

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS KARL G. BOTTKE

Karl G. Bottke, emeritus professor of French and Italian, died on February 11, 2005, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida at the age of 96. He was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on September 22, 1908, and graduated from Butler University in 1929 with a degree in Romance languages. During his undergraduate career, he studied no fewer than six languages – French, Italian, Spanish, German, Latin, and Greek – and the study of languages would be his life-long passion. In the fall of 1929 he accepted an assistantship to pursue graduate study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he took both the M.A. (1931) and Ph.D. (1940) degrees. Karl spent a year (1933-34) in France as an American field fellow and followed courses in linguistics and philology in Paris, where he attended the lectures of Mario Roques and Joséph Bédier. A serious automobile accident in 1935 delayed the completion of his doctorate for several years. He was an inveterate and indefatigable traveler, who spent long periods in various countries – France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Romania – studying and improving his knowledge of most of the Romance languages. In 1943 he participated in the first Linguistic Institute held here in Madison and made his contribution to the war effort through his very effective teaching of various critical languages to American soldiers.

The courses Karl taught at the UW-Madison focused on French phonetics, the history of the French, Occitan, and Italian languages, and Old French and Italian philology. One of his favorite courses was phonetics, which he began to teach in 1932, the year after he completed the M.A., and which he continued to teach until his retirement in 1969 as professor of French and Italian after a long (40 years) and distinguished career in our department. For many years he directed the second-year French language program. He was chair of the department in 1962-63 and served on a number of departmental and college committees, among which were the Executive Committee of the Linguistics Department and the building committee for the construction of Van Hise Hall. For many years he was secretary-treasurer of the Société des Amis de la Maison Française. He was a long-time member of many professional organizations: American Association of Teachers of French, American Association of Teachers of Italian, Linguistic Society of America, and the Modern Language Association, among others. He served as editor of the *Comparative Romance Linguistics Newsletter* in 1962. His publications include articles on specific points of Romance philology and a wide range of French and Italian textbooks -- grammars (*A Brief Oral French Review Grammar* and *Practical Italian*), editions of plays (*Nationale 6*, *Noe*, and *Un chapeau de paille d'Italie*), and cultural readers (*Aspects de la France*) -- , as well as numerous book reviews (for *French Review*, *Romance Philology*, *Orbis*, *Italica*, *Symposium*, *Modern Language Forum*, and *Books Abroad*).

Karl Bottke was a true gentleman, a master of his chosen discipline, and a kind and nurturing mentor for his many students. A letter of recommendation sent on his behalf to the UW-Madison in 1929 notes that Karl “has such exceptional language ability that I have never had in all my years as a teacher, nor do I ever expect to have again, a student who will equal him. He is not only what I term a genius in languages, but a very superior student in practically every line, and also a gentleman in every sense of the word, with a courtesy which is rare in the younger generation.” When Karl arrived in Wisconsin in 1929, he became part of a class that contained several of his future UW colleagues in French, Italian and Spanish: E. E. Milligan, André Lévêque, Joseph Rossi, Mack Singleton, and Lloyd Kasten. Karl was also very generous, endowing a scholarship for language study at Butler University and supporting the French House on the UW-Madison campus. Until the end of his life he continued to read books and newspapers in a variety of languages and to participate actively in regularly scheduled conversation groups. His love of and expertise in languages is an inspiration to us all.

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