

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA CLARA PENNIMAN

Professor Emerita Clara Penniman, long-time faculty leader and specialist in state administration and public finance, died of pneumonia in Madison on January 30, 2009, at the age of 94. She was the first woman member of the Department of Political Science upon her initial appointment in 1953. She served a term as department chair from 1963-66, then was founding director of the Center for the Study of Public Policy and Administration (now the LaFollette School of Public Affairs) from 1967 to 1974. From 1979 until her 1984 retirement, she held the position of Oscar Rennebohm Professor of Public Administration.

Penniman was born on April 5, 1914, in Steger, Illinois, and spent her early childhood on a family farm near Pardeeville, Wisconsin. Her family moved to Lancaster, where her father ran a grocery and her mother was an elementary school teacher. When she graduated from high school in 1931, there were no family resources available for college; she attended a local business school, then worked for a few years as a legal secretary. In 1937, she found a clerical post in the Wisconsin State Employment Service in Madison; over the following decade she rose to the rank of administrative assistant.

In 1947, at the age of 33, she resolved to use her savings to enroll in the University of Wisconsin, joining a student body inflated by the surge of veterans. In the remarkably brief span of six years, she had earned a B.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) and M.A. at Wisconsin, and virtually completed a political science doctorate at the University of Minnesota. Seeking academic employment in 1953, she entered a domain where women were still rare, and far from achieving equal standing. In her oral history, she recalls a response from a University of New Hampshire official to a recommendation from her Minnesota department:

I have your letter recommending Miss Penniman for this position. Unfortunately, we here at New Hampshire have never heard of women's emancipation and (being hard of hearing) couldn't consider a woman for our position. Somehow there is a feeling that women get married. Now, it's true that men also get married, but this inconsistency has never affected our policies.

At the time of her initial appointment as instructor at Wisconsin in 1953, the only other woman faculty member in the social sciences was Elizabeth Brandeis.

Penniman held a joint appointment in political science and the former Extension Bureau of Government (later Institute of Governmental Affairs) from 1953 to 1958. In 1954, following completion of her doctorate, she was promoted to assistant professor, earning tenure as associate professor in 1958, then rising to full professor in 1961.

She quickly won national attention for her work on tax administration. In 1959, she co-authored with well-known Minnesota economist Walter Heller *State