

WILLIAM M. WHYBURN

1901–1972

BY W. T. REID

William Marvin Whyburn was born in Denton County, Texas, on November 12, 1901, the son of Thomas and Eugenia Elizabeth (McLeod) Whyburn. He attended Bethel School, a small country school that went only through the ninth grade, and in the academic year 1916–1917 entered North Texas State College in the town of Denton, through the then existing “college qualifying examinations”. In 1920 he entered the University of Texas in Austin, where he obtained the B.A. (1922), M.A. (1923) and Ph.D. (1927). His younger brother, Gordon Thomas, (for his obituary, see *Bull. Amer. Math. Soc.* **77** (1971), 57–72), for many years Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Virginia, was also a student at the University of Texas in the years 1921–1927, and they both received their Ph.D. degrees in June 1927. For the academic year 1927–1928, Whyburn was a National Research Fellow at Harvard.

In 1923, he married Marie Barfield, who was also a student at the University. To this union were born two children, Willa Marie in 1928, now Mrs. George Allen Austin, and Clifton Thomas in 1937, at present an Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of Houston.

Whyburn’s career as a teacher began at an early age. The period 1918–1920 was divided between work at North Texas State College and teaching in public schools in Denton County. It is to be remarked that one of his students at Little Elm School was Samuel Wilks, later to be Professor of Mathematical Statistics at Princeton for many years prior to his untimely death in 1964. After the receipt of his Master’s degree in 1923, Whyburn’s formal graduate study at the University of Texas was limited to summer sessions and the academic year 1926–1927; during this latter year he held the Louis Lipsitz Fellowship. For the academic year 1923–1924 he was Instructor at South Park Junior College, Beaumont, Texas, and in 1924–1925 an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M College. His association with Texas Technological College in Lubbock, Texas, began as Associate Professor in 1925–1926, and for the period 1926–1928 he was listed as Professor, on leave from that institution.

In 1928 Whyburn went to the University of California at Los Angeles as Assistant Professor, and progressed through the ranks to Professor in 1938; he was Departmental Chairman in the years 1937–1944. In 1944 he became President of Texas Technological College, from which post he