

RALEIGH UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

OCTOBER 18, 1982



HARLAN C. BROWN (1906-1982)

Harlan Brown will be missed by members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. He and his wife, Helen, were founding members of the Fellowship and their presence and active participation provided constant strength in the continuing growth of the Fellowship. Harlan died Sunday, October 10. A memorial service was held at the Fellowship building on October 18 under the direction of James Hunt.

Harlan was born in Cleveland, Ohio, but his family moved to Minneapolis when he was young and he considered it home. There he came in contact with the Unitarian Church and began his lifelong commitment to Unitarianism. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Minnesota, an additional year of study brought him a bachelor's degree in library science. His first job as a librarian was at South Dakota State University. Recognizing that he needed additional training, Harlan went to the University of Michigan, where he received a master's degree in library science in 1936. While working on the degree he held a full-time job in the University Library. Also he met Helen, a student in library science, and they were married in 1936.

Harlan came to North Carolina State University in 1936 as head of the circulation department of the D. H. Hill Library. Helen accepted a position as librarian at Russel Sage College in Troy, New York. Russel Sage, a new school, was in the process of achieving accreditation as an institute of higher learning, a process requiring adequate library services. Helen saw the accreditation process through and joined Harlan in Raleigh in 1937. She accepted the position of librarian at St. Mary's College, where she remained until her retirement in 1971.

In 1939 Harlan was appointed director of the D. H. Hill Library. Under his direction the library moved from small college status to a major university library. During this time the library moved twice, finally occupying the present building in 1971, the year of Harlan's retirement. In 1963 he chose to become associate director and served with I. T. Littleton, the present director.

Harlan entered military service in 1942. His ROTC commission had lapsed, and on entering active service in the U.S. Army Infantry he went to Officers' Training School at Fort Benning, Georgia. After being commissioned a second lieutenant, he spent his Army service as a training officer at various Army installations. He rose to the rank of captain, and at the conclusion of the war was commissioned a major in the Army Reserve.

Harlan and Helen joined the United Church when they settled in Raleigh. The members had varying denominational backgrounds: Congregational-Christian, Friends, and Unitarian. During the 1940's, members of the United Church organized the Institute of Religion. The group sponsored lectures by national and international figures -- Stringfellow Barr, A. Powell Davies, Paul Douglas, Ralph J. Bunche, Eleanor Roosevelt, Brooks Hays, Erika Mann, Allyn P. Robinson, Norman Thomas, Abba Hillel Silver, Wayne Morris, Robert M. Hutchins. The lectures were open to all, regardless of race or creed, and drew listeners from throughout North Carolina and the region. Taking into account the setting, a Southern town in the 1940's, the Institute of Religion was a notable factor in opening up the minds of many people. Both Harlan and Helen were very active in this program.

In 1949 the Browns and several other members of the United Church joined together to form the Unitarian Fellowship of Raleigh. Harlan and Helen retained their membership in the United Church but assumed considerable responsibility in the development of the Unitarian Fellowship. He served as Treasurer during 1951-1953.

Harlan had many interests, both inside and outside the Fellowship. He was active in a local stamp club and interested many young people in stamp collecting. He participated in activities of the Little Theatre and had a role in one of its productions. Within the Fellowship he sang in the choir, played the recorder with the Transylvania Pipers, and participated in the Wednesday Discussion Group and the bridge group. The present Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh is deeply indebted to his steadfast support.

Ray Noggle