

# **Burdette Kibbe Northrop**

*June 23, 1893 — October 25, 1957*

The death of Professor B. K. Northrop, on October 25, 1957, came as a shock to associates and students in the School of Electrical Engineering as well as to his many friends throughout the whole Cornell community.

Professor Northrop was born June 23, 1893, in West Danby, New York. His father was a clergyman who later moved his family to Florida. There, as a lad, Prof. Northrop attended school and entered Stetson University from which he transferred into Cornell and graduated with the degree of ME in EE, December 20, 1918.

While still an undergraduate, B. K. Northrop began his teaching career in Electrical Engineering as a student assistant. Upon graduation, he was appointed Instructor in E. E. In 1923, Prof. Northrop left Ithaca to accept an appointment as Asst. Prof. of Physics at Colgate University where he remained until 1929, when he returned to Cornell as Asst. Prof. of Electrical Engineering, becoming Associate Professor in 1943 and Professor in 1946.

In June 1920, he married Mary Etta Thatcher of Ithaca, who survives. Also surviving are two daughters, Mildred (Mrs. Rollin L. Wiseman) of Niagara Falls, and Geraldine (Mrs. Richard L. Jones) of Biloxi, Miss. There are three grandchildren. Professor Northrop was one of four brothers, all of whom entered educational work.

In addition to teaching at Cornell, Prof. Northrop was active in industry during the summers and sabbatical leaves. He was a registered professional engineer in the State of New York. For a total of eleven summer periods, Prof. Northrop worked with W. S. Murray, Inc. at Utica, N.Y. or with the Oneida Community, Ltd., at Sherrill, N.Y. For the former company he worked on the design of an automatic electric welder and on the design and building of a machine for expanding steel tubing. For the latter company, he worked on the improvement of chemical recovery and on special electroplating processes for which he obtained two patents. Since 1937 and during his sabbatical leave, Prof. Northrop was a consulting engineer for the Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company of Milwaukee. In this capacity, he worked on the mercury-arc rectifier and on radio and refrigeration equipment.

Working with the late Prof. W. C. Ballard, Prof. Northrop was one of the pioneers in the development of the electronic-tube machine facilities and high radio vacuum apparatus at Cornell. Together, they also established an early experimental broadcast station at Cornell. Prof. Northrop developed the industrial electronics program of the EE School. During World War II, he was in charge of the Cornell ESMWT radio and electronics teaching program. He published articles in technical journals on subjects in electronics and lightning.

For the past eight years, B. K. Northrop devoted much of his time to advising freshmen in the School of Electrical Engineering. In this capacity, he exerted great influence on many students. To most of the freshmen, he was not only their advisor but also their first friend on the faculty, and, for many, he was their best friend through all five years.

Prof Northrop was also admissions officer for the School of Electrical Engineering, and he was a member of the University Faculty Committee on Student Conduct. Until recently he was also a counselor at frosh camp, and for two terms he served on the Board of Control of Cornell United Religious Work.

Prof. Northrop was a "life member" of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers and was past chairman of the Ithaca Section of that organization. He was also an active member of the Institute of Radio Engineers, American Society of Engineering Education, Eta Kappa Nu, (a professional honorary fraternity), the Power Squadron, and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Prof. Northrup was a member of Acacia Fraternity; a member and past master of the Masonic Blue Lodge, Hamilton, N. Y.; a member of the Methodist Church; and served on the Board of the Wesley Foundation.

The passing of B. K. Northrop is deeply felt by all who knew him. His influence in the college and on the students will never be forgotten.

*C. L. Cottrell, E. M. Strong, W. W. Cotner*