

Preface

Teacher, Scholar, Mentor, Friend. With this description of W.F.H. Nicolaisen I dedicated the 1997 index to *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*. Professor Bill Nicolaisen has been a major influence on my life since I first walked into his graduate course on the history of the English language thirty years ago. I was captured by him and his astounding knowledge of the language I had, more or less, taken for granted to that point. His Scottish burr only added to my fascination. When I say that Bill Nicolaisen captured me that day, I mean that he led the way for me to seize on a discipline and a body of knowledge which still excites me today. When I read an especially perceptive paper (which includes every one of Bill's papers I have ever read) I hearken back to those graduate school days when Professor Nicolaisen opened whole new vistas to us. After Grimm's law and the Great Vowel Shift I could, of course, not give up on an area which so fascinated me. I went on to complete my doctorate taking at least one course from the master every semester. He guided me in my study of language and onomastics, instilling in me a reverence for the details and an appreciation of the power of names *within* a language. He worked closely with me, continuing to introduce me to the vagaries of onomastics until I knew that it was a subject I would never abandon. His guidance and genuine concern for all of his students and in particular this mentee brought me much pride. Under his tutelage I was presented with the "Distinguished Dissertation Award" by the State University of New York at Binghamton. He has gone on throughout the years to guide and advise me. His talents as a teacher, mentor and scholar are abundant. To be able to call him friend is a deep source of pride for someone who is still awed by his knowledge and understanding of so many things.

Bill Nicolaisen is a remarkable man. A graduate of the Universities of Tübingen (Dr. Phil.) and Glasgow (M. Litt.), he served as head of the Scottish Place-Name Survey in the School of Scottish Studies of the University of Edinburgh. In 1969 he joined the Department of English at the State University of New York at Binghamton from which he retired as Distinguished Professor *Emeritus* of English and Folklore in 1992. He has been a Visiting Professor at Ohio State University, the University of Aarhus in Denmark, and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He also was a Carnegie Fellow at the University of Aberdeen in 1978-1979. From his retirement until 1997 he was an Honorary Research Fellow in English at Aberdeen which granted him the status of Honorary Professor in 1998. He has served as President of several professional organizations: our own American Name Society in 1977; the New York Folklore Society (1971-75 and 1981-83); the American Folklore Society (1983); the Middle Atlantic Folklife Association (1987-89); the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland (1993-1996); the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (1993-1996); The Scottish Medievalists (1994-97); and the

Folklore Society (1999-2002). Professor Nicolaisen has also served as Vice President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Names (1982-85) and the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research (1989-94). He is currently an Honorary Vice President of the New York Folklore Society and an Honorary President of the Scottish Place-Name Society. Professor Nicolaisen has written extensively (he has more than 300 articles published) in the fields of name studies and folk-narrative research and has lectured widely at many universities and professional meetings. His book *Scottish Place-Names: Their Study and Significance* (1976) received the joint first prize of the International Chicago Folklore Competition in 1977. Retirement has not slowed him down, either; his publications in the last seven years are extensive.

W.F.H. Nicolaisen, Bill to the many who count him as a friend, has truly attained every facet of the title "Distinguished Professor" which was bestowed on him by the State University of New York in recognition of his great gifts and his eagerness to share them with his students.

In the following pages you will witness the level of respect which Bill Nicolaisen has earned from some of the best minds in onomastics today. If I have any regret in bringing this festschrift together it lies in the fact that I was unable to include the works of all of those who wanted to honor this outstanding scholar. Author after author reported to me the deep respect which they have for Bill. Many credit him with some of the highest level of scholarship in our discipline and more than a few wrote about how his work has raised the level of scholarship in the field.

You will find in this collection some of the best known names in onomastics. They cover areas from geographic names (a sub-discipline in which Bill has made a significant mark -- and so an area in which many of our authors have chosen to honor him) to anthroponyms to odonyms. You will witness some of the best thinking about some fascinating subjects.

I chose to begin this volume in an unconventional way. It is very unusual to include a work by the person being honored in a festschrift but I find the thoughts expressed and the subject covered (an onomastic autobiography of our honoree) so compelling that I chose to cast tradition aside and ask Bill if I might include his fascinating article in a publication produced in his honor. I am thankful for his consent. I feel that his work sets the stage for this festschrift and declares, in a way that I am unable to express in words, the reason why so many people hold Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen in such high regard (I think you will like the pictures too!). Please start with his article and begin to admire this teacher, scholar, mentor and friend as so many of his colleagues have.