

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA MARY ELIZABETH BROOKS

Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) Brooks, professor emerita of Spanish and Portuguese, died on Saturday, March 31, 2001. Professor Brooks was born in Washington, Indiana, and was raised in Loogootee, Indiana (near Vincennes), where her family operated a well-known furniture factory. She received the A. A. degree from Stephens College in 1944 and the B. S. from Purdue University in 1947, where she also received a Distinguished Student Award. She completed the M. A. (1951) and Ph. D. (1959) degrees in Spanish at the University of New Mexico with a specialization in Golden Age (sixteenth- and seventeenth-century) peninsular drama and a thesis on Gabriel Espinosa, the legendary Spanish “pastry-cook” who was involved in the Madrigal conspiracy around the Portuguese throne in the sixteenth century and who became the subject of various literary works.

She was a loyal member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and was active in the Wesley Foundation. Between her undergraduate and graduate studies, she worked as a passenger agent with Delta Airlines and eventually trained for and received a pilot’s license. She began her college teaching career as instructor at Purdue University for two years before joining the faculty of the University of Wisconsin in 1959, and proved to be an enthusiastic Badger thereafter, faithfully attending football games. Her book, *A King for Portugal: The Madrigal Conspiracy (1594-95)* was published in 1964 by the UW Press. Renowned Wisconsin author August Derleth, in his 1964 Capital Times review of the book, stated that “[Gabriel] Espinosa is a fascinating character by any standard, and Prof. Brooks makes the most of him without any sacrifice of historical accuracy. . . . The book can as readily and enjoyably be read by any lay reader as by the scholar.” In later years, her interest in imperial Spain continued unabated, with her research on the 17th-century monk-playwright Tirso de Molina.

Professor Brooks served as associate chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese from 1965 to 1968, achieved the rank of full professor in 1968, and was chair of her department during 1982-85. Respected for her administrative acumen, she served on numerous university committees and editorial boards: Ibero-American Studies (now LACIS) Executive Committee, UW-Madison Faculty Senate, L&S Faculty Senate, Parking and Transportation Board (served as chair), Humanities Division Executive Committee, UW Press Committee, Student Appeals Committee, and the Graduate School Administrative Committee. Within the department, she accumulated a long record of service as advisor for the Madison (Psi) chapter of Sigma Delta Pi (National Spanish Honor Society), as Honors advisor for Spanish and Portuguese, and for coordination of the second-year Spanish courses. In addition, she developed a second-year Spanish honors curriculum, which enabled students to complete intermediate/advanced language training plus an introduction to Spanish literature in one year. She taught this sequence for many years.

During her long service to the department, she was active in promoting the teaching of the Portuguese language and Luso-Brazilian studies. She was a reader of several theses in Portuguese, taught undergraduate and graduate courses in the language, and served on the Portuguese Studies Committee. She was also instrumental in reviving interest in the undergraduate Spanish Club. During her years as its faculty coordinator, the level of its programs was raised considerably and its membership tripled. She retired from the UW-Madison faculty in 1990.

Betsy cultivated extracurricular interests in the areas of theater and music. She was an assiduous audience member at Madison Symphony concerts and enjoyed playing piano at home. She was involved in supporting various Native American causes.

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Professor Brooks is survived by a brother, Dr. Fred (Madeau) Brooks of Indianapolis; a sister, Barbara Kopple of San José, California; and ten nieces and nephews.

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