

# Harley Earl Howe

*August 26, 1882 — August 18, 1965*

Harley Earl Howe, born in Linneus, Missouri, began his career as a teacher in a small elementary country school in his native state. It was thus that he entered nearly half a century of active teaching, most of it at Cornell University.

To continue his own formal education he returned in 1904 to the University of Missouri from which he received the Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1906. Then, after two years as a graduate student and teaching assistant at the University of Missouri and a summer term at the University of Chicago, he was granted a scholarship in the fall of 1908 to attend Cornell. He completed the requirements for the M.A. degree in 1909 and for the Ph.D. degree in 1916. His unusual pedagogical perceptions were clearly evident by 1909, and he was then appointed an instructor in physics in the College of Arts and Sciences. He continued teaching in this capacity until 1912 when he accepted an appointment as Professor of Physics at Randolph Macon College, Ashland, Virginia.

In 1918 Dr. Howe returned to Cornell as an Assistant Professor in Physics. For the next 32 years he taught and developed introductory physics courses for students in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, and Home Economics, and in other Cornell divisions. Advanced to full professorship in 1937, he taught continuously until his formal retirement in 1950.

Many of his colleagues and former teaching assistants will recall with nostalgic pleasure those free-for-all discussions in the Monday staff meetings of his courses, when with painstaking care, the week's pedagogical problems were bared with new insights into the art and practice of teaching. Luster was continually added to his reputation. All with whom he associated were constantly stimulated by his warm cheerful humor, by his broad human outlook, and by his contagious example of the dignity of the teacher. After 1950, as Emeritus Professor for fifteen years, he continued in his inimitable, spry, and alert fashion to gently prod his colleagues and former students to see and to uphold the unquestionable verities.

Professor Howe successfully put down in writing his characteristic and well-tested pedagogical style. He published in 1942 a textbook, *Introduction to Physics*. Immediately popular among teachers everywhere, this text went through two editions and was studied by tens of thousands of students throughout the United States and Canada.

During the 1930's Professor Howe very appropriately became a member of the Executive Board of the American Association of Physics Teachers, no doubt his favorite professional organization. During practically all of his active

life he was also a member of the American Physical Society, Optical Society of America, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma Xi, and Gamma Alpha.

His research interests were mainly in the areas of optics, colorimetry, and absorption by organic salts; but he was always primarily a teacher, and it may be fairly said that his real research was in pedagogy.

On August 21, 1913, Professor Howe married Eva Belle Rich of Hobart, New York. A daughter, Marion, was born in 1918 during their last year at Randolph Macon College. Always a devoted husband and father, he especially enjoyed his years in retirement when he had the cherished time to spend with his family, and with them to enjoy the companionship of his many friends and the delights of his University, of his town, and of his country.

*Leroy L. Barnes, Carlton C. Murdock, Lyman G. Parratt*