

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
HANS FREDERICK BIRNIE
(1893 - 1961)

Hans Frederick Birnie was born in Sourabaya, Java, on September 4, 1893. At the age of six he went to Geneva, Switzerland, where he obtained his primary and secondary education. After attending the Federal Polytechnic Institute in Zurich for four years, he was awarded the degree of Engineer in 1916. At Zurich he studied under the world-known professor A. Stodola. From 1916 to 1918 he followed up his engineering studies with a course in General Science at the University of Zurich.

Hans Birnie began his technical career in Europe but came to America in 1920 where his interest in Diesel engines, gas turbines, and aircraft engines made him a valued engineer with more than a half dozen progressive engineering firms. After a visit to his native Java in 1926, he returned to America, where he practiced engineering until 1929. Possibly as a result of the impending depression, Hans Birnie decided to return to Europe and to devote some of his energy to non-engineering pursuits. Thus, the year 1931-32 found him in Paris studying literature at the Sorbonne. It is during this period of his middle years that he published a novel, "Hantise", as well as numerous short stories and poems.

In 1935 Hans Birnie decided to return to the U.S.A. where he remained until 1960. His second American period can be divided into two parts, namely, one of active practice with various engineering organizations, lasting until 1948, and the one of teaching at Stanford.

Professor Birnie's long and varied practical experience before entering the academic world enriched the value of his courses very greatly. His knowledge of his field was extremely thorough, but he did not allow this fact to make his lectures ponderous. On the contrary, he was always attempting to present his thoughts with a keen sense of humor. As a teacher of young engineers, he was very patient and understanding.

At the age of 21, Professor Birnie married Elizabeth Simonin with whom he had a daughter Elaine. His first wife died in 1952 and three years later he married Regine Du Planty who was with him in Morocco vacationing when he died from a stroke on March 23, 1961. He is survived by his widow, his only daughter, and a granddaughter Michelle Mead.

Hans Birnie had a great deal of *élan vital*. He was enthusiastic about his two professions and, besides his literary efforts, he cultivated several additional hobbies: astronomy, travel, photography, painting, and stamps. In his younger years, he was an accomplished mountain climber having scaled Mt. Blanc three times which, fifty years ago, was considerably more of an accomplishment than it is today.

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