medal.

He published 47 articles, bulletins, and reports for public use and wrote many others that were private and confidential for company use only. With W.H. Johnson he coauthored the book *Principles, Equipment and Systems for Corn Harvesting* (Agricultural Consulting Associates, Ohio, 1966).

In addition to his dedicated involvement in engineering and education, he had a broad and diverse range of interests and was active in his church.

Benson was a devoted family man. He is survived by his loving wife of 64 years, Martha Jane; children Elaine (Jim) Yarbrough of Peachtree City, GA; Marlene (Steve) Soule of Ventura, CA; Linda (Bill) Connor of East Lansing, MI; and Dave (Denise) Lamp of Southlake, TX; grandchildren Robb (Melissa) Yarbrough, Jamie (Matthew) Fearrington, Katie (Derek) Walton, Matthew Connor, Julie (Mike) Warren, Erik Soule, Ellen Connor, David Lamp, Olivia Soule, and Lauren Connor; great-grandson Connor Warren; brothers Wilbur and Russell; sisters-in-law Joan Motz and Joanne Lamp; and many friends.