
In Memoriam

E. Wallace McMullen, 1915-2002

Editor's Note: E. Wallace McMullen, a long time member and officer of the American Name Society, died in Madison, New Jersey on July 27, 2002.

McMullen was born in the small community of Quincy, Florida, on December 8, 1915. He graduated from the University of Florida, Gainesville, in 1936 and received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1950. From Columbia he went on to a distinguished teaching career at the University of Iowa, Lehigh University, and Fairleigh Dickinson, where he taught Chaucer and the history of the English language for more than 20 years. He retired from Fairleigh Dickinson in 1982. During World War II McMullen was a member of the team assembled in Washington, D.C. to break the Japanese military code.

Wallace was an early member of the American Name Society, joining in 1952, shortly after the Society was founded. He served ANS in several capacities, including editor of *Names* from 1962 through 1965 and president of the Society in 1976.

McMullen's major publications in onomastics include *English Topographic Terms in Florida, 1563-1874* (University Press of Florida, 1953), *Names New and Old* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), and *Pubs, Place-Names, and Patronymics* (originally published 1980; to be reissued by Mellen in 2003). The Mellen volumes are collections of articles from the many Names Institutes which Wallace organized at Fairleigh Dickinson.

I have asked Leonard Ashley, who knew Wallace personally and professionally for many years, to contribute some personal reflections on the life and career of Wallace McMullen. Ashley's comments follow.

"Mac" McMullen's long and productive life ended recently at the age of 86. I offer a brief commemoration of the long life of a departed friend. These are going to be personal remarks, because the loss of a vibrant personality is more important than a dry list of life milestones

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or publications on the place names of Florida or the doings of the Names Institute. This is not an obituary but a sort of thanks. In my denomination, which is Anglo-Catholic or Episcopalian, we tend not to erect tablets in churches with R.I.P. (as do Roman Catholics and some others), the letters standing in both Latin and English for “Rest In Peace,” but we frequently use epitaphs that begin with “Thank God for the Life of. . . .” I say “Thank God for the Life of E. Wallace McMullen.”

He came into my life many years ago. I met Mac in the early 60s when I attended the second meeting of the Names Institute, which he had founded at Fairleigh Dickinson University. Margaret M. Bryant, a distinguished scholar who much admired Mac, had recently hired me to teach in the English department at Brooklyn College and she prevailed upon me to give a paper at the Names Institute in New Jersey. I gladly accepted, especially since the meeting was going to feature Prof. Wrenn, of Oxford, whose standard work in Anglo-Saxon I had been assigned to read in graduate school.

At the end of a pleasant day, one of Mac’s former students, Arthur Berliner, offered a ride back to New York City to Miss Bryant, Allen Walker Read, and myself. Arthur Berliner was a taxi driver whom Mac had encouraged to do graduate work in English; under Mac’s direction Berliner had completed a master’s degree in place name study. Arthur Berliner to this day maintains the interest that Mac encouraged. Many others in the American Name Society will also have some such connection and will deeply regret Mac’s passing.

Throughout the years I continued to attend meetings of the Names Institute and missed reading a paper only when, a couple of times, I happened to be out of the country on sabbatical leave. I was glad to see Mac at the 40th anniversary meeting of the Names Institute held last year at Baruch College CUNY, where Wayne Finke directs the thriving institute Mac founded and ran for a quarter of a century, until his retirement from Fairleigh Dickinson.

Wayne Finke and I have edited selected papers of that 40th meeting as *A Garland of Names* and we have dedicated the volume to Mac’s memory. It is a small token of our esteem and our debt to him. The American Name Society, of which Mac was once president, gained immensely from Mac’s talent and energy. Over the years hundreds of

onomastic papers were read at his meetings, some of which appeared in two volumes which I encouraged Mac to publish, and, following his lead, a number of other annual regional meetings of the American Name Society were established and their proceedings published. Grace Alvarez-Altman's Conference on Literary Onomastics ran for almost 20 years. The Connecticut Onomastic Symposium, begun by the Berliners and taken up later by Dean A. Reilein, lasted for years at Eastern Connecticut State University. Fred Tarpley ran a lively meeting for some years in Texas, Murray Heller ran another at North Country Community College in the Adirondacks, and in the Midwest, Larry Seits (and later Edward Callary) conducted the North Central Names Institute. Each of these was inspired by Mac's success with the original Names Institute. It is unfortunate that all regional meetings except Mac's Names Institute have perished. However, the Names Institute goes on. I hope that for many more years it will continue to honor his memory. Every single person who attended any of these regional meetings owes some debt to his foresight and inspiration.

Other members of the American Name Society may have published more than Mac had time to produce, but Mac was, in this age of publish or perish in academe, not so much a career researcher as a tireless teacher. He leaves behind him generations of students and scholars whom he unstintingly helped and effectively urged on. The influence of a dedicated teacher is not any the less significant just because his influence is incalculable and unending. The man is gone. The stamp of his personality and the impact he had on the subject he loved remain.

It is to that deathless memory of a man who devoted his life to teaching that we must pay our respects. In searching my mind for a quotation with which to cap this brief comment, I could not find anything suitable to Mac filed under the rubric Deaths. But I thought of a book called *Lives*, by Diogenes Laertius. In that old text, in reference to Aristotle, Diogenes Laertius says that teachers "deserve more honor than parents, who merely gave [children] birth; for the latter only provided life, while the former ensure good life." E. Wallace McMullen, who had a good life, with his dear wife Marian and their children, not only produced a personal family (and to them we all offer our sincerest condolences on their loss) but an unnumbered family of students and fellow scholars. They will miss him—and carry on his enthusiasms.

In his autobiography, *Blessings in Disguise*, Sir Alec Guinness wrote “In recent years there has developed a tiresome custom of referring to these [memorial] services as ‘celebrations’—a cosy euphemism, such as ‘industrial action’ to explain the cessation of work.” I boldly use the term. I think Mac’s life should be celebrated, and that his industry and insight in the education business is worthy of celebration, celebration not merely of memory but also of joy and gratitude.

Leonard R. N. Ashley
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Breandán S. Mac Aodha, 1934-2001

Breandán Mac Aodha was truly an Irish friend of the American Name Society. He contributed articles to *Names* and his work in onomastics was reported regularly in the Ehrensperger Report.

Mac Aodha was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on January 4, 1934, the second in a family of four. To his parents, Edward and Kathleen, he was always “the wee lad,” but he grew up to be a tall, wiry, energetic man who once cycled around Ireland. From childhood on he had a remarkable affinity with birds and wild animals, some of which followed him around his garden. An educational visit to the Donegal Gaeltacht confirmed him in a life-long love of the Irish language.

At Queen’s University, Belfast, he studied geography under Sir Estyn Evans, obtaining an Honours BA in 1955, followed by an MA in 1958 for a thesis on *The Pattern of Farming in County Tyrone*. He was much influenced by Evans’ approach to historical geography through an examination of cultural landscapes, folklore and customs, but he supplemented this with a linguistic/literary route featuring the study of place names.

In 1958 Mac Aodha was appointed Head of the Geography Department in St. Patrick’s Teacher Training College, Dublin. From there he moved to a Lectureship in University College, Galway. At the early age of 33, he was promoted to Foundation Professor of Geography, a chair he occupied until he retired in 1999. To cater to Irish as well as English speakers, he undertook the heavy burden of running a bilingual