

MEMORIAL OF JOHN CHARLES RABBITT

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John Charles Rabbitt died suddenly at his home in Washington, D. C. on the evening of June 10, 1957. He was working on an overtime load of office papers, as was his custom, when stricken by a fatal coronary occlusion.

Jack Rabbitt (a name he relished and was known by universally) was born November 3, 1907 in Butte, Montana. He was the son of Grace Esther (Decker) and Thomas Rabbitt. His father died when Jack was seven, leaving his mother with three growing sons and little worldly goods. After finishing high school, he worked as a miner in Butte for about six years. It was characteristic of Jack that this became a profound and lasting experience. He learned much about the history and practice of mining and a great deal of Irish history and lore. He acquired deep respect for the common man and a compassionate understanding of the problems of minority and immigrant groups. He also saw the advantages of further education. He entered the Montana School of Mines from which he received the Bachelor's degree in geology in 1935, and the Master's degree in paleontology in 1937. He continued his geologic studies at Harvard University where he was particularly influenced by the late Harry Berman, by Clifford Frondel, and by Esper S. Larsen, Jr. He received his doctorate in petrology and mineralogy from Harvard in 1947.

He was appointed a geologist with the U. S. Geological Survey in 1942 and continued there until his death. During the World War II years, using spectrographic facilities made available at Harvard, he analyzed many thousands of mine, mill, and smelter products for a large group of critically short elements, including uranium.

In 1947 he was given the responsibility of establishing and operating the extensive laboratory facilities needed to support the Survey's uranium resources program being undertaken for the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission. Within a year he had in operation what soon became probably the largest and best equipped mineralogical-geochemical laboratory in the world. His personal leadership of a professional staff of nearly 100 was, I believe, his greatest contribution to geology. His guidance, advice, and encouragement developed many sound scientists from professionally inexperienced young graduates, and the laboratory he initiated and led contributed fundamentally to many fields of geology and geochemistry.

In 1953 Jack was assigned to the staff of the Chief Geologist. For a year he served as Assistant Chief Geologist. He became vitally interested in the Survey's publication program and was made responsible for re-



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organizing that program in the Chief Geologist's office; he was deeply engrossed in this administrative duty at the time of his death.

In 1947 Jack married Mary Priscilla Collins, who had been a research assistant in geophysics at Harvard during his years there. They were an exceptionally happy couple with both professional and cultural interests in common. They were extraordinarily well read and well informed. Both loved the theatre, music, and the ballet. They enjoyed entertaining small groups of their intimate friends, and at such times it was easy to start Jack reminiscing about his mining days at Butte, or his grandfather's saloon in Chicago; or to start an argument on any political subject, the Irish-English controversy (Jack's mother was of German descent, but

Jack was pure Irish), or the ideal laboratory program to support the Survey's study of uranium resources.

Jack's interest in people led him early into administrative work. Although his bibliography is short he was a sound scientist, as demonstrated by his profound work on anthophyllite. He contributed much more through his encouragement of the work of others.

He is survived by his widow, who continues her professional career as a geologist with the U. S. Geological Survey. He is survived, too, by his brothers, Thomas, of Seattle, Washington, and Francis, of Houston, Texas.

Many people respected and loved Jack. He is sorely missed.

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