

# Arthur Consaul Wickenden, 1893-1967

By ROBERT T. HOWARD, *DePauw '37, Former Editor, THE BETA THETA PI*

AMONG ALL THE MEN whose devoted service has meant strength to Beta Theta Pi, few have contributed to that strength in a greater variety of ways than the quiet, modest "Wick."

Arthur Consaul Wickenden, *Denison '15*, had just completed the latest of those brilliant yet unobtrusive services to Beta Theta Pi when he died at his home at Oxford, Ohio, June 7, 1967. This was the research and writing involved in a book which will bring the history of the Denison Chapter up to date for the 1968 Alpha Eta Centennial. Wick's assignment was to pick up the story of Alpha Eta where the great Francis W. Shepardson had left off.

Ironically, Shep had spent the last year of his life working on a *History of Alpha Eta Chapter of Beta Theta Pi*. The final corrected proof for this volume had been turned over to the printer on the day of his death, Aug. 9, 1937.

Only a few days before his own death, Wick had discussed the project with other members of the Alpha Eta Centennial Committee. Since he expected to leave soon for California, it had been agreed that his major responsibility for the history had ended with completion of manuscript; as planned, details of publication are being carried out by his chapter contemporary, Robert R. Weber, *Denison '14*.

As professor of religion at Miami University, the man who established its Department of Religion in 1928 and headed that department until his retirement in 1963, he was distinguished in his profession. Yet he seemed always to find the time and energy needed by Beta Theta Pi.

In 1946, the Board of Trustees faced the need for "a central clerical or service office to be of assistance to all of the officers of the Fraternity in administrative matters." The office of Keeper of the Rolls was established to provide a director for such a project. Art Wickenden accepted this assignment. He brought membership files and other records to Oxford, recruited a clerical staff, scrounged some used office equipment. Thus was established a temporary agency which in 1949 evolved into the full-scale Administrative Office at 208 E. High Street within view of the founding site of the Fraternity.

As the first person to hold the title Administrative Secretary when the broadened concept of an Administrative Office was put into effect, Ralph N. Fey, *Miami '40*, often has paid tribute to the groundwork laid by Dr. Wickenden as Keeper of the Rolls. This demanding activity was carried out as a so-called spare-time activity while he continued full-time service to Miami University.

This was a man who had been Chief of District XI (Centre, Cincinnati and Miami) from 1933 to 1939, was Secretary of the 1934 General Convention at Mackinac; was chaplain of the Centenary Convention at Oxford in 1939, and had been President of the 1952 General Convention at Bigwin Inn.

Through the four years when the late Columbus S. Barber, *West Virginia '20*, was Editor of THE BETA THETA PI, a cogent meditation of some 350 to 400 words by Art Wickenden appeared on the inside front cover of the Magazine. Twenty-eight of these had appeared when Wick stopped a new editor on the Miami campus one morning in 1955 and asked to be released from further assignments of this sort.

"I feel written out," he said, as if in apology.

Letting Wick discontinue the series was one of the earliest of many errors of this writer's editorship of THE BETA THETA PI. However, many of these meditations did become part of the book *Time Out!* which Dr. Wickenden published in 1960 "in the hope that they may throw some light upon the way of meaningful and significant living" and "to serve as a devotional resource, particularly by young people who seek to make the most of their lives."

Few of the Fraternity's leaders have been in greater demand—or met the demands more unselfishly—as speakers for initiation dinners and other special events.

His greatest service to Beta Theta Pi may have been least heralded: condensing and systematizing the files which had been accumulated by the General Secretaries of Beta Theta Pi, from J. Calvin Hanna in 1887 on down. This meant taking crate after crate of musty and faded documents, reducing them to what must be kept and putting them in such shape that pertinent documents could be lo-



cated and related materials would be together. It required the wisdom of one who knew the Fraternity's history well; a forbearance against saving everything, and most of all a devotion that would carry beyond mere patience. Only when Wick had completed many months of scanning and sorting could the Beta archives at Oxford become the workable collection of rich source material that they are today.

