

# Arthur James McNair

*March 17, 1914 — October 31, 1986*

Arthur James McNair, professor emeritus of civil and environmental engineering, was born in Leadville, Colorado, on March 17, 1914, and died in Denver, Colorado, on October 31, 1986. He was the son of Fred J. McNair and Goldie R. McNair. He is survived by one son, Fred P. McNair; two daughters, Adrienne McNair and Virginia L. McNair; a stepson, Wilson Chase; a sister, Florence M. Witt; and many friends and colleagues.

He received his education in the public schools of Leadville and at the University of Colorado, receiving the degrees of B.S. in civil engineering (with special honors) in 1934 and M.S. in 1935 and the professional degree C.E. in 1945. He was elected to membership in the honorary societies of Tau Beta Pi, Chi Epsilon, and Sigma Xi.

Professor McNair was an active teacher of surveying throughout his lifetime. He was an instructor, assistant professor, and associate professor at Colorado State University (1935-49). He was first appointed as an associate professor at Cornell in 1949 and served as professor and head of surveying from 1950 to 1979. Subsequent to his retirement from Cornell he was a visiting professor at Texas A & M University.

His work in combining digital computers with coordinatographs greatly increased the accuracy of measurements over those obtainable from previous methods. The application of these new methods to the measurement of the shape of the thousand-foot radio telescope in Arecibo, Puerto Rico (operated by Cornell University for the National Science Foundation), resulted in the determination of the position of points on the antenna with a tolerance of very few millimeters.

Much of that research at Cornell was funded by the National Science Foundation and other federal agencies. M.S. and Ph.D. candidates in the surveying graduate program also participated in this work. At least a half-dozen of these graduate students are teaching surveying at widely recognized universities. Three of them are authors of textbooks. Others hold responsible positions in various federal or state agencies, and still others have their own private practices in surveying.

Many engineering students remember Professor McNair as their faculty adviser. He always took time to listen to their questions and problems, personal as well as academic. Others remember him as the adviser to the Christian Science group on campus for many years.

Art was a loyal and devoted member of the Cornell community. He served on many school, college, and university committees. During his lifetime he was a member of many professional societies, including the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Society for Engineering Education, the American Society of Photogrammetry, the Canadian Institute of Surveying, and the Colorado Professional Surveyors Association, and an honorary member of the New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors. He was a frequent contributor to the publications of those societies. His papers addressed technical topics as well as the promotion of the surveying and engineering professions.

Art was a member of the American Society of Photogrammetry, president of the society in 1961-62, and an honorary member in 1982. He was the first member of the society to be elected from the academic communities.

During his lifetime he was a frequent participant in professional meetings on photogrammetry and geology in Europe and was awarded a number of scholarships and fellowships in photogrammetry at United States and foreign universities.

*Walter R. Lynn, George B. Lyon*