

EDWARD SAGENDORPH MASON MEMORIAL MINUTE ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
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BORN: February 22, 1899 DIED: February 29, 1992

Edward Sagendorph Mason was a great scholar and a distinguished public servant. Warmly esteemed by all who knew him, he was a devoted member of the Harvard community, whose contributions to this university still shape many of its activities a quarter century after his formal retirement.

Of humble origins, Ed was born in Clinton, Iowa, but his family soon moved to Central Michigan and later, when Ed was fourteen, to Lawrence, Kansas. To help finance his way through the University of Kansas, where he graduated at the age of nineteen, he worked in a copper mine in Butte, a cattle ranch in Spokane, and in the oil fields and zinc mines of southeast Kansas. He was an athlete and remained one all of his life. At Kansas, he played varsity football and basketball. In Cambridge he was an accomplished softball pitcher and rowed and played tennis, rowing well into his eighties, giving up tennis in his seventies, he said, only when his granddaughter began to beat him.

Ed first arrived at Harvard in 1919, but moved on to three years at Oxford after only one year. He returned to Harvard in 1923. With time out during the second world war, Ed remained at Harvard for the next sixty-three years.

It was in Cambridge in 1930 that he married Marguerite and where they raised their three children. They were a remarkable team, each acknowledging and respecting the other's interests. In their division of labor, Marguerite was in charge of Cambridge, while Ed's domain covered the Charles River, Harvard University, and the wide world beyond.

Through the first decades of his career, Ed Mason's academic work dealt mainly with the relationship between government and business. In the 1930s his seminar on industrial structure, monopoly and price rigidity was a centerpiece in this field. In this earlier period and in the 1950s Ed initiated the modern field of Industrial Organization. He created the dominant paradigm of the industry study, exploring the relationship between industry structure, the conduct of firms in the industry, and the economic performance that resulted. Mason's collaborators and students dominated the field and remain important to this day; they include many lawyers as well as economists.

Ed's interest in industrial organization and the relationship between government and business was part of his lifelong concern with issues of public policy. In 1941 Ed and his colleague and old friend, William Langer, went to Washington to help organize the research and analysis branch of what originally was the Office of the Coordinator of Information, later the Office of Strategic Services. The economic division that he created had an enormous range of activity, focusing primarily on the German and Japanese economic ability to make war and on the American capacity to affect this ability through blockade, bombing and sabotage. To this office Ed attracted some of the ablest economists of that generation. Throughout his career, the respect and affection that so many of Ed's colleagues felt toward him enabled Ed to attract an extraordinary group of scholars to one major endeavor after another.

Ed was a generous and understanding man who could see the good qualities in people and bring them out. He was always determined and persistent, which meant that he also saw to completion what he started. The list of projects, large and small, that he led is long. In 1946 he was one of the authors of the speech of Secretary of State James Byrnes in which the Secretary announced the return of responsibility for the German economy to the Germans. In 1956, he, together with Ray Vernon, did a pioneering study of the New York Metropolitan Region, a study that tried to identify the economic, political and social forces that were shaping that vast urban area. At the time the problems of urban areas were mainly the concern of architects and philosophers;

almost no economist and only a few political scientists knew much or cared greatly about such issues. The studies that resulted provided rich fare for a generation of urban planners to follow.

Ed Mason's public services included membership on presidential commissions under four chief executives. He was economic advisor to the Secretary of State at the 1947 Moscow conference. He was President of the American Economic Association and a recipient of the Medal of Freedom and many other honors.

Ed Mason's services to Harvard, in addition to his primary lifetime activities of teaching and research, were numerous and diverse. In the troubled environment of 1969, on the eve of his retirement, Ed was called on to serve as acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Prior to that, from 1947 to 1958, he was Dean of what is now the Kennedy School of Government. It was during this earlier deanship that Ed began his involvement with developing countries, an interest that was to occupy much of the last three decades of his career.

In 1954 Ed Mason directed an eight person team that drew up a development plan for Pakistan, and in 1958 he conducted a similar exercise for Iran. The Pakistan involvement led to the creation of the two institutions most associated with Ed today, the Mason Fellows program and the Harvard Institute for International Development. The Development Advisory Service, as HIID was called at the time, worked with governments in developing countries to enhance their capacity for planning and economic analysis. The Pakistan project served as a field laboratory during the 1960s for some of the best development economists of the period, many of whom brought their experience back into the university classroom. One of the first economic development courses at Harvard, taught by Ed Mason along with David Bell and Gustav Papanek, was a product of this collaboration with the developing world.

Among his many accomplishments, Ed regarded the mid-career program for government officials from developing countries, now called the Mason Fellow Program, as his crowning achievement. Perhaps it was because he could see a bit of himself in each Mason Fellow, many of whom had risen from humble beginnings to go on to improve the lot of their fellow man.

Ed Mason remained active in HIID long after his retirement from teaching. At age 75, he led a major study of Korean development, published in ten volumes, and at age 85 he wrote a carefully researched history of the first decades of the Institute. He continued to come to his office at HIID every morning until a stroke made that physically difficult. The last five years of his life were spent in California, where he was close to his family and where he died on February 29, 1992 at the age of 93.

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