

LANE MITCHELL.
CERAMIC ENG.

Letter to Lane Mitchell from President Blake Van Leer on December 22, 1944.

“ As you probably are aware, the Ceramic Engineering Bldg. is now closed up and we do not have any students in Ceramic Engineering. Furthermore, there are quite a few urgent and pressing research problems in the ceramic field that we must do something about immediately.--- Furthermore we cannot accept any students in Ceramic Engineering so long as we do not have a single member of the Department here on duty at Georgia Tech.--- What I especially want to know is: could we count on your return to Georgia Tech during the next six months?”

Note: Lane returned in June of 1946 as head of the department.



LANE MITCHELL

Although much of the research conducted by Professor Mitchell and his colleagues was crude by scientific standards and more qualitative than quantitative, the work was guided by a keen insight into what was important to industry and especially the kaolin industry of the State of Georgia.

In an article written in the May-June 1951 issue of the Georgia Tech Alumnus, Lane gives some comments on the founding and the importance of the School of Ceramic Engineering to the State of Georgia. In the mind of Lane Mitchell the School of Ceramic Engineering was not just another discipline but an economic engine for the State.

“ It is interesting to note that the ceramists involved in the creation (of the Georgia Tech School of Ceramic Engineering) came largely from the brick industry which was the only major ceramic industry represented in Georgia at that time. The undeveloped kaolin resources were represented by the forward looking industrial agent of the Central of Georgia Railway, J.M.Mallory. This railroad which had been a great power in the establishment of Tech itself, came forward to play a leading role in the creation of the Ceramic Engineering Department.

What has resulted from this vision? Today Georgia has a firmly established ceramic industry and one still growing with increasing acceleration. Ceramic manufacture in Georgia brings wealth to the State only exceeded in manufacturing fields by textiles and perhaps one or two other classes of products. --- The Central of Georgia Railway is hauling tremendous tonnage's of kaolin today and the State leads the Union in production of this commodity, producing over 70% of the nation's domestic white clay.”

Lane Mitchell was not only a ceramic engineer, he was an avid advocate of the discipline and the industry.

Lane Mitchell was born on July 11, 1907 in Atlanta, Georgia.

In a speech delivered at the Peachtree Christian Church in 1963 celebrating the founding in 1925 Lane reflects on his life and some of the more important influences. *“Mama had a bed full of petunias and nasturtiums and zinnias. Three little gold finches came to the flower bed. One was dark, one mottled, and one bright yellow and Mama named them Shem, Ham and Japheth and told me of Noah’s sons. For three summers in a row these little birds returned to our flower bed. Mama would take me out on the porch steps and point out the flowers and the plants. In the evenings Mama would look up at the sky and tell me of the constellations and the galaxies.”*

“ In this day of bright lights and television and extravagant life, I vividly recall Papa gathering the family about his knee and reading under the gas light from the Bible, from books of poetry, and from classics.

How plain it is to me to hear Papa read about the school master in Ian McClaren’s Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush and to watch the tears stream down his face during a particularly sad sequence!

Mama taught me to say Mary Queen of Scots Prayer in Latin and I said it to Mr. Craighead in Sunday School. One Sunday A Mr. Moffett came to visit our Sunday School and Mr. Craighead called on me to come to the platform and give this prayer. I did

O Domini Jesu, aparvi in te

O cave mi Jemi, nunc librea me

Indure catena, in misera poena decidero te

Languendo, gemendo, et genuflectardo

Adero, imploro ut liberen me.

and when I was leaving Sunday School, Mr. Moffett came up and gave me \$5.00 to apply on my future education. Oh, what a thrill that was.--

When I graduated from Tech in Ceramic Engineering I went to the University of Illinois and soon found myself exposed to a group of agnostic and free thinkers who intrigued me with their arguments. I well remember the fiery sessions where I defended the Bible, the Century Cyclopedia, Christian missionaries in Moslem lands and my deep rooted beliefs learned at my mother’s knee. Nevertheless, I was fascinated by the liberalism of my opponents in the debate and I played with the idea of not having a rigid belief in the Almighty.”

Lane Mitchell was an outspoken critic of the attempts to integrate the campus. (Possibly influenced by his childhood and his experiences at the University of Illinois) Although outspoken with few faculty supporters, the faculty respected his right to voice his opinion. Many faculty meetings were enlivened by his arguments.

Lane Mitchell conducted himself as a gentleman. Regardless of being his advocate or opponent on different issues, you could be assured that you would be accorded the utmost civility in any conversation.

He attended Georgia Tech (then the Georgia School of Technology) from 1925-29 and received his BS in 1929.

He attended the University of Illinois from 1929-31 and received his MS degree.

He attended Rutgers from 1931-32 and returned to Emory in 1933. While attending Emory University he was instructor of English at Boy’s High in Atlanta from 1932-34. He served as

Assistant State of Georgia Geologist from 1934-36 and participated in the geological survey of Georgia.

Lane Mitchell was appointed assistant professor at Georgia Tech in 1936 and was associate professor from 1938-41. He went to Penn State in 1940 and received his Ph.D. in 1941.

Lane served as Professor and Head of the Department of Ceramic Engineering from 1941-49 and Professor and Director of the School of Ceramic Engineering from 1949 until his retirement on June 30, 1973.

Lane's wife was Mildred Morris Mitchell and they had a son Robert Lane Mitchell.

Lane was active in academic and professional societies as well as civic organizations.

He was a member of Tau Beta Pi, Phi Kappa Phi, Keramos, Pi Delta Epsilon, Sigma Xi, Georgia Academy of Science, Georgia Minerals Society, American Ceramic Society (Fellow in 1949), American Society for Testing Materials, American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, and American Association for Advancement of Science.

He died December 4, 1988.