

WILLIAM JOSEPH WISWESSER
1914-1989

A legend among us, Bill (W.J.W.) Wiswesser died on December 16, 1989, following a siege of coronary problems. For the past 30 years, Bill has had an influence on everyone working in the field of chemical structure information retrieval. He was the guru of concise storage and retrieval of chemical structures. Best known for the WLN, the chemical line notation that bears his name, Bill pioneered mathematical, physical, and chemical methods of punched-card and computer-stored representation of molecular structures. He published and presented well over 100 papers bridging the ACS Divisions of Chemical Information, Chemical History, Chemical Education, and Chemical Health and Safety. His recognitions include the following:

Department of the Army Award of Merit—the highest honor that is awarded by the U.S. Army to a civilian
Doctor of Science, Lehigh University—an honorary degree for an outstanding alumnus
Skolnik Award—the ACS Division of Chemical Information award recognizing contributions to chemical information
Patterson Award—the ACS Dayton Chapter award for contributions to chemical information
Lehigh University Wiswesser Collection—a repository of scientific papers describing the philosophy and applications of the Wiswesser Line Notation
Chemical Notation Association—a scientific organization dedicated to development of chemical notation systems and at one time comprising over 200 members representing over 60 international organizations that had adopted chemical notations to manage their respective chemical structure files
American Chemical Society—50-year membership

The WLN, once the most frequently used term in the annual index of papers published in the *Journal of Chemical Documentation*, the forerunner to this journal, required full-day symposia on chemical notation at national and international meetings. The impact of Bill's brainchild affected services and publications such as ISI's *Chemical Structure Index*, the Chemical Abstracts Service *Parent Compound Handbook*, CRC's *Atlas of Infrared Data*, the *Pesticides Index*, the *Merck Index*, and the *Aldrich Chemical Catalog*, to name only a few.

Who can forget the lively floor debates at meetings in the 1960s of the Division of Chemical Information, when the Pennsylvania Dutchman would challenge the prevailing thoughts concerning storage of chemical structure information? Who can forget the provocative *Chemical World Index Key*, Bill's periodical publication for the Reading Chemist's Club? For those in the Chemical Notation Association, who can forget the endless hours of labor and love, the sessions spent arguing about the manual rules—the wording, the examples? Bill left a legacy that cannot be replaced. We have lost a mentor and a friend.

Bill can be remembered with contributions to the William J. Wiswesser Memorial Fund that Kitty, Betty Jean, and Mike have established at Bill's alma mater, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA.

Alan Gelberg