

# Interama's

# Muskat: *He's That Rare Breed— A Practical Idealist*

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*'I never plan  
for failure;  
'I plan only  
for success.'*

—Dr. Irving E. Muskat

By **NIXON SMILEY**  
Herald Staff Writer

At last Irving E. Muskat can relax. His five years of constant driving to make Interama a reality was capped by success when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill authorizing a federal exhibit at the huge Miami center.

But if Muskat can relax, so can his family, his friends, and his associates; so can Washington; so can political and industrial leaders.

**For none of these people or institutions has had much chance to relax since 1961 when Muskat became chairman of the 11-member Inter-American Center Authority and began giving full time to selling Interama.**

"Dr. Muskat has been the catalyst who put all the efforts together after years of work to make Interama a reality," said David W. Walters, secretary-treasurer of the Interama authority.

"All of the authority members have done their part, and so have the governor and Florida's delegation in Congress. But Dr. Muskat has given his full time and energy to the job — and it's been tremendous."

## *'Sold' Two Presidents*

IN SELLING Interama, Muskat always drove to the top of the pyramid — to the head man. Subordinates fell before his advances like corn shucks as he pushed in to see industrialists, bankers, congressmen, cabinet members, presidents of the United States.

Once he got his foot in the door of the highest and the mightiest he almost invariably sold his ware — his concept of Interama as the showcase of democratic government and industry working hand in hand; of Interama as a meeting place of the Americas; of Interama as a tropical playground for millions of visitors to Miami.

He sold Interama to two presidents, first to Kennedy and then to Johnson.

"I have completed my obligation," Muskat said before leaving Wednesday for Washington to set the wheels moving on the building of Interama's International Area. "It's now time to bring in a general manager of high caliber to run the show."

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## *You Don't Forget Him*

**WHAT KIND** of man would give up five years of his time without hope of compensation to take a selling job like Interama?

To watch Muskat in action was to wonder at him and to admire him, even when you were irritated by the friction his energy created; but only his family and his close friends understand him.

He has received no salary, and, although his expenses have been paid, he estimates that the job has cost him at least \$20,000 a year in the neglect of his research and his business.

**When a magazine writer asked his wife, Dorothy, to size up her husband it required little reflection for her to answer:**

"Muskat is Muskat."

What more could be said? For Muskat is one of those rare persons about whom it is said that after he was made the mold was thrown away. He looks different. He thinks different. He is different.

Once you meet this five-foot-six-inch, somewhat stocky man with his jet black hair, now graying about the temples, you never forget him.

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## Holdings Some 200 Patents

MUSKAT IS a scientist, one-time college professor, businessman, intellectual. But in his actions he does not fit the public's image of any of these. For he is highly articulate, gregarious, dominating. He is an idealist, yet intensely practical.

Muskat is 60, or believes he is. The best he can figure he was born in 1905, but is unsure of the date. He selected Dec. 25 himself, because everyone must have a birthday and that seemed like a convenient date to remember.

**But if he has trouble proving the date of his birth to qualify for Medicare at 65 it shouldn't bother him, because he will be quite capable of paying his doctor bills. He has some 200 patents and draws royalties on many of them.**

Muskat was born in Germany but doesn't know where. His parents died while he was very young. He was brought to the United States as a boy and grew up in Marietta, Ohio.

He sailed through high school and got his bachelor's degree from little Marietta College when 19.

It took him but one year to get his master's degree from the University of Chicago, and, two years later, at 22, he was awarded a Ph.D. degree in chemistry.

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## Stieglitz His Mentor

HE WAS IMMEDIATELY taken on the faculty by Prof. Julius Stieglitz, head of the chemistry department. Other members of the faculty included Arthur Compton and Robert A. Millikan, Nobel prize winners who were working on the basic concepts that made the A-bomb possible.

"These were not only outstanding scientists, but men of ideals and great vision — men who had confidence in their fellow man," Muskat said. "They had tremendous drive and an endless source of energy. But they were demanding perfectionists and not at all easy to work with."

Muskat was unaware that he also was describing some of his own qualities. For his life has been guided by the impact these men left on him, particularly, Prof. Stieglitz, and it has been costing the nerves of his family, friends and associates ever since.

A large photograph of Stieglitz hangs in the study of his home at 4975 N. Kendall Drive. To him Stieglitz attained the ultimate in perfection as scientist, teacher and benefactor; and many times every day he is home Muskat is reminded of the example set by this outstanding chemist.

