OBITUARY: WILMER WEBSTER TANNER, 1909–2011

On 28 October 2011, two months short of his 102nd birthday, Dr. Wilmer W. Tanner passed away, leaving a lifetime of accomplishments. His most enduring achievement was his marriage to Helen Brown on 4 January 1935, which resulted in a family consisting of Lynn, David, and Mary Ann. Helen died in 1995, following 60 years of marriage. At age 90, Wilmer, always an optimist, married again, to Otella Tyndal Devey, who died in 1999. Wilmer was a caring person, who showed consideration and kindness throughout his life to each of his wives and to his 3 children, 10 grandchildren, and 24 great-grandchildren. Wilmer considered his posterity to be his greatest legacy. He was proud of them! Wilmer’s career success came about in large part because of the sacrifices and hard work of Helen and the children.

Wilmer was born 17 December 1909 in Fairview, Utah, the fourth of five children. His parents were John Myron and Lois Ann Tanner, descendants of early Utah pioneers, who resided on a ranch in the open and meadow-bottomed valley at Indianola in Sanpete County. They had 5 children: Vasco, Ray, Laura, Wilmer, and Jean.

Wilmer attended public schools in Sanpete County, Utah. Following graduation from high school, he served as a missionary between 1929 and 1932 for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Netherlands, where he learned Dutch by immersion, there being no language training prior to the mission. Upon his return to Utah, he attended Brigham Young University (BYU), where he earned a B.A. degree in 1936, and an M.S. degree in 1937. His earliest publications dealing with snakes date from 1939 and give indication of a life-long interest in herpetology. Economic conditions of the time were difficult. Helen