MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

Professor Ortha L. Wilner (1894-1980)

To write about Ortha L. Wilner is inevitably to write about the classics, so totally was she identified with the teaching of and the teacher training for that often imperiled branch of the humanities. Dr. Wilner, as she was always known to her students, died August 10, 1980, in Williamsville, New York, where she lived since 1964, after her retirement from the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee. Dr. Wilner joined the faculty of Milwaukee State Teachers College in 1931; she helped guide the transition to Wisconsin State College and finally to the University.

Dr. Wilner was born in Buffalo, New York, January 27, 1894. She received her bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts, in 1916. In 1929 she was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree in classical studies by the University of Chicago. Before she joined the MSTC faculty, she had taught English and Latin in New York secondary schools, and she had been a junior faculty member at the University of Buffalo and the University of Chicago.

During her long tenure in Milwaukee Dr. Wilner quietly and efficiently served both College and University in various important administrative posts: as chairman of the foreign language department, chairman of the catalog committee, chairman of a special committee to survey administrative organization prior to merger, chairman of the secondary education merger committee--the list could go on. Clearly, Dr. Wilner was a steadying influence during the formative years of UWM.

Beyond her own campus, Dr. Wilner served Latin teachers of the state and nation by actively participating in their learned societies and
professional organizations. She was twice chairman of the Latin section of the Wisconsin Education Association and fulfilled various committee duties for the American Classical League, Sigma Pi Rho, and Eta Sigma Phi. She was a member of the American Association of University Professors, the National Education Association, and the American Philological Association.

Dr. Wilner's essays occurred frequently in such professional journals as Classical Outlook, Classical Weekly, Modern Language Journal, and Classical Philology. Her special interest was Roman comedy, especially the dramas of Plautus and Terence, but she was also a student of Vergil and Lucretius.

These biographical data of a professional woman are, of course, impressive. But the real testament cannot be recorded in a faculty document and filed in the University record. It can only be found in the lives of her students, who remember her as a gentle, soft-spoken teacher with very high academic standards. She kept the classics department alive and exciting despite the threats of economic retrenchment and educational whims. Astrology was one of her many hobbies and interests, and she noted that she was an Aquarian. She was indeed: the water bearer.

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