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## 'I Never Plan for Failure'

TO HAVE BEEN associated for several years with such men; to know that he had the mental capacity and the stamina to work under such giants of intel-

lect and perfection, must have done a lot to boost Muskat's confidence.

Something sure has. For there are few persons who move about the world with greater certainty than Irving Muskat.

He has never admitted failure; and if you work for him you don't dare tell him a thing can't be done. His mind entertains no alternatives.

When asked what course Interama might take if Congress failed to approve a federal exhibit, which he viewed as necessary for Interama's success, Muskat looked like a man who had been slapped.

"I never plan for failure; I plan only for success," he snapped.

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## Process Saved GI Lives

THIS IS the attitude that has helped to make Muskat one of the world's outstanding authorities in plastics chemistry.

While at the University of Chicago, Muskat worked out the basic chemistry that helped Du Pont develop the first practical tire made of synthetic rubber.

**During the early part of World War II Muskat did research that led to the present day fiberglass-plastic lamination industry.**

The Army Air Corps grabbed him from Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co., whose research department he headed after leaving the University of Chicago in 1934. Six months later he came up with a new compound, polyester resin, which, when used to laminate fiberglass over the exterior of airplane gas tanks, made them resistant to flak and bullets.

This discovery saved millions of dollars worth of aircraft and countless lives of Allied airmen.

Today tens of thousands of boats and many other products are made of fiberglass-plastic lamination.

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## No Gimmick Theme to Him

BUT THE MONTHS of virtual imprisonment under which Muskat was kept while working on this vital wartime project — because of his German background — was an experience he was never to forget. It awakened his appreciation for individual freedom and probably contributed to his determination to put over Interama as a showcase to display the "American Way of Life — Progress With Freedom."

This isn't a gimmick theme with him. He believes that science and industry, working under conditions where the individual can maintain his freedom and integrity, can solve the world's problems of ignorance and poverty.

Muskat moved to Miami in 1955 to retire after selling his Marco Chemical Co. of Linden, N.J., which he had formed in 1942.



War Plane Part  
... developed by Muskat



Dr. Irving Muskat Pauses in His Office as Interama Architects Confer in Background.

But he was not the kind who could loaf. The quest for the perfect plastic had haunted him for years. It was a plastic that would remain pliable until molded and set, after which it would stand up against time, weather and harsh chemicals.

Muskat set up a laboratory at the south campus of the University of Miami and went to work with some assistants.

Although he failed to find the plastic he sought, he found another, known as SMA Resin, which is widely used in household cleaners and in paints. It is manufactured by Sinclair Petrochemicals Corp. in a large plant at Channelview, Texas, and every housewife who buys one of the many products which contains this plastic pays a small royalty to the Muskat family, particularly to the Muskats' two daughters, who own most of the rights.

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## *Helped GM Make Corvette*

**YOU WOULD** think that after Muskat took over the tough job of selling Interama in 1961 he would find no time to work with plastics. But every time he saw the picture of his old professor and mentor, Stieglitz, he was haunted by his failure to meet the goal he had set — the perfect plastic.

"I wanted a plastic that would make it possible to stamp out a boat in 10 minutes which now requires 10 man-hours of work," Muskat said, thumping his desk.

**In his mind such a plastic would revolutionize the automobile and construction industries, making it possible to stamp out fiberglass-plastic automobile bodies and building materials in mass production.**

Nobody knows better what kind of plastic is needed. He helped General Motors to set up its method of making the fiberglass-plastic body of the Corvette, the only American-made plastic automobile body. But the use of polyester resin with fiberglass is a cumbersome way to make a boat or an automobile body. The resin doesn't lend itself to mass production.

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## *'I'm on a Warm Trail'*

**SO, EVEN WHILE** Muskat was selling two presidents of the United States on Interama, as well as countless industrialists and Latin American leaders, he was working on his "perfect plastic."

No, he hasn't spent hours and days in a laboratory. His work is done in his mind. To him plastics chemistry is an intellectual process. He first constructs a plastics molecule in his mind, then puts it on paper.

