ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EMERITUS GAROLD L. BARTNESS

Memorial Resolution

Associate Professor Emeritus of Mass Communication Garold L. Bartness died in Carlton, Minnesota, on September 15, 1998, at the age of 85. He was born on July 13, 1913 in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. And he was born, as they say in the newsroom, with printer's ink in his blood. Gary was the son of Bess Wentworth Bartness and John Bartness, the telegraph operator for the Duluth (Minnesota) News-Tribune, and followed his father into the journalism field. He worked for Associated Press while earning a bachelor's degree in English from Superior State Teachers College, now the University of Wisconsin-Superior. After his graduation in 1937, he was a News-Tribune reporter and a high school teacher of composition and literature, until he enlisted to serve in World War II.

Bartness initially enlisted in the U.S. Army, only to be discharged upon the discovery that he was color-blind, but he appealed to and was accepted by the U.S. Marines and assigned to office work. However, his diligence and sense of duty were rewarded when he was reassigned to the infantry in time to land in Normandy eleven days after the D-Day invasion. For his service in France and Germany, he was awarded a Bronze Star and an expert rifleman's badge. He also received the gratitude of his fellows on the front lines and their families for filing stories on hometown soldiers as an "informal war correspondent" for the Superior (Wisconsin) Telegraph. After the surrender, he edited an Armed Forces newspaper to maintain morale for soldiers awaiting their return home.

Bartness returned home to move with his wife to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he would earn master's degrees in English and journalism from the University of Minnesota and joined the journalism faculty at the College of St. Thomas. Owing to the postwar shortage in housing, the Bartnesses lived in Quonset huts for faculty including another young veteran named Eugene McCarthy, later an antiwar presidential nominee in a turbulent era on campuses. At his campus, Bartness would encourage students to engage in their country's concerns and counsel against closing down campus at the cost of their education -- and then would hold classes off-campus so that seniors would not delay their degrees.

Bartness came to this campus in 1954 as an instructor at the Milwaukee State Teachers College while he was a copy desk editor at the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Sentinel. Upon the founding of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and its Department of Journalism in 1956, Bartness joined the faculty. However, he continued to work on the copy desk of the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Journal, on Saturdays and in summers, where students witnessed his commitment to connect the classroom and the newsroom, "keeping current" and keeping contacts in the field for their sake. Students knew that "he knew what he was doing," recalls then-ad hoc instructor and Milwaukee Sentinel news editor Leo KIssel, and "the kids loved him" for his adherence to high professional standards. "He was a taskmaster but quick to praise when he saw good work," says Professor Emeritus of Mass Communication Ruane Hill, and "he was a marvelous influence" on them and on colleagues who could count on "the quiet man with the wonderful wit."

Already beloved and respected by students and colleagues on campus and in the field, Bartness became one of the rare academics to be addressed as "Dr." even by editors despite the journalistic anathema to pomp and circumstance. But
they accorded him the honorific because they had witnessed the circumstances under which he finally earned his doctorate in journalism from the University of Minnesota in 1968, when he was 55 years old. Some even read and discussed his scholarly dissertation on the Wisconsin News, an early Milwaukee newspaper which also had been published by his earlier employer, then-Milwaukee Sentinel publisher William Randolph Hearst. Bartness also was honored by his peers in the press as one of the first from the professoriate to be elected president of the oldest press club in the country, the Milwaukee Press Club, and again with its highest honor upon induction into the Knights of the Golden Quill.

But a subtler form of leadership was his forte. Bartness summarized his style in campus politics in advice to "put your thoughts in memos and keep a low profile." He was a crucial force on a fast-growing campus as the senior member among founding faculty in the merger which created the Department of Mass Communication in 1970. He also was a versatile and innovative teacher in a department diversifying as fast as its field, as his coursework covered not only reporting and copy editing -- including a component as early as 1970 in the coming computer technology which was not yet evident in the newsrooms -- but also media history and ethics and even international mass communication. In 1972 and 1973, he led his department's first overseas courses which took UWM students on tours of European media. Some would recall that he also took the opportunity to tour another sort of course on the Continent, as he was a faithful proponent of his firm belief that "you could meet God through golf."

Bartness also was a fervent fan of his boyhood sport of ice hockey, and his daughter recalls it as the only cause ever known to have caused her soft-spoken father to raise his voice owing to officials' erroneous calls. However, he took care to take himself to his car, listening to the radio in what he presumed was privacy, until a granddaughter slipped into the back seat and heard terms unusual even in his extensive vocabulary. Forever embarrassed by the episode, Bartness resolved never to chance a repetition and attended games alone -- or cased the back seat of his car in the event of unexpected company.

Bartness was surprised again in 1978, upon his retirement, when hundreds of former students and colleagues filled the Wisconsin Room in the UWM Union to celebrate his quarter of a century of service to this campus in its formative years. For two decades, he returned to campus often for alumni events, and he remained in contact with many former students by continuing to readily write reference letters accompanied by his colorful reminiscences of campus life, some of which are now in the UWM archives. Most recently, he returned in 1997 to be -- by order in the alphabet, by seniority and by right -- the first inductee into the Department of Mass Communication's Hall of Fame. His famed wit had not left him, as his improvisational and seemingly self-deprecating acceptance speech soon descended into a subtly caustic commentary on the surprisingly successful careers of high-placed former students in attendance.

But the Bartnesses left Milwaukee soon afterward to live their last years with their family in Minnesota, where his final illness was soon discovered and he died at home. He is survived by his wife Virginia Kane Bartness and their children, Retired Colonel Patrick Bartness of Georgia and Virginia Bartness Gelineau of Cloquet, Minnesota. But his legacy also is here in Milwaukee and in media across the country, in the thousands of students then and since who still benefit daily from his decades of devotion to the Department of Mass Communication he helped found and the profession for which it prepares them.