

# RICHARD W. SUTTON

1900-1966

*Richard M. Sutton, Caltech professor of physics and director of relations with secondary schools, died on March 29 of a heart attack at the Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena. He was 66 years old. At a memorial service for Dr. Sutton, held in Dabney Hall on April 1, President DuBridge delivered a tribute—printed here in part—to his colleague and friend.*

Richard Sutton was born in Denver, Colorado, on January 23, 1900. He received his bachelor's degree at Haverford College in 1922 and then served as instructor in physics at Miami University in Ohio for three years. While at Miami, Dick met a lovely physical education student named Grace Leeds, and they were married in 1924. They then came to Pasadena where Dick pursued his graduate studies. He received his PhD in physics at Caltech in 1929 and stayed on as a research fellow for two years.

In 1931 Dick went back to his alma mater—Haverford College—where he taught physics continuously during the next 25 years. He was chairman of the department during his last 12 years there. After two years as professor of physics at Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland, Ohio, he returned to Caltech as professor of physics and director of relations with secondary schools.

During his 25 years at Haverford College Dick Sutton became famous as one of the leading physics teachers in the country. Many of his students went on to successful careers. But Dick became chiefly noted for extraordinary imagination and ingenuity in designing lecture and laboratory experiments illustrating basic principles and phenomena in physics. His *Demonstration Experiments in Physics* has been a handbook for physics teachers since 1938.

Dick's work in science—indeed Dick's whole life—was based on his keen interest in students, his love of people, on his ingenuity, his exceptionally keen powers of observation, and his wide range of interests. He continually surprised his friends, and even his family, by the many interests which he



pursued with care, with diligence, and with imagination. He was a student of history, especially of the southwestern part of the United States. He made an extensive study of the explorations of the Grand Canyon. He studied the life of General Fremont and other major figures in the history of California and the West. He made a hobby of genealogy and compiled the genealogies of many important figures in the early colonial history of the United States.

Dick was a lover of music. He played the piano and the flute, and he loved to sing. In recent years he became interested in art and used to go out sketching and doing pastels and water colors.

His interests were so many that he was never idle. His sons told me that once while they were climbing in the Grand Tetons they were caught in a storm and had to take refuge in a small cave. Rather than sitting idly while waiting out the storm, Dick used the walls of the cave as a blackboard and gave his sons an elementary lesson in trigonometry.

Dick was brought up as a Quaker, and this is what attracted him to Haverford—a school of Quaker tradition. He was a minister and elder of the Friends Meeting of Haverford and in recent years a trustee of Haverford College. The Quaker tradition was evident in the firm, quiet integrity of his character.

We shall all miss Dick as a companion, as a friend, as an interesting, interested, and loyal member of the Caltech community.