

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
WILSON MATHIS HUDSON**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Wilson Mathis Hudson, professor emeritus, English, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM
WILSON MATHIS HUDSON**

Wilson Mathis Hudson was born in Flatonia, Texas, on December 26, 1907. He spent his early childhood in Mexico and Flatonia, but for most of his life Austin was home. He not only received his high school and much of his college education in this city, but he also taught at The University of Texas for twenty-eight years.

After earning a BA (Phi Beta Kappa) in English and French in 1929 and an MA in English in 1930 at the University, Professor Hudson spent seven years as an English instructor at what was then the Rice Institute in Houston, attending graduate summer school at the University of Chicago for four of those years. Following a short hiatus from academe working for G. & C. Merriam Co., the publisher of *Webster's Dictionary*, he began full-time graduate study in English at the University of Chicago in 1938. Soon after the United States of America entered World War II, Professor Hudson joined the Army Air Force as a second lieutenant, finishing his tour of duty in 1946 with the rank of captain. In the fall of that year he joined the University's English department as an instructor. After earning his PhD from Chicago, he was promoted to assistant professor in 1947, to associate professor in 1953, and to full professor in 1964. He retired in the summer of 1974 and was accorded professor emeritus status by President Stephen H. Spurr.

Throughout his career, Professor Hudson was unusually eclectic in his teaching, especially at the undergraduate level. He offered courses in language, poetry, and fiction in regional as well as in international literatures. Starting in the fall of 1950, he taught the upper-division Life and Literature of the Southwest course almost every year, taking it over from the faculty member who had designed and instituted it, J. Frank Dobie, and assuring the continuity of a course that is still a vibrant part of the University's English department curriculum. Almost as often, he taught The European Novel course that included works of internationally renowned writers, from Dostoyevsky to Camus. Professor Hudson's course offerings also spanned lengthy historical periods, encompassing not only The American Novel after 1920 but also The Poetry of Milton. His graduate seminars, too, embraced a variety of topics, from the Epic, to T.S. Eliot, to Yeats and the Irish Revival.

Professor Hudson's scholarly research and writing reflected his pedagogical eclecticism. Early in his career, he not only published essays on early Celtic literature—on works ascribed to the legendary Irish warrior-bard, Ossian, for example, and to Taliesin, the sixth-century Welsh poet—but also on more technical topics of language and writing. However, he soon settled on the subjects that he would make his particular specialties for the rest of his career: myth theory, Western U.S. literature, and folklore of the Southwest. He published essays treating Jung's ideas on archetype and on the collective unconscious, Freud's on the primal horde, Mircea Eliade's on sacred symbolism. His major contribution to the field of Western literature studies was a 1964 book, *Andy Adams: His Life and Writings* (1964), a comprehensive overview of the novelist whose *Log of a Cowboy* (1903) many critics consider one of the most realistic books about cowboy life ever written.

It was folklore of the Southwest, however, that quickly became Wilson Hudson's overriding interest, and it was in the service of folklore that he spent most of his energies. Though a member of many scholarly societies of national scope—the Modern Language Association, the American Studies Association, the Conference of College Teachers of English—Professor Hudson dedicated much of his professional life to the Texas Folklore

Society (TFS), the second-oldest state folklore society in the U.S., which was started in 1909 by John A. Lomax, then at Texas A&M, and UT assistant professor of English L.W. Payne. Professor Hudson served TFS in a variety of administrative positions, among them secretary-treasurer, vice-president, and president, eventually being honored with his election as a Fellow in 1972. But his greatest contribution to TFS, and through it to the intellectual world, was undoubtedly his longtime editorial role in the book series, *Publications of the Texas Folklore Society*, begun by internationally renowned folktale scholar Stith Thompson in 1916 and still flourishing today under the editorship of Stephen F. Austin University's Professor Francis Edward Abernethy. Beginning in 1951 with *The Healer of Los Olmos and Other Mexican Lore* and ending in 1972 with *Diamond Bessie and the Shepherds*, Wilson Hudson edited or co-edited almost a score of books in the *PTFS* series, including such well-known volumes as *Mesquite and Willow* (1957), *A Good Tale and a Bonnie Tune* (1964), *Tire Shrinker to Dragster* (1968), and *Hunters and Healers* (1971).

He is remembered as a colleague whose personal warmth and human concern were as much in daily evidence as his intellect. "He was very kind, very wise, and very gentle," remembers one of those colleagues, "who would ask about my wife, kids, home--ordinary things. He always had a story to tell, and I always felt privileged to be the one hearing it." Wilson Hudson died in his longtime hometown of Austin on February 19, 2002, almost two months into his ninety-fifth year. He was preceded in death by both his first wife, Mildred (*née* Ruckman), whom he married in 1932 and who died in 1949, and his second wife, Browning scholar and Southwest Texas State University English professor Gertrude Catherine Reese, whom he married in 1951 and who died in 2001. Professor Hudson donated his books and papers to the Southwestern Writers Collection, and they are housed in Special Collections at the Albert B. Alkek Library of Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Roger deV. Renwick (chair), Don B. Graham, and James D. Garrison.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on November 27, 2002. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/>.