

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS JOHN CARL NEESS

John Carl Neess, who passed away on October 26, 2007, in St. Paul, Minnesota, had a long and almost continuous 45-year history with the University of Wisconsin-Madison beginning before the receipt of his B.A. degree and ending when he retired and became an emeritus professor in zoology. Neess was born on June 16, 1925, in Shorewood at the north side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and attended public schools there and in Whitefish Bay. He attended Marquette University in 1942-1943 and then came to Madison for his B.A. (1944-1946) and Ph.D. (1949), both advised by Dr. Arthur D. Hasler. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, and Phi Sigma. He had an Atomic Energy Commission/National Academy of Science Postdoctoral Fellowship at Yale University (1950-1951). He became a tenured instructor here in 1951, assistant professor in 1952, associate professor in 1959, full professor in 1970 and emeritus professor on his retirement in 1989.

Like many faculty he moved through several phases of his career at Wisconsin. As a graduate student, assistant and associate professor, he conducted research in limnology, aquatic ecology, and general ecology, with papers including the populations of fishes including the carp in Lake Wingra and nitrogen fixation by algae. His last peer-reviewed paper was in 1964. As his career developed he focused more on his graduate students in ecology, undergraduate teaching and advising, and public service. He participated in the undergraduate faculty advising service from 1967 to 1989.

His teaching style was Socratic, eloquent, thoughtful, and took a big-picture approach. Some courses included considerable scientific debate with the other faculty to the students' amazement; they learned that very different viewpoints could be supported from logic and evidence. He had been influenced by Aldo Leopold and "The Sand County Almanac" and would blend philosophy and hard science. Students often commented about the breadth and depth of his knowledge.

As an assistant professor he taught Survey of Zoology, Ecology, Field Zoology, and Biometric Techniques. As an associate professor he taught General Biology, Ecology, Biology of the Vertebrates, Origin of Plant and Animal Species, and Biometric Techniques. As a full professor he taught General Biology, Evolutionary Theory, Field Biology, Origin of Plant and Animal Species, and Biology of Vertebrates. He also taught Limnology and Ecology of Fishes and a course on Homosexuality in Perspective on occasion. Some of these were team taught with colleagues such as John Emlen, Joseph Hickey, Hugh Iltis, John Kirsch, William Reeder, and others. He made major contributions to the Department of Zoology as well as the entire campus through Introductory Biology and Biocore. For three years, from 1986-1988, he taught Field Biology and Conservation in Costa Rica with a three-week field session in Costa Rica.

John mentored about 16 Ph.D. students and many M.S. students. These and many other graduate students would acknowledge him for his advice on quantitative approaches and methods. Initially these were theses in limnology and aquatic ecology and then primarily in ecology and biology. His students admired him for his low-key optimism and willingness to back riskier graduate students.

Neess contributed to public service regarding environmental issues. He became very involved with issues concerning the electric utilities, led a court case opposing a transmission line in Columbia County, was a member and executive director of Wisconsin's Environmental Decade in the 1970s, and a participant in the National Research Council study committee "Energy and the fate of ecosystems" during the Carter Administration. His last publication with 13 others was in 1980: *Energy in Transition, 1985-2010; Final report of the Committee on Nuclear and Alternative Energy Systems* (National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, 677 pages).

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John was married to Carol Schrader and they had four children, Paul, Carl, Steve, and Michael. His last years were spent with his partner, Mark S. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minnesota. A memorial service was held in Madison at the Unitarian Society Meeting House on June 21, 2008.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

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