

Alden P. Johnson, both of whom were themselves becoming deeply involved in the reproduction of historical sources through micrographic means. He was not, alas, especially active, attending only two widely separated meetings, but he did steer the occasional piece of research material the Society's way.

Tate married Katherine Anne Moore on June 10, 1931. They had two children, Vernon Rodney and Charlotte Anne. Vernon Dale Tate died on September 30, 1989.

John B. Hench

### WILLARD THORP

Willard Thorp, an eminent figure in American literary studies, died in Princeton, New Jersey, on February 15, 1990, at the age of ninety. Born in Sidney, New York, on April 20, 1899, he grew up beside the Susquehanna's banks, not far from Cooperstown and in country dotted with burial mounds of the late Iroquois people. After attending schools in Sidney, Willard earned degrees from Hamilton College and Harvard University in 1920-21, taught at Smith College until 1924, then received a Princeton University doctorate in 1926 and served on the Princeton faculty until retirement in 1967.

After writing his first books on Elizabethan and Restoration drama, Willard turned to American literature and produced the first fully annotated editions of Melville, *Herman Melville: Representative Selections* (1938) and *Moby-Dick* (1947). During the dark years of World War II, he coauthored with another member of the Society, Robert Spiller, and edited the monumental *Literary History of the United States*, a three-volume work that affirms the vigor and elasticity of national expression and adds to its traditions the impact of Modernism and New Criticism. His other major works

of literary history included *A Southern Reader* (1955), *American Writing in the Twentieth Century* (1960), and *American Humorists* (1964).

Willard earned an international reputation through his books, several appearing in foreign translations, his leadership of professional societies, committees, and editorial boards, and his frequent appointments as visiting professor at universities from Harvard to Hawaii. But he was foremost a loyal son of Princeton, serving her proudly as president of the graduate alumni association, coauthor of the graduate school history, and incumbent of the university's oldest endowed chair, the Holmes Professorship of Belles Lettres. In 1978 Princeton awarded him an honorary doctorate, citing him as 'a man of discriminating judgment and catholic knowledge, revered by the members of forty-one Princeton classes as a giant among teachers, to whom scholars of the present and the future owe their gratitude.' The commencement audience greeted these words with a long, standing ovation.

Willard's students remember him as a lecturer of fabled power. He could hold a throng hushed as he spoke, in a silvery tenor voice, on matters of great pitch and moment, punctuated with sly comical asides. He rarely indulged in anecdotes or self-compliment, mainly caring how well the students listened, especially when he described American values. In his book-lined office at 1 McCosh Hall he taught 'preceptorials,' small group discussions that began with an idea and quickly developed wide-ranging connections between writers and music, buildings and paintings, politics and science. This interdisciplinary method of teaching led Willard in 1941 to co-found the American Civilization Program, one of the nation's early such efforts, which he chaired for thirteen years. Now called the American Studies Program, it aims to give students an understanding of America's culture, institutions, intellectual traditions, and human relations.

To students, he was known as a wise counselor, a rigorous grader, and a fearless assassin of mediocrity. One spring a junior

approached and confessed that he feared not passing the general examination. 'Sit down in my chair,' said the Holmes Professor, 'and let me show you how wrong you are.' After ten minutes of brisk questions, Willard rose and said, 'You're right, you *are* in grave trouble.'

Colleagues mainly knew Willard's sociable side, often glimpsed at frequent gatherings in the colonial home on Nassau Street that he shared with his wife, Margaret Farrand Thorp. Margaret, who died in 1970, was a distinguished biographer and author of *America at the Movies* (1939), an early book on American film. The Thorps regularly invited friends to mark arrivals and honors, to hold readings of poems and plays, to conduct over fireside drinks lively talk about the latest books, films, and reviews. The heart of the house was a magnificent library; its soul was a grand piano where Willard played each day, maintaining his wide repertory of Bach fugues and other Baroque works. Famous visitors and guests included Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, T. S. Eliot, R. P. Blackmur, William Meredith, and Louis Coxe; the last three were all associated with Princeton's creative writing program, which Willard helped to foster.

In his life's work, Willard Thorp exemplified several values that stand at the heart of a committed liberal education: teaching with passion; taking the wide view over narrow specialization; speaking and writing clear English rather than muddled jargon. Those values governed his association with the American Antiquarian Society, which elected him to membership in 1966 and encouraged his research on early fiction, first published in the *Proceedings* as a monograph, *Catholic Novelists in Defense of their Faith* (1968). This paper he first delivered as a talk at Antiquarian Hall in October 1967. According to James Mooney, Willard was in such rare form that day that his happy auditors included several waitresses and the bartender, listening from behind a green burlap curtain.

To AAS, Willard donated, in 1969, a set of rare editions of James Fenimore Cooper. To the world of letters, he leaves a legacy of

high standards: respect for the past, hope for the future, and honor to the wide range of informed opinion.

William Howarth

### ROBERT HOWARD WETZEL

Robert Howard Wetzel, stockbroker and prominent Worcester community leader, was born in Buffalo, New York, the son of Howard and Catherine Wetzel. He died suddenly, at the age of fifty-two, on the Fourth of July 1989 at his summer home on Cape Cod.

Wetzel took the degree of bachelor of arts from Hobart College in 1959. In 1962 he joined the Worcester brokerage firm of Kinsley and Adams. He later became associated with Shearson Lehman Hutton in Worcester, becoming the firm's senior vice-president. He was also president of A. E. Thompson, Inc., in Worcester before the company merged with General Medical Corp. of Richmond in 1976. He served on the latter firm's board of directors for a number of years thereafter.

Bob Wetzel was the consummate volunteer, community leader, and trustee. As his eulogist, Rev. Barbara Merritt, said, 'The Worcester community entrusted him with our endowments, our wealth, our portfolios, large and small, and knew that we had entrusted them to a man who would do everything in his power to take our talents and resources and return them to us with all possible interest and growth.' For thirteen years he served Clark University as a member of its Board of Trustees. He was also a trustee of the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, Worcester Hahnemann Hospital, and Bancroft School. He was a director and past president as well of the Greater Worcester Community Foundation. His deep involvement in Worcester's philan-

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