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OBITUARIES - DONALD COOKSEY

Edwin M. McMillan

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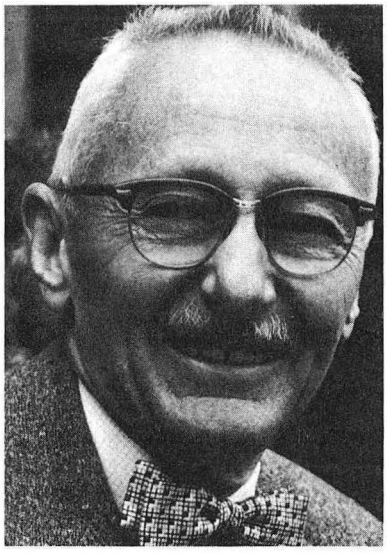
obituaries

Donald Cooksey

Donald Cooksey died 19 August at the age of 85. His role in the establishment and direction of the Radiation Laboratory of the University of California (now the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory) cannot be overemphasized. When Ernest Lawrence came to California from New Haven in 1928, Cooksey was already his close friend; they had first met when Lawrence was a graduate student at Yale University in 1924. The relation continued through long summer visits to Berkeley and through an extensive correspondence. Cooksey came to Berkeley to stay in 1936.

During a visit to the Radiation Laboratory in 1932, Cooksey participated in the first observations of nuclear disintegration by cyclotron-accelerated protons. In 1935 he designed a new and more reliable cyclotron chamber and two years later was the chief designer for a large 37-inch device. That same year he was appointed to the University of California's physics department as an unpaid research associate. When the Regents of the University officially recognized the Laboratory and provided some financial assistance, Donald Cooksey was the first person hired with the title of assistant director. He was named associate director when the position was created in 1943 and remained in that role until his re-



COOKSEY

tirement in 1959 from the Laboratory.

Cooksey's activities in the early, unstructured years of the Laboratory was as a *confidant* and right-hand man to Lawrence and also involved work and leadership in many diverse areas. He was particularly interested in the mechanical shops and in the improvement of design and engineering standards. His dedicated attention to essential details made it possible for Lawrence to devote his time to scientific work and to the raising of financial support, which at that time came principally from private foundations.

Later, his role became more that of the traditional administrator, but he never lost sight of the importance of the human element. He was gracious and friendly to all, and many of the early staff and students received help from him in times of difficulty. He aided in disseminating the cyclotron art throughout the world through correspondence and by the preparation of a *Cook Book of Vacuum Chambers and Associated Parts.*

Cooksey was born in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York on 15 May 1892. As a lieutenant in the US Army Ordnance Department in World War I he helped develop a method for synchronizing machine-gun fire between aircraft propeller blades. He was educated at Yale University, receiving his PhD in 1932, and was a Fellow of The American Physical Society.

EDWIN M. MCMILLAN
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory

TECHNICAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT
LAWRENCE BERKELEY LABORATORY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720