Wick described this task at the 1960 General Convention, when he shared an informal program of "My Most Memorable Beta Experiences" with Former Editor Thad Byrne, *Washington State* '25; Former Trustee Stratford Lee Morton, *Washington (St. Louis)* '10, and District Chief Andrew Nicholoff, *Wittenberg* '48. Along with his own initiation by Shepardson, his nomination as a District Chief, and his work on the Centenary, Wick described the archives project thus:

"I presume that the greatest Beta experience that has been mine has been the recent task of going through the files, selecting out the material that should be preserved and filing it so that it could be useful to the Fraternity.

"It was a tedious task, but nonetheless a rewarding one. It confirmed what I already knew, but it confirmed it in a wonderful way: the basic reason why Beta Theta Pi is a great Fraternity is the long succession of very able men of sterling character who have given themselves with complete love and devotion and arduous labor without end to the service of the Fraternity. For these files went all the way back to the administration of J. C. Hanna, beginning about 1887, and there were some materials much older than that. It was tedious, because much of this was just routine correspondence; yet every once in a while I would come upon a communication of great interest. I learned of the stresses and strains that had been a part of our fraternity experience, some of which were pretty deep-seated. But I'm glad to say that the bond of brotherhood was always stronger and kept us a united fraternity despite some rather intense conflicts. What amazed me was the amount of work that these men had put forth in the interest of the Fraternity. J. Cal Hanna did his work when typewriters were just beginning to come into use, and he never made very much use of them. He wrote out his letters longhand, and he did not write a large hand; but again and again he would write a letter 8, 10, 12 or 15 pages long.

"As Seth said, Hanna was a great classical scholar and notable teacher; but I am sure he spent much more time in the service of Beta Theta Pi than he did at his tasks as a teacher.

For not only did he administer the Fraternity, he edited the Catalogue. Through many years of arduous work, this great man poured out his life for Beta Theta Pi. When you consider his successors—Frank Sisson, Francis Shepardson, George Howard Bruce, Harold J. Baily, G. Herbert Smith, Edward M. Brown, Clifford C. Gregg, Seth R. Brooks—I am sure we have had a succession of General Secretaries of this fraternity that cannot be matched in any other similar organization. When you come to take account of the devotion of such men as Major Ransom, George Chandler, William Raimond Baird, Charles L. Thornburg, John I. Covington and many others one could mention, this is a marvelous record of devotion and service. It is this that has made Beta Theta Pi a Great Fraternity."

Dr. Wickenden was born at Toledo, Ohio, April 24, 1893, son of Thomas and Ida Consaul Wickenden. Graduated from Denison University in 1915, he went to Miami University that year as YMCA director. He left Miami in 1917 with the 1st Division of the American Expeditionary Force to establish YMCA cantonments in France. That accomplished, he returned to this country to enlist. He returned to Europe almost immediately with the 4th Division as a sergeant in the 12th Machine Gun Battalion. He fought at Chateau Thierry and at Muese-Argonne and was leading the battalion when wounded in action a week before the Armistice.

Resuming study after the war, he received a master's degree from the University of Chicago in 1920 and a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the same university in 1921. He was a Baptist minister at Owatonna, Minn., for four years and at Mason City, Iowa, for two years.

He then was invited by President Raymond M. Hughes of Miami University to return to Miami in 1927 to establish a Department of Religion. He remained chairman of the department until September 1962. He received the degree Doctor of Philosophy from Chicago in 1931.

He was director of campus religious activities 1929-52. For many years he was responsible for bringing guest speakers to the campus for assembly programs, frequently presiding in the absence of the president of the university. He opened Miami assemblies with brief sermonettes similar in content to the articles which are to be found in *Time Out!* and in the 1951-55 Beta Magazine meditations.

He also was Miami's adviser to fraternities 1937-45.

