

MEMOIRE

Joseph C. Lawler

1920 - 1982



Joseph Christopher Lawler, son of Joseph C. and Clara M. (Emerson) Lawler, was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, on May 3, 1920. He received a B.S. degree in civil engineering from Northeastern University in 1943, immediately entered the Navy as an ensign in the Civil Engineer corps and spent the rest of the war with a construction battalion in the South Pacific. Discharged in 1946, he entered Harvard that fall to study sanitary engineering under Gordon Fair. He was granted an M.S. in 1947 and joined the small, newly formed Boston consulting engineering partnership of Camp Dresser & McKee, an association that was to continue for the remainder of his life. The firm then comprised at most eight persons in addition to the partners, Dr. Thomas R. Camp, Herman G. Dresser and Dr. Jack E. McKee.

Mr. Lawler's technical competence, appetite for hard work, limitless energy and instinctive business sense soon made themselves felt. He became a partner in the firm in 1952, was named President when the partnership was incorporated in 1970, and was Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer

at the time of his death. Under his leadership Camp Dresser & McKee Inc. had become an internationally known organization employing more than 1200 engineers, scientists and supporting staff, with offices in fifteen states and seven foreign countries and consistently among the top 20 on the Engineering News-Record's "500" list.

While not a prolific writer — his engineering and management activities absorbed most of his time — Mr. Lawler authored more than 25 published papers and technical articles and collaborated with Dr. Camp on three chapters in Davis' Handbook of Hydraulics. He was also a member of the committee that prepared the first edition of ASCE's Manual 37, "Design and Construction of Sanitary Sewers."

He was a registered Professional Engineer in California, Massachusetts, New York, and six other states. He joined ASCE as a student in 1939 and continued his association with the Society throughout his life. He was also an active member of the Engineering Societies of New England (President 1962-1963), a Diplomate of the American Academy of Environmental Engineers, a member of the Water Pollution Control Federation (Director, 1972-1975; member of the Executive Committee, 1972-1973), a member of the New England Water Pollution Control Association (President 1970), a member of the American Water Works Association, a Fellow of the American Consulting Engineers Council, and a member of the National Society of Professional Engineers. He belonged to the British "Institution of Water Engineers and Scientists" and was its United States correspondent. He was elected to The National Academy of Engineering in 1973.

Mr. Lawler was a staunch supporter of Northeastern University, serving as a member of the corporation from 1965, as a Trustee from 1977, and as a Director of the Alumni Association. Northeastern awarded him an honorary Doctor of Engineering degree in 1972, named him Alumni Man of the Year, also

in 1972, and cited him as its Outstanding Civil Engineering Alumnus in 1979. Other Northeastern University honors included membership in Tau Beta Pi and Chapter Honor Member of Chi Epsilon.

The Engineering Societies of New England gave him the New England Award as engineer of the year in 1972. He received the NSPE Professional Engineers in Private Practice Award in 1977, the Gordon Maskew Fair Award of the American Academy of Environmental Engineers in 1979 and ASCE's Parcel-Sverdrup Civil Engineering Management Award in 1982. His Parcel-Sverdrup Management Lecture, delivered at the Society's 1982 spring meeting, was published in the October 1982 edition of Civil Engineering.

Mr. Lawler's interests and activities were not confined to his office and his University. He served his community as a member of its school building committee and as an elected member of the school board. He participated actively in the work of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Greater Boston Council, Boy Scouts of America, and in the Greater Boston United Way annual campaign. A dedicated outdoor sportsman, he was a founding member and a driving force in the New England Chapter of Safari Club International, the Safari Club Conservation Fund, and the American Wilderness Leadership School. He helped organize and chaired the National Academy of Engineering's "Roundtable on Engineering Contributions to the National Clean Water Program" in 1981. Recommendations developed by it for amendment of the Clean Water Act were well received by both the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Senate and are expected to influence future environmental legislation.

Joe Lawler, as he signed himself and was widely known, as a man for all seasons and conditions of man, equally at home with partrician or peon, engineer, banker, or cleric. He died as he lived, active to his final hour, early in the morning on November 18, 1982.

