

## James L. Wilson

DR. JAMES LEE WILSON SR., 87, internationally recognized expert on geology of carbonate sedimentary rocks and paleontologist, passed away on February 13, 2008 at his home in New Braunfels, Texas. He was born in Waxahachie, Texas on December 1, 1920, and was raised in San Antonio and Houston, Texas. Jim leaves behind the love and helpmate of his life for nearly 64 years, his wife, Della Moore Wilson; his children James Lee Wilson Jr. and wife Carolyn Ann Wilson, Burney Grant Wilson, his brother Phil Wilson, grandchildren Kimberly Wilson Broesche, Robert M. Wilson, Amanda Wilson Loggins, Jason Wilson, James Burney Wilson II, Holly Wilson, Hayley Wilson and 4 great grandchildren and numerous grand nieces, nephews, cousins and all the students he taught over the years.

Jim Wilson was one of those rare people who knew exactly what he wanted to do in his life at the early age of 10 years.

He attended Rice University and then the University of Texas – Austin, where he earned B.A. (1942) and M.A. (1944) degrees in Geology. It was while doing field work in Montana in 1944 that Jim met and fell in love with Della Moore, and they were married shortly thereafter. After serving in Italy at the end of WWII, Jim returned home, and he and Della and a new baby boy moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where in 1949 he received his Ph.D. in Paleontology from Yale University.

Dr. Wilson was an associate professor at the University of Texas, Austin from 1949 to 1952 and then 1952 to 1966 he was a research geologist for The Shell Development Company in Houston. In 1966 Jim returned to the occupation he loved most, teaching, and went to Rice University. At Rice, he held the Harry Carothers Weiss Chair of Geology and served as Chairman of the Geology Department, along with teaching and mentoring many graduate students. In 1979 Jim left Rice to join the faculty at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor where he in 1986 formally retired as a Distinguished Professor. Although “retired,” Dr. Wilson stayed very active doing extensive consulting Geology in Mexico and the United States. Throughout his busy career Jim worked in Texas, Mexico, New Mexico, North Africa, the Rocky Mountains, the Austro-Alpine area and in the Middle East.

He has published hundreds of articles in prominent journals and his 1975 book “Carbonate Facies in Geologic History” still is a standard text on stratigraphy of carbonate rocks. It has been published in several languages, including Chinese and Russian.

Dr. Wilson belonged to many geological societies and has been awarded honors by them. As for SEPM, he served the society on the Publications Committee, as Paleontology Councilor, Technical Program Chair and as President in 1975. He was awarded Honorary Membership in 1980 and then the Twenhofel Medal, the Society’s highest honor, in 1990. In 1996, the Wilson Award for young geoscientists was established in his honor and a fitting example of his impact on young researchers is part of the reply to the first winner of his namesake award, Isabel Montanez.

“I am most honored to be the first recipient of the James Lee Wilson Award for Sedimentary Geology. Like most undergraduate geology students. I left college with a degree, enormous amounts of unfocused enthusiasm, and the names of a handful of geologists permanently emblazoned in my memory. These were the men and women who my Bryn Mawr College professors referred to with respect as having defined the frontiers of geology. Among this handful of names was James Lee Wilson. In June 1992 I had the pleasure of being introduced to the Cretaceous carbonates of northeastern Mexico by Jim and Bill Ward. During the week that we spent together in Mexico, my image of Jim Wilson, geology icon, was enlivened with

memories of a multidimensional, compassionate man with a broad interest in things geological, biological, and cultural. I am confident that I am not alone in feeling that James Lee Wilson is the role model, not only as a scientist and educator, but as a friend and colleague of many sedimentary geologists. Needless to say, I am as equally humbled as I am honored tonight to receive this award bestowed in his honor.”

This paleontologist, award-winning geologist and respected educator will be greatly missed by family, friends and colleagues.

At the request of his wife, anyone wanting to honor Dr. Wilson is urged to make a contribution to the James Lee Wilson Young Scientists Recognition Award through the SEPM, or the Heritage Museum of the Texas Hill Country Assn., P.O. Box 1598 Canyon Lake, Texas 78130, or Hope Hospice at 611 Walnut in New Braunfels, Texas 78130.