



Memorial to George D. Roberts (1910-1980)



Our good friend and fellow Geologist, George D. Roberts, passed away on December 25, 1980, in Los Angeles, California. He was a member of the Association of Engineering Geologists and the Geological Society of America, and was registered as a Geologist, Engineering Geologist or Geological Engineer in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Utah.

George was born May 13, 1910, in Michigan and spent his early childhood there and then moved to New Mexico where he attended high school and graduated from the New Mexico Military Institute. After one year of college in Roswell, New Mexico, he entered the Colorado School of Mines and graduated in 1933 with a degree in Geological Engineering. He worked in a machine shop after graduation until he obtained a job with the Soil Conservation Service more in line with his educational qualifications. His work with the Soil Conservation Service from late 1933 to 1938 included surveying, geological mapping and soil erosion studies in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. In 1938 he joined the Geology Section of the Little Rock District, Corps of Engineers, who were planning, designing and building flood control and hydroelectric dams on the Arkansas and White Rivers. In 1939 George was appointed Chief Geologist for the Little Rock District, a position he held until joining the Navy as an officer in the CEC, in 1942. During a period of about three years in the Navy he prepared a Water Supply Manual for use by the C.B.'s and served as Assistant Civil Engineer in the Fourth Fleet. In 1945, after discharge from the Navy, George

spent nine months with the fledgling engineering geologist group of the U.S. Geological Survey. He returned to the Corps of Engineers as Geologist in the South Pacific Division for a period of about eight years after which he rejoined the Navy Civil Engineer Corps and served in Kodiak, Alaska; Key West, Florida; and Point Magu, California for a period of about six years. George returned to the Corps of Engineers in August, 1959, working in the Seattle District as Chief, Foundations and Materials Branch and as chief Geologist for CEBEMCO on construction of missile bases. He left CEBEMCO in 1963 and worked for Dames and Moore for a two-year period when he again joined the Corps of Engineers, Huntsville District, in connection with construction of missile bases. After leaving the Huntsville District in 1967, George continued his career with Dames and Moore as a staff consultant until 1975.

I first saw George at a dam site location on the Great Salt Plains, Oklahoma, in 1938. I was down on my knees, logging core, when I noticed the size 13 or 14 feet in front of me and I looked up to see a very tall (for 1938) man looking down at the core. I learned in the next few years that this man with the large feet had a heart and intellect of the same magnitude. He was willing to share his knowledge with less experienced geologists, and having an engineer's training, make the problems and work more understandable with regard to design and construction. He was also ready to help financially or by just listening and talking about personal problems.

George expected a full day's work from his geol-

ogists and engineers. He always set a good example by his conscientious efforts in the office and field. In his early days with the Corps of Engineers he had a number of field parties on projects and would spend time in the field with them reviewing the results of their work. The field geologists would occasionally double team George, one going with him in the morning and another in the afternoon, both going at full bore during the time they were with him in an attempt to wear him down. I am sure that George realized what was going on but never asked for any relief. Those who were willing to work hard and exchange honest views with George were rewarded by experiences that prepared them for additional responsibilities and authority.

George fully appreciated the academic and theoretical phases of geology but always emphasized the practical application of the geological knowledge to the design and construction of engineered projects. He strongly advocated detailed geological investigations as a basis for planning exploratory programs. The titles of articles authored or co-authored by George indicate his interest in the practical application of geology.

He is survived by a son, James Roberts, and two grandsons.

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