Memorial Resolution

Professor Willard E. Downing (1909-1977)

Willard Downing died of cancer on September 30, 1977. He is survived by his wife Gloria, his son Greg, and his daughter Carol.

He received his education at the University of Michigan and the University of Buffalo.

Willard Downing originally came to the University of Wisconsin in 1947 as a faculty member of the, then new and Madison-based, graduate social work program. His responsibility was to serve as chairperson of the Milwaukee portion of that program and he was, from the onset, resident in Milwaukee. In the years that followed, he was instrumental in getting a fully developed master's degree curriculum under way in Milwaukee. In so doing, he overcame many difficulties in recruiting staff, developing courses and establishing administrative procedures. These efforts, in large measures, laid the basis for development of other graduate programs on the UWM campus. In the merger period of 1955/56, Professor Downing spearheaded opposition to a movement which would have had the effect of reversing the trend toward graduate work in Milwaukee and restricting UWM to undergraduate instruction. Thus, he was, in a very substantive way, a major founder of the graduate emphasis at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Throughout his career, he traveled extensively, was a research scholar at the Institute of Psychology, University of Rome, 1951-52, Visiting Professor at the University of Puerto Rico in 1955 and the University of Recife, Brazil. He was the executive director (on leave) from 1958-1961 of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee. Over the years he served extensively on many community boards and agencies, a few of which were - Citizen Urban Renewal Committee, the International Institute, the United Community Services of Milwaukee, American Red Cross-Milwaukee Chapter, Downtown Association of Planners and the Real Estate Investment Board. He was the driving force in the establishment of the Penfield Child Development Center, the South Care Day Center and the Garfield Foundation. In addition he served as a consultant to the Child Development Center of OIC, the Boston Store and the Jewish Vocational Service. He was the major developer of the Sullivan Professorship established in the School of Social Welfare in 1976. He was honored in an unusual manner in 1976 when the Penfield Child Development Center established the Willard E. Downing Annual Lectureship.

He had a distinguished University career having served on many faculty committees, most recently - Division of Professions-Executive Committee, the Honorary Degrees Committee and the Faculty Senate.

As a person, Willard Downing was a man of many parts: He was a knowledgeable and expert teacher eagerly sought out by students. He communicated to students a belief in the significance of that being studied and a conviction that what the students were doing was worthwhile. Students responded by seeking his advice and aid; he never failed them.

He was a community leader of considerable stature whose influence was widespread and significant. He communicated to the community an understanding of their problems and a desire to be of help. The community responded with trust and belief and was never disappointed.
He was a traveler who had seen, enjoyed and appreciated many parts of the world. He was equally at ease at a Spanish bull ring, an Italian villa, or an English pub. He communicated to those he met on his travels a real interest in them and their culture and was responded to with warmth and friendship.

He was a friend, invariably courteous and kind, giving full attention to whomever he was involved with. He communicated warmth, love and interest. His friends responded with love and trust, seeking his companionship and good counsel.

Willard Downing will be remembered by the Milwaukee metropolitan community, by his many students and by his colleagues.

Robert Ingle
Max Kurz, Chairperson
Ron Lewis
John Teter

JJS:sa
12/30/77