



IN MEMORIAM

Iain Finnie
Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1928 – 2009

Iain Finnie, professor emeritus of mechanical engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, passed away peacefully at home on December 19, 2009, from pneumonia and complications of Parkinson's disease, with his wife and daughters at his bedside. He was 81.

A pioneer and world expert in engineering materials, Professor Finnie served as department chairman from 1979 to 1987. He became a member of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) in 1979 and an honorary member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) in 1981. His textbook, *Creep of Engineering Materials*, written with William Heller, is regarded as a classic in its field. When he retired in 1993, Professor Finnie received the Berkeley Citation, the highest honor the campus awards.

Born to Scottish parents in Hong Kong on July 18, 1928, he was schooled at George Watson's College in Edinburgh, Scotland, where he lived with his aunt, his uncle, and his "wee cousin" (Dr. Gilbert Kennedy, a rugby player for Scotland at 6 feet 3 inches), with whom he was as close as a brother. In 1940, when women and children were evacuated from Hong Kong, Iain joined his mother and sister and lived in Victoria, B.C., and Banff, Alberta, Canada. His father, the director of Swire & Sons' Taikoo Dockyard, was captured and imprisoned on Christmas Day, 1941, and released early in 1945 to help rebuild Hong Kong.

Iain attended the University of Glasgow and received an unrestricted fellowship that he used to complete an M.S. and Ph.D. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He wrote problem sets for the books of Professor Jaap Den Hartog, a world expert on mechanical vibrations, staying summers at the Den Hartog family island home on Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire. The Den Hartogs considered him their third son. After teaching a summer session at MIT and facilitating classes for world-renowned probability expert Professor Wallodi Weibull, Iain moved to Emeryville, California, to work for Shell Oil Development Co. In 1961, he joined the faculty at UC Berkeley, and became a tenured professor at age 34.

In 1965, as part of a UC team led by Professor Erich Thomsen and funded by a Rockefeller grant, Professor Finnie helped establish the engineering department at Universidad Católica in Santiago, Chile. In 1967, he received a Guggenheim Award, a rarity for engineers, to study brittle solids — research that took him everywhere from miles down a South African gold mine to rock drilling in Switzerland. In 1974, he received an honorary D.Sc. degree from the University of Glasgow, where he wore the hat of 16th century Reformer John Knox at the ceremony.

Professor Finnie married Joan Roth McCorkindale, a widow with two young daughters, Carrie and Katie, in 1969. The couple had a daughter, Shauna. The family took two sabbatical leaves, in 1976 and 1987, to

Lausanne, Switzerland, where he was Professeur Invité at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL).

In the course of his career, Professor Finnie served as faculty advisor to over 40 Ph.D. students, with whom he wrote more than 185 papers on subjects such as fatigue of metals, crack propagation, and erosion of materials. He held a strong record for recruiting some of Berkeley's top talent and encouraging minority students to pursue careers in engineering. Many of his recruits have become university presidents, deans, and chaired professors worldwide. As a result of his inspiration and motivation, two of his daughters hold graduate degrees in mechanical engineering and are successful career women in the field. He remained close to his students over the years, sharing with them his sparkling sense of humor, his passion for skiing, and his hospitality. At one of the many parties in his Berkeley home, his graduate students donned T-shirts labeled "Finnie's Flaws" (consistent with their research on fracture mechanics) and presented him with one entitled "Master Flaw." Joan later gave their wives sashes emblazoned with "Finnie's Flawless Females." When Professor Finnie retired in 1993, his students framed his T-shirt and "retired" it, as is sometimes done on a professional athlete's retirement.

According to Dr. Ron Streit, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Professor Finnie taught more than engineering: he taught about enjoyment of good wines and food, travel, skiing, and the importance of family. Professor Panos Papadopoulos, UC Berkeley, commented that Iain was a shining example of a colleague whose ethos and positive energy made everyone around him better. Professor Ian Hutchings of the University of Cambridge wrote, "His pioneering work on erosion of materials has been emulated but never equaled by several generations of subsequent researchers. His early papers remain very highly cited." A personal friend, Dr. Paul Hertelendy, wrote, "Our dear friend, Iain, made this world a better place AND provided the good humor to lubricate many a sticky situation." Dr. Marco Gremaud, former visiting scholar from Lausanne, Switzerland, commented that Iain was "really global, multi-cultural (not only western culture but Asian too) and open-minded." Professor Emeritus Wilfried Kurz from EPFL wrote, "Iain was a very strong and truly outstanding person, as a great scientist and engineer, highly intelligent and of great originality. He gave lectures of outstanding clarity. He was a gentleman and he had great humor. Often I was laughing tears with him."

Iain is survived by his wife; three daughters, Carrie McCorkindale of Fremont, California, Katie Croxdale of Edina, Minnesota, Shauna McIntyre of Encinitas, California; two sons-in-law, Jerry Croxdale and John McIntyre; three grandchildren, Mackenzie and Charlie Croxdale and Mia McIntyre; his sister, Jean Mackie of Hong Kong and her husband Jock; and Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert Kennedy of Edinburgh. He will be honored by the Iain Finnie Fund at the College of Engineering, UC Berkeley.

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David Dornfeld
Ralph Greif