MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

Professor Verna L. Newsome (1896-1983)

Verna L. Newsome, Professor Emerita of English, died at Columbia Hospital on May 2, 1983, at the age of 87.

Ms. Newsome received her early education in the schools at Waupaca, Wisconsin, where she was born on March 28, 1896. After attending the State Normal School at Oshkosh for three years, she was granted the B.A. with senior honors from the University of Wisconsin in 1922. In 1927 she began graduate study at Madison (having been awarded the Mary Adams Fellowship in English Language and Literature) and received the masters degree in 1928. She also did graduate work at Marquette University, Northwestern University, and the University of Minnesota. Ms. Newsome was a member of Pi Lambda Theta and Delta Kappa Gamma, national honor societies in education.

Ms. Newsome's early professional experience was in Wisconsin public schools, both elementary and secondary. From 1924-27 she taught at the State Teachers College at Indiana, Pennsylvania; in 1928-30 she taught English at the University of Wisconsin High School in Madison; and in February, 1930, she joined the faculty at the State Teachers College in Milwaukee, where she remained (through the evolution of the Teachers College into the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) until her retirement in 1966.

During her thirty-six years with the University and its predecessors, Verna served the Department of English in many ways. From 1930-41 she was faculty advisor of the Echo Weekly, publication of the then State Teachers College. She served on and chaired innumerable Department committees and assisted on many College and University committees, such as the committee for the reorganization of the College and the catalog committee. Her scope of teaching covered all aspects of English, from freshman composition to upper level literature courses. From 1946-56 she was chairman of English 220, Introduction to Literature, a course required of nearly all students in the College. She introduced courses in Structural Linguistics, and she was the first to teach Romantic Poetry after the 1956 merger. For professional background for this course she visited England, and she selected many critical and biographical books on the period for the UWM library.

Professor Newsome's services to the profession were substantial and important. Her main interest was in the grammatical structure of the English language, and her most important studies dealt with the application of grammatical theory to the teaching of composition. She pioneered in Wisconsin (with Sterling Leonard and Robert Pooley) in the presentation of new theories of usage and grammar, first of structural and later of generative-transformational grammar. In 1952 she published (with Enola Borgh) a very effective college text, Sentence Craft (Macmillan); while her study, Structural Grammar in the Classroom, published by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English in 1961, was sold on a national scale by the National Council of Teachers of English. Her work having attracted the attention of the noted linguist Professor Harold B. Allen of the University of Minnesota, she and her colleague Enola Borgh were invited to collaborate with him on a series of high school texts embodying the new theories, New Dimensions in English, Books 1-4 (Mc Cormick-Mathers, 1966-68), and later on an anthology dealing with the new concepts, Focusing on Language: A Reader (Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975).

During the 1960s Professor Newsome was invited to give numerous workshops, among them a workshop on structural linguistics at UWM under the sponsorship of the English Club of Greater Milwaukee that attracted 200 English Teachers. She was also
invited to teach at various NDEA Summer Institutes: at the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Nebraska, the University of Minnesota, and at various private colleges nationwide.

In 1964 Professor Newsome was recipient of the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English award for long and meritorious service to the profession. It was a widely expressed opinion among those present (many of them Verna's former students) that seldom had the Council's award been so richly deserved. Verna's colleagues in the UWM English Department who have worked with her over the years would certainly concur with this opinion.

Ruth I. Aldrich
Enola Borgh
Tinsley Helton, Chairperson
James Kuist
Florence L. Walzl