WILLIAM FREEMAN TWADDELL

Those fortunate enough to have known William Freeman Twaddell will realize all too keenly what a rich life of scholarship, friendship, and family came to a close on March 1, 1982. Many men will be missed less; none will be missed more.

He was born in Rye, New York, on March 22, 1906, the son of William P. and Emily Fawcett Twaddell. His father was an organist and choir director who moved his family to Philadelphia, to Baltimore, to Forsyth, Georgia, and to Durham, North Carolina. It was in these cities that Freeman attended grammar and high school, and it was at Duke University that he attended college. He received his B.A. in 1926, and the M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard in 1927 and 1930. His academic career began at the University of Wisconsin, where he taught German from 1929 to 1946. He was Chairman of the German Department from 1937 to 1946; from 1943 to 1946, he was also Chairman of the Division of the Humanities. During the war years, he was Director of the Army Language Program at Wisconsin. After 1946 he left Wisconsin for Brown University, where he held the George Hazard Crooker Professorship of German and Linguistics, serving as chairman of both departments until his retirement in 1971.

Though obviously his service at Wisconsin and Brown represents a full and active career, Freeman used his unusual expertise for many other academic tasks. During LSA summer institutes, he taught at Michigan, Indiana, and Texas. He was a visiting professor at Stanford, Princeton, and Hamburg; a consultant in Turkey; and a Fulbright lecturer in the Philippines and Egypt. During the summers of 1956–58, he was a consultant in Tokyo, where he was a principal mover in establishing the English Language Education Council, sponsored by John D. Rockefeller III.

In 1950–51 he took a year's leave from Brown to serve as consulting editor on the staff of the Merriam-Webster dictionaries; and in the summer of 1952, the State Department sent him to Germany to supervise work on the Muret-Sanders bilingual dictionaries of English and German. He served for a long time on the Committee on the Language Program of the ACLS; and from 1948 through 1954, he was chairman of a consortium of linguists from Brown, Michigan, Cornell, and Texas, for the education of Egyptian doctoral students in linguistics and the teaching of languages. The program was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1961, Edward Murrow appointed him to the English Teaching Advisory Panel of the US Information Agency. He served in similar advisory offices for the US Defense Language Institute, the Modern Language Association, and the Foreign Scientific Advisors' Board of the Institut für deutsche Sprache in Germany.

Freeman was a valued member of such learned societies as the Modern Language Association and the LSA, always doing more than his share of work in the organizations' behalf. For the MLA he served as a member of the Executive Council from 1968 to 1971. In our own society, he served on the Editorial Board, and later as Vice President and President. It is also noteworthy that he gave endless time and labor in various short-term services to linguistic and educational groups not formally organized as learned societies. Thus, in summer 1955, he was a member of a seminar on Comparative Philology at the University of Hamburg; and in summer 1959 he served as a member of a study group on Asian and African languages at the University of London. In that same year he evaluated the first experimental NDEA institutes for the US Office of Education; and again in 1966, for the same organization, he served as Co-director of the NDEA Overseas Institute for Advanced Study in Mannheim and Heidelberg. Finally, in 1974, at the request of the Center for Applied Linguistics, he evaluated the summer Linguistic Institute in Cairo, Egypt.

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In addition to the activities just described, Freeman wrote a great many articles and monographs on linguistic subjects, and was a partner in the production of many textbooks for foreign language instruction. I believe that even in these days, when fashions have radically changed in linguistic theory, his monograph *On defining the phoneme* (1935) is still known, valued, and quoted by linguists of many schools. Indeed, the monograph stands at the head of a group of writings on phonemic theory which are still important and useful. It is typical that, in the last few weeks, when I was writing an article on sound change for a forthcoming volume, I found myself going back to Freeman's discussion with both pleasure and profit. A very just evaluation of his theoretical writings comes from his long-time friend and colleague Einar Haugen:

