IN MEMORIAM

ELMER BAGBY ATWOOD

In the death of Elmer Bagby Atwood on October 6, 1963, the University and the community experienced the kind of loss which is felt not only locally among family and friends, colleagues and students, but also among scholars throughout America and the world. During the career cut short last fall, Professor Atwood had distinguished himself first as a Mediaevalist, the discoverer of a neglected Latin account of the Trojan War, and then as the leading dialectologist of the Southwest. His interest in Texas speech did not, however, prevent him from contributing significantly to the dialectology of other regions such as Virginia, Belgium, and though his death prevented completion of the studies he had begun, Hawaii.

Professor Atwood was born in Yoakum, Texas, in 1906. While he was still quite young, his parents moved to El Paso, where he spent his boyhood. He never lost his feeling of intimate connection with the West Texas countryside. His father, Dr. E. B. Atwood, Sr., to whom he was deeply devoted, was a distinguished clergyman who founded the Baptist church of New Mexico and served for a time as president of Wayland College. The son received his B.A. from Hardin-Simmons at the age of twenty. He was married in 1933 to Mary Hamill Bell of Roanoke, Virginia, who survives him, together with a daughter, Mrs. John Dieter, of Houston, and two grandchildren.
Professor Atwood's graduate study was carried out primarily at the University of Virginia, where he held a DuPont Fellowship, and received his Ph.D. His dissertation on the Troy Story eventually reached publication as "The Rawlinson Excidium Troiae," edited jointly with Virgil Whitaker of Stanford. His study at Virginia was supplemented by study at the University of London and, after the Ph.D., Phillips-Universität in Marburg. It was at these universities that his interest in dialectology was awakened. He was highly skilled at languages, not only as a student and scholar but as a writer and speaker. He read far beyond the range of his special interests and had a copious and exceptionally accurate memory of what he read. His career outside the several institutions at which he studied and taught was varied and personally gratifying to him. At one time during the depression he lived for some months in the high Sierras of California and worked at gold mining—an experience he was found of recalling, partly at least for a love of nature that those who did not know him well were not always aware of. After he and his family acquired their own home on David Street he became highly skilled at gardening, producing a variety of flowers, including prize specimens of *hemerocallis*. During World War II he volunteered for overseas service with the American Red Cross and spent considerable time in the European theatre as Field Director, seeing action and no little hardship during the "Battle of the Bulge" in the Ardennes section.

His teaching career began in Texas, continued in Hawaii, and after his doctorate included Stanford, The University of British Columbia, Texas Western, and The University of Texas, where he began as an instructor in 1937 and became a full professor in 1953. Among his noteworthy honors were a Fulbright Fellowship in Belgium in 1954-55, and an honorary degree
of Doctor of Letters from Hardin-Simmons. His published works included two books besides the *Excidium Troiae* already mentioned, *A Survey of Verb Forms in the Eastern United States* (1952) and *The Regional Vocabulary of Texas* (1962). Among his articles are the following:


In preparing his studies of dialectology he developed a very successful machine-technique for the assembling, sorting, and printing of linguistic data, thus demonstrating his remarkable ability at keeping abreast of the most recent tendency in his chosen science, linguistics. In fact, the active and growing program in linguistics at Texas is, in large measure, a monument to his pioneering efforts in teaching and scholarship in this field.

His fellow members of the English budget council universally respected his hard sense and good judgment, displayed on numerous occasions; he was never reluctant to say, forcefully, what he felt was needed. He had a sharp wit that merged into the epigrammatic, and he deeply appreciated the humor others, especially his prime favorite James Thurber. His conversation was stimulating in its breadth and rewarding in its depth. With students he was unfailingly kind and courteous; graduate students worked especially hard for him not only through interest in what he taught but through a realization that he was working much harder than they. No one who served with him on a dissertation committee will forget the standard of excellence he set by his careful corrections and suggestions. Long after graduation his doctoral candidates continued to concern him and he undoubtedly had a decisive influence upon the careers of several.
As the concluding sentence to "The Methods of American Dialectology," published a few weeks after his death, Professor Atwood wrote: "The history of scholarship is to a considerable degree a history of patience, and of this quality the dialect scholar has need of more than his share." More than his share of patience, as a very distinguished dialect scholar, he had; but also a more than generous share of much else that will continue to be remembered and cherished by all who knew him.

Norman Hackerman  
Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Eugene W. Nelson  
Secretary of the General Faculty

The resolutions were prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors A. A. Hill, Chairman, Joseph J. Jones, Winfred P. Lehmann, and Joe West Neal.