

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



John E. Fetzer (1901-1991)

John Earl Fetzer was born on March 25, 1901, in Decatur, Adams County, Indiana, USA. His parents were John Adam Fetzer (1870–1903) and Della Frances Winger Fetzer-Pyle (1870–1958). In 1926, Fetzer married Rhea Y. Yeager Fetzer (1901–1988). On February 20, 1991 (aged 89), at Honolulu, Honolulu County, Hawaii, USA., John E. Fetzer passed away. He was then buried at the Mountain Home Cemetery Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, Michigan.¹

When Fairview Hall was being renovated, John E. Fetzer, a descendant of Christian Wenger, pledged \$40,000 to the renovations on the condition that addition members of the Wenger family would donate \$60,000.² After receiving many donations from the Wengers, the renovated Fairview Hall was renamed the Christian Wenger Center for the Humanities, housing offices and seminar rooms for the departments of English, history, and religion and philosophy.³



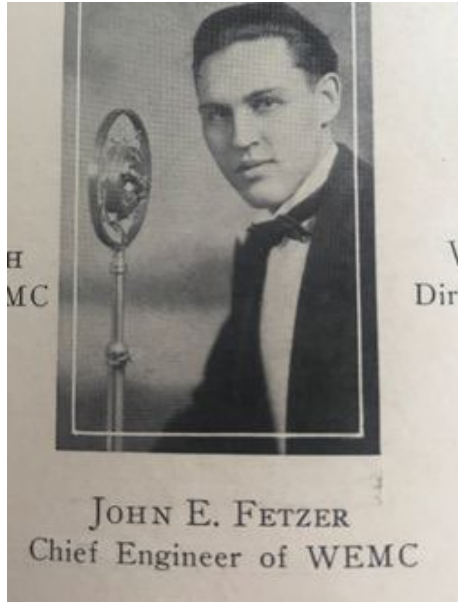
The Find a Grave website detailed John E. Fetzer's interest and involvement in the broadcasting industry:

¹ "John Earl Fetzer," Find a Grave, accessed July 2, 2024.
https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12317294/john_earl-fetzer.

² Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 261-262.

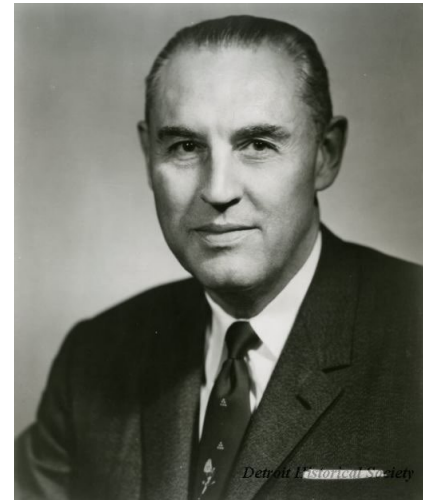
³ Williamson, 262.

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“It's 1950 and broadcasting pioneer John E. Fetzer has a dream. For nineteen years, WKZO 590 AM, his Kalamazoo radio station, fills the West Michigan airwaves. Now Fetzer turns to television. With a group of engineers and a room at the Burdick Hotel in downtown Kalamazoo, Fetzer's dream is soon a reality and WKZO-TV 3 debuts as West Michigan's CBS affiliate on June 1, 1950. Six years later, the television and radio stations are moved to their current home on West Maple Street in Kalamazoo. The remodeled car dealership has undergone extensive changes throughout the years and will house Channel 3 into the next millennium. Through the 1950s and 1960s, viewers enjoy a variety of local live shows. Monday through Friday, kids are the stars of the ‘Channel 3 Clubhouse,’ a West Michigan staple until 1983. Many baby boomers make their television debuts on the Clubhouse. Saturday is for Rem Wall

and the Green Valley Boys on the "Green Valley Jamboree." Their country-western music is a hit for years, and members of the original band still perform now and then. Fetzer takes on another challenge in the early 1960s when he purchases the Detroit Tiger baseball team.⁴ WKZO becomes the television home of the Tigers in West Michigan to the delight of thousands of viewers who witness the team's World Series win in 1968. Color television comes to Channel 3 in 1968 with the station's first color film processor. ‘Living color’ is a big step, but is consistent with John Fetzer's willingness to embrace technology and take risks. Throughout the 1970s, WKZO and ‘NewsActive 3’ cover West Michigan events. The remote cameras are seen in Holland at Tulip Time, in Grand Rapids for the Festival of the Arts, in Battle Creek at the Balloon Festival and in Kalamazoo for the Holiday Parade. From elections to festivals, Channel 3 is West Michigan's choice for local television! In 1985, John Fetzer sells the television and radio stations and retires.”⁵



⁴ Jean-Paul Benowitz, Peter J. DePuydt, “Elizabethtown College” (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 16.

⁵ “John Earl Fetzer,” Find a Grave, accessed July 2, 2024.
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