> 'His first and probably best contribution to linguistics was the monograph *On defining the phomeme,* which quickly became a classic and is still cited. He was one of a handful of linguists in the world who immediately saw the importance of this new term, which is comparable in linguistics to the discovery of the atom. Freeman demonstrated not only the importance, but also the difficulty of defining this unit. He concluded that it was a "fiction", but only in the sense that every theoretical unit in science is a fiction. The term gave substance to an idea that linguists had long groped for, one that would make it possible to reduce the confusing variety of human sounds to a small number of "invariants" for each language. Incidentally, this term also provided the theory for the practical work of alphabet-makers since the invention of writing. I do not know how often the monograph has been translated, but I have in my possession a Japanese translation, done by Shiro Hattori, the master of Japanese linguists.
>
> 'Another fruitful line of inquiry was his work on the German vowel system, above all his widely-known article on Umlaut. Then there was his masterpiece on the English verb auxiliaries, familiarly and wittily known as his "modal model". Nor must we forget his enthusiasm for the study of word frequencies, stimulated by his contact with George Zipf in his Harvard days. Word frequency is a significant factor in making sense out of the mass of vocabulary items that make up a language, and one that shows a remarkable constancy from one language to another. An incidental outcome in those pre-computer days was a whole family of word indexes produced at Wisconsin.'

To this statement, I can add at least one other characteristic detail. Einar refers to the description of English auxiliaries by a witty nickname. There is still another, however. Since this appeared as a Brown University publication, Freeman sometimes referred to it as a 'Brown study'.

A more important addition is that, in the years of Freeman's retirement, the Brown University Press published his translation of *The saint,* a German biography of St. Thomas Becket, by C. F. Meyer. Of his scholarly activities in the ten years of his retirement, his wife Helen says that 'he continued to work a full day ... on scholarly projects, most recently making a selection of his favorite Old Testament readings and also annotating a collection of German Lieder in English.' It is unfortunate that neither project has been published.

Honors and elected offices came to Freeman in great numbers, as unsought but richly deserved rewards and recognition. They were so numerous that I can easily imagine young and ambitious academics quoting Freeman's favorite poet, Housman, to themselves, with the discouraged recognition that they could hardly equal his record—

> 'We'll to the woods no more,
> The laurels all are cut ...'

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An honor already mentioned is his Presidency of the LSA. It was characteristic of him that his Presidential Address bore a title meant to puzzle the reader of the program—not that its meaning was unclear, but that it offered an amusing problem of production. The title was '/č/?' The only solution that I can think of is to pronounce it 'Slant, c-wedge, slant, question mark'. The title was a bit of the whimsy which enlivened Freeman's conversation, and to which I will return.

Other honors were his being named to the Comité Internationale des Linguistes, as the second American member, and election as Vice President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, to represent Humanities. In 1964 his alma mater, Duke University, honored him with the degree of Litt.D. In 1972 the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages gave him an award 'For outstanding service and leadership'. In 1972 (after his retirement the previous year) he was the guest of the German Foreign Office at seminars on Germanic studies in Bonn, München, Marburg, Saarbrücken, Berlin, and at the Institut für deutsche Sprache in Mannheim. Finally, in November 1976, Freeman and Helen Twaddell were guests in Japan of the English Language Education Council, which Freeman had been instrumental in establishing. Helen speaks of this three-week visit as one in which they were lavishly supported and escorted guests; Freeman gave 'lectures in various cities' [and received] 'an honorarium as well'.

It is obviously true that the list of Freeman's services and honors in education and linguistic scholarship represents more than enough channels for expression and human communication for one person; yet he had other channels as well. One of the most abiding was music. This interest led him to enter and win the state-wide piano contest in Georgia in 1921, and to earn a part of his college expenses as a church organist. As a young boy in Baltimore, he once played a piano duet with the much older H. L. Mencken; and throughout his life it was his habit to work to the accompaniment of classical music—especially, says Helen, that of 'his favorites, Bach, Mozart, and Brahms, always played loud enough so he could savor every decibel'. Within the month before his death, his granddaughter played Bach on her recorder to his piano accompaniment. Nor was music the only artistic activity that interested him. Helen tells us that, in his high school and college days, he 'tried his hand at many complicated forms of lyric poetry—sonnets, ballades, sestinas, and rondeaux—and he took pleasure in re-reading these and sending copies to old friends to whom he had paid verse tribute long ago, as well as to new friends and family members.'

Freeman's friends and colleagues all felt (as I did) that he was one of the great wits of the world, worthy to have been in the pages of Joyce along with Oliver St. John Gogarty (alias Buck Mulligan). One colleague, Nancy Duke Lewis, remarked of him, after they had served together on a University committee, that 'it [was] impossible for Freeman Twaddell to utter anything dull or trivial—unless he [was] quoting'. Another old friend and colleague, W. N. Francis, says that he wishes he 'had written down on the back of old envelopes or exam books some of the impromptu bon mots that Freeman produced apparently effortlessly on any occasion that seemed to need it.'

I can remember only a few examples, one of which occurred in a discussion in the corridor at an LSA meeting. There, some twenty years ago, a distinguished but old-fashioned member of the Society carried on a one-man crusade against the adjective 'phonemic', on the ground that etymology required 'phonematic'. Freeman ended the argument with one well-placed shot: the adjuration not to be 'dogmic'. Another old friend, J M. Cowan, recalls a summer spent with Freeman during the war, when Helen was away. The men were supposed to take care of the vegetables in the Victory garden. Instead they dug them up and sowed the seed for a smooth greensward; there the two of them could relax after a long daily spell of studying Chinese. Freeman christened the sward his 'Defeat garden'.

It should also be said that Freeman was like Falstaff in one (but only one) characteristic, in that

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he was a 'plentiful cause of wit in other men'. Thus, on the occasion of Freeman's 35th birthday, his students and colleagues put out a sort of Festschrift consisting of a parody of the Wisconsin periodical *Monatshefte,* to which Freeman was a frequent contributor. The parody was called *Moralische Monatshefte, William Freeman Twaddell Jubilee Number.* It was all good-natured fun, though at the same time clearly a serious honor for a beloved teacher. Among the contributors were 'John Wilkes Booth', 'Delirius Phonemius', and 'Cal. I. O'P'. Freeman was once addressed as 'Wilhelm Freyherr (v) Zweytal'. A typical entry was that by 'Cave Canem', which closes—

'To novices we say:
"To Rückumlaut and sound laws
Give not your heart away,
'T is paid with sigh aplenty
And sold for endlcss rue."
But they are green and twenty,
Who knows what they will do?'

It is obvious that real research would be required, and lots of it, to elucidate all the linguistic, literary, and local references.

I have implied that Freeman had in plenty the devotion of friends and colleagues. He had even more devotion from his family, and returned it with pride and deep-seated joy. No one who ever saw him together with his devoted wife of more than fifty years could fail to realize the strength of that relationship. His three sons were scattered from Australia to Mozambique; however, not only the one in Providence, but all three sons and their wives came home during Freeman's mercifully brief illness. A nephew, Ansley Fleming, came from Illinois to be the organist at the memorial service on March 5. And it should finally be mentioned that one friend, Milt Cowan, came as a speaker, in spite of weather that made the trip from Ithaca much like an Arctic exploration. Milt read from one of Freeman's favorite works, Goethe's 'Wandrers Nachtlied':

'Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh ...'

The reading was appropriate and heart-warming to those gathered in Manning Chapel.

It is also significant that another bit of literature which meant a great deal to Freeman himself, in his last days, was the speech of the agèd warrior in the old English poem, *The Battle of Maldon*:

'Mind must be mightier, heart the fiercer,
Courage the greater, as our strength lessens.'

But appropriate as these quotations are, I find the words of Horace most fitting to bid farewell to a happy warrior on the field of scholarship, my friend for half a lifetime:

'Integer vitae, scelerisque purus
non eget Mauris jaculis neque arcu
nec venenatis gravida sagittis
Fusce, pharetra ...'[1]

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[1] I have been greatly aided in composing this obituary by the curriculum vitae and bibliography

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composed by Freeman himself, and the addendum composed by Helen Twaddell. I have drawn on the remarks of several speakers at the memorial service: Einar Haugen, Mary T. Reynolds, W. Chesley Worthington, and J Milton Cowan. I have also been helped by correspondence from Helen Twaddell, Nelson Francis, and Lore Mueller, and by the obituary in the Providence *Evening Bulletin* for March 2. Finally, I am indebted to my colleague Winfred Lehmann for the loan of the *Moralische Monatschefte*—to which he contributed a mock essay on the reconstruction of IE roots, under the punning pseudonym of Larry Ingall.

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