



IN MEMORIAM

Franklin M. Henry
Professor of Physical Education, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1904 – 1993

By the time of his obligatory retirement in June 1971 at the age of 67, Franklin M. Henry had spent more than 30 years as a faculty member at the University of California, Berkeley. His contributions to exercise physiology, aviation medicine, and especially motor behavior research had been extensive. He would continue to come to campus regularly and to write and publish for several more years. Lunches with long-time friend and university colleague Rheem Jarrett (Department of Psychology) were occasions for spirited conversations about such things as the philosophy of science and the role of statistical methods in the interpretation of observable data.

Henry was born in Helena, Montana in 1904. By his own account there was nothing in his childhood or youth, much of which was spent on a farm in northeast Missouri, that prefigured a career in higher education. Not yet 17, he enlisted in the United States Navy and developed considerable skill in the maintenance of electrical equipment. In 1921 he purchased a radio amateur's handbook, sought advice from the ship's radio operators, and began to think about a future in the emerging field of broadcasting and radio. Following discharge he attended the Denver Institute of Technology, obtained an operator's license, and began building crystal receiving sets. At Northeast Missouri State Teachers College (now Truman State University) he completed chemistry, physics, mathematics, and other courses and at the same time took courses in bacteriology and physiology at a nearby osteopathic college. Having no intention of pursuing a formal degree, he obtained employment in a firm that made medical equipment and before long was working at the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Desert Laboratory, where he explored the effects of high frequency electrical currents on the metabolism of cancer cells in rats; the project was halted because of the Depression.

Henry was living in San Francisco with his wife Lillian Ellen Abraham (whom he married in 1931 and with whom he would have two children, John and Ellen) when he decided to enroll as a special student at the University of California, Berkeley. He was, by his own admission, more interested in furthering his talents in electronics and instrument construction than in pursuing a degree. Clarence W. Brown (Department of Psychology), who was beginning a research program on subcortical brain function, recognized his considerable skills and hired him to design and calibrate research equipment that was not available commercially; he also was very adept at statistics and an expert in the use of the slide rule. Franklin soon qualified for regular status and graduated from the undergraduate psychology major summa cum laude in 1935. His Ph.D. was awarded in 1938. By then he had authored or coauthored more than 20 articles in publications like the *American Journal of Psychology*, *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, and *Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

The Department of Psychology would not hire its graduates unless they had served for several years at another institution. The effects of the Great Depression were still being felt and Henry had family obligations. Frank Kleeberger, chair of the Department of Physical Education for Men, who knew of Henry's talents, offered him a position as instructor to help teach Physical Education 140 (Physiological Hygiene). In 1939 he was appointed assistant professor in the Department of Physical Education and began designing a new course around his interests in experimental and physiological psychology. During the 1940s he was invited to join in

research that was being conducted at the Donner Laboratory of Medical Physics (whose director was John H. Lawrence). With Lawrence, Sherbourne Cook (Department of Physiology), and others, he investigated exercise at altitude, decompression sickness, and aeroembolism (release of air bubbles in tissue upon rapid decrease in air pressure). At the same time studies were underway in his own laboratory on such topics as kinesthetic perception, neuromuscular reaction, and specificity and generality in learning motor skills.

Although Henry had no formal training in physical education, he saw better than did most people its importance as a profession and its potential for becoming a viable academic field. He was convinced that it needed to include appropriate aspects of the social as well as biological sciences. His 1964 article “Physical Education– An Academic Discipline” was a significant factor in moving the field to the scientific and scholarly configuration that it had attained by the 1980s. It influenced developments not only in the United States but in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and elsewhere. Most individuals thought that it was a proposed model, but it was based substantially upon the physical education major at UC Berkeley, which already had moved from a largely professional orientation to one grounded in science and scholarship.

Students were expected — indeed required — to engage in weekly experiments in his undergraduate exercise physiology class (Physical Education 105). Eager to learn from the man who came to be known as the “Father of Motor Behavior Research,” numerous individuals from the United States and abroad completed graduate work under his stern, but not unkind, guidance. Many went on to hold prestigious faculty, research, and editorial positions, often writing to “Doc” (as he was affectionately called) to seek his advice regarding a scientific or professional question and expressing how much they had benefitted from his insistence that they employ precision in their thoughts and writings.

During his career Henry published more than 120 articles, served on the editorial boards of several journals, and was called upon numerous times to help advance the field of physical education. For his contributions he received numerous commendations and awards. The American College of Sports Medicine’s 1975 Honor Award stated, in part: Franklin Henry “has had a long productive career in basic research in biophysics, psychology and motor learning, and exercise physiology. . . . His own evaluation of the success of his career, he believes, is to be measured by the quality of the scientific accomplishments of his former students.”

He passed away on September 13, 1993 at age 89 in Oakland, California.

Roberta J. Park
George A. Brooks
M. Kathryn Scott