

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR SARGENT BUSH, JR.

Sargent Bush, Jr., John Bascom professor of English, died peacefully from metastatic melanoma on October 8, 2003. The son of Reverend Sargent Bush, a Presbyterian minister, and Marion Roberts Bush, he was born on September 22, 1937 in Flemington, New Jersey. After graduating from Blair Academy, he studied English at Princeton, earning his B.A. in English at Princeton in 1959. In 1960 he married Cynthia Bird Greig, whom he had met at Bryn Mawr College.

Following graduation, he worked briefly at Hanover Bank in New York City. Service in the New Jersey National Guard and U.S. Army Reserves culminated in a 10-month call-up for the Berlin crisis. Released from military service, he moved west to the University of Iowa to pursue his love for literature. Earning his M.A. degree in 1964 and his Ph.D. in 1967, he became an assistant professor of English at Washington and Lee University, until he moved to the University of Wisconsin in 1971.

In his thirty-two years of service, Sarge left his mark on the University of Wisconsin in a number of important ways. In the English Department, he taught a wide variety of courses, ranging from introductory literature courses for freshmen to graduate seminars. In several important ways his teaching interests anticipated later changes in his field. He taught courses on autobiography decades before the current burst of interest in life-writing and championed the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe as early as the 1970s, when few other scholars accorded the same respect to women writers. One of the mainstays of the American literature area, he cheerfully and graciously taught whatever courses were most needed, setting a tone of generosity that deeply affected both his colleagues and students. Numerous individuals have testified that their love for poetry, for Benjamin Franklin and Nathaniel Hawthorne, or even Puritan sermons dated to that first influential course they took with him.

As a scholar, Sarge painstakingly built up a reputation as one of the leading authorities in his chosen field—17th-century American literature. His bibliographical and critical work on Thomas Hooker, a major spiritual leader in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, is praised to this day. Spending months in archives in the U.S. and Britain, his research greatly deepened our understanding of the theological controversies, personal lives, and ideas of a group of religious leaders who have often seemed distant and obscure. In order to write his intellectual biography of Rev. Thomas Hooker, for example, he tracked down and sorted out all of Hooker's writings, discovering twice as many editions than had previously been known. His final major work, The Correspondence of John Cotton, the leading theologian in the early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, has been hailed as an "outstanding achievement of scholarly devotion and determination." But despite his love for the 17th century, Sarge also published essays on a wide range of American authors, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He loved the novels of Willa Cather but never could quite find the time to teach the course on her work he dreamed of.

Sarge Bush's ground-breaking and influential scholarship was matched by his generous administrative service to the University of Wisconsin. He served as chair of the English Department from 1980-83, assuming the post in the semester after the bitter TA strike of 1980. His "gentle firmness" (as one colleague characterized his style of leadership) established a tone of healing that was much needed in those days. No matter what the crisis or conflict, Professor Bush provided a soothing wisdom that was greatly respected by his colleagues.

In 1983-84, he served as the first director of the UW Junior in Warwick University Program, helping to ensure the success of what has become one of the university's most important study-abroad programs.

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On two different occasions, he deferred his research to serve as associate dean of the humanities for the College of Letters and Sciences, from 1989-94 and 1998-99. During a period of declining budgets and staffing, he played a key role on the Academic Planning Council, preparing and presenting data on every humanities program as the council struggled to minimize the damage done by budget cutbacks. During this crisis, he was a sympathetic ear and effective voice for the departments and programs that were his responsibility. While dean, Sarge also served as the chair of the chancellor's committee to review the entire General Library System, helping to draft what came to be known as the Bush report—a key working document that helped the newly appointed director of libraries. As chair of the Inter-College Campus Arts Consortium, he helped to draft a plan that resulted in improved communications among the arts programs housed in five different colleges.

In his teaching, scholarship, and administrative duties, Sarge managed to move people, influence minds, and improve communications, without drawing undue attention to himself. His modesty and wit, generosity and grace served for many years as a source of strength for those who knew him. He is survived by his wife Cynthia and his two sons, Charlie and James.

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