

A Tribute to Emerson Foulke Ph.D

A TRIBUTE TO EMERSON FOULKE Ph.D

1929-1997

by Betty Niceley

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On the journey through life, few men are able to choose as many roads and make as many contributions along the way as did Dr. Emerson Foulke. He was a distinguished university professor, a recognized researcher, and a well-known author of numerous materials dealing with braille, mobility and other tactile matters. Emerson was a world traveler, a sought after speaker with a quick wit that endured him to everyone; and he was the epitome of integrity. I have never known anyone who had so many friends from so many totally different walks of life, and he treasured each and every one of them.

It will come as no surprise that my fondest memories of Emerson involve his deep commitment and endless energy which he devoted to the National Federation of the Blind. In the early eighties I asked him to chair a Braille Action Committee for our Kentucky affiliate, and he accepted the challenge. This led to the 1986 opening of the Braille Service Center, which he directed for the eight years the project was in existence. He was one of the pioneers of the National Association to Promote the Use of Braille (NAPUB) which was organized in 1984, and he served for a number of years, first as its treasure and then as its second vice-president. When Kentucky organized a division of NAPUB in 1986, Emerson was its first president, a position he held until 1994.

For many years, Emerson had dreamed that one day there would be a facility dedicated to braille research, and his dream was finally realized in 1992 when he was a co-founder of the Braille Research Center which had its beginning at the American Printing House for the Blind. Emerson served as consultant for the Center until it moved from APH to the National Center for the Blind in Baltimore and opened there on June 1, 1995. He then served as Associate Director and later Director of the Braille Research Center until January of 1997. He continued in the role of consultant,

as well as a moving inspiration for the BRC until his death.

In 1987 the NFB of Kentucky presented Emerson with the Susan B. Rarick Award for unselfish dedication to the work of the Federation . He received in 1993 the Distinguished Blind Educator of the Year Award from the National Federation of the Blind.

The Louis Braille Memorial Award for significant contributions to braille or tactile communication research was established in 1997 by the Board of Directors of the Braille Research Center. Nominations for this award were solicited from all over the world, and the selection was made by the Center's Council of research Fellows. No one was suprised when this most prestigious award was presented to Emerson Foulke on July 3, 1997.

The National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1997 and initiated a scholarship program to commemorate the occasion. The affiliate felt it most appropriate to name the mew project the Emerson Foulke Scholarship Program. By so doing, Kentuckians could honor a true scholar and an outstanding Federationist.