Miami students chose him Miami Dad of the



Year in 1962. When he was asked to deliver the baccalaureate address for June commencement in his retirement year, 1963, Miami conferred the honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters upon him. Denison gave him the honorary degree Doctor of Divinity in 1966 and some years earlier had given him an Alumni Citation.

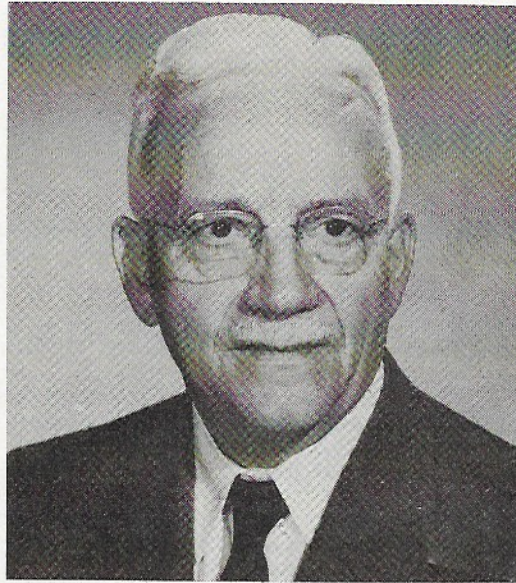
In retirement, he wrote and published through the Miami Alumni Association a biography of Miami's 13th president, *Raymond M. Hughes: Leader of Men*.

He was also author of *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* and *Youth Looks at Religion*; co-author with Eliot Porter of *The Sabbath—for Man*, and contributor of a chapter titled "The Director of Religious Life" in the book *Religion in Higher Education*, edited by M. B. Towner. He also had contributed articles to *Journal of Religion*.

He was a member of the National Council of the YMCA 1939-42 and in 1944; chairman of the USO Committee of Oxford 1942-44, and president of the National Association of Biblical Instructors in 1954. His memberships included the Archaeological Institute of America, ΦΒΚ, ΟΔΚ and the American Association of University Professors.

Mrs. Wickenden is the former Ethel Frances Russell. They were married June 30, 1921. Active in her own sorority, ΚΚΓ, Mrs. Wickenden has taken a keen interest in his service to Beta Theta Pi. Her paintings include a portrait of Founder John Reilly Knox which was used on the cover of the November 1939 issue of THE BETA THETA PI.

Survivors, besides Mrs. Wickenden, include their two Beta sons, Herbert Russell Wickenden, *Miami '45*, Akron, and Roger Consaul Wickenden, *Miami '48*, China Lake, Calif.; a brother, three sisters and four grandchildren. A Beta brother, the late Homer Edgar Wickenden, *Denison '12*, was a pioneer in the Blue Cross movement as general director of the United Hospital Fund of New York 1939-40, administrator of the New York Medical College and Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital 1941-43, and vice-president and secretary of the National Health and Welfare Retirement Association 1943-56.



Arthur C. Wickenden, *Denison '15*

### ... Eagan

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direction, one where his idealism was an advantage. He accepted President Eisenhower's offer to be chairman of the People-to-People committee.

This was and is a grouping of do-gooders who believe that the peoples of the world can be united through sports.

'Sports are the common denominator,' said Eddie, the perfect man for the job. He brought foreign teams to the United States and sent Americans abroad. It did no harm and may have done some good.

As a matter of fact, that's almost the life story of Eddie, the staunch idealist. He also did no harm and may have done a lot of good."

During his six-year tenure as chairman of the commission, Eagan instituted a scoring system, still used today, that combines round-by-round scores with points to break a draw if the rounds come out even, fingerprinting of licensees, insurance coverage and rigid examinations of boxers before and after their bouts.

Former Beta President A. J. G. Priest, *Idaho '18*, described his fraternity brother.

"Eddie Eagan was an interested Beta. He was New York's 'Beta of the Year' on one occasion and, among other things, he joined Col. Simpson and some of the rest of us in making available to each of the chapters a handsome portrait of Wendell Willkie. He was almost the classic example of the poor boy who made good. His fast fists helped."