

# THE TECH MURDER MYSTERY: A WHODUNNIT BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP?



---

Christine D. Myers, Independent Scholar


SWPACA Summer Salon

9 June 2023





HENRY GLYSSON MYERS, "Hank"  
*"Well, Well, Oil King!"*  
Of Hamilton, Montana. Preparation: Washington High  
School, Portland, Ore.; Oregon State College.  
*Mechanical Engineering* Entered 1928



California Institute of Technology, Class of 1930

CIT

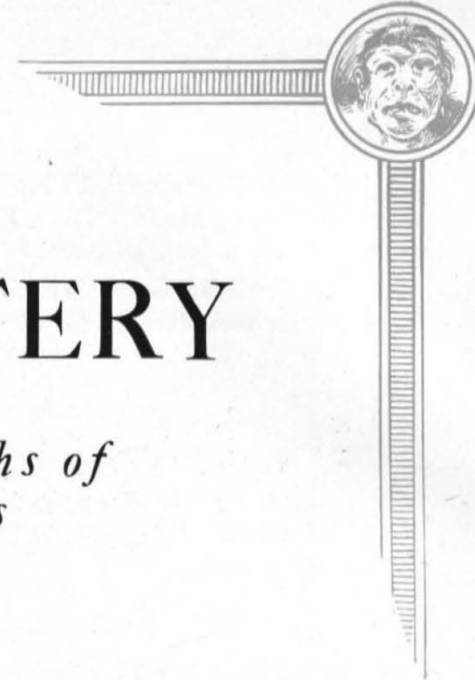
# THE TECH MURDER MYSTERY

---

*Riddle of Mysterious Deaths of  
Prominent Faculty Members  
At Last Solved*

---

Illustrated by W. E. Johnston, Jr.





## LYON SPRAGUE DE CAMP, "Speedy"

*"Invalid Iconoclast Inveighs"*

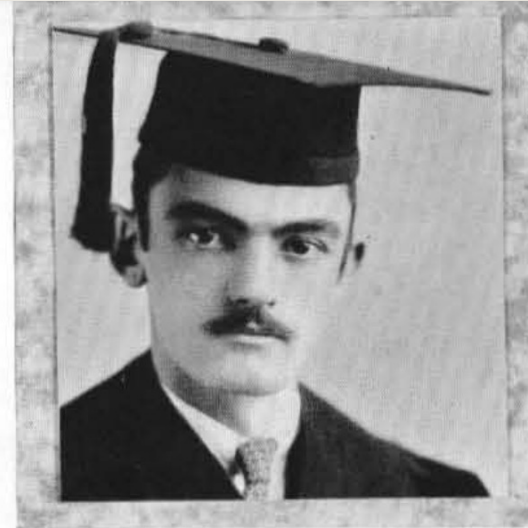
Of New York City. Preparation: Hollywood High School.

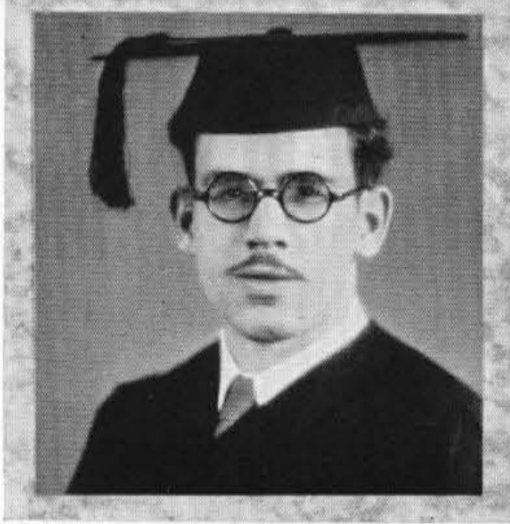
*Aeronautics*

Entered 1925

A.S.M.E.; Press Club

Tech Staff (1, 2, 3), Editor (4); **Big T Staff** (4, 5); Press Club:  
Secretary-Treasurer (3), Vice-President (4), President (5);  
Fencing Club (4, 5); Aero Club (2), Secretary-Treasurer  
(4, 5); Cosmo Club (3).





## JOHN DRURY CLARK, 'Shrimp'

*"Chem Lab Wizard"*

Of Fairbanks, Alaska. Preparation: Fairbanks High School.  
Alaska Agricultural College.

*Chemistry*

Entered 1927

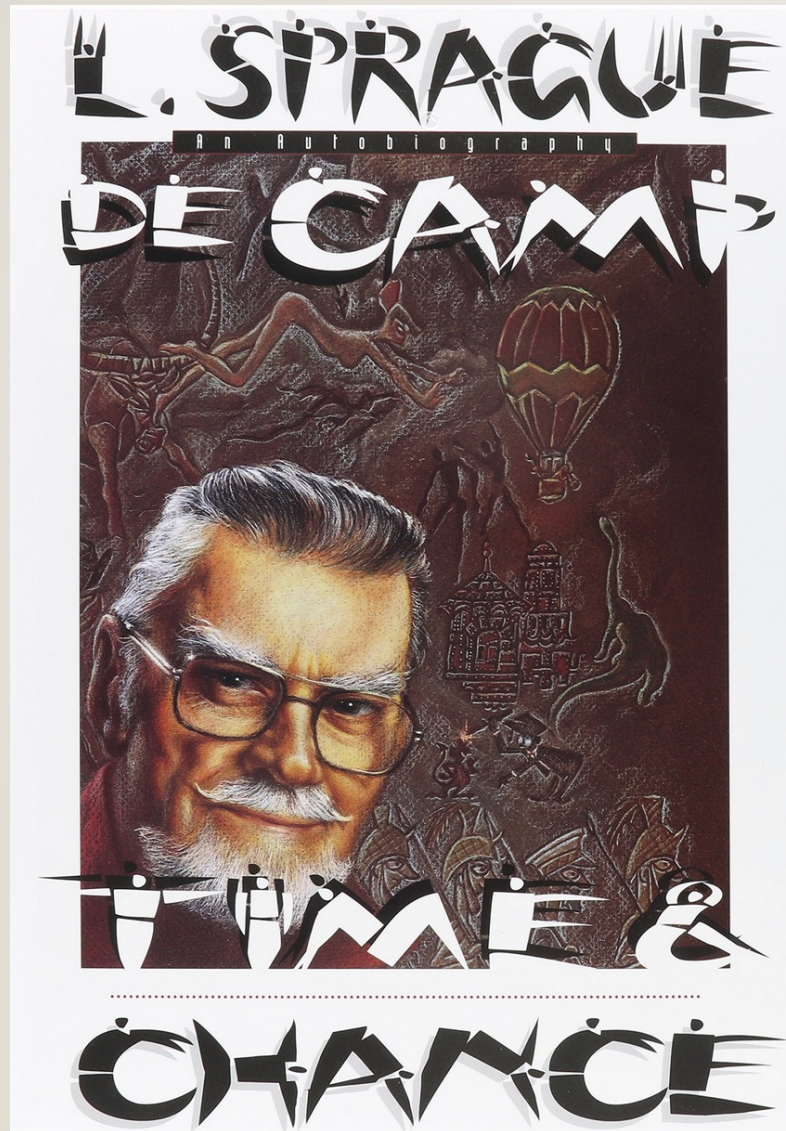
Press Club

Chem Club (5); Fencing Club (4, 5), Secretary-Treasurer (5);  
Rifle Club (5); Tech Staff (5); **Big T Staff** (5).

## The Victims – and how they met their demise

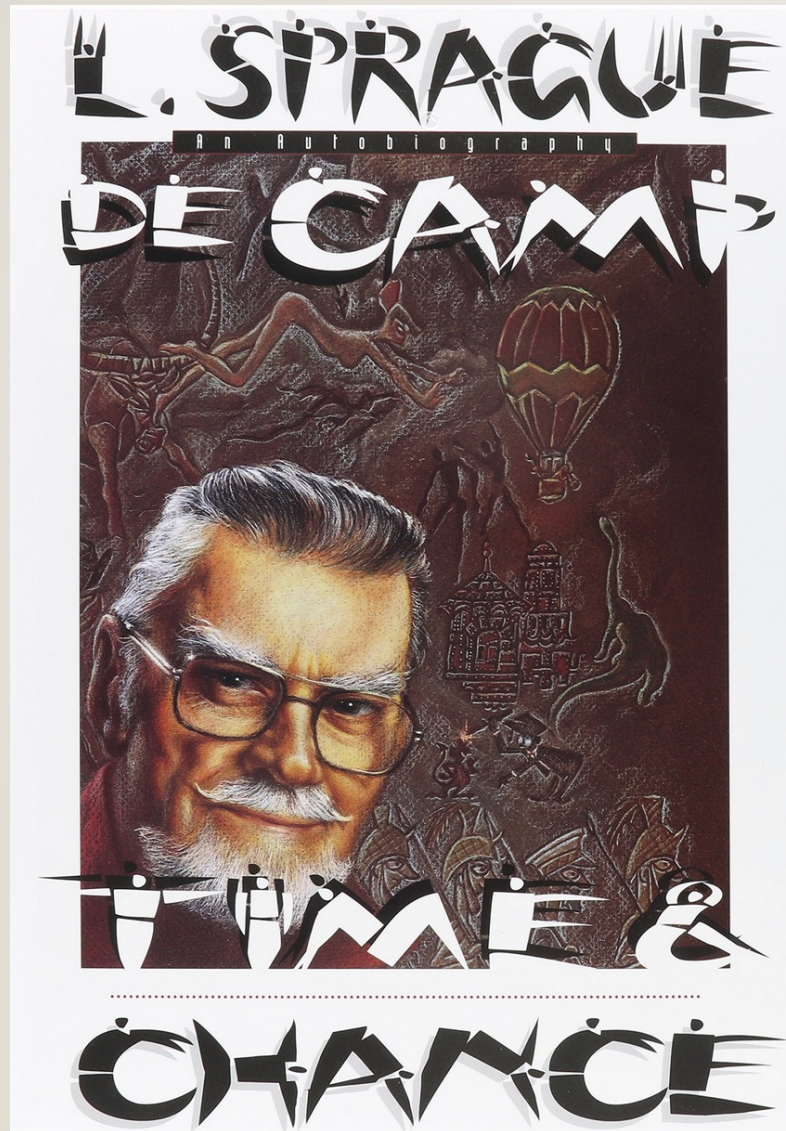
0. Romeo Raoul Martel (Civil Engineering) – disappeared three weeks earlier
1. Charles Schwieso (director of the YMCA) – sat on a tack poisoned with cacodyl
2. Howard Lucas (Chemistry) – centrifuge burst
3. John Peter Buwalda (Geology) – tied up in wind tunnel, eroded to death by sand
4. Arthur Klein (Aeronautics) – cut up by propellor
5. George V. Lomonossoff (Engineering) – suspended by his feet and electrocuted
6. Thomas H. Morgan (Biology) – frozen
7. Chester Stock (Palentology) – skull with poisoned teeth bit him
8. Harvey Eagleson (Literature) – heart failure when a snake came in his classroom
9. Eric Temple Bell (Mathematics) – hanged by his own necktie on a flagpole
10. Graham A. Laing (Economics) – head exploded after lighting a cigarette
11. Theodore G. Soares (Philosophy & Social Ethics) – cremated in steam plant furnace





1997 Hugo Award  
for Best Related Non-Fiction Book





Charles Schwieso (director of the YMCA)

“At 2:00 a.m. the night of November 7th... Charles Schwieso, awoke me to announce that my mother was dead.” - p. 86

Chester Stock (Palentology)

“The amiable Stock was a substantial figure in his field but cursed with the worst lecturing style I have endured.” - p. 87

Harvey Eagleson (Literature)

“Our English professor, Harvey Eagleson, had a horror of creeping things.” - p. 99





Cover detail from *Time & Chance*

“Further, knowing Sprague’s great interest in cryptograms and the double meaning, I suspect that more is intended, though not to be taken too seriously, than meets the eye.”

- Harvey Eagleson, *Engineering and Science*, 1962



## Works Cited

de Camp, L. Sprague. *The Best of L. Sprague de Camp*. Rockville, MD: Phoenix Pick, 1978.

------. *Time & Chance: An Autobiography*. Hampton Falls, NH: Donald M. Grant, Publisher, Inc., 1996.

Eagleson, Harvey. "Review of *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate* by L. Sprague de Camp '30," *Engineering and Science*, 5, no. 5 (1962): 6. <https://resolver.caltech.edu/CaltechES:25.5.books>.

Episode 014: John Tibbetts' interview with L. Sprague De Camp, *AboutSF AUDIO*, 6 April 2012, [https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aboutsf/episodes/2012-04-06T13\\_13\\_52-07\\_00](https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/aboutsf/episodes/2012-04-06T13_13_52-07_00)

"The Tech Murder Mystery: Riddle of Mysterious Deaths of Prominent Faculty Members At Last Solved," *The Big T*, v. 20 (1930): 206-216. California Institute of Technology, Caltech Associated Student Body. <https://resolver.caltech.edu/CaltechCampusPubs:20110930-101719288>

Taine, John. *The Gold Tooth*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1927.