

SAMUEL STANLEY WILKS, 1906–1964

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Samuel Stanley Wilks died in his sleep at his home in Princeton, New Jersey, March 7, 1964. His unexpected death at the age of 57 years came as a shock to his many colleagues, students, and friends throughout the world, who now mourn his passing. The loss of this vigorous, talented, and devoted man is felt widely, especially among mathematical statisticians. It is particularly fitting to dedicate to his memory this volume of the *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, the journal which he did so much to bring to its present eminence.

1. Life and career. Samuel Stanley Wilks was born in Little Elm, Texas, on June 17, 1906, the first child of Chance C. Wilks and Bertha May Gammon Wilks. His brother, Syrel Singleton, less than two years younger, was his boyhood chum; William Weldon, eight years younger, was his “baby brother.” (The names came by Chance, not by chance.) His father trained for banking, but made his livelihood by farming his 250 acre ranch outside Little Elm. His mother, whose formal education did not go beyond high school, had artistic and musical talent; her lively curiosity was transmitted to her children. Syrel pursued his studies to obtain a Ph.D. in physiology, taught at San Marcus (Texas) College, and is now at the School of Aerospace Medicine, Brooks Air Force Base, Texas. William took a B.S. degree and is research advisor to Bell Aircraft Company, Fort Worth, Texas.

Wilks’ early education took place in a typical rural white one-room school-house. His instructor during seventh grade was W. M. Whyburn who later became president of Texas Technological College and chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the University of North Carolina. While the Wilks boys benefited by the instruction, some of these frontier lads made discipline the real challenge; in fact, one afternoon one of them took off after Syrel with a shotgun.

To attend high school Sam roomed in nearby Denton and went home on weekends, if necessary walking the fifteen miles. His ambition and interest in mathematics showed up early. During his final high school year the authorities found that he was not in attendance at study hall. Investigation indicated that instead of going to study hall he was taking a mathematics course at North Texas State Teachers College.

After high school graduation he continued his education at North Texas State Teachers College with particular attention to industrial arts and mathematics. His degree of A.B. was granted in 1926 in architecture. Had he considered his eyesight adequate for an architect, he might have made his career in that profession.

In 1926–27 he taught manual training in a high school in Austin, Texas, and studied mathematics at the University of Texas. During the next two years he