MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

for

Professor Katherine G. Nelson (1913-1982)

Dr. Katherine G. Nelson, a Professor in the Department of Geological and Geophysical Sciences at The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, died on December 29, 1982, after a short but valiant fight against cancer. Dr. Nelson was a geologic educator in the Milwaukee area from 1938 until her death; with the exception of a 4 year interruption to undertake emergency duty in the oil fields of Texas during World War II. After receiving the first Ph.D. in Geology granted at Rutgers University in 1938, her initial base of service was Milwaukee Downer College. Subsequently, she served Milwaukee Downer Seminary, the Y.W.C.A. and Wisconsin State College for a brief time before she joined the UWM Faculty in 1956.

Probably her greatest contact with the public, at least in terms of numbers of people served, was through public tours of the UWM Greene Museum. When UWM initially acquired the Milwaukee Downer property, the Greene geological collection was to be moved to Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. To Katherine, the loss of this educational resource to the Milwaukee area was unthinkable. Consequently, she mounted a campaign that was carried to the UW Board of Regents, and finally the Governor. Once the collection was purchased for UWM, she started an active education program to make it available to the public. As a result, hundreds of schools and organizations have toured this facility under Katherine's guidance. In all, she reached about 15,000 people with her special message about the earth.

She believed in faculty governance, and conscientiously served her university on scores of committees ranging from the Faculty Lounge Committee (1956) to the Letters and Science Admissions Policy Committee (1981), and including terms as departmental chair and a member of the Faculty Senate. She was a member and held offices in numerous service-oriented organizations. She made special contributions toward the establishment of a Sigma Xi Chapter at UWM; including service as President of the UWM club. For service to the Milwaukee Public Museum, she was elected an Honorary Curator in 1963. She worked for many years in a variety of capacities for the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, and served as the first woman President in 1952-53. She continued on the Governing Board of the Academy until her death. Her efforts on behalf of earth science organizations included involvement with the Wisconsin Geological Society. She served this organization as President in 1941-42 and was later elected an Honorary Member for her numerous contributions. In part because of this involvement, she was named Educator of the Year in 1982 by the Midwest Federation of Mineralogical and Geological Societies. She was an active contributor to the programs of the National Association of Geology Teachers, and served as President of the Central Section (1968-69). In 1978, NAGT awarded her the prestigious Neil Miner Award for her distinguished contributions to earth science education at all levels. She was President of Phi Kappa Phi in 1976-77, and at her death was a nominee for the presidency of Chapter E of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Katherine was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, and a member of the Paleontological Society, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and the American Association of Stratigraphical Palynologists. She also helped establish the Ice Age
Scientific Reserve in Wisconsin by tirelessly leading members of Congress and personnel from the National Park Service on countless field trips through the magnificent glacial country of Wisconsin.

One could continue listing her activities in other organizations and on boards, or describe her many earth science-oriented educational endeavors for a variety of organizations. This could be followed by a listing of published scientific articles and her numerous public lectures. However, this would leave unlisted hundreds of informal presentations made to classes and clubs in Milwaukee area schools. Whenever, a call came into her department for a display, a career talk, a demonstration, or a lecture, almost everyone else was too busy except Katherine. She was always the willing volunteer for public service of all kinds. Her vast knowledge about Wisconsin geology made her the preferred geological contact for reporters for Milwaukee newspapers and TV stations, and she freely assisted them all without concern for the time it took. Because of all her involvements, she was The Geologist to citizens of southeastern Wisconsin.

All the above is about Katherine the doer, but what about Katherine the person? First, she was beautiful, tranquil, and energetic with malice toward none. She never sought, nor needed, public acclaim for her activities on behalf of others. She provided service because in her heart and mind she had gifts to share with all who wondered or cared about the natural world. To her, the earth was a place to be understood and enjoyed. She labored tirelessly for this belief, while always imparting warmth, enthusiasm and joy to all who came in contact with her. To many, she provided the perfect model of what a college professor should be.

On January 15, 1983, colleagues in her department hosted a paleontological symposium to honor her life, featuring contributions by her former students. These papers were subsequently published in a special memorial volume of the Transactions of The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, which was sponsored by contributions from former students and professional associates. A scholarship honoring Katherine was also established by her department and contributions are welcomed.

Katherine Greacen Nelson, geologist and educator, is survived by her husband, Attorney Frank H. Nelson of Milwaukee, and thousands of loving friends and former students scattered throughout the world. She enriched the lives of all who knew her.

For the Department of Geological and Geophysical Sciences,

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