

HARRY POOLE BURDEN

1890 - 1972

Harry Poole Burden, noted educator and President of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers in 1944, passed away on October 29, 1972.

Dr. Burden was born in Lynn in 1890, was educated in the Lynn public schools, and was graduated from the University of Maine in 1912. After working for a year he came to Tufts College in 1913 as an instructor in Civil Engineering, and thus started a career of almost sixty years at Tufts. He progressed through the positions of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and full Professor in 1930, finally in 1936 being appointed Dean of the School of Engineering.

As Dean, he directed the affairs of the College of Engineering with great skill until his retirement in 1957 when he became Dean Emeritus. His talents and contributions as an educator were rewarded in 1953 when Tufts College conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Engineering. The Alumni Association recognized his contributions by awarding him the Distinguished Service Award. His students honored him when the 1957 Year Book of the Tufts Senior Class was dedicated to him. The dedication read: "He has demonstrated his ability to understand the human, as well as the mechanical, side of his engineering students. His aim has always been to avoid letting his students graduate understanding their science but not themselves."

To some men it is given to make their influence felt far beyond the ordinary bounds of their lives. Dean Burden, with his charming wife, Lunetta, made a lasting impression on Tufts College all the years of their tenure. As a Dean he liked to feel that he was closer to his students and to the members of the faculty than he was to research and publication. Although he was an extremely busy and hard working man, no one of his students who had a problem was denied a sympathetic hearing. Faculty members also found him available when they wished to discuss academic problems or personal affairs. The Burden home was always open to students, whether it was for a meal or a night's lodging, and faculty members remember well the hospitality they found here. At the time of the famed Valentine's day storm in 1940 one faculty member found a home for three nights.

The last eleven years of Dean Burden's life were very lonely due to the fact that Mrs. Burden died in July 1961. He lived alone on Latin Way until 1968 when he moved to his last home on Curtis Street. He recovered rather well from a stroke which he suffered in May 1967. Through it all he maintained his interest in everything pertaining to Tufts, and looked forward to visits, not only from his friends, but especially from his former students. He made his last appearance at a Tufts event in May 1971, at the Alumni Dinner of the Civil Engineering Department.

The fine qualities of Dean Burden were admirably set forth by his good friend and colleague, Dr. Alvin H. Howell, in his remarks at the Memorial Service held in Goddard Chapel on November 8, 1972: "The living and lasting monument to Dean Burden is the Engineering College that he handed over to his successor

after twenty-one years as its head, and the alumni who received their education during these years. Harry Poole Burden was a prince of a man. He was kind and modest, completely unselfish, totally honest, and absolutely honorable, one who never did anything improper. His quick wit, sly sense of humor and happy smile revealed the Harry Burden that people admired so much, and loved."