



Ben Moreell

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1892-1978

By Richard H. Tatlow III

Ben Moreell, Admiral of the Navy and Chairman of the Board, President, Chief Executive Officer, and Director of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation, died in Pittsburgh at the age of eighty-five, on July 30, 1978, after a brief illness.

"The Chief," as he was respectfully and fondly known, retired in 1958, but he remained a Director until 1964 and through retirement was active in political and professional affairs.

Admiral Moreell was a distinguished engineering leader and organizer, master of innovative design and construction, creator of the SeaBees, proven industrialist, and a great citizen.

Born on September 14, 1892, in Salt Lake City, Admiral Moreell received in 1913 his Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering and in 1943 his first honorary degree, Doctor of Engineering, from the Washington University in St. Louis. He was later awarded nine other honorary degrees-four in engineering, three in science, and two in law.

Admiral Moreell had an excellent theoretical foundation as a civil engineer and subsequently acquired great practical knowledge and experience as a constructor and an administrator of engineering and construction projects. While a lieutenant commander, he was responsible for writing what turned out to be the U.S. Navy's excellent concrete manual. He was most conscious of the quality of design and detail, was progressive and innovative, and, as Chief of the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks and as Head of its Civil Engineering Corps, he gave the fullest support to those who came

up with new ideas. He took pride in elegant engineering solutions executed under his command, sometimes overruling the more conventional and conservative engineers on his staff. It was exciting to work for him. Admiral Moreell was a man who got things done and done well.

The SeaBees, organized by Moreell, grew from an initial authorization of 3,300 officers and men on December 28, 1941, to an organization of more than 10,000 officers and 240,000 men. More than three-fourths of these were active on overseas duty at the end of World War II. These were construction men who were trained in combat. They replaced the pre-Pearl Harbor civilian construction workers formerly employed by the Navy. The fate of the latter at Wake, Guam, and Cavite strengthened Admiral Moreell's conviction that the Navy needed men who could both build and fight. By the war's end, Admiral Moreell had directed a \$10 billion construction program in building up the shore establishment needed to support the fleet. During the war the SeaBees and civilian construction forces worked at more than 900 naval bases and stations, including 300 new advance bases, some of which were as large as Peoria, Illinois, or Columbia, South Carolina.

The total worth of these bases was fifteen times the value of all naval shore establishments existing before the war. Moreell was the American engineer who probably made the greatest number of engineering contributions toward winning World War II.

In October 1945, President Truman placed Admiral Moreell in charge of the major portion of the nation's petroleum industry, which had been seized by the Government as the result of a nationwide strike.

In May 1946, the strike-bound nation's bituminous coal industry was seized by the Government, and President Truman designated Admiral Moreell to be Coal Mines Administrator.

Admiral Moreell became Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation in early 1947. During the ensuing years, until he retired, Jones & Laughlin embarked on a prodigious expansion program conceived and directed by Ben Moreell, during which time it established clear leadership among the largest steel companies in this country as the first such company to pioneer basic oxygen steelmaking on a large scale. This decision

on the part of Ben Moreell called for a combination of engineering judgment, business intuition, and industrial fortitude. In any group of engineers turned senior executive of a large American corporation, Ben Moreell's career would stand out for his technical and administrative leadership. At the same time, anyone who knows him would identify him as a great natural leader of men.

Under his leadership, the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation launched a \$500 million expansion program that added impetus to plans for the redevelopment of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When the decision was made to build a new \$70 million open hearth shop in a blighted area on Pittsburgh's South Side, Ben Moreell saw to it that the company, working with the union and with the city government, found homes for the 296 families that had to be moved from the area.

In addition to his official duties, he established himself as one of the nation's authorities on concrete and reinforced concrete. In 1929, he wrote "Standard of Design for Concrete," which received much favorable notice from the engineering world. He also has published other papers on the design and construction of concrete structures and on cements.

Admiral Moreell served as Chairman of the Task Force on Water Resources and Power of the Second Hoover Commission, directing a twenty-six-man committee from November 1953 through June 1955. Former President Herbert Hoover called the work of this Task Force "the most far-reaching and penetrating inquiry into our water problems ever made in our history."

Admiral Moreell served as Member of the Board of Visitors, U.S. Naval Academy, in 1953-55 (Chairman in 1955). He also was a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation.

The doors of Presidents of the United States were open to Admiral Moreell, and men such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Herbert Hoover looked to him for advice.

Admiral Ben Moreell was elected to membership in the National Academy of Engineering in March of 1976. Memberships and honors are too numerous to record in this memorial; he belonged to all engineers and was a frequent writer and speaker in support of his views on individualism and constitutional government