

## We Need Another Hero

**W**e are all looking for a hero. Someone who performs extraordinary tasks, acts with vision (as if they came back from the future), and always appears when you need them most. One who is strong, one who is sure, one who is bred for the fight. Norman Hackerman was a hero to many. He started like many, doing corrosion and other studies, but then began to do extraordinary things. He didn't take measurements, he made breakthroughs. He didn't just serve on university committees, he became President of the University of Texas, then President of Rice University. He didn't use a racquet, he played handball. He didn't win awards, he received the National Medal of Science from President George H. W. Bush. Forming opinions appeared to come easy for Norman, and his opinions were good and wise. Professor Allen Bard tells the story of how he was hired sight unseen by Hackerman after a phone call. Humans don't usually do things like this.

In Norman's spare time, he edited the *Journal of The Electrochemical Society* (JES). But he didn't just edit it, he transformed it from *Transactions of The Electrochemical Society* to JES in 1948. Then he served as editor for the next 40 years, and this was in addition to being President of ECS (1957-58), President of The University of Texas (1967-70), and President of Rice University (1970-85). One of Norman's greatest assets was his ability to compartmentalize the different facets of his life and focus on the task at hand.

In 1957 JES editorial, Hackerman wrote about what motivates researchers: "The incentive for research almost certainly includes any one, or any combination, of the following: gain, fame, satisfaction ... there is a greater bias toward the last item—satisfaction." When Norman told stories, they were often of overcoming obstacles. You could feel his satisfaction in having achieved something for the greater good.

Norman is no longer with us. The details of his accomplishments over the past seven decades are being written. He met every challenge and was there for us all. We need heroes because when the issues get thick or the tasks seem overwhelming, heroes help make the impossible, possible.



**Paul A. Kohl**  
*Editor*

