MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR JOHN J. SOLON

When John J. Solon died at 1 a.m. Thursday, November 26, 1981, an era in the history and development of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee passed with him. He played a singularly important role in the development of this young university during the period of its most rapid and difficult growth. He played an equally important part in the lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands of people who came in contact with him.

John J. Solon was a university leader, an adviser to chancellors, and a man dedicated to community service. But most of all, he was a friend to virtually everyone he met.

He had a long and distinguished career in the University of Wisconsin System, serving both the Milwaukee and Madison campuses. When he died, he was the only top administrator who had served all three chancellors in the 25 year history of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Solon died of complications after being hospitalized for treatment of lung cancer at Columbia Hospital.

He was a popular leader on the UWM campus and knew virtually every faculty member by their first name. After learning of his serious illness, the Faculty Senate created a special scholarship fund in his name at its November 19th meeting.

UWM Chancellor Frank E. Horton also presented a plaque at the faculty meeting honoring Solon's 33 years of service to the UW System with the inscription:

You embody the finest qualities of a university leader. You have touched the lives of many and we have been the richer. You have dedicated yourself to helping others, serving your community and building a great university. We are forever indebted to you as each new generation benefits from that which you helped to create.

John was born on May 13, 1920 in Waterbury, Connecticut and was educated in the public schools there. He attended Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in 1941.

In 1942 he received a master's degree in education from Clark University in Worcester and in 1947 he received a master's degree in English from Boston College. He received his Ph.D. in English from the UW-Madison in 1955.

John's professional career began as Assistant to the Dean of Men at Holy Cross College in 1941. He served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific during World War II, reaching the rank of Captain.

He was Sales Manager and the Associate Director of the University of Wisconsin Press from 1952 to 1965. He achieved full professor status at the UW-Madison campus in 1962.

John was brought to UWM as Assistant to Chancellor J. Martin Klotsche, but soon took on a much larger role in the planning and physical development of the
campus during its period of greatest growth. His breadth of knowledge of the people and buildings made him an invaluable source of advice for chancellors and everyone else.

In September, 1965, John was appointed Assistant to the Chancellor and Director of Summer Sessions at the UW-Milwaukee. In 1967, he became Assistant Chancellor for Facilities and Services. In 1974, he was appointed Secretary of the University.

John devoted many of his hours away from the university to the creation and development of the Southeastern Wisconsin Health Systems Agency, which he served as Director, Vice President, and President. He believed strongly in the need for hospital and health planning so that modern health services could be provided to the greatest number of people at the lowest possible cost.

Known as "Dr. John" to many people in the Milwaukee community, he was a leader with a rare combination of wit, wisdom, and a quiet strength. He helped scores of young men and women in their professional careers, offering advice and personal recommendations. As Secretary of the University he was a key member of the chancellor's staff and kept faculty records. He presided over all commencement activities.

John had a mischievous Irish wit and charm. He had a storehouse of biblical and literary quotes that he often used to make light of a difficult situation. When burdened with senseless detail or nitpicking he would often say, "Please Lord, take care of the gnats -- we can take care of the elephants."

The real story of John Solon may never be fully told, because he never took care to have it recorded.

John Solon was an excellent judge of character and potential in other people, encouraging and quietly promoting their interests. You knew that if he was your friend, you had a friend for life. And you tried hard never to let him down.

There is no question he played a pivotal role in the development of UWM from its humble beginnings to a major, doctoral university. But perhaps more important to him, he played a pivotal role in the lives and careers of untold numbers of people.

He was a member of St. James Church in Mequon, where he served as an usher and lector.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen, of Mequon, sons Christopher and John James III, and daughters Mary Elizabeth and Anne Marie.