

EDWARD RAYMOND SHARP

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AN APPRECIATION

DR. EDWARD RAYMOND SHARP died at his home in Cleveland, Ohio, on the 24th July 1961. He died after some months of suffering which he had borne with great fortitude. His passing is mourned by all who knew him.

Ray Sharp—as he preferred to be known—was born in Virginia 67 years ago and graduated in Law at Williamsburg. He served in the U.S. Navy in the First World War and, as a Lieutenant, did escort duty in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean. When he retired from the Naval Reserve as recently as 1942, he held the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

In his work, Dr. Sharp was best known as the Director of the Lewis Research Center of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics now renamed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He joined the N.A.C.A. in 1922 at the Langley Aeronautical Laboratory in Virginia, becoming Administrative Officer. In 1940 he assisted in building for the N.A.C.A. the Ames Laboratory in California. A year later he transferred to Cleveland and became Manager during the reconstruction of the Lewis Laboratory. He was appointed its Director in 1947 and held this position until his retirement at the end of 1960.

The Lewis Research Center is primarily concerned with matters of propulsion and was initially built with equipment for the testing of piston engines and propellers that was second to none. With the coming of the gas turbine, this equipment was extended and modified to embrace the new requirements in terms of capacity, altitude and equivalent air speed. Then, with advancing speeds came the ramjet and the rocket and the transition from air-breathing engines to the propulsion of vehicles in space. And finally, for this latter purpose came the use of nuclear energy and the creation of an entirely new facility still to be administered from Cleveland.

In all this work Dr. Sharp showed great powers of originality and adaptation so that great strides were made without scrapping what had already been created.

In recognition of nearly 40 years service with N.A.C.A./N.A.S.A., Dr. Sharp was given the title of Director Emeritus of the Lewis Research Center in March 1961. Numerous distinctions and awards were made to Ray Sharp in the course of his career, but one he treasured most highly was the N.A.S.A. Medal for



Outstanding Leadership. The citation accompanying this medal so aptly summarises his contribution at Lewis that it is repeated below:—

“This signal honour has been made because you have demonstrated outstanding leadership throughout your career, in the maintenance and improvement of research operations during agency growth; in the training of men to meet the agency needs for critical skills, ranging from the apprentice crafts and trades to the major technical and executive levels; in the development and growth of aeronautical and space research facilities which enabled the Lewis Research Center to meet critical military objectives in World War II and in the administration of the propulsion research programme at the Lewis Research Center.”

In this Country, Ray Sharp was known to a wide circle of friends but especially to the engine people whom he had helped and made welcome in Cleveland

on numerous occasions. Not only did he and his colleagues smooth away our technical difficulties but he made each and every one of us feel so completely at home by taking us into his heart and smothering us with the inspiration, enthusiasm and kindness that were the very essence of Ray Sharp.

Many of us remember Ray at various international aeronautical conferences which he keenly supported. We remember with affection the welcome he gave us when the delegates to the Anglo-American Conference visited Cleveland in 1959. After the heat, bustle and rather impersonal existence of a week in New York, we were made to feel that we were indeed once more members of a family. A few of us who attended the Second International Congress in the Aeronautical Sciences in Zurich in September 1960 vividly recall a pleasant afternoon's cruise on the Lake with Ray, his wife Vera and other friends: we little knew this would be the last occasion. Only in March last he wrote to the writer from his bed of sickness saying he had had a lung removed, was recuperating at a very fast rate and his summer plans were simply the Anglo-American Conference, Farnborough and a nice trip to the Continent.

He was a man of very great spirit and unquenchable cheerfulness.

Dr. Sharp was President of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences in 1956 and had supported its activities throughout his working life. He was a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers, a Fellow of the Canadian Aeronautical Institute and, interestingly, a member of the Newcomen Society. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society in April 1959. His lively interest in our members and their activities did much to cement good Anglo-American relations in the field of aeronautics. He would speak with pride of "our Society" and he meant it.

Wonderful tributes have been paid to Ray Sharp by his colleagues and associates. In this connection we would mention particularly Dr. Hugh Dryden, Dr. Abe Silverstein and the Acting Director, Eugene Manganiello. At this time, however, our thoughts are especially with his widow and his family of two sons and a daughter. Those of us who had the good fortune to know Ray Sharp and whose lives were made the richer thereby extend to them our sincere sympathy in a great loss to us all.—E. S. MOULT.
