Memorial Resolution for Professor Harry Thompson Avey

As it must to all men, death came to Harry Thompson Avey, Emeritus Professor of Mechanical Engineering, on May 2, 1966 at Oklahoma City. At the age of 87, he ended a long and unusually interesting career.

Professor Avey was born in Blockton, Iowa on January 10, 1879. After graduating from Blockton High School he served as Principal and staff of the Taylor County School for two years. An engineering career beckoned and he graduated from Iowa State College with a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree in 1905.

Following graduation he spent one year with the General Electric Company as a Test Engineer on steam turbines.

In 1906 he went to India where he served in many capacities at Ewing College at Allahabad until 1910. During this period his breadth and versatility permitted him to serve as Engineer in Charge of Construction, Head of Manual Training at the Jumna Boys School, Head of the College Electrical Engineering Department and as a part-time instructor in physics.

Following these years in India he returned to the U.S. in 1910 to earn the degree of Master of Engineering in Electrical Engineering from Cornell University in 1910. On completion of this degree he returned to India to resume his duties at Ewing College, Allahabad, where he remained until 1920.

During this second period in India he met and married Dr. Sarah Ellis Swezey (MD) who was a medical missionary specializing in pediatrics and obstetrics. They had a son Harry Thompson, Jr. who is now a doctor in Oklahoma City (3908 N.W. 44 Street). They adopted a son Charles who took up theatrical work.

On their return to the USA in 1920, Prof. Avey spent a year as a design engineer with the General Electric Co. at Lynn, Mass.

In 1921 he started his 23 years of continuous service at the Milwaukee Extension Division, rising from the rank of Instructor to Associate Professor. Not only did he handle much of the instruction in engineering subjects in those early days, but he also competently served as Supt. of Bldg. and Grounds. He was very highly regarded by his colleagues who still speak of him as "the Salt of the Earth". To quote from a letter written by the Director requesting that he be given emeritus status: "There is no member of our faculty, or perhaps even of the University faculty, who has served the University with more loyalty and diligence than Professor Avey did. In addition to his teaching duties in Mechanical Engineering, he was also Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds and his meticulous care of the physical plant here in Milwaukee was reflected in every department of our activity."
Following his retirement in the summer of 1944, he moved to his wife's family home at Yaphank, Long Island, establishing a practice as a Registered Professional Engineer and Surveyor there. He was also active in community affairs, serving as Treasurer of the local school board and the Presbyterian Church.

With advancing age, the Aveys moved to Oklahoma City to join their son, Dr. Harry Thompson Avey, Jr. Prof. Avey’s wife, Sarah, preceeded him in death as the result of a fall in 1964.

Death claimed this fine gentleman on May 2, 1966 at the age of 87.

Memorial Resolution Committee

J. G. Bailer
M. Freeman
E. Holmes
J. G. Van Vleet
H.W. Wesley