MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
PROFESSOR MARY JO READ

Dr. Mary Jo Read was born in Pella, Iowa, February 2, 1911. Following elementary and high school in Pella she attended Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa), where her father was Professor of education, receiving her B.A. in 1931. Before entering the teaching profession Dr. Read completed a Master of Science degree in Geography at the University of Chicago in 1932.

After several years of social studies teaching in Iowa public schools she secured an appointment at the then LaCrosse State Teachers College before joining the faculty of Milwaukee State Teachers College (a predecessor institution of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) in 1940. During her early years in Milwaukee she completed the Ph.D. in Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1942. Dr. Read was very proud of the fact that she was one of the first women to receive a doctorate in geography from that institution.

Aside from a wartime period when she was on leave to the Office of Strategic Services, Washington, D.C., she remained with the UWM Geography Department until 1965, serving as its Chairperson from 1958 to 1963. She received the title Professor of Geography in 1956 upon the establishment of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Professor Read’s specialty was cultural geography and especially of Latin America. She traveled very extensively in that area, including field research in the Upper Amazon. Field investigation was not limited to this hemisphere however; she experienced all other continents, including being one of the first women ever to visit Antarctica.

A highly accomplished photographer, Professor Read was in great demand as a lecturer throughout her career and retirement. Sets of her slides were marketed internationally by the National Council for Geographic Education. Some 25,000 cataloged original slides were donated to the American Geographical Society Collection of UWM’s Golda Meir Library.

Dr. Read was a life member of The Association of American Geographers and The Society of Women Geographers. Additionally she was active in Delta Kappa Gamma (honorary education) P.E.O. Society, and the College Women’s Club and Summerfield United Methodist Church both of Milwaukee.

Following her twenty five years at UWM and its predecessors, Professor Read accepted a position at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL, from which she retired with emeritus status in 1975 and returned to Milwaukee for her retirement years. She became one of the original residents of St. John’s Tower shortly after resuming residency here.

Dr. Read touched the lives of countless people over the years, not the least of whom were her students, at UWM. As a founder of the UWM Chapter of Gamma Theta Upsilon, the geography honor society, her Kenwood Boulevard home was always open to its members and
their fellow students. Many future Milwaukee area social studies teachers learned their geography from Read.

She was highly regarded among geographers throughout the state as evidenced by her election to the presidency of the Wisconsin Council for Geographic Education.

The UWM Master's program in geography was approved by the UW System, Board of Regents during Professor Read's tenue as department chair and the bulk of preparation for the Ph.D. similarly completed.

Dr. Read is survived by her brother - Allen Walker Read of New York City, an emeritus professor of English at Columbia University, and his wife, Charlotte.

Following her death on November 30, 1998, services were held in Milwaukee with interment in Memorial Park Cemetery, Galesburg, Illinois, her ancestral home.

Donn Haglund,
Professor Emeritus of Geography

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