



*Dean F. Peterson*

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1913–1989

By Robert L. Smith

Dean F. Peterson, professor emeritus of civil and agricultural/irrigation engineering at Utah State University, died on April 21, 1989, at the age of seventy-five. He was born on June 3, 1913, in Delta, Utah. His undergraduate education was at Utah State University, where he received a B.S. in civil engineering. His graduate education was at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he obtained an MCE and DCE. Dean was elected to membership in the National Academy of Engineering in 1974.

Dr. Peterson had a distinguished and multifaceted career in academe, government service, and consulting. He was involved with the design and operation of water resources projects and engineering education worldwide.

His first decade after college saw him in a number of engineering construction assignments scattered across the nation, culminating in several years of military service. His military commitment continued in the active reserve following World War II, and he retired as a captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

Dean initiated a serious commitment to the academic portion of his career in 1946 when he accepted appointment as an assistant professor at Utah State University. He left Utah State in 1949 to begin an eight-year assignment at Colorado State University as professor and head of the Department of Civil Engineering. Dean returned to Utah State in 1957, where he served as

dean of engineering until 1973. From 1973 until his retirement to emeritus status in 1976, he was vice-president for research.

Dr. Peterson's role in government service was also extensive. In 1965–1966 he was on leave from the university to serve as technical assistant, Office of Science and Technology, Executive Office of the President; and concurrently, chairman, Committee on Water Resources Research of the Federal Council for Science and Technology. As special assistant, he was responsible for handling specific problems of national water resources policy as requested by the White House. The committee he chaired was charged with coordinating water resources research in the federal establishment. Again in 1968–1969 Dr. Peterson returned to Washington to head the Office of Water for Peace in the U.S. Department of State.

Following his retirement from the university, Dr. Peterson returned to government service where he concentrated on addressing problems of developing countries. From 1976 to 1978 he was chief, Soil and Water Division, Technical Assistance Bureau, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State; in 1978–1979 he was director, Office of Agriculture, Development Support Bureau, USAID; and from 1979 to 1981 he served in India as agricultural research and irrigation adviser, USAID. He continued in similar advisory capacities almost to the time of his death.

Dean was an acknowledged leader in the technical field of irrigation. He was equally at home in his knowledge of all aspects of worldwide food policy, ranging from economics to nutrition. Those who knew him well were continually struck by his compassion for all mankind, and his innate desire to improve the lot of the developing nations.

Dean Peterson was a quiet-spoken individual, but his work did not go unnoticed by his peers. They chose to honor him on numerous occasions. The American Society of Civil Engineers extended three major awards. These were the Royce Tipton Award for Irrigation in 1968, the Julian Hinds Award for Water Resources Management in 1980, and designation as an honorary member in 1976. The American Water Resources Association presented him with its Icko Iben Award in 1979. Also, in 1979 he

received the U.S. Department of State's Superior Honor Award. He received the Distinguished Service Award of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters in 1976 and was designated an honorary citizen of Texas in 1971. He was also the recipient of two honorary doctor of science degrees, one from Utah State University, the other from Mahatma Phule Agricultural University in India.

Dean cared about his profession and he cared about people. He is missed.