

part in planning a "World Weather Watch", a co-operative project of world-wide scope in which satellite observations of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. would be pooled in order to provide improved synoptic weather reports for the benefit of all countries.

The above summary shows clearly a dominant feature of Wexler's very active life, his ability to think on a grand scale and not to be daunted by the size or complexities of the problems with which he was faced. In addition, he believed in pushing forward new ideas as a stimulus to research even though some of these may have been open to criticism on scientific grounds. This combination, together with a friendly and open personality, made him a stimulating director of research.

In addition to the scientific value of international co-operation, Wexler also had a genuine interest in the human importance of international contacts. He played a major part in starting an international Weather Centre at the "Little America V" station during the I.G.Y., and he helped to extend the idea into an exchange of scientists between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. Antarctic stations which is still continuing. After the I.G.Y. his Antarctic interest continued as the alternate delegate to S.C.A.R. from the U.S.A., in spite of his many interests in other international programmes in meteorological and space science fields.

His contributions to science brought recognition in many ways. He was a vice-president of the American Meteorological Society and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His friends, both in the United States and in many other countries, are finding that his warm personality and stimulating views are greatly missed. Although he knew that the condition of his heart was not satisfactory he continued working on his many projects until his unexpected death. He is survived by a wife and two daughters.

G. DE Q. ROBIN

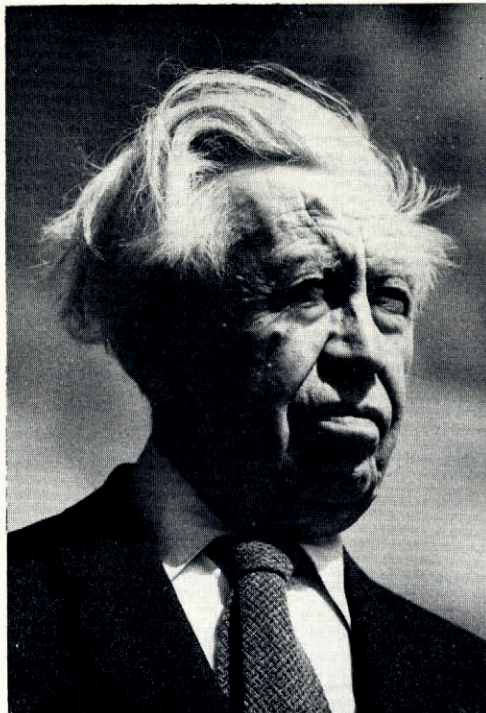
VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON—1879–1962

VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON was born of Icelandic parents in Arnes, Manitoba, on 3 November 1879. His death in Hanover, New Hampshire, on 26 August 1962 ends a remarkable career devoted to the understanding and development of the polar regions. Active to the last, Stefansson had served from 1947 as Arctic consultant to Dartmouth College. The Stefansson Collection of polar literature, one of the largest polar libraries in the world, had been acquired by the college. He completed a first draft of his autobiography only the week before he died.

The interest and the energy which kept Stefansson at his desk seven days a week in recent years were a characteristic of his Arctic explorations and of his subsequent career as author, lecturer, adviser to government and industry, and collector of polar literature. A graduate of the University of Iowa, he went on to read comparative religion and anthropology at Harvard. Stefansson spent ten winters and thirteen summers in the Arctic between 1906 and 1918. He commanded the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913–18, which explored a vast area and discovered four sizeable islands. He was one of the few anthropologists who, upon finding primitive groups who had never even seen a white man, was able to speak with them in their own tongue. Largely because he was an untiring recorder with unusual powers of observation, and because he lived with the Eskimos as one of them, Stefansson's anthropological writings are scholarly and unique.

His contribution to glaciology was indirect but far-reaching. Though each of his expeditions had specific research objectives, Stefansson's lifelong crusade was to convince men that the polar regions were not wastelands but areas holding great promise for science and for commercial enterprise. His independence of mind led him to reject the entrenched belief that the Arctic environment was hostile, and to champion, when still unorthodox, the feasibility of polar aviation and of submarine navigation through Arctic seas. In attacking the psychological barriers to living and working in polar lands, Stefansson did much to pave the way for

the rapidly expanding activities of the past few years. Altogether he wrote 24 books and more than 400 articles. In his best-known narrative, *The friendly Arctic*, and in his handbook, the *Arctic manual*, glaciologists find invaluable information ranging from ice observations to hints on survival and the technique of polar travel.



Stefansson's contribution to the individual student of polar matters is tangible and lasting; it is his library. He believed that a thorough knowledge of the literature is essential to intelligent progress. With his fluency in half a dozen languages, Stefansson's own grasp of the literature was formidable. He was always eager to learn from others, whether from the culture of ancient Greece or from the Eskimos of Coronation Gulf. For those who had the privilege of using the library during Stefansson's lifetime, the rewards were twofold. Not only did they discover a wealth of information at hand, but Stefansson was never too busy to interrupt his own work to give of his knowledge and wisdom. Whether undergraduate or distinguished scholar, the visitor was received with the same enthusiastic attention. Stefansson's death breaks one of the last strong ties between the old and the new in polar research.

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