

# **William Cyrus Ballard, Jr.**

*September 1, 1888 — June 11, 1952*

William Cyrus Ballard, Jr., professor of electrical engineering, suffered an attack while fishing on Cayuga Lake and died without regaining consciousness in Memorial Hospital on June 11th.

Professor Ballard was born September 1st 1888 in Baltimore, Maryland; attended Baltimore city schools and graduated from Baltimore City College. He entered Cornell University in 1906 and received the degree of Mechanical Engineer in 1910, majoring in electrical engineering. After a summer with Bell Telephone Company he returned to Cornell as instructor in the fall of 1910; became Assistant Professor of electrical engineering in 1917, and Professor in 1924. In December 1910 he married Ruth M. Murphy of Ithaca He is survived by three daughters, Grace, (Mrs. E. H. Lotspeich, of Terrace Park, Ohio) ; Ruth, (Mrs. R. O. Klausmeyer, of Cincinnati, Ohio) ; and Evelyn, (Mrs. Henry O. Dunn, of Ithaca).

As a teacher, he was noted specially for his lectures. He had an unusual ability to present technical material in clear and simple terms. Over the years, literally hundreds of alumni have remarked about this. This special ability made him much in demand as an expert witness in patent litigation, where frequently rather highly technical material must be explained to judge and jury, usually without much scientific background. He served a long list of industrial concerns and research organizations as consultant.

Directly connected with his teaching, and laboratory work, he organized and taught the first courses in communication engineering at Cornell, became interested in wireless telegraphy as an undergraduate and obtained the first license for an experimental radio station in 1915. This eventually became a broadcasting station in 1923, known as W.E.A.I. and has been operated almost continuously by the University to the present time. He started the vacuum tube laboratory in the School of Electrical Engineering in 1921, and this development led to pioneering work in the field of talking motion pictures in association with T. W. Case of Auburn, New York. The Case Research Laboratory was later organized into Fox-Case Corporation, producers of Movietone pictures.

Professor Ballard was a musician of unusual accomplishments for an amateur. Gifted with absolute pitch and a good tenor voice, he sang in several quartets and church choirs, and in Sage Chapel. In the years when the Cornell Summer School gave courses specially for public school music teachers he taught courses in harmony and counterpoint. As an undergraduate he played the University Chime, and in later years was occasionally called to play it in emergencies when no one else could be found. He played alto horn in the famous Patsy Conway's Band

for some time when its headquarters were in Ithaca. He served as organist for a time in the Baptist Church, and completed 20 years of service as organist of the First Presbyterian Church. In this assignment he combined his electrical vocation with his avocation by designing a complete new electrical action for the Church organ when it was rebuilt.

The author of one of the earliest books on Radio Telephony, (McGraw-Hill, 1922), Professor Ballard was honored by membership in the Sigma Xi, Eta Kappa Nu, and Phi Kappa Phi.

*R. F. Chamberlain, True McLean, B. K. Northrop*