Dr. Donald Wallin Wilson

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He was born Jan. 9, 1938, at Poona, India, to missionary parents, Nathaniel and Hanna Wilson.

He became the sixth president of PSU on Dec. 1, 1983, and served in that role until April 7, 1995.

As a youth, he lived with his parents in the Far East and completed his secondary education while living in Indonesia. He received his bachelor of arts degree in religion and speech from Southern College at Collegedale, Tenn., in 1959; a master of arts degree in systematic theology from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Mich., in 1961, and a Ph.D. in speech communication from Michigan State University in 1966.

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In 1988, Dr. Wilson proposed to the Kansas Board of Regents the construction of a new technology complex that was realized nearly a decade later in the $28 million Kansas Technology Center, which is the largest academic building in the university's history.

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He was recognized for numerous civic contributions and achievements while serving as president of PSU. He was the first recipient of the Spirit of Pittsburg Award in 1987. He helped found and served as first chairman of Pittsburg NOW!, an economic development group. He served on the Pittsburg Business and Industry Advisory Council, the Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce, the Bank IV Board of Directors and the Pittsburg YMCA Board of Directors.

He also received Outstanding Alumnus Award from Michigan State University, 1984, and the Alumnus of Achievement Award from Andrews University in 1981. He was appointed to the Governor's Commission on a Public Agenda for Kansas in 1989. He was elected to the NCAA Division II President's Commission in 1994.

He is survived by his first wife, Kathleen Fischer; his current wife, Amporn Wilson, of Thailand; two daughters, Carrie Wilson and Jennie Wilson Kafka, both of Pittsburg; two sons, Greg Wilson, of Woodbury, Minn., and Andrew Wilson, of Olathe; two brothers and two sisters and 10 grandchildren.

Memorial services will be 10 a.m. Monday at First United Methodist Church with the Rev. Thomas D. Sims officiating. The family will receive friends from 7 to 8 p.m. Sunday at Brenner Mortuary Chapel, where friends may call after 10 a.m. Sunday to sign the register. The body has been cremated. Arrangements are under the direction of Brenner Mortuary, 114 E. Fourth St., Pittsburg.
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"I've been friends with Donald Wilson since college, and I had great admiration for him and for his leadership," he added.

Born of missionary parents in Poona, India, on Jan. 9, 1938, Wilson continued his love of travel and his belief in providing a global perspective throughout his life. At the time of his death, he was working for a university in Thailand, where he lived with his second wife, Amporn Wilson.

As a youth, he lived with his parents in many parts of the world, completing his secondary education in Indonesia. He received a bachelor's degree at Southern College in Tennessee, a master's degree from Andrews University in Michigan, and his doctorate from Michigan State University in 1966.

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Lately, it seemed, Wilson was mending fences with his friends and colleagues at PSU. He visited the campus in February to attend a Centennial lecture given by Smoot, and planned to attend a President's Club dinner next year in honor of the university's 100th year.

"It's obviously a tragedy," said current PSU President Tom Bryant, who served as dean of the College of Education when Wilson was president. Bryant also acted as interim president following Wilson's resignation.

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"Each one of his sons and daughters have degrees from Pittsburg State University. Don and the Wilson family were certainly important to our university community for many years."

During his tenure at PSU, Wilson led the faculty and staff forward in many ways. He is remembered by colleagues for his dynamic, charismatic leadership style. He was said to inspire confidence in others, the belief that together they could do great things.

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According to information provided by PSU officials, Wilson's major goal was promotion of the university and enhancement of student recruitment, leading to higher enrollments and increased retention of students.

Officials note that his international background has a significant influence on his leadership style as he helped push PSU into the global sector through a variety of international associations. They add that he believed that a university should develop the entire person, mentally, spiritually, aesthetically and physically.

Pitt State staff note that Wilson helped develop PSU athletics, bringing the Gorillas in to greater focus and renown and that his leadership led to several developments in technology programs. Under his administration, PSU's Vocational Technical Institute and the School of Technology were merged to form the School of Technology and Applied Sciences. PSU received the state designation as a Center for Excellence in Technology. In 1988, Wilson proposed the construction of a new technology center to the Board of Regents; nearly a decade later that became a reality with the creation of the $28 million Kansas Technology Center, the largest academic building in the university's history.

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Highlights of other university accomplishments during Wilson's presidency included:

* consolidation of the Endowment Association and the Alumni Foundation in the PSU Foundation in 1985;

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"What was unique about him is he always made you feel as if you could do anything, and together we got a lot done," she said. "He always made you feel like you could do it."

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Former PSU president dead of apparent heart attack at 65

By OLIVE L. SULLIVAN
Morning Sun Staff Writer

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Community leaders cite Wilson's vision in promoting region

By OLIVE L. SULLIVAN
Morning Sun Staff Writer

Donald Wilson was more than just a university leader, he was a community leader.

As news of the former Pittsburg State University president's death spread Tuesday, other community leaders paid tribute to the charismatic personality that made such a difference in the university, the city and the region.

"One of his strong points was that he brought the community and the City of Pittsburg together with the university and working toward a common goal of creating a better place to live, where each entity worked for the good of the other," explained Pittsburg Commerce Bank President Wendell Wilkinson, who counted Wilson as one of his friends.

Wilkinson said Wilson, soon after his arrival in Pittsburg in 1983, founded a group called Pittsburg Now, which looked at community issues on a long-term basis.

Some of those discussions had a lasting impact on the city we know today. Pittsburg Now was the first group to promote the half-cent sales tax for a revolving loan fund. The sales tax later funded projects such as the renovation of Memorial Auditorium, a new fire station on Rouse Street and the renovation of the Pittsburg Public Library.

According to Mike Slack, a member of Pittsburg Now and the PSU Foundation, part of Wilson's gift was getting people to think long-term.

"I think Don set the stage for this type of thinking to continue," he said. "When I first joined the Foundation, we looked at projects primarily on..."
Vision

Continued from front page

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