WALTER HERAM MCNEILL

Professor Walter Hiram McNeill was born in Evant, Coryell County, January 27, 1889, son of Dr. Hiram McNeill, pioneer Texas physician, and Fernine Jane McNeill.

He graduated from the University of Texas in June, 1910, with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. Following graduation he served the Houston and Texas Central Railroad at Houston for more than four years. Later he became associated with the James Stewart Construction Company as a field engineer in Texas and Virginia on various types of construction work, including the erection of Sutton Hall on the University of Texas campus, and construction of army camps and dry docks for the United States government at the time of World War I.

During the later months of World War I, he served as a machine gun instructor in the School of Military Aeronautics in Austin. At the request of T. U. Taylor, Dean of Engineering, he joined the staff of the Department of Drawing in 1918.

He was married to Winfred Hume, a graduate of the University and a resident of Austin, November 27, 1929.

He received the Master of Science in Civil Engineering degree in 1923 and was promoted to the rank of Professor of Drawing in 1939. For 16 years he served as chairman of the Department of Drawing, which he directed up to the time of his retirement on April 30, 1951 on account of ill health. He died on June 6, 1951.

Professor McNeill is survived by his widow and two daughters, Mary Jane and Ann, both students in the University of Texas, and by a brother, Dr. W. C. Jones of Houston, and by four nephews.

Professor McNeill was a member of University Lodge No. 1190, A. F. & A. M.; Tau Beta Pi, honorary engineering fraternity; the American Society for Engineering Education; and the University Club.

As a member of the University Club, he contributed generously to its success, and there he formed many friendships through his interest in pool and billiards.

Professor McNeill devoted many hours of extra service to the University as Chairman of the Engineering Placement Committee from 1936 to 1947. Under his leadership the highly successful placement program of the College of Engineering was developed, almost entirely due to his own efforts.

From 1941 to 1945 Professor McNeill was supervisor of courses in the Engineering Defense Training program and the Engineering, Science, Management War Training program throughout Texas.

Professor McNeill’s chief hobby was fishing. He developed a deep interest in the sport, beginning with the trips he took as a child with his father, and continuing throughout a full life. He enjoyed relating these early experiences in which he and his father would travel in a buggy to the fishing spots and camp on the banks of a stream. One summer, after he had become a member of the faculty, he made a trip throughout the western part of the United States, with two friends, camping and fishing wherever they desired. For the last twenty years of his life very few summers passed in which he did not spend a portion of the time fishing either in fresh or salt water.

He enjoyed the sport thoroughly, and was always a source of enjoyment to his companions.

Professor McNeill was an inspiration to all who worked with him. He was always cheerful and understanding, and ready at all times to cooperate and help his co-workers in any problems that were presented. He always found time to confer with his students in working out any difficulties they might have in their work or in their planning, and gave freely of his advice and experience.

It was his friendliness that attracted students, thus making it easier to help them and for them to present their problems to him. He had an unusually fine ability to devise different approaches to difficult problems—a teaching trait of tremendous value to students whose minds are able to comprehend in differing ways.
In his own duties he was a perfectionist; no detail was too small, no question too time consuming for his careful and thorough attention. Yet, he could delegate responsibility well, and a pleasant and stimulating atmosphere prevailed in his department.

One of the sterling attributes of Professor McNeill, which served as an example to many of his associates, was faithful adherence to a systematic program of thrift. He made a consistent practice of setting aside a certain portion of his income for future needs.

If words could properly express his character, they would reveal a sincerity and a greatness that was most extraordinary if not unique.

He evidently knew that his life was closing some six months before he died and he and his family resolutely set about to make his departure as natural as any other normal occurrence. He contributed a lesson to all who came in contact with him at this time. He did not die lonely. His wife and daughters were smilingly with him to the last moment of his consciousness.

W. W. Dornberger  
S. P. Finch  
C. R. Granberry  
B. E. Short  
C. E. Rowe, Chairman

Filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty by Mr. C. E. Rowe, Chairman of the Special Walter Hiram McNeill Memorial Resolution Committee, December 10, 1951.

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A.W.C., Manager