

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

SIMON SONKIN (1901 – 1965)

Simon Sonkin was born in New York City on April 3, 1901. He received all of his education in New York City and spent most of his professional life there as a member of the Physics Department of the City College of New York where he had done his undergraduate work. He received the B.S. degree from the College of the City of New York in 1920; the E.E. degree from the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute in 1922; and the M.A. degree in 1924 and the Ph.D. degree in 1933 from Columbia University.

From 1938 to 1941 he was Chairman of the Physics Department at C.C.N.Y., of which he was a faculty member from 1918 to 1953; being successfully: tutor, assistant professor, associate professor and professor. During this period he had two extended leaves of absence. Between 1942 and 1946 he contributed to the war effort as a member of the Scientific Staff of the Radiation Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and subsequently at the Radiation Laboratory of Columbia University. During the years 1948 to 1950 he was research associate and Visiting Professor at the Microwave Laboratory at Stanford University and returned during the summers of 1951 and 1952 for further work.

In 1953 he came to Stanford permanently as a Professor in the Microwave Laboratory. During these years he played a significant role in the development of the first high power klystron which was essential in the development of the large linear accelerators at Stanford. The detailed technical contributions he made to the research activity at Stanford are recorded in the many papers published in the professional journals. On September 1, 1963, because of ill health, he became Professor Emeritus. Despite his illness, he continued his activities in the Microwave Laboratory until his death on August 29th, 1965.

Dr. Sonkin was a member of Phi Beta Kappa; Sigma Xi; the American Physical Society; the Institute of Radio Engineers; and the American Association of Physics Teachers.

In the years before the war when "Si" Sonkin was teaching at C.C.N.Y. that school probably had the largest enrollment of physics and mathematics majors of any college in the United States, most of whom chose science as a profession. One had only to visit a professional meeting with Si Sonkin (especially in New York) to realize the impact he had made on the lives of these students. For many of them his warm personal relations with his colleagues, his humor, as well as his own technical skills, had made him a beloved and inspirational teacher. These same characteristics which marked his work as a teacher were also characteristic of his work in the laboratory. His scientific work was noteworthy for his personal laboratory skills and manual dexterity. He was a scientist of whom it could be said that "he thought with his hands."

Looking back, one can see that Simon Sonkin had in his lifetime two completely separate but complementary careers. One as a Professor at C.C.N.Y. where he was regarded by many as one of the memorable teachers of their college days; and the other, as a talented research scientist at Columbia, M.I.T., and finally at Stanford University. In each of these careers he made noteworthy and different professional contributions; and, in each, he left many strong bonds of friendship and memories of his personal warmth and humor.