

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS WALTER B. RIDEOUT**

Walter B. Rideout, emeritus professor of English, passed away at age 88, on Saturday, April 8, 2006.

After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Colby College in Maine, Walter earned an M.A. in 1939 and Ph.D. in English literature from Harvard University in 1950. After the beginning of World War II, he took a course in cryptography, learning to decipher Japanese codes, and worked in Washington, D.C. until he joined the U.S. Navy as an ensign and was transferred to Pearl Harbor, where he did the same important work. In June 1946, he resigned his commission as a lieutenant senior grade and returned to the states to finish work on his Ph.D. thesis. Walter taught in the English Department of Northwestern University from 1949 until 1962, when he was invited to be visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin. This began his long tenure in Madison. While chair of the Department of English from 1965 to 1968, Walter initiated a full-scale study and review of the department's Ph.D. program, which led to an important reorganization that became known as the "area system." Walter taught until 1986, when he retired as Harry Hayden Clark professor of 20<sup>th</sup> century American Literature.

Walter Rideout was the leading authority on the American writer, Sherwood Anderson. With Howard Mumford Jones, Walter edited *Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (1953); he was sole editor of Anderson's novel *Poor White*, and of *Sherwood Anderson: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1974); and in 2006, the first volume of Walter's definitive two-volume *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America* appeared from the University of Wisconsin Press. Volume II will appear in January 2007.

In addition, Walter edited four textbooks, including a well-respected and oft-used anthology of American poetry, and *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society* (Harvard 1956), which has since been reissued twice by Columbia University Press. He wrote eighty articles, reviews, and introductions, and guided fifty students to the completion of their dissertations. He kept in close touch over the years and to an unusual degree with many of his former graduate students, among whom he was a favorite teacher.

His many honors and awards include a Newberry Library Fellowship, the directorship of the Northwestern University Program for Bell Telephone System Executives, a Guggenheim Fellowship, visiting senior professor in the Institute for Research in the Humanities at UW-Madison, a Fulbright Grant spent in Japan, a Mid-American Award, Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, and Distinguished Educator Award from Colby College. He served on the Modern Language Association's Executive Council and on the fellowship selection board of the ACLS. After retirement in 1986, Walter continued research and writing on the life and work of Sherwood Anderson.

He and Jean, married in 1947, spent more time than ever on their favorite hobby, square and round dancing. They were also avid gardeners and Walter took pleasure in Jean's bird-watching. They helped found the Wisconsin Hosta Society, and attended many state and national hosta conventions. They grew about three hundred varieties of hosta in the shady garden of their Nakoma home and for many years their hillside rock and flower garden was a spring sight marveled at by neighbors and passers-by. Within the department, Walter always took new colleagues to lunch to help them feel at home.

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Of their many volunteer activities, Walter and Jean helped to found the ARC-Dane County and were active volunteers, helping developmentally challenged people realize their fullest potential. For their communal spirit and graciousness, Walter and his wife Jean inspired both deep affection as well as respect among their friends and colleagues.

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