

Grover Cleveland “Cleve” Backster, Jr. (Feb. 27, 1924 – July 1, 2013)

The American Association of Police Polygraphist is saddened to announce that Mr. Cleve Backster died on July 1, 2013 after a long illness. Mr. Backster was a long-time friend and member of the AAPP and 2007 winner of the AAPP's Max Wastl Sr. Award.

In 1948 Cleve Backster received his specialized training from the late Leonarde Keeler, a pioneer during the early history of polygraph usage. Earlier, Mr. Backster's military service included active duty in the West Pacific as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy. He later served as an interrogation instructor in the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Corps. After military service Mr. Backster accepted a position as an interrogation specialist with the Central Intelligence Agency, where, in 1949, he instituted their still active polygraph program. In 1962 Mr. Backster founded The Backster School of Lie Detection.

Prior to his founding The Backster Research Foundation, Inc., in 1965, Mr. Backster was Chairman of the Research and Instrument Committee of the Academy for Scientific Interrogation, a post to which he was reappointed for eight consecutive years. During his intensified research activity, which started in 1958, he consolidated, refined and expanded upon the then existing polygraph techniques. This effort resulted in the development of the Backster Zone Comparison Technique and the first system for the numerical evaluation of polygraph charts. These developments have been generally adopted as the standard throughout the polygraph. Mr. Backster was a Charter Member and is now a Life Member of the American Polygraph Association. In 1997 he was the recipient of their Leonarde Keeler Memorial Award and in 2003 the John E. Reid Memorial Award for Distinguished Achievements in Polygraph Research and Teaching or Writing. In 2006 the APA Board of Directors established the Cleve Backster Award.

In addition to having been a professional observer of human psychophysiological tracings since 1948, starting in 1966 and continuing to date Mr. Backster has conducted extensive research related to observed electrical responses in plant life and at a cellular level in other living organisms. His research into what has been called “The Backster Effect” has attracted world- wide attention. He has lectured extensively before academic and scientific groups where he has reported upon the progress of this ongoing research. In 1996 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy from the California Institute for Human Science and an Honorary Doctorate of Science from the Medicina Alternativa Institute, affiliated with the Open International University for Complementary Medicines.