Memorial to Carl Colton Branson
1906–1975

L. R. WILSON
School of Geology and Geophysics, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73019

Although professionally a geologist, Carl Colton Branson was a scholar of wide interest with a remarkable depth of knowledge in an amazing number of fields. His passing is a great loss to those of kindred interest and others who shared his life. Carl was at his best in the field and at the end of a difficult and exhausting day when the observations were being recounted and put in order. At these times he would often digress and quote a limerick or reflect on what his favorite authors or scientific contemporaries might have offered on the subject. He was always a generous and considerate critic of differing opinion. As a teacher, he guided his students in a manner that created in their minds the thought of their leading the way. He produced many competent and successful scientists by his pedagogy and, in his modest way, he was exceedingly proud of the products.

Carl's father was Dr. E. B. Branson, former head of the geology department at the University of Missouri, well known for his teaching and research in paleontology. Carl was born in Oberlin, Ohio, on September 15, 1906. He grew up in Missouri and attended the University of Missouri, where he received his bachelor of arts degree in 1926 and his master of arts degree in 1927. His Ph.D. degree was taken at the University of Chicago in 1929 at the age of twenty-two. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1926, and he maintained contact with that society throughout his career. From 1964 to 1965 he was president of Alpha Chapter of Oklahoma at the University of Oklahoma.

A recounting of Carl Branson's career unfolds a prime example of professional growth by a person much alive to scientific endeavor and its responsibilities. He began a teaching career in 1929 as an instructor in paleontology at the State College of Washington, then moved to Brown University in 1930 for a period of ten years. In 1940 he accepted a visiting assistant professorship in geology at Northwestern University, and in 1941 he moved to the University of Kentucky, where he was an associate professor of geology. In 1944 he left the academic world to become a research geologist for Shell Oil Company, but he returned to teaching in 1950 as a professor of geology at the University of Oklahoma. His professional development was rapid—he became director of the University of Oklahoma School of Geology and also director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey in 1954. He held the former position until 1963 and the latter until 1967. That year he assumed the position of research geologist with the Oklahoma Geological Survey, meanwhile retaining his professorship in the school until 1972, when he became an emeritus professor of geology and geophysics.

An active career requires many affiliations with local, national, and international organizations. Carl Branson was much a part of these and held many responsible positions in their ranks. In the American Association of Petroleum Geologists he was district representative from 1956 to 1958, served on the editorial board, was a Distinguished

Lecturer from 1962 to 1963, contributed to and edited the landmark volume *Pennsylvanian System in the United States—A Symposium* (1962), and was elected to honorary membership in 1973. He was affilitated with many other organizations—Geological Society of America, Paleontological Society of America, Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, Society of Vertebrate Paleontologists, Paleontology Society of India, Paleontology Research Institute, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Association of American State Geologists (president, 1962 to 1963), American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers, Oklahoma City Geological Society (honorary member, 1964), Tulsa Geological Society, Ardmore Geological Society, Oklahoma Academy of Science, Sigma Xi, Gamma Alpha, and Sigma Gamma Epsilon.

Research, literature review, writing, and editing, as well as teaching, were a major portion of Carl Branson's life. His publication list begins with *Paleontology and Stratigraphy of the Phosphoria Formation*, a 99-page document that appeared in 1930, and he continued to publish until 1972. During that interval there appeared 202 papers under his own name, either solely or as co-author. He also contributed to the organization and content of scores of other works by various authors. Although his greatest number of publications (92) dealt with many aspects of paleontology, his other contributions were varied. It is difficult to categorize a number of them because of their breadth, but an attempt is as follows: stratigraphy, 43; general geology, 24; memorials, 20; reviews, 12; economic geology, 7; and mapping, 4. His most cited publications are his conodont studies, *Bibliographic Index of Permian Invertebrates* (GSA Memoir 26, 1,049 pages, 1948), and his papers on Pennsylvanian stratigraphy.

In 1948 Carl Branson married Ila Irene Freeman, then a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey. After their marriage Ila Branson resigned from the geological profession and confined her activity to raising two sons, Derick and David, and a daughter, Deborah, all attending the University of Oklahoma.

Carl suffered a stroke in April 1969, which left him partially paralyzed, and he was largely confined to his home. However, he maintained an active interest in geology until his death on August 27, 1975. It was always a great pleasure to visit with him at his home and talk at length about his many interests, especially stratigraphic paleontology. His influence will long remain a part of Oklahoma's geological endeavor, and his friends will remember him as a scientist with a penchant for accuracy and clarity.

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