

IN MEMORIAM
OSCAR BROWN WILLIAMS

Oscar Brown Williams, Professor of Bacteriology, died in a Dallas hospital on September 23, 1959, after a brief illness. He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Frances Rowe Williams, one son, Dr. O. B. Williams, Jr., of Dallas, one daughter, Katherine Rowe Williams, a senior student in the University, and two grandchildren. He was a member of the Methodist Church.

His untimely death was a great shock to the University community which he had served so long, so ably, and so loyally. Born in Kosse, Texas, on September 17, 1895, he received his B.A. degree from The University of Texas in 1921, after serving for two years in a medical laboratory of the United States Army during World War I. His fine undergraduate record led to his election to Phi Beta Kappa. After receiving his M.A. degree from the University in 1923, he did further graduate work beginning in 1925 in Bacteriology, Chemistry, and Biochemistry at the University of California, where he received his Ph.D. degree in 1928. Election to Sigma Xi and service as a teaching fellow at the University of California during his resident graduate work were honors he received as a graduate student. Professor Karl Friederich Meyer of the California Medical Center, his teacher and an internationally known Bacteriologist, recently wrote Mrs. Williams that "I hope that some day in not too distant a future I may be able to tell you how I enjoyed his friendship and how he stood out as one of the brilliant students I had the privilege to guide over thirty years ago."

Professor Williams began his long and distinguished career at the University with his appointment as tutor in Botany in the fall of 1921. This mutually advantageous association continued with only two interruptions until his death. After the Department of Botany became the Department of Botany and Bacteriology in the mid-twenties, Dr. Williams' appointments were in the latter field. He left the University in 1935 to become, first, Bacteriologist and, later, Director of the Bacteriology Research Laboratory with the National Canners Association in Washington, D.C. He returned to the University as Professor of Bacteriology in 1941. He was appointed Chairman

of the Department of Botany and Bacteriology in 1942 and, in 1949, he became chairman of the newly created Department of Bacteriology. He served this department as chairman until his death. His administrative leadership and untiring devotion to the welfare of the department are reflected in the high ranking which this department has attained nationally.

To hundreds of ex-students, Professor Williams was known for his love of teaching and his interest in students. Many graduate students in Bacteriology benefited from his wise counsel and attentive supervision. Although he always upheld the highest standard of scholarly performance, students who studied under him held him in the highest esteem as a person and as a professionally competent teacher.

His service to the University, however, was not limited to the classroom. Throughout his career he was appointed or elected to many major University committees, including the Discipline Committee, the Faculty Building Committee, the Advisory Coordinating Committee on Graduate Work in the Medical Sciences, the Committee of Counsel on Academic Freedom and Responsibility, the 1945 Advisory Committee to the Regents on the Selection of a President, and the University Research Institute Council. He was treasurer and a member of the Board of Directors of Texas Student Publications during the difficult period of World War II. In this capacity he rendered outstanding service to the student body and to the permanent staff of Student Publications.

Perhaps his greatest committee contribution, however, was his service on the University's Intercollegiate Athletic Council from 1954 until his death. He became chairman of the Athletic Council in 1956, and he served as president of the Southwest Athletic Conference in 1957-1958. As chairman of the Athletic Council, he approached the heavy responsibility involved in this position with the same zeal and devotion that he showed toward all other tasks which he was called on to perform. He was instrumental in the selection of two outstanding head coaches and in the creation of the present counseling program for athletes. Like his associates on the University faculty, staff members in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics loved him for his leadership, his integrity, his loyalty, and his wisdom. Certainly Dr. Williams was one of the architects of a

sound athletic program under faculty supervision at the University.

Professionally Dr. Williams gained a national reputation in his chosen field of work. His published research reflects his life long interest in the microbiological problems associated with food and water. His first major paper, "The Heat Resistance of Bacterial Spores," *J. Infectious Diseases* 44, 421-465, 1929, set such a pattern of thoroughness that it is still the major initial reference in his field. It attracted such favorable attention that subsequent collaborative efforts on food microbiology sought his participation. Especially noteworthy are his chapter on "Preservation of Food in Hermetically Sealed Containers" in *THE CHEMISTRY AND TECHNOLOGY OF FOOD AND FOOD PRODUCTS*, M. B. Jacobs, Editor, Interscience, N.Y., 1951, and his Symposium on the "Biology of Bacterial Spores," *Bact. Reviews* 16, 89-143, 1952.

Not only did his research yield important contributions to the methodology of food bacteriology, but he and his students published a series of papers on fundamental studies on heat resistance of microorganisms.

Especially significant papers, published with L. L. Campbell, Jr., were "The Effect of Temperature on the Nutritional Requirements of Facultative and Obligate Thermophilic Bacteria" *J. Bact.* 65, 141-145, 1953, and "A Study of Chitin Decomposing Microorganisms of Marine Origin," *J. General Microbiol.* 5, 895-904, 1951.

His early interest in water bacteriology was continued in his later years in studies on oil field waters. He was a member of the committee that worked out standard methods for studying the microbiology of oil field waters and published regularly in the journals of that field.

Professor Williams was an active participant in those areas in which his research interests lay. Particularly valuable was his work over a period of years on the microbiological problems associated with food, which was conducted for the armed forces. Twice he served on an Award Jury of the Institute of Food Technologists. He was also a member of the Committee on Bacteria and Bactericides of the American Petroleum Institute. As a member of the Committee on the Microbiological Examination of Food of the American Public Health Association, he authored a report of the Committee for 1938 and 1939. At various times he served on the Board of Editors of

the Journal of Bacteriology and of leading journals in the food research field. For several years he was an advisory editor for the McGraw-Hill series on food technology.

His national Society of American Bacteriologists honored him with membership on its council and service on several important committees. He was also a member of the American Public Health Association, the Institute of Food Technologists, the British Society for General Microbiology, and the Texas Academy of Science. In 1957 the American Academy of Microbiology was organized, and Dr. Williams was selected as a charter fellow. He was, in addition, a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Professor Williams was listed in Who's Who in America and American Men of Science.

Although Professor Williams' loss will be great to those in his professional field, it will be even greater to his colleagues here who will miss his jovial nature, his friendly smile, and the warmth of his personality. With boundless energy he pursued a variety of interests, and he served them all well. In whatever field he chose to enter, recognition came from his colleagues. In addition to his University and professional activities, at the time of his death he was serving a second term as national President of the Chi Phi social fraternity. It can be said of him that so many people in so many different walks of life will miss that devotion to duty which characterized his work with them.

In reporting Dr. Williams' serious illness to the Faculty Council on September 21, 1959, Vice President and Provost Harry H. Ransom remarked that it was faculty members like Professor Williams who had done much to bring distinction to the University without receiving complete recognition for their contributions. "These are the people," he added, "who have given their lives to the University, not only to bring it external eminence but to raise its internal quality." This tribute is a fitting one for a dedicated and useful life.

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Dean H. Y. McCown
Dean W. G. Whaley
Professor Orville Wyss

The O. B. Williams Memorial Resolution Committee