The Life and Career of Dr. Alberta Wilson Server, 1897-1986

Alberta Server was born in Ludlow, Kentucky but spent her early years in Puebla, Mexico where her parents ran a small hotel called “The American House”. Her life in Puebla was convenient despite the lack of conveniences as the Wilson family was part of a small but friendly American colony and Puebla was graced with an English school run by an elderly British woman. She had her formal education in the Methodist Mission school which provided 8 grades in English and was later put under the tutelage of a Methodist minister’s wife who was preparing he own children for American high school. The Wilson family had to abruptly leave Mexico because of the revolution and returned to Somerset Kentucky where she attended high school. She received a bachelor’s and master’s degree in zoology from the University of Kentucky in 1921 and began teaching at the University of Kentucky. In 1939 she received a doctorate in Romance languages from the University of Besancon in France. She graduated with highest distinction from both Kentucky and Besancon, a notable achievement for an American.

Dr. Server remained at the University of Kentucky for 45 years. She had a heavy teaching schedule, but she gladly taught believing that education is a possession which cannot be taken away. After nearly four decades of service to the University, Dr. Server was appointed chair of Romance languages in 1960.

During her nearly five decades in the profession, Dr. Server was involved in many activities and areas of service. She wrote several articles that appeared in foreign publications and was the author of two books including a treatise on the game of Bridge, one of her avocations. She served 13 years as the editor-in-chief of the Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly and was a member and president of the Lexington Women’s Club and served as national treasurer of the American Pen Women. She also served the Kentucky Historical Society, American Association of University Women, the Bluegrass Foundation, and several foreign-language organizations.

In 1963, Dr. Server established a book endowment in memory of her mother, Lou Emma Wilson. The objective of the endowment ...to make the University of Kentucky a major center for the study of all aspects of Mexican culture, through the purchase of current and retrospective books, manuscripts, and microfilm that are within scope of available funds. In the words of Dr. Lawrence S. Thompson, Director of University of Kentucky Libraries, 1948-1965,

*If one trait of Alberta Server can be singled out for special recognition, it is loyalty. Fidelis ad urnam to her university, she is the donor of a handsome endowment...Perhaps more important has been her extreme conscientiousness in her relationships with students. Over and above her regular teaching duties, she has undertaken such chores as directing student summer groups in Mexico.*

Dr. Server died on July 4, 1986 and was laid to rest in Somerset, Kentucky.