



## George R. Hughes

JOHN A. WILSON

*Photo by Ethel Schenk*

On June 30, 1972, George Hughes retired as Director of the Oriental Institute after serving four years. He had reached the statutory age of sixty-five. Nevertheless, he will not leave active work at the Institute. The Trustees have awarded him deferred retirement as a Professor, so that he may continue his research and teaching, free from administrative responsibility.

Dr. Hughes came from Nebraska, received a B.D. from McCormick Theological Seminary, and came to the University of Chicago as the Old Testament Fellow of the seminary. His emphasis shifted from Hebrew to Egyptian, and he received his Ph.D. here in 1934, with a dissertation on Demotic business documents. After an apprenticeship as Research Assistant and war work in Washington, he joined the Epigraphic Expedition in Luxor, where he served from 1946 to 1964. For the last fifteen years of that stretch he was the Director of that Expedition. Those administrative years covered the revolution of 1952, with a new regime and new attitudes in the Egyptian Service of Antiquities, and there was also the Nubian salvage operation of the early 1960's. The Epigraphic Expedition had to adjust to new challenges. Maurine Hughes ran the household during years when supplies were running short. The Expedition came out of these crises with a higher esteem from the Egyptians and from western scholars.

Dr. Hughes returned to his professorship in 1964, but was not able to maintain an unbroken dedication to teaching and research. In 1968 his colleagues unanimously recommended him

for the directorship of the Oriental Institute. Over the past twenty years administrative duties have multiplied seriously. Nevertheless, Dr. Hughes retained a heavy load of teaching and turned out original research. His four years fell into a time of difficult university financing, but he won such confidence with the University Administration that the Institute escaped some of the damaging cuts that crippled other parts of the University.

His academic specialty lies in the later phases of the Egyptian language, such as Demotic and Coptic. A colleague in another institution once remarked that for the first recognition of a Demotic text he would prefer the judgment of George Hughes to that of any other authority. When a British expedition found quantities of Demotic papyri at Sakkarah, one member of that staff expressed the wish that they might have just two months of Hughes's time for the initial study of the material.

Because of George Hughes's modesty about himself and his achievements, I have tried to keep this statement factual. But I should not be factual if I failed to record the admiration, gratitude, and affection of our colleagues for George and Maurine Hughes. That is a very clear and very warm presence.