

### H.R. WILSON, 1920 - 1990

Harry Rex Wilson was born in Halifax, NS, in 1920 and remained a Maritimer, even an aggressive one, for the rest of his life. None the less, it was at the University of Toronto in what, in amused derision, he called 'Upper Canada,' that he took his BA in 1944 and his MA in 1948. After a brief stint of teaching at Alexander College, an offshoot of the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB, and one formed specifically to provide for the needs of returning ex-servicemen, he moved to Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. While at Augustana, he completed his Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Michigan; his doctoral committee included Professor A.H. Marckwardt and Professor Hans Kurath, and his thesis dealt with the dialect of Lunenburg County, NS. From Augustana College, Wilson moved in 1959 to the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, ON and later to the University of Western Ontario, London, ON where he taught until his retirement.

Wilson's thesis is, of course, available on microfilm (Dissertation Abstracts, vol. 19, no. 12, p. 3300). Both abstract and thesis suitably and generously acknowledge Wilson's use of earlier records made by Henry Alexander of Queen's University, Kingston, ON, and given to Wilson by Alexander. What neither does is to pay tribute to Wilson's own inventiveness. His study was the first-ever study to be made in Canada over the LAUSC questionnaire. Moreover it was, so far as this writer knows, the first-ever study to be totally tape-recorded. Nowadays, of course, the tape-recorder is old hat and no self-respecting dialectologist would leave home without it; one wonders just how far this is due to Wilson's innovating.

And what of the International Conference on Methods in Dialectology? The first one took place in the University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PEI, in 1972 and since then the Conference has gone from strength to strength and from country to country. As a mark of its stature, we should note that the Papers from Methods V, the latest your writer has, run to 494 pages. Despite Wilson's disclaimers on pages 11 and 12 of that volume, the idea was his and it was he who conjured it into the reality of scholars speaking to scholars.

Nor was this the only way in which Wilson served his discipline. He became Vice-President of the American Dialect

Society in 1971 and became its President in 1976. And he served us here in APLA as well. He was a frequent attender at our meetings and an interested and always encouraging member of our group. It is some small consolation that our current president, Professor Flikeid, was able to attend Wilson's funeral service and to sign, on our behalf, the memorial book thereat.

Of Rex himself, one recalls more than anything his four outstanding qualities: his geniality, his good humour, his wit, and his generosity. Indeed, if the word geniality were eponymous, this would be a tribute to Rex the Genie.

We shall miss him a great deal; our sense of loss and our sympathy form the message we here at APLA would send to his wife, his children, and to the relatives who survive him.

#### NOTES

1. Some of this material will appear in an In Memoriam for Wilson in the forthcoming edition of the Newsletter of the American Dialect Society. That material is reproduced here with the generous permission of Professor Allan Metcalf, editor of NADS.
2. The biographical details herein were kindly provided by Wilson's eldest daughter, Mrs. Nancy Kobayishi.
3. Papers from the Fifth International Conference on Methods in Dialectology, ed. by H.J. Warkentyne. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1985.