

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

DAVID LOCKE WEBSTER (1888 – 1976)

Born in Boston on November 6, 1888, David Locke Webster studied at Harvard where he received his A.B. in 1910 and his Ph.D. in 1913. He served in the Air Force Signal Corps during World War I and after its end became Assistant Professor of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 1920 he came to Stanford as Professor of Physics, serving also as executive head of the Department until 1942. At a time when x rays were in the foreground of atomic research, investigation in this field was intensively pursued and led at Stanford by Webster. Upon the invention of the klystron by his former student Russell H. Varian, Webster immediately recognized the potential importance of this new source of microwaves and not only encouraged but also participated in its development at Stanford before World War II.

At the onset of the war Webster took a leave of absence from the University to carry out research as civilian scientist with the Army's Ordnance Department. His "outstanding performance of duty" as Assistant Chief of the Rocket Research Branch at Aberdeen Proving Grounds was recognized in a Certificate of Commendation.

In 1945 he returned to Stanford where he continued to teach until his retirement in 1954. Far from ending his research at that point, he consulted even in his eighties for the Naval Air Station at Moffett Field on problems of geophysics and his last publications are among the very few contributed by authors of his age. Among professional societies he was a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Physical Society. He was a founding member and former president of the American Association of Physics Teachers.

The great gifts of David Webster were manifested in his teaching as well as his research. In discussing physics, he was not inclined to offer standard answers or refer to "well known" theorems. Instead, he would approach a new problem from fundamental considerations and then proceed with a simplicity of reasoning, possible only for a man of his deep and wide knowledge. Nor were his interests confined to narrow specialties; on a flight in his beloved airplane he was apt to teach the passenger a good deal of aerodynamics not easily to be found in a textbook.

Thoroughly devoted to science and free of all pretensions during his long life, he succumbed on December 17, 1976 to a lengthy illness.

Felix Bloch, Chairman
Paul R. Farnsworth
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