

Jack E. McKee

1914-1979



Jack E. McKee, professor of environmental engineering, died on October 22 after a long illness. He was 64. McKee had been a member of the Caltech faculty since 1949, coming to the Institute after three years as a partner in the consulting engineering firm of Camp, Dresser, and McKee of Boston, Massachusetts. For ten years he was again an active member of that firm, beginning in 1965.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, McKee took his BS in civil engineering at Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1936. He received an SM in 1939 and an ScD in 1941 in sanitary engineering, both from Harvard University. In 1973 he was awarded the honorary degree of DEng from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

During World War II, McKee served with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. His principal assignment was as sanitary engineer for civil affairs and military government in the First U.S. Army headquarters during the invasion of Normandy.

McKee was widely honored for his research on water quality and waste treatment. Among those research efforts were work on water-quality criteria, disinfection of settled sewage, membrane-filter analysis, radioactive substances in sewage and sludge, marine waste disposal, and reclamation of waste waters. He was the author of 89 technical papers, including the compendium *Water Quality Criteria*, the first book of its kind to summarize and evaluate what was known of the toxicity of various elements and compounds occurring in water supplies. It has become a classic in its field, and has even been translated into Japanese.

His professional interests were also expressed in his energetic participation in technical societies. Between 1957 and 1963 he served as director-at-large, vice president, and president of the Water Pollution Control Federation. He

was president of the Los Angeles Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1960 and a national director of that organization from 1965 to 1968. He was a member of the National Academy of Engineering, a diplomate of the American Academy of Environmental Engineers, and served as chairman and trustee of the Environmental Engineering Intersociety Board. In 1965 he was appointed to a three-year term on the prestigious Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards of the Atomic Energy Commission.

McKee's energy and optimism stood him in good stead when he came to Caltech and found himself the only faculty member in his field. He developed a teaching and research laboratory in one of the "temporary" World War I bungalows, demolished in the late 1950s to make way for Page House. Long before anxiety about the environment became popular, he pushed ahead with plans for the expansion of the environmental health engineering program — with new labs and additional faculty to be housed in the Keck Laboratory, which was built in 1959. And he had a warm and continuing interest in and concern not only for his own students but for engineering education in general.

One of Jack McKee's non-professional interests was the Caltech Dixieland Jazz Band. This group of near-professional quality musicians was organized by McKee several years ago, drawing its members from the ranks of Caltech faculty and students. His instrument was the banjo, and he played it with both skill and enthusiasm. A memorial service was held for McKee on November 20, and at his request music of his choice was provided by the Dixieland group.

McKee is survived by his wife, Dorothy, and three children, Douglas, Edward, and Katherine McKee. A memorial fund has been established at Caltech in his honor. □