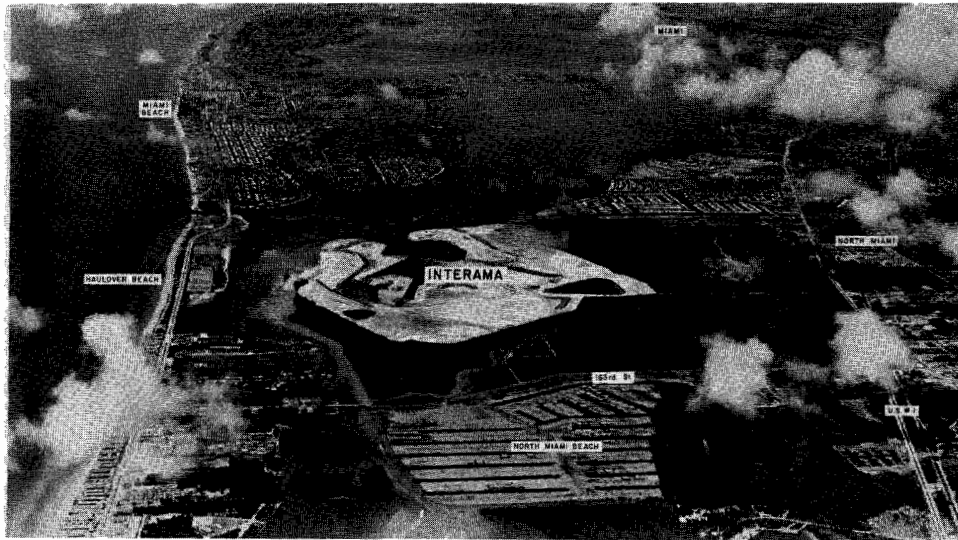
**The practical process of constructing the molecule takes place in the laboratory. Technicians do this work.**

"I think I'm on a warm trail," he said 10 days ago while waiting on President Johnson to sign the Interama bill.

He firmly believes he will come up with the perfect plastic. No one would dare to suggest that such a discovery might have to await another generation of scientists.

You just don't say such things to this man if you want to get along with him. Genius is difficult enough when not antagonized.

# Federal Action Unlocks \$50 Million



**Interama's 680-Acre Site Already Has Been Cleared**  
*... start of construction of buildings should come this year*

President Lyndon B. Johnson's signature on a bill authorizing a federal exhibit at Miami's Interama automatically unlocks some \$50 million of funds and insures the beginning of work this year on the center.

It is expected to take three years to complete and will give jobs to 54,000.

When in full operation upward of \$500 million will have been spent on filling the land, on roads, parking lots, buildings, landscaping, exhibits and concessions.

Permanent jobs will be provided for 100,000, a percentage of which will be Latin Americans in the International Area.

A feasibility survey made by Economics Research Associates of Los Angeles estimated that 75 million will see Interama in its first five years of operation.

The economic impact on Florida, and especially Miami, is likely to be fantastic.

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THE 680-ACRE prepared site on which Interama will be built is located on the upper mainland shore of Biscayne Bay, south of NE 163rd St. Another 1,020 acres of undeveloped area is available for expansion.

The 680-acre area is about the same size as the New York World's Fair, but it will be surrounded by parking lots and a transportation system will make it possible for the visitor to travel effortlessly from one area to another.

State Road Department funds of \$3 million are available to begin work immediately on interior roads and on the NE 163rd St. entrance. Another \$4 million will be available next year for completion of two other entrances, including a major interchange at the main entrance on Biscayne Blvd.

Chelsia Senerchia, state road board member from an arrangement with North Dade County, said bids on planned work could be let as soon as Gov. Haydon Burns gives the word.

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INITIAL SOURCE of construction funds will be a \$22 million loan by the U.S. Community Facilities Administration for the construction of a federal building and pavilions for the Latin American nations to house their exhibits.

This must be repaid from admission revenue, estimated to be more than sufficient for this purpose. Interama also will have to meet the obligations of a \$21-million bond issue.

The \$9.5 million appropriated by Congress for the federal exhibit will cover the \$7.5 cost of the exhibit and \$2 million to operate it for two years.

This will be a large and important exhibit, housed in a beautiful building designed by Edward Durell Stone. It will have a dominant location at Interama.

Arrangements have been made with utilities companies to bring power, gas and telephone service to the area; while sewers and water will be supplied through Miami.

The basic plan, made by Architect Robert B. Browne and an Interama staff, has been ready for some time. A model of Interama is being hurried to completion for public inspection.

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MUSKAT SAID before leaving for Washington that industries showing interest in Interama would be contacted as soon as the proper administrative facilities could be set up.

"We've never made any formal contracts with any industry or concession," Muskat said. "But we have talked with many informally and unofficially and there has been a very wide and substantial interest."

"I can see nothing to prevent an early beginning of Interama," Muskat said. "We've got everything pretty well set up for the next big step."

In Washington Friday, during a conference with Secretary of Commerce John Connor, Muskat said he expects Interama to open its doors on Independence Day of 1968. The Commerce Department will survey U.S. industries for possible exhibitors, while the State Department will do the same for Latin American countries.