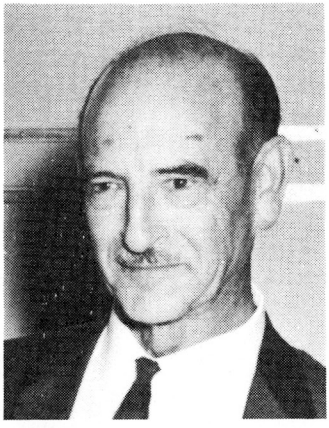
Memorial to Allen S. Cary
1904–1981

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Allen S. Cary was born on 27 June 1904 at Winslow (Bainbridge Island), Washington, and was educated in the public schools in Bellingham, Washington. In 1923 he entered Washington State College at Pullman. Between academic years, his summers were spent as a draftsman or as a packer in the Skagit country of the North Cascade Mountains. This latter work stimulated his early interest in geology, which was to play such an important role in his later career. It was also during this period that his artistic talents began to develop in response to his training as an architect and through his keen observation of landforms.

In 1929 Cary was graduated from Washington State with a B.A. degree in architectural engineering. During the early 1930s he worked for various architectural firms in the Seattle-Tacoma area. He also worked for the federal Civil Works Administration in a land classification survey of Mason County, Washington, and had the responsibility for design and construction of the first ski lodge at Stevens Pass in the Washington Cascades. Later, he served as geological field assistant for the state Department of Conservation and Development and as packer for that organization as well as for the U.S. Forest Service. From these years he developed an ethic for hard work and continued to develop his natural artistic talent toward geologic sketching.

Between 1934 and 1936 Cary attended the University of Washington to receive formal training in geology. Much of this training was under the influence of J. Hoover Mackin, who was later to make a mark in classical engineering geology. After a brief time designing recreation areas for the Civilian Conservation Corps, Cary joined the Seattle District Corps of Engineers in January 1937 as a core-drill inspector during the investigation for Mud Mountain Dam on the White River, Washington. It was during this period that he came under the influence of Edwin T. Hodge of the University of Oregon, who earlier had exerted much influence on another budding engineering geologist, Claire Holdredge. In 1939 Cary spent four months at the North Atlantic Division Laboratory at Ithaca, New York, learning soil mechanics, in order to better understand the problems of constructing what was at that time the highest embankment dam in the world (430 feet). For the next two years he was instrumental in setting up the Mud Mountain Dam soils laboratory and, for all intents and purposes, was the district geologist. By late 1940, with the onset of World War II, his work began to be directed toward construction of airfields, coast artillery emplacements, materiel investigations, and military water supply. In December 1941 he became head of the Seattle District Soils Laboratory responsible for all field investigations for defense projects under design by the district.

In 1945 he became part of the team that studied the potential for development of the Columbia River and its tributaries. This team produced the monumental "308 Report."

He did much of the early geologic work on Priest Rapids, Foster Creek (later to become Chief Joseph Dam), Libby, and numerous other sites throughout the Pacific Northwest. In December 1946 he transferred to the Seattle District Foundations and Materials Branch, and early in 1949 he became chief of the newly created geology section while still performing his duties as district geologist. During this period he supervised investigations for Chief Joseph Dam, becoming chief of the Foundations and Materials Branch in 1953. He supervised investigations for Eagle Gorge Dam (later Hansen Dam) on the Green River of Washington and early investigations for Libby Dam on the Kootenai River in Montana. In 1958 he conducted investigations for the Inchon Harbor project, Korea, and for Rampart Dam on the Yukon River, Alaska. In February 1959 he resigned his position as branch chief to return to his former position as chief of the geology section, a position he held until his retirement from government service in June 1966. He then began a nine-year career with Shannon and Wilson in Seattle, from which he retired in 1974.

A field excursion with Cary was always delightful and included gourmet lunches of smoked whale meat and crackers. He would always carry a mummified prune in the pocket of his field vest, and whenever he became hungry he would take it from his pocket, examine it carefully, then replace it with the remark that he wasn't that hungry yet. A confirmed pipe smoker for most of his life, he brought tobacco preparation and pipe filling and maintenance to a pyschological art form. No question could be answered until the formalities of pipe preparation had been observed. Cary's fondness for applied humor was crowned by the construction and presentation of an "Indian Compass" to some unsuspecting person. After a long description of the use of the apparatus, the punch line was that it always pointed up.

Cary was an active member of several professional groups, including the American Society of Civil Engineers, Geological Society of America, U.S. Committee on Large Dams, American Geophysical Union, American Geographical Society, and Toastmasters International. He was a founding member of the Washington State Section of the Association of Engineering Geologists and a frequent contributor to its activities for many years. His ability to communicate with people and stimulate their interest in the importance of timely geologic investigation provided the Seattle district with a strong base in engineering geology and did much to shape the attitudes of the next two district geologists as well as others with whom he came in contact. His artistic abilities aided greatly in this communication, and the district was left with a considerable legacy of drawings and sketches relating to the geology of sites and areas he investigated.

In the fall of 1976, at the age of 72, he began work on a long-delayed dream of building his own log house. He personally selected trees from his beloved Skagit Valley, and with the help of his step-daughter, peeled, cut, and fitted the logs, completing enough of the work by the summer of 1981 to permit him to move into the structure. There he continued his work until a few days before his death from leukemia on Friday, 13 November 1981. He lived a fruitful and influential life and will not be forgotten.

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