PROFESSOR EMERITUS THOMAS W. WALTON

Memorial Resolution

UWM Professor Emeritus Thomas W. Walton was born in Ishpeming, Michigan, December 16, 1920, and died November 7, 1995, after a prolonged illness. He is survived by his wife, Betty, and his son, Michael T. Walton and two grandchildren, Evan and Andrea. Tom’s family and many friends celebrated his life at a memorial service and 75th birthday party held for Tom in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin on December 16, 1995.

After attending Northern Michigan College of Education (NMCE) for one year, Tom taught two years in a one-room rural elementary school in Misery Bay, Michigan until he joined the U.S. Army in 1942. He was stationed in Prince Rupert, British Columbia until he was discharged as a Staff Sergeant in 1946. After World War II, Tom completed his B.S. in Elementary Education at NMCE, his Master’s degree in Remedial Reading at Boston University and he earned his doctoral degree in Education from Michigan State University in 1955.

Tom was a humanist: a poet, a painter, a sculptor, and a conservationist all rolled up into the job description of teacher. His early professional life until 1955 was spent teaching elementary school, serving as a reading specialist, and as a counselor and teacher in outdoor education programs during summers in Michigan, Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

He came to UWM as an Assistant Professor in 1955, and retired as a Full Professor in 1985, after being the first and longest serving Chair of the Department of Cultural Foundations of Education in the School of Education.

Tom was open to change, and he was tenacious in his pursuit of justice through education. He had great faith in the essential goodness of people. He consistently evidenced this faith in the respect and attentiveness which he lavished upon all with whom he worked. He worked at teaching; he worked at bringing out the best in us.

Tom served as president of the Mequon School Board in the late 1950s. He was active in civil rights groups in the 1960s. He was the first sponsor of the first alternative high school in Milwaukee. He was committed to international understanding; he served as a consultant to the Ministry of Education in Venezuela, and as a Project Director for Kenyan and other African educators in Milwaukee. Tom contributed to exposing the plight of migrant workers in Wisconsin and to improving the living and schooling conditions of migrant workers’ children. He was co-author of Education for Relevance which made the national “Best Books in Education” list in 1968.

Jesse Stuart, an Appalachian teacher whose early teaching in Kentucky was similar to Tom’s work in rural Michigan, wrote

"... A teacher lives on through his students. Good teaching is forever, and the teacher is immortal."

The UWM and our world is richer for Tom Walton having been among us.