

Robert B.
Diemer



New honor for Robert Diemer

Robert B. Diemer, of Pasadena, California, became an Honorary Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers recently as the professional society of civil engineers had its annual meeting in San Francisco. Mr. Diemer's citation said the honor was "in appreciation of outstanding public service rendered in a lifetime devoted to developing and conserving water resources, especially in California."

Mr. Diemer retired in 1961 as general manager and chief engineer of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California after an outstanding career in the water works field. During his long tenure with the Metropolitan Water District, he carried to completion the Colorado River Aqueduct, selected by ASCE in 1955 as one of the "Seven Modern Civil Engineering Wonders of the United States."

Born in Palmyra, Mo., Mr. Diemer received his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University in 1911. He made Tau Beta Pi and received his "M" as a shortstop on the Tiger baseball team. From 1911 to 1926, he was employed on the construction of irrigation works for the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation in Nebraska and Wyoming. In the latter year he resigned to accept a similar assignment in Mexico for the J. G. White Engineering Corporation.

In July 1929 Mr. Diemer was retained by the City of Los Angeles to make estimates and designs for an aqueduct to carry water from the Colorado River to Southern California—a distance of 300 miles across the desert and through mountain ranges. Surveys and studies to determine the best and most economical route for the Colorado River Aqueduct initially were conducted by the City of Los Angeles. After the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California was organized, the work was taken over by the District, in May 1930, and Mr. Diemer was transferred from the City of Los Angeles to the District. When Mr. Diemer was assigned to the Colorado River Aqueduct project, it was supposed to be for a period of six months. He was there for 30 years.

In September 1931 Southern California voted a bond issue of \$220,000,000 to finance the building of the first stage of the Colorado River Aqueduct. Mr. Diemer rose from the position of engineer on loca-

tion to division engineer in charge of the construction of forty miles of 16-ft. tunnels. In 1934 he became distribution engineer, responsible for the location, design, and construction of 150 miles of giant pipelines.

With the completion of the aqueduct system in 1941, he became assistant general manager and chief engineer, a position he held to the end of 1956. During this decade he was front man for all construction and operating problems on the entire system. From January 1, 1952, to his retirement in 1961, he was general manager and chief engineer of the District, which now covers about 4,000 square miles in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura, and includes Los Angeles and 94 other cities. This represents a significant growth since 1928, when the District had 640 square miles and 11 cities. Its population has increased from 2,000,000 to 7,800,000 and its assessed valuation from \$1.6 billion to nearly \$15 billion. Needless to say, this spectacular growth would not have been possible without the Colorado River Aqueduct.

During the last eight years under Mr. Diemer's direction, the District spent about \$200 million on expansion of its facilities to meet increasing water needs. Now it has been brought to its full planned delivery capacity, and is capable of delivering more than a billion gallons of water daily—one of the world's largest water supply systems.

Upon his retirement, Mr. Diemer was cited by the Metropolitan Water District, and the Lower Feeder Filtration and Softening Plant was named for him. Pasadena, where he resides, named him its director on the District Board.

Among other honors accorded him are the Beaver Award for Outstanding Achievement in Heavy Engineering Construction; honorary membership in the American Water Works Association; the Missouri Honor Award for Distinguished Service in Engineering; and the Elliott Award from the California Section of the American Water Works Association.

Bedford off to Afghanistan

Jimmy (Pete) Bedford, who teaches journalism at the University of Maryland, is off on his travels again. This time the roaming photographer, writer and teacher is bound for Afghanistan, where he has a Fulbright teaching fellowship at the University of Kabul for the next academic year. Jimmy has three degrees from M.U. He taught at the University of Kansas for four years, and in 1958 embarked on a two-year world tour. His trip was financed by pictures and articles sold to various publications. The *Alumnus* featured one of his articles which described his motor scooter safaris in Africa. Since joining the Maryland faculty he has spent his summers on trips. One summer he traveled the length of the Rhine river in a rubber raft; another summer was spent in Finland.