

Search for New Chief at Memorex

By Timothy C. Gartner

Robert C. Wilson, who agreed to slay on as Memorex boss until a successor was named, said yesterday he expected an appointment to be made "certainly before the first of the year."

Wilson said in an interview that the Memorex board of directors has been interviewing prospective candidates for the past three or four months. "They are in the process of evaluating potential candidates," he said. "We want to assure that there will be a smooth and orderly transition."

Wilson will be 60 next January 9, the date he has said he would retire. However, at Wednesday's annual meeting, he told shareholders he had agreed to extend, apparently indefinitely, his employment contract beyond that date.

"The board of directors asked me to agree to serve as chief executive officer beyond the first of the year if needed," he told stockholders. "I have agreed to do so."

Asked in the interview just how long he would extend his stay with Memorex, Wilson hedged. "I can't answer that question. The board will make the final determination. But my position is one of great fondness for the company and its people and I want to do everything I can to be supportive."

"The best thing might be for me to step aside shortly after the board has picked a successor. But it's really inappropriate of me to speculate on what is going to happen. My role, though, will be one of support and a desire to help."

Wilson said it was unlikely he would remain with the Santa Clara maker of peripheral computer equipment in any executive capacity, such as chairman while another executive became presi-

dent and chief executive officer. He currently fills all three positions. He conceded, however, "it's true that those three titles probably wouldn't" be given to his successor.

Wilson declined to say how many candidates have been approached by the board, but he said the board was considering prospects from outside the company as well as within it. Of Memorex's nine board members, Wilson is the only company officer who is a director.

The leading candidate up until last August was thought to be Robert Jaunich II, who had been with Memorex for 8 1/2 years, eventually rising to executive vice president. Jaunich, 39, left to become president of Shasta Beverages in Hayward, and a senior vice president of Shasta's parent, Consolidated Foods Corp.

Wilson said losing Jaunich "was both painful and pleasant. It's one of the things you feel good about — that so many of your people become presidents of other companies. I hated to see him leave, but I also rejoiced for him."

Although scotching press reports that Jaunich was a leading contender to succeed him, Wilson said. "We don't try to identify anyone as a crown prince."

Jaunich, a Proctor & Gamble graduate, said. "I've started a new career path. Soft drinks are more competitive than computers. I wouldn't begin to say my hat is in the ring (for the Memorex job)." He also said. "Nobody (from Memorex) has talked to me."

Then he added, "I really haven't given it any thought, either. I have crossed a bridge — literally, I guess, because I now come across the bay — but I don't ever burn bridges. I have stated that my decision to leave Memo-



ROBERT C. WILSON
He will stay on awhile

rex was carefully considered. But that's not to say it's once and for all."

Wilson said, "There's no reason to exclude him (from consideration)."

Another potential candidate is board member Alvin C. Rice, 54. A Memorex director since 1974 and formerly a vice chairman of Bank of America. While at the bank, Rice was instrumental in steering Memorex out from under \$300 million in debt. Rice has been unemployed since his forced resignation from the bank last August because of a dispute over his personal business practices. An observer noted, however, "This cloud over Al's head could cause difficulty."

The three leading insiders are two from Memorex's office of the president.

executive vice presidents James Dobbie, 48, and Charles E. Strauch, 44. A more remote possibility is Reto Braun, 37, who has headed International operations from London since December, 1977.

Dobbie joined Memorex in January, 1975, from Varian Associates. Two years later he became executive vice president with responsibility for overseeing the company's equipment group. Strauch, an executive with Gould for five years before joining Memorex in January (succeeding Jaunich), is in charge of products such as tapes and discs.

Braun, vice president in charge of Europe, Middle East and Africa, is responsible for 45 percent of Memorex's revenues.

Although stepping down from active management, Wilson indicated he would remain as a Memorex director. "After all," he said, "I have a substantial interest in this company." He owns 162,100 shares, or 2.3 percent, of the outstanding stock.

Of his future, Wilson said he would like to "serve on the boards of a few companies in the northeast, around Boston, because we have a place on Cape Cod, and be a director of some companies around here." He said, "I have deliberately avoided serving on other boards except Memorex."

In retirement, he said he wants to begin flying again (he holds a private pilot's license), "take time to do some scuba diving around those islands I sailed past in World War II," golf, fish and hunt.

When pressed, however, he said he might also find time to take part in running a small company somewhere. "Of course," he said, "Memorex was once a small company."