In Memory of Professor Harold Wendell French, 1930-2014

KENNETH W. BERGER
Duke University (Retired)

Teacher, scholar and friend Hal French passed away July, 10, 2014, while recovering from heart bypass surgery. He was a frequent and popular Southeast Conference contributor.

Hal received master's degrees from Boston University and United Seminary (Dayton, Ohio) before earning his Ph.D. at McMaster University in 1972. He first taught at St. Andrews Presbyterian College, then enjoyed a long academic career at the University of South Carolina, beginning in 1972 and retiring as professor and chair of the Department of Religious Studies in 1995—though he continued to teach until 2014. His area of concentration was South Asian religion, but he also taught courses in the broader fields of religion, ethics and history.

Hal's published works included the highly regarded *Zen and the Art of Anything* (1999) and culminated with his editorial work on the three-volume *Encyclopedia of India* (2011) and the recently completed *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. His participation in professional organizations included leadership positions in the International Association for Religious Freedom, the American Academy of Religion, the World Congress of Faiths and the World Parliament of Religions.

Hal's service to the Southeast Conference was long and varied. He presented his first SEC/AAS paper in 1974; his last, “It's Completed! *The Encyclopedia of Hinduism* in Eleven Volumes” was at the 2014 meeting. In between there many other papers, memorable for their combined scholarship and spirit; four were published in the *Annals* and *Southeast Review*. His contributions as an officer were also remarkable: he was the second editor of the *Annals* (1984-1989), followed immediately by terms as vice president and president, and he hosted three annual meetings at the special venue of Hilton Head, S.C.

Hal is survived by his wife Rannie, his sons Steve and Mark, and daughter Rebecca. His lecture, research and personal travels took him all over the world; we were most fortunate to have them include more than four decades with the Southeast Conference.