

EARL F. COOK

1920-1983

Earl Cook was a respected and appreciated Honorary Member of the Association of American State Geologists. His administrative career began in 1957 when he was appointed Dean of the College of Mines at the University of Idaho, and hence also by state law the Chief of the Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology and State Geologist. For six years he served in this capacity. In 1963-64 he was AASG president. He left Idaho in 1963 to become Executive Secretary of the Division of Earth Sciences at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. Two years later he moved to Texas A & M University as Associate Dean of the College of Geosciences, becoming Dean of the College in 1971 and serving there for 10 years. Those who knew him at College Station ascribe to his leadership and skill the development of a model college, with a four-fold enrollment growth to 1,000 students by 1981. In that year he stepped down in order to devote more time to the scholarship that he loved. At his death, he held the position of Distinguished Professor of Geography and Geology and the Harris Professor of Geosciences.

Dr. Cook was born in Bellingham, Washington, in 1920. He received his Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Washington in 1954, where he also earned a B.S. in Mining Engineering in 1943 and an M.S. in Geology in 1947. He served as a machine-gunner and squad leader in a cavalry reconnaissance troop in the 9th Infantry Division, U.S. Army, with duty in Europe during World War II.

Post-war professional activities included being a photo-geologist for Geophoto Services in Denver and a contract geologist with Gulf Oil Corporation in Nevada and Utah. He served as Acting Head and Head of the Department of Geology and Geography at the University of Idaho between 1952 and 1956. He was Acting Dean and Acting Chief of the Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology in 1956-57, before becoming Dean and Chief the following year. His scholarly publications included some 100 significant contributions in areas of the geology of the West, energy and environmental issues, limits to the exploitation of nonrenewable resources, the role and history of nuclear industry regulations, and the large-scale problems associated with charting our nation's energy future.

In 1981 Dr. Cook received the Achievement Award, with gold medal, of the Geosciences and Earth Resources Advisory Council of Texas A & M University. For 10 years prior to his death he served on the National Academy of Science's Committee on Risks Associated with Nuclear Power. In 1970-72 he was chairman of the Committee on Resource Development and Environmental Compatibility for the American Institute of Professional Geologists. In 1969-72 he was chairman of the National Affairs Committee of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers; and from 1958 to 1964 he served on the Western Governors' Mining Advisory Council. His book, *Man, Energy, and Society* (W. H. Freeman and Co., 1976) dealt decisively with man's relationship to nature and to energy. This and many of his other writings revealed how well read he was. He had a sweeping historical approach and a comprehensive view of matters of moment to him. He also had a "monumental love affair" with the English language, with

some of his writings being masterpieces of clarity and poignancy. He was not one to jump on "bandwagons" of current thought or trends. He repeatedly stressed the need to view the global energy issue in a systems context. A key thesis was that there is an inherently entrenched resistance in western democratic societies to changes in resource allocation, especially "when the growth of affluence is threatened." He also maintained a healthy skepticism of the "technological fix," including the notion that our energy problems are as much attitudinal as they are technical. He felt that remedial measures for effectively handling the energy crisis must involve both technological breakthroughs and changes in social structures and political cultures in the developed as well as the developing nations. In this respect he was a seer to the future.

Throughout his life Dr. Cook practiced and preached excellence. He was intolerant of shoddy reasoning, sloppy procedures, or sham in personal or public affairs, and especially in teaching and research. But he was also noted for his humor. He was endowed with much charm, which he only forgot on occasions when he felt it necessary to make a quick quip or insert an appropriate phrase to refocus attention on an important point. Those who knew him will also remember his eternal zeal for the tasks of life, and his basic reasonableness. His larger view of individual and group obligations was invigorating to his associates. We will remember him as always aiming at what is right and what is necessary to achieve our potential as individuals and as a nation.

He is survived by his wife, Vi, and three children

Maynard M. Miller
Director
Idaho Geological Survey