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## WALTER S. AVIS

1919–1979

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WALTER SPENCER AVIS was born in Toronto, early enough to serve overseas in the Royal Canadian Artillery in the Second World War. He died, suddenly, unexpectedly, and peacefully, in his home in Kingston, Ontario, in December 1979. While this is no occasion for a detailed account of his achievement, it is appropriate to say that, with his passing, we have lost a great scholar and a great Canadian.

Remembering him as a Canadian, we recall with gratitude the energy and diligence with which he served the Canadian Linguistic Association. He served as President of the CLA for 1968–70, but he was, from its very beginning in 1954, a tireless worker in its behalf. As a token of its appreciation for his efforts, the CLA dedicated a special issue of this journal to him, on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary.

Remembering him as a scholar, we recall the energy and diligence with which he pursued his chosen fields of lexicography and dialectology, both within Canada and outside of it, notably for the American Dialect Society. Had events taken their expected course, he would have been Vice President of the ADS in 1980, and the President thereafter.

In his many publications, his interests as a scholar and a Canadian came most happily together; and what marvelous service he gave in the field of Canadian English! The most recent bibliography of this topic, a bibliography of which he was first author, contains 723 entries. Fifty-two of them begin with "Avis, Walter S." And the dictionaries which these entries enumerate establish him, once and for all, as a leader in the field; the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (Gage, 1967) is, quite simply, among the finest and most scholarly dictionaries in existence. It is no belittlement of the work of C. J. Lovell or of his other associates to say that it was Avis who put Canadian English on the map. I don't say he invented it; like Australia, it was there all the time. But his writings, perhaps

more than those of anyone else, helped to gain recognition for its existence and its importance.

To leave it at that, however, would be to miss the essential Wally Avis: the energy, the sharp—the very sharp—mind; the meticulousness; the enthusiasm; the sense of comradeship and the sense of fun; all of which made him not only a great scholar, and a great Canadian, but a man we all loved and admired.

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