IN MEMORIAM

Lancaster E. Dabney

Lancaster Eugene Dabney, Professor Emeritus of Romance Languages, died April 18, 1977, two days short of his seventy-ninth birthday. He had retired in 1968, after thirty-nine years of teaching French at the University, but through the Correspondence Study Section of the Division of Extension, continued to be active up to the day of his death.

In the 1960's in recognition of his already long association with the University Lance Dabney was designated official historian of the Department of Romance Languages. In that capacity, he traced the development of modern language instruction from the year the University opened, 1883, and prepared a comprehensive checklist of more than six hundred doctoral dissertations and master's theses by graduate students. There was thus a certain appropriateness to the fact that Lance Dabney's retirement and his completion of this historical project coincided, in 1968, with the division of the Department of Romance Languages into the Department of French and Italian and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.

Lancaster Dabney was born near Willow City, Texas, on April 20, 1898. The family later moved to San Saba, where he was graduated from high school in 1916. Following a year of study at the San Marcos Normal School, he enrolled in 1918 in the University of Texas, from which he received the B.A. degree in 1922 and the M.A. in 1924. (During the year 1922-23 he had taught science and served as high school principal in Snyder.) The years 1924-27 were spent teaching,

first, English and Spanish at Rusk Baptist College, then French at Butler University. Following this interval, he picked up his graduate studies again, enrolling in the Johns Hopkins University. Two years later, in 1929, with Ph.D. in hand, he returned to Austin to accept a post as Instructor of Romance Languages (French). During the academic years 1940-41 and 1960-61 he was a visiting professor at, respectively, Southern Methodist University and the University of Kentucky; and he went abroad during the year 1932-33 to do research, on a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies. Otherwise, the remainder of his professional career after 1929 was spent in Austin in the Department of Romance Languages.

Professor Dabney taught both the literature and the language of France. The Romantic poets and the great novelists of the nineteenth century were a particular interest of his, along with parts of the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. Over the years graduate students working under his direction -- among whom one must count one of the first Blacks to be awarded the Ph.D. degree at the University -- wrote doctoral dissertations and master's theses in all three of these areas. His published scholarship focussed on the history of the pre-classical theatre and included a study of the dramatist Claude Billard (1931), a survey of French Dramatic Literature in the Reign of Henri IV (1952), and a critical edition of Antoine de Montchrestien's play David (1963). He also made substantial contributions to two volumes of the Cabeen Critical Bibliography of French Literature; namely the chapter on the "Theatre" in Volume II (The Sixteenth Century) and the section on "Precedessors of Corneille" in Volume III (The Seventeenth Century).

At one time Lance Dabney had considered a career in science, and even after he had definitely chosen foreign languages instead, he kept up a keen interest in scientific matters. For many years he taught a section of the French reading course for graduate students in the sciences, and in this connection published two texts, each of which went through several editions; French Verbs and Idioms for Reading, and French for Science and Technical Majors.

Lancaster Dabney was dedicated to his students and to his scholarly pursuits, but he also loved to work with his hands; and he was in his spare time a fashioner of fine furniture, as well as an enthusiastic backyard gardener. He was also devoted to his family. He is survived by his wife, Kathleen Reeves Dabney, to whom he was married September 9, 1924; by a son, Alan Lancaster Dabney, and three grandchildren, as well as by two brothers and two sisters. They each have their own memories of him. For those who were his colleagues at the University, he will be remembered as a man who was generous with his learning and with his friendship and as a person of quiet, unassuming dignity.

Lorene L. Rogers

Lorene L. Rogers, President of
The University of Texas at Austin

Bill D. Francis

Bill D. Francis, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of A. Donald Sellstrom (chairman), Theodore Andersson, and Ernest F. Haden.