IN MEMORIAM

CLARIS JESSE SANDERS

Clarise Jesse Sanders was born March 17, 1904 in Mason County, Texas, and died of a heart attack August 17, 1949, in the same county. He received his B. A. from The University of Texas in 1926 and his M. A. from the same school a year later. He began his teaching career at Texas Christian University in 1929. In 1930, he returned to The University of Texas where, except for eighteen months of research work for an independent geophysical company, he remained with the Department of Physics until the time of his death, at which time he held the rank of assistant professor.

Sanders was interested in all nature and possessed a knowledge born of his interests, for he took instinctively to research. This knowledge was varied and immediate; it was detailed of the things that were near him. The grasses that were most palatable to the cattle, the weeds that made the early spring pastureage -- he knew them all and greeted them every year with the same interest with which he observed some new approach to an old problem in physics. He knew how to recognize the symptoms of various ailments of range cattle -- how to judge and market stock -- and how to make any sort of precise and accurate electrical measurement. This interest engendered interest in others. Many of his friends learned to observe the conditions of pastures and stock along the road or otherwise to interest themselves in the simple things of nature.

Some people are born to create, others to appreciate and understand. C. J. was of the latter. Many times he developed the theoretical causes of published effects; but his only record of the work was a few penciled notes. It is unfortunate that the published record of the productivity of a great mind is not more extensive.

His vicarious contributions to science, through his contribution of knowledge and encouragement to his friends and associates, were many. To the student, he was an especially important person. Few men without official capacity have received so many letters from graduates of the University. Many graduates of later years, particularly the best, wrote him; sometimes for technical aid, but more often simply because they remembered him as a friend. When doing their graduate work, they had come to him for two reasons. First, they felt no embarrassment in showing their ignorance, because he was always friendly, rarely critical, and had the knack of setting their reasoning straight in such a way that they were able to use their own knowledge and intelligence in arriving at the answers they needed. And second, he knew many subtle points of theory, tricks of laboratory practice, and saving short cuts in mathematics.

Although he held membership in no church, his daily life was a manifestation of a deep and sincere religion based on a sound philosophy and a high standard of ethics. Regarding children and the church, his views were particularly enlightening. He held that, regardless of the religion -- or lack of religion -- of the parents, the children should be taken to Sunday school or church, because such was part of their American heritage.

Perhaps there is more that should be said of C. J. Sanders as a scientist and as a counselor of his friends, but none of those things could account for the acute sense of loss, of emptiness that his passing caused. Our greatest loss was the loss of a friend.

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