



Gerald A. McCarthy

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1909-1990

By Wilson V. Binger

GERALD T. MCCARTHY, retired senior partner and chairman of the engineering, architectural, and planning firm of Tippetts-Abbett-McCarthy-Stratton (TAMS) in New York, died on November 21, 1990, at the age of eighty-one. He had Parkinson's disease for many years.

McCarthy was born in Dover, New Jersey, in 1909 and graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1930 with a B.S. in civil engineering, magna cum laude. He joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a junior engineer and spent eight years with the Corps in several offices working on various flood control, navigation, and power projects reaching the grade of senior engineer. During his government service he developed many methods and techniques in hydrology and water resources planning that are still used today.

McCarthy left the Corps in 1938 to join what was then Parsons, Klapp, Brinckerhoff, and Douglas of New York and spent the next nine years working in Latin America; much of this time he was a special partner in charge of the firm's work in Venezuela and Colombia.

After moving back to the United States, he joined TAMS (then known as the Knappen Engineering Company) in 1947, and his name was added to the firm's partnership that same year. Largely through his efforts the firm became engaged in water resources development activities throughout much of the world. Among

many notable projects, he oversaw a countrywide technical and economic survey of Burma in the mid-1950s. He was also much involved in major works in Greece, Morocco, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Turkey. McCarthy retired from TAMS in December 1974 after twenty-seven years of service; during most of that time, he was the acknowledged leader of the firm. He had the vision and imagination that brought the firm to be one of the foremost consulting firms in the United States and the world. He recruited many capable and expert engineers within the firm, some of whom later became partners themselves. He was always quick to recognize and promote talented people.

However, McCarthy's energies were not applied only to his firm. He also found time to provide leadership to the engineering profession, both nationally and internationally. He was president of the International Commission on Large Dams from 1964 to 1967, after having served as vice-president for three years. He had earlier been chairman of the United States Committee on Large Dams. He was president of the American Institute of Consulting Engineers in 1961. He served as a director and as a member of the Executive Committee of the International Road Federation, the presidency of which he declined because of other commitments. He was named an honorary member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and chairman of the National Water Policy Committee. He was a registered professional engineer in seven states, the District of Columbia, and the Panama Canal Zone.

McCarthy was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1973. His other memberships included the National Society of Professional Engineers, the Society of American Military Engineers, the American Geophysical Union, the American Geographical Society, the Moles, the American Water Works Association, the U.S. National Committee of International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (member and cofounder), Tau Beta Phi, Chi Epsilon, Phi Mu Alpha, Kappa Gamma Pi, and Phi Kappa Theta. In addition to his professional memberships, McCarthy was a member of the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre in New York and a member of Saint Teresa of Avila Church in Summit, New Jersey. He had also been a

member of the board of trustees of Canoe Brook Country Club. He received the Distinguished Alumnus of Pennsylvania State University Award.

Much of McCarthy's success, and there was a lot of success, was in my opinion the result of his personality. It was not only dynamic—he always appeared to be the outstanding person in any group—but also represented a real interest in people. He knew all his key employees, a hundred or more, on a first name or nickname basis, and he also knew their hobbies, the names of their wives and children, and so on, which was all made possible by a wonderful memory. He was always ready to interrupt his work to receive visitors to the office, including overseas employees or former associates who might come by. He was an enthusiastic golfer, an amateur photographer, and a very occasional violinist.

McCarthy was married to Grace Baskerville McCarthy, who predeceased him. He is survived by a daughter, Susan M. Relyea of New York City; a son, George of Florham Park, New Jersey; and two grandchildren.