



Ralph A. Seban

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1917–1993

BY SALOMON LEVY

RALPH A. SEBAN, professor of mechanical engineering and world-renowned expert in heat transfer and fluid flow, died on June 13, 1993, at the age of seventy-six.

Elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1978, Ralph was a dedicated teacher and researcher known for his technical expertise and his willingness to pass his knowledge and the latest technical advances on to his many students and the broader technical community.

During his career, which extended over forty-five years, Ralph worked on a variety of heat transfer topics, equipment, and conditions. He had more than sixty publications covering boundary layer, pipe, film, and separated flows as well as natural and forced convection, radiation, boiling and condensation, freezing and ice formation, and wall jets. His publications are noteworthy not only because of the breadth of areas covered but also because they are of the highest quality. They generally include both experimental and analytical work. Many of his papers have opened the way for subsequent contributions by others.

Ralph received all of his university degrees, including B.S., M.S., and Ph.D., from the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to his research and teaching on the Berkeley faculty since 1946, he served for seven years as the chairman of the Heat Power Systems Division (1958–1965) and for four years as the chairman of the Mechanical Engineering Department

(1965–1969). During his extended tenure at the University of California, Berkeley, he provided the professional and technical leadership to make the Berkeley heat transfer group one of the world's leading research and teaching centers in that field.

Ralph was an involved member in the heat transfer community and has served in many capacities in professional activities, including the chairmanship of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Heat Transfer Division. He helped organize and contributed to most national and international heat transfer conferences. For his outstanding contributions to education and research in heat transfer and his professional service, he received the ASME Heat Transfer Division Memorial Award in 1963, and he was elected to the grade of fellow in ASME in 1970. He became an honorary member of ASME in 1977 and was awarded the ASME-AIChE (American Institute of Chemical Engineers) Max Jakob Memorial Award in 1980.

Another outstanding contribution of Professor Seban was the number of students he guided through graduate studies. A large fraction of those students went on to become well known in both the academic and the industrial world by applying the same principles of high integrity and quality they had learned from Ralph. In June 1982 several of his students and some of his associates held a special meeting at Berkeley on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. The papers presented at that session were published in a Festschrift issue of the *International Journal of Heat and Mass Transfer* (Volume 25, No. 6, 1982).

Professor Seban was a devoted family man. He is survived by his wife, Jean, who fully supported him in his career and personal life, and by five children. They can all be proud of Ralph's many accomplishments and contributions to the world heat transfer community.

