

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS WILLIAM C. THIESENHUSEN

William C. Thiesenhusen, long-time affiliate and former director of the Land Tenure Center, and professor emeritus of both agricultural and applied economics and life sciences communication, died at his home in Fitchburg, Wisconsin, June 25, 2005. He was 69.

William Thiesenhusen, Bill to family and friends, was born in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, February 12, 1936, and grew up on the family farm, the oldest of four boys. In his youth, Bill was a leading figure in Wisconsin 4-H clubs, Boys State, and Future Farmers of America. His first trip abroad came in 1958 when he spent a half year in Spain with the International Farm Youth Exchange program. He worked part-time as a farm radio newscaster while studying at the university, and received an appointment with UW-Extension while he was a graduate student.

Bill was associated with the University of Wisconsin at Madison all of his professional life. He completed his undergraduate studies at UW in 1958, went on to earn a master's degree (1960) and a PhD (1965) in what is now the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. He also earned a master's degree in public administration at Harvard University in 1962. Upon returning to Wisconsin in 1962, Bill joined the newly organized Land Tenure Center, an international development research and assistance program focused on problems of land reform and rural modernization in Latin America. He lived in Santiago, Chile from 1963 to 1965 conducting field studies for the Land Tenure Center as part of his PhD research. He joined the UW faculty in 1965 where he served until his retirement in 1998.

Throughout his career, Bill maintained a focus on land tenure and the plight of rural people in developing countries. He served twice as director of the Land Tenure Center, from 1971-1975 and again from 1994-1998. He played a key role in maintaining the center as the longest operating federally funded university center in the U.S. focused on issues of land rights and institutional arrangements for managing and allocating land and natural resources in rural regions.

For many years Bill taught a regular sequence of courses emphasizing the economic problems of underdeveloped areas, and land tenure and the Latin American peasant. He helped to organize an interdisciplinary graduate program in Development Studies in 1970 and was its director for nearly 15 years. He was skillful and energetic in bringing field opportunities of the Land Tenure Center together with research interests of graduate students. Bill advised dozens of students from all corners of the globe. He was highly respected and fondly remembered by former students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He was proud of their accomplishments and felt especially honored by invitations to visit and lecture in their countries.

Bill observed agrarian conditions in developing economies around the globe—writing, lecturing, and consulting in Chile, Brazil, Central America, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Taiwan and elsewhere. Twice he served as visiting professor abroad—at the National College of Agriculture, Chapingo, Mexico, and the Autonomous University of Madrid. During the 1980s and early 90s he was the very embodiment of Wisconsin's long-standing commitment to solve land tenure problems in developing countries.

He published widely remaining focused on the fate of rural people and their ability to secure a place on the land. He reviewed development programs for the World Bank, FAO, and USAID, questioned reform efforts in El Salvador and the Philippines, defended peasant contributions to national economies, and wondered if agricultural economists were doing enough to address poverty issues. He was a consistent advocate for improving agriculture in peasant communities and never stopped seeking better ways to document the successes of enterprising groups.

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In retirement, Bill was an active volunteer with Wisconsin Public Radio, Briarpatch, and persons with disabilities. He served on the board of directors of the Terra Institute, an international research and advisory service in Mt Horeb, and continued working abroad. He collected international folk art, was an expert gardener and chef, and a devoted grandfather and companion to 5-year-old Brandon. Two daughters, Kay and Gail, and grandson, Brandon, survive him along with his mother, Myrtle, and three brothers, John (Pat), Art (Bonnie), and Charles (Earl).

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