

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

WILLIAM IRVINE (1906 – 1964)

William Irvine, Professor of English at Stanford University, was born on June 9, 1906, at Carson Hill, California. He died in his home on Gerona Road, on the Stanford Campus, on October 8, 1964. While he was still a child, his family moved from Carson Hill to Stockton, and this remained the family home. He graduated from the Stockton High School with distinction in 1924 and from Stanford University with distinction in 1928. During the academic year of 1928-29 he studied at the Universities of Heidelberg and Munich, but took no degree. He studied at Harvard from 1929 through 1934, taking the M.A. in 1931 and the Ph.D. in 1934. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1928; while at Harvard he was a University Scholar in 1932, a University Fellow in 1933, and a Townsend Scholar in 1934. He taught at Mills College in 1934-35; from 1935 until his death he taught at Stanford. He held a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1955-56 and, again in 1,962-63. He received an ACLS Grant-in-Aid for 1958-59, and a Huntington Library Grant in 1958. His major publications were: Walter Bagehot, London, Longmans Green, 1939; The Universe of G.B.S., New York, Whittlesey House, 1949; and Apes, Angels, and Victorians, New York, McGraw Hill, 1955. At the time of his death he was working on a biography of Robert Browning, which was near completion.

In 1935 he married. Miss Charlotte Stearns; he is survived by his wife and his son John. Early in his career at Stanford, he and his wife built a home on Gerona Road, and there their genial hospitality was known and appreciated by colleagues and students, Anyone who called casually upon him there was likely to find him writing in his huge arm chair, but he never gave the appearance of having been interrupted. His writing was an integral part of his thinking, and he carried this on easily into his always entertaining and often highly informative conversation, He enjoyed thoroughly the congeniality of friendly talk and imparted this enjoyment warmly to others.

Professor Irvine was unquestionably one of the major scholars of our time in the field of 19th century English literature; he was for years one of the principal ornaments of Stanford's Department of English. His scholarship was patient and thorough, and in these qualities it was motivated by love for his subjects and for the activity of scholarship; his insights into his subjects were acute; and his style was distinguished. He was as fine a teacher as he was a scholar. And those who knew him found him not only one of the most amusing of raconteurs, but one of the kindest and most charming of men.

Yvor Winters, Chairman
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