

Bruce Tabor Wilkins, Sr.

June 21, 1931 — June 30, 2007

Dr. Bruce Tabor Wilkins, Sr., was born in Greenport, New York and grew up in Queens. He graduated from Stuyvesant High School in New York City. He enrolled in 1948 in Cornell's newly created Department of Conservation (now Natural Resources) and received his B.S. degree, specializing in wildlife management, with its first graduating class in 1952. As an undergraduate, Bruce was a member of the Reserve Officer Training Corps, Scabbard and Blade, captain of the rifle team and played #150 football.

After graduation, Bruce served with the U.S. Army in Korea, training at Camp Drum in 1953 and then serving as an Artillery Lieutenant in the 84th Field Artillery Battalion in Seoul during 1953 and 1954. Following his discharge, he completed his M.S. degree at Montana State University in 1956, specializing in wildlife management and botany. While serving as a Laboratory Teaching Assistant at Montana State in 1954, he met his future wife, Sandra Enevoldsen. Bruce and Sandra were married in 1956. Bruce worked as a wildlife and range research biologist for the Montana Fish and Game Department until moving to New York in 1959 to assume a Cooperative Extension agent position in Broome County, whose focus was working with non-farm rural residents.

Bruce returned to Cornell University in Ithaca in 1963 as an Extension Specialist in the Department of Conservation. His responsibilities included Extension programming in wildlife habitat improvement, fish pond management, and commercial recreation enterprises. Simultaneously, he worked on his Ph.D. degree, which he completed in 1967. He received his doctorate and a faculty appointment in Conservation in 1967, with a focus in outdoor recreation.

Dr. Wilkins' early teaching included courses in conservation perspectives and outdoor recreation. His early research interests included hunting and fishing trends and factors associated with these trends, and campground business management, the latter also being important to his Extension programming. He began a research program in outdoor recreation that included staff as well as graduate students. This program later evolved into the Human Dimensions Research Unit.

In 1972, Dr. Wilkins became the Associate Director and Extension Director of the newly formed New York Sea Grant Institute, a position he held for much of the rest of his career. In this position, he led the most diverse Sea Grant Extension program in the nation, with offices, staff, and programs in marine, estuarine, and freshwater locations on Long Island, the lower Hudson River, and Great Lakes. During those years, the New York Sea Grant program had the reputation of being annually ranked first or second among the leading programs in the nation.

Dr. Wilkins' calls for applied research, the translation of the research results into Extension programs useful to marine trades clientele, and his emphasis on program evaluation were major factors contributing to the success of New York's Sea Grant program.

Dr. Wilkins maintained a faculty appointment in the Department of Natural Resources during his tenure with Sea Grant and was promoted to Associate Professor and later to Professor. He worked actively with the Resource Management and Policy section of the department, leading efforts to establish more rigor in the curriculum and formalize the administration of this academic concentration. He taught courses in natural resource policy and marine fisheries and later in his career developed an interest in fisheries management in developing countries. He taught hundreds of students, had many undergraduate advisees, and perhaps a score of graduate students. Sabbatical leaves and consulting opportunities gave him the chance to spend extended periods of time in Canada, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Australia, China and Taiwan, Chili, and Cambodia. In 2002, he was awarded the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Alumni Association of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University. In 1997, he was named Professor Emeritus. In 1998, he received the William O. Wick Leadership Award from the Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders.

Dr. Wilkins was very active professionally, with memberships in the Ecological Society of America, American Fisheries Society, and The Wildlife Society. He participated frequently in national and international conferences of these organizations as well as the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, national Extension conferences, and regional and national Sea Grant conferences.

Dr. Wilkins was also active in community service in Ithaca. In 1972, he was part of a group who organized the Tompkins County Girls Ice Hockey Association, probably the first in New York State. In 2002, the group held a 30th Reunion, honoring the founders and thanking them for "bringing into being" an organization that meant so much to them. He was a member of First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, New York where he had served as Elder and on many committees.

Dr. Wilkins is survived by his wife, Sandra Enevoldsen Wilkins of Solomons, Maryland; by his sons, Bruce Tabor Wilkins, Jr. of Seattle, Washington, Gregory Wilkins and his wife, Marcy Feathers Wilkins of Sudbury, Massachusetts; and his daughter, Sheryl Wilkins Pardo and her husband, Jaime Pardo of Alexandria, Virginia; also by five grandchildren, Andrew, Christopher and Nicholas Wilkins, Sebastian and Amanda Pardo.

Tommy L. Brown, Chair; Barbara A. Knuth, Richard J. McNeil