

A TRIBUTE TO WILBUR ZELINSKY*

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Guest Editor

For six decades Wilbur Zelinsky has been an original and authentic voice in American cultural geography. His curiosity is endless, his intellectual appetite voracious. He seeks human meaning in every facet of material life and every corner of the American scene. His scholarly productivity continues to be extraordinary—more than 200 books, atlases, chapters, articles, reviews, and reports, and still counting. The body of work includes ten articles in the *Geographical Review* over fifty years, on topics from log houses of Georgia (1953) to American religious landscapes (2001c). It is therefore especially fitting that the following articles in celebration of Wilbur appear in the *Geographical Review*. The articles exhibit a richness of contact with and reference to Wilbur's incredible body of work, and in the process they also reveal something of the person.

First and foremost an explorer, Wilbur, like all explorers, is dedicated to bringing profound understanding to simple things. He is also an insatiable reader and not averse to employing hypothesis testing and quantitative analyses when and where appropriate. He is a wordsmith of uncanny ear, considerable wry humor, and incomparable devotion and attention to language. His remarkable web of cultural references and the clarity of his expression are simply astounding. He is in every way the consummate scholar, all the while having great fun and never assuming his is the last word.

Early work experiences trained Wilbur well for observation and analysis. He was a map draftsman in various firms during World War II, even as he was moving about to find a place to earn a degree, which he did at the University of California, Berkeley in 1944. After receiving a master's degree at the University of Wisconsin in 1946, he worked as a terrain analyst for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in occupied Germany. He returned to Berkeley for his doctorate, which he completed in 1953, then worked as an industrial location analyst for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway from 1954 to 1959. His academic appointments include the University of Georgia (1948–1952), the University of Wisconsin as a researcher (1952–1954), Wayne State University as an adjunct professor (1954–1959), and Southern Illinois University (1959–1963). In 1963 he joined the Department of Geography at Pennsylvania State University, where he has remained ever since. He served as department head in

* Some portions of this introductory essay are drawn from an unpublished biography of Wilbur Zelinsky I wrote when he received the Cullum Geographical Medal of the American Geographical Society on 3 March 2001. I want to thank the authors, the reviewers, and Editors Douglas Johnson and Viola Haarmann for being especially thoughtful and responsive as this special issue developed. I also thank the editors for their efforts in selecting a review essay and a set of book reviews that complement exceedingly well the kinds of interests Wilbur has exhibited over his remarkable career.

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