

Maurice Hudiburg Wallace**1917-1961**

Maurice Hudiburg Wallace was born 22 August 1917, in Fairbury, Nebraska. In 1924 he moved with his parents, Mrs. C. M. Wallace and the late Dr. Clarence M. Wallace, to Muskogee, Oklahoma, where his father became pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church. His early education was obtained in the public schools of Muskogee. He attended College of the Ozarks, Clarksville, Arkansas, and was graduated from Iowa State University with a B. S. degree in geology in 1940. He received a Master's degree from the University of Kansas in 1942.

Immediately upon graduation from the University of Kansas he went to work for the Standard Oil Company (New Jersey). He resigned in 1955 and in 1957 joined the faculty of the University of Tulsa where he taught for two years. Since leaving the University he has maintained a close association with the department of geology, going on field trips, giving lectures, and counseling students. He was in his forty-third year at the time of his death, which came on 9 July 1961, following an operation to stop massive internal hemorrhages.

He crowded an amazingly varied, fruitful and adventuresome career into this brief span of time. Of his professional career, the first twelve years were spent conducting field geology studies in Costa Rica, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Honduras, Cuba, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Angola, the Belgian Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Turkey, and Libya.

A wonderful sense of humor was one of Maurice's most attractive qualities. He was always cheerful and never failed to find something about which to laugh, even under the most trying circumstances, including bouts of malaria, amoebic dysentery, and undulant fever. He was a friendly man, in the truest sense of the word. He had no enemies and certainly, this amiable, happy-go-lucky philosopher would not approve a serious or platitudinous memorial.

Without doubt, he belongs to that select coterie of gifted men who can do reconnaissance geology, men who have that rare ability to grasp the regional picture as they travel through unexplored country, mapping as they go, enduring hardships, but coming out with a job well done.

Things seemed to happen to Maurice or Li'l Abner, as he was to become known. His interesting and often humorous experience would fill a book. He wrote well and it is regrettable that he did not keep a diary or leave an autobiography. He did, however, maintain a lively correspondence with numerous friends, and his ex-employer has a file full of his company correspondence and reports, both formal and informal. In a clear, terse, yet picturesque style of writing he would describe the geology of an area and include the account of a humorous incident as it took place in the course of his work.

Upon his return to the United States in 1955, he traveled extensively over this country, Canada, and Mexico, attending as many scientific meetings and field conferences as he possibly could. He enjoyed mostly the opportunity to meet friends, swap tales, and argue on any subject.

Although a field geologist, he enjoyed his brief career as a teacher and gave freely of his time to instruct and guide the students. He made sure that they got the opportunity to go on numerous field trips where they learned lessons that will never be forgotten.

Those who were privileged to know Li'l Abner as a friend not only respected and admired the compass of his learning but also his extraordinary breadth of interests. He was first and foremost a geologist, but in the course of his worldwide field work he collected both fossils and minerals, compiling a private collection second to none. His early work in the archeologically rich countries of Central and South America only served to stimulate an early interest in anthropology. His collection of Indian artifacts and pottery is outstanding. His interest in this field continued and during his work in North Africa and the Middle East he delved into the subject of ancient history. With a thorough knowledge of the Bible gained from his father, he became an apt student of Biblical history and archeology. Along with these interests he was also a stamp and coin collector and carried on a lively trading business in both, as well as being president of the Muskogee Stamp Club at the time of his death.

Although Li'l Abner would eat most any dish, he was a gourmet and familiar with the cuisine of many lands. His library contains many cook books featuring the foods and dishes of many of the countries in which he worked and he was no stranger to their preparation, being able to cook and serve a meal worthy of any chef.

The scientific and learned societies to which Abner belonged are many. Notable among these are: the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Geological Society of America, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Society of Exploration Geophysicists, American Museum of Natural History, Tulsa Geological and Geophysical Societies, Oklahoma Academy of Science, and Oklahoma Anthropology Society.

Above all, Maurice, "Li'l Abner" Wallace, was a philosopher. No more fitting epitaph could be written for him than that which the British author, Ritchie Calder wrote in his book, "Men Against the Desert."

"This geologist from Oklahoma is a character who has got into Arab lore . . . This 'rough-neck' is also a fine scientist and a philosopher. In the desert you get plenty of time and opportunity to philosophise. Where there is no roof but the stars, and not a sound, you can think. Wallace had done a lot of thinking about problems which were uncomplicated by the day's head-lines. He had time to think about humanity and its future."

Jack L. Walper