



IN MEMORIAM

Joseph A. Pask
Professor of Ceramic Engineering, Emeritus
Berkeley
1913–2003

Joseph Adam Pask, emeritus professor of ceramic engineering, died peacefully in his sleep on June 14, 2003 at the Brentwood residence of a home health care nurse. He had been moved there from his home in Berkeley a week earlier, after his wife of 65 years, Margaret, suffered a heart attack.

Pask was born in Chicago to Adam and Catherine Poskoczem. After changing his name to Pask at the suggestion of a high school teacher, he entered the University of Illinois, where he received his B.S. degree in ceramic engineering in 1934. He obtained a master's degree in 1935 at the University of Washington and completed a Ph.D. in ceramic engineering at the University of Illinois in 1941. From 1941 to 1943 he served as an assistant professor at the University of Washington, where he broadened his research experience through a concurrent appointment as associate engineer in the Northwest Experiment Station of the U.S. Bureau of Mines. He obtained valuable industrial experience and a reputation for research achievement as research ceramist at Westinghouse Electric Corporation, in Bloomfield, New Jersey, before accepting an appointment as associate professor of ceramic engineering at the University of California, Berkeley in 1948 with the daunting assignment of initiating a graduate program in the field, a task that he carried out with distinction.

By 1954 Pask had developed an impressive teaching and research program and had been promoted to professor. He was then authorized to recruit two junior faculty. Within a few years the program under his leadership had grown to have an enrollment of more than 20 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, and an upper division major in ceramic engineering was instituted. The ceramics programs, which continued under Pask's benevolent and effective leadership until the time of his retirement in 1980, were remarkably successful. More than 40 graduate students and postgraduate researchers from the program rose to tenured positions at major universities throughout the world. Pask directed the research of 39 master's and 31 Ph.D. students. With only three faculty, ceramic science and engineering at Berkeley attained a level of professional regard comparable with that of elite graduate programs that were staffed by more than 20 faculty.

One of Berkeley's products was Richard Fulrath, who completed his doctorate under Pask's direction while also serving the department without a faculty title. He was then appointed acting assistant professor, as one of the two recruits of 1954. Fulrath had established such standing in the field by the time of his untimely death in 1977 that the Richard M. Fulrath Award was established and endowed by Japanese industrial leaders to honor rising young American and Japanese ceramic engineers and scientists for outstanding achievements. The annual award presentations and talks became a major event at the fall meetings of the American Ceramic Society. The first stop of the Japanese winners and more senior scientists and engineers en route to the American Ceramic Society meeting for many years was Berkeley, where Joe and Margaret welcomed them into their Berkeley home. There, the fog always seemed to lift in time to provide a spectacular view of the

bay, San Francisco, and the Golden Gate. Pask served his department one year as vice chairman, followed by three years as chairman, from 1958 to 1961. It is noteworthy that he filled that often vexing role with unruffled good humor while simultaneously maintaining his momentum in research and serving as associate dean of engineering in charge of the graduate office, a responsibility he discharged from 1969 until his nominal retirement in 1980. After that date, he continued to arrive at his office every normal workday, in term and out, to pursue research and provide advice solicited by students and a stream of visiting professionals. He was well into his 80s before his defective knees forced him to abandon his routine of walking his downhill mile in the morning to be picked up by Margaret in the evening.

During his years at Berkeley, Joe Pask was considered to be one of the leading professionals in the United States, and worldwide, in ceramic science and engineering, with a definite orientation towards ceramic processing. Over the years, he was a strong proponent of the need for ceramic processing research in order to produce more reliable ceramic products. He helped organize and served on numerous National Research Council committees and panels on ceramic processing, particularly emphasizing the need for research directed at producing more reliable ceramic bodies. Early on, with several of his graduate students, he made significant contributions to clay mineralogy and the behavior of clay suspensions with regard to ceramics. He had a long-term interest in phenomena involved in producing glass-metal bonds, which probably resulted from his years in research at Westinghouse. He is well-known for his many studies on mullite ceramics, and was one of the world's leading experts on this material. With many of his graduate students, he investigated interfacial phenomena involved in ceramic processing systems. Over his career he made over 200 contributions to archival journals and conference proceedings and authored or edited eight books in the field, including the important Ceramic Microstructures Conference series proceedings, which served as a benchmark of progress in ceramics and identified new frontiers for research.

Joe Pask was elected a member of the National Academy of Engineering, an honorary member of the Ceramic Society of Japan, a charter member of the International Academy of Ceramics, and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The awards that he probably treasured most were the Berkeley Citation, awarded at his retirement, and the Distinguished Life Membership and the Jeppson Award of the American Ceramic Society. The Distinguished Life Membership is the highest honor of the American Ceramic Society, and recognizes lifelong achievement and contributions to the society. The Jeppson Award recognizes distinguished scientific, technical, or engineering achievements in ceramics. He and Margaret were devoted members and seemingly tireless servants of the campus and the society.

Margaret Pask died in February 2005. The Pasks are survived by their son, Tom, daughter Kathryn Pask Hruby, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Alan W. Searcy
Douglas W. Fuerstenau
Andreas M. Glaeser