

A Biography of **John G. Jenkins**

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John Gamewell Jenkins was born on May 30, 1901, in South Amboy, New Jersey. Jenkins completed his undergraduate work at Cornell University. He went on to teach psychology at Iowa State College while pursuing his M.S. degree there, which he completed in 1927. He spent a year as an assistant at the University of Illinois, before returning to Cornell where he worked as an assistant and earned his Ph.D. in 1929. He then returned to Iowa State College as an assistant professor for one year before going back to Cornell as an assistant professor, where he stayed until 1938. At this point he joined the faculty at the University of Maryland as a professor and chairman of the Department of Psychology, and remained in these positions for the rest of his life.

At the cusp of the nation's entry into World War II, Jenkins served as chairman of the National Research Council Committee on Selection and Training of Aircraft Pilots. In charge of around 100 psychologists, his group was responsible for the selection and training of the pilots who were to go to war. His extraordinary ability in this task undoubtedly saved much time, money, and equipment, not to mention lives. During the war, Jenkins headed the Aviation Psychology Section of the Navy Department Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, attaining the rank of Captain. This was notable considering he had no medical background and illustrates the regard the Bureau of Medicine had for his abilities. He was the only psychologist in the Navy to attain this rank.

Jenkins was a remarkable organizer, and at the University of Maryland, he established an innovative industrial psychology program. He had a wide network of acquaintances in business, industry, and academia, upon which he drew to hire both Roger Bellows and Edwin Ghiselli to the program, among others. Jenkins stressed the importance of a balance between first-hand knowledge and information in the program. Students were expected to learn the information available to them based on the work of previous scholars, but they were also greatly encouraged to learn through first-hand research. He also stressed diversity. All students accepted into the program were from different universities, and he encouraged his undergraduates to attend a different school for their graduate work.

Jenkins was an active researcher. He was one of the original research associates for The Psychological Corporation and he served on the Board of

Directors. He was a consultant for the Market and Social Research Division of the Psychological Corporation. Among other things, he studied polling techniques and the communication of ideas.

Jenkins published his seminal work, *Psychology in Business and Industry: An Introduction to Psychotechnology* in 1935, a book covering problems faced in selection, production, worker motivation, and market research. Jenkins served as the second president of Division 14, from 1946-1947. John G. Jenkins committed suicide in 1948.

References

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