

D. S. CLARK: Triple-threat man

DONALD S. (for Sherman) Clark is probably one of the few men in these parts who can wear three hats at the same time, not only efficiently—but even comfortably. One job is enough for most men; it takes three to occupy Don Clark. At Caltech he serves three masters; the faculty, as professor of mechanical engineering; the administration, as director of placements; and the alumni, as secretary of the alumni association.

It takes efficiency and organization to keep three jobs like this going full tilt, and efficiency and organization are two of Don Clark's strongest points. He operates from a central location on the first floor of Throop Hall, with the assistance of seven female office-workers, who are more generally referred to as his harem. Four of these ladies are concerned with placement activities, two work on alumni affairs, and one serves as Clark's personal secretary. All of them know their boss as a man who can handle a staggering amount of work himself, and so expects at least as much of everyone else—as a man who never forgets anything, never loses anything, and never throws anything away.

Don Clark became director of placements in 1936, shortly after the office was established at Caltech. In this position he now fills about 400 jobs a year, including part-time jobs and summer work for students, permanent employment for seniors and graduate students and new positions for alumni. Each year more and more organizations send interviewers to the campus to recruit students, and it is Clark's responsibility to see that the two groups make contact. As a matter of record (to give you an idea of the thorough records the placement office keeps), in the past academic year D. S. Clark ate lunch with a total of 394 company representatives on the campus, sitting down with the first on October 14, getting up with the last on April 27, sometimes taking on as many as 16 at a throw, and rarely missing a single workday.

Don Clark once served a two-year term as a director of the alumni association, and for four years he functioned as editor of *Engineering and Science*, but his main contribution to the alumni has been as secretary of the alumni association. He took the job for a year, in 1946—and has been the strong right arm of the alumni organization ever since. Each succeeding slate of alumni officers usually makes certain that Don will still be on the ticket before it chooses to run itself. In this position, Don runs the alumni office at the Institute,

helps plan all alumni events each year, helps committees and the alumni board of directors carry out details of their work, attends the monthly meetings of the alumni board (and keeps a spectacularly detailed set of minutes), handles all correspondence dealing with alumni matters and with membership in the alumni association, and keeps in touch with all alumni association chapters.

None of this considerable activity, however, seems to detract from Don Clark's main interest and chief job—which consists of teaching and research in the field of physical metallurgy. Of his many jobs, the most stimulating and satisfying to him is teaching. He began teaching engineering materials and processes to undergraduates in 1930-31 — which was the first time the course was given here—and he's still at it today. He also handles graduate courses in metallography laboratory and in physical metallurgy.

His research in the dynamic behavior of metals and alloys has already (1) earned him membership on the board of trustees of the American Society for Metals in 1939-40; (2) won him the Richard H. Templin Award of the American Society for Testing Materials in 1949; (3) won him the Charles B. Dudley Medal of the ASTM in 1951; (4) made him the Edward DeMille Campbell Lecturer of the American Society for Metals in 1953.

The most recent of his professional honors is the most important of all, though. As national vice-president of the American Society for Metals he is currently the nominee for the office of president of the ASM, and is heading for election at the society's annual meeting this fall.

Don Clark was born in Springfield, Mass., on December 27, 1906. He grew up in Burlington, Vt., and was scheduled to study engineering at Cornell when his father decided to go into business in California. Don hastily applied at Caltech, which agreed to let him take his entrance exams under rather special circumstances. Since, on the day of the exams, Don, his mother, and the family car had got only as far as Albuquerque, New Mexico, Don was sealed up in a storeroom at the University of New Mexico for two days to work on the long series of exams.

As it turned out, he didn't do very well on one of these exams; in fact, there was some doubt about admitting him to Caltech at all, but he put on such a fiery display of confidence in his own ability to do the

*Donald S. Clark,
professor of mechanical
engineering, director
of placements, and
secretary of the Caltech
Alumni Association.*



work that he was promptly taken in—and has been proving ever since how right he was.

After he received his BS from Caltech in 1929, Don went on to get his MS here in 1930 and his PhD in 1934. He began teaching here as a graduate student, and he's been at it ever since—attracting additional duties like a magnet.

Along with everything else, he has functioned for many years as secretary of the faculty in mechanical engineering. He has written two textbooks—*Engineering Materials and Processes*, with William Howard Clapp; and *Physical Metallurgy for Engineers*, with W. R. Varney. During the war he added three or four more jobs to his normal quota by working on the Caltech rocket project, supervising development projects for the War Production Board and the OSRD, and teaching night training courses in metallurgy.

From his active life Don Clark manages to eke out a certain amount of spare time. Some of it goes into growing camellias and roses, but his real hobby is book-binding. Like the good Yankee he is, he manages to turn this hobby to a good practical purpose by binding—not rare old quartos and folios—but all the publica-

tions of the half-dozen technical societies to which he belongs. These impressive volumes line the walls of his office at the Institute, and provide an invaluable reference library for his colleagues and students (who sign out the carefully indexed books, just as in any professional library).

From 1935 to 1942 Don was Resident Associate of Dabney House on the campus. Since then he has lived, with his mother, in San Marino. (As evidence that being a bachelor has its advantages—he's the only member of the faculty who comes to work every morning in an air-conditioned Cadillac). He is still a demanding teacher, though nothing like as demanding as he was in his early days. Even before the first term was up, in his first year of teaching at Caltech, his punch-drunk pupils had given him the nickname "Butch." Today his students are more inclined to call him "Doc," which can only mean one of two things—Clark is getting mellow or students are getting tougher.

His office staff supplies a clue. As an indication of the affection and regard in which they hold their boss, the harem presented him with a nameplate for his desk a couple of Christmases ago. It says: "Simon Legree."