

Preface

When classes started in the Fall, 1969, at Southern Methodist University, it was the first time in forty-two years that Mayne Longnecker was not present to greet the new students on campus.

Mayne arrived on the SMU campus in September 1927, fresh out of Iowa where he had more recently been Superintendent of North English Schools. He had a Master of Science Degree from the University of Iowa, his wonderful wife, Joyce, and the first of two daughters. His new job was that of Assistant Professor of Biology; and he took hold of it with an enthusiasm that was never to be diminished by years of teaching.

He quickly recognized that to function properly as staff member in a developing university he would have to earn a doctorate. He chose the University of Chicago, and was at this university for the summer quarter each year 1929 through 1937 (except for 1935). In spite of the financial sacrifice entailed by this kind of activity, his family proudly supported him in his efforts, and he was awarded the Ph.D. in Botany in 1937.

Throughout the years he has been what might be called the teacher's teacher. By this I mean to imply many things. To the satisfaction of the Dean, he was always on the job, met classes, kept and recorded infallible grades, wisely counselled students, attended faculty meetings, contributed sagaciously to innumerable committees. To the joy of his colleagues he actually preferred to teach freshmen, never complained of the hours assigned him, reveled in large classes, and would undertake to teach anything assigned him—even when the assignment was made the day the class began. To the delight and edification of his students he was an informed scholar, a skilled and skillful lecturer, a patient listener, a goad and driver to the indolent, a wise counsellor, a friend.

Inevitably he gained campus recognition. In 1952, against his own desires he became what he privately described as “Dean of Sin” when President Umphrey Lee requested him to become Dean of University Life. In this new post Mayne’s principal role was that of disciplinarian, charged with enforcement of a body of traditional rules, many of which were obsolete. Though he personally disagreed with many of the rules, yet he accepted them as faculty mandates to be enforced by himself as Dean; and to the honor of the man I think it should be recorded that, as long as he was Dean, Mayne ordered his life to conform to University rules both on and off campus. His reasoning was simple: he could with better conscience enforce a body of (sometimes senseless) rules if he regulated himself by that same body of rules.

I think that “promotion” to Emeritus Professor in June, 1964, was not altogether an unhappy event. Mayne was free again from the thralldom of decanal discipline, and enthusiastically accepted an invitation to continue post-retirement as full-time teacher until, sadly enough, University mandate required his final release in June, 1969. It is a delight to report that he is currently serving as consultant to four developing colleges in the Rio Grande Valley, advising them on the improvement of science teaching.

This issue of the Journal is inscribed to our esteemed colleague, W. Mayne Longnecker.

JOE P. HARRIS,
Dean of Humanities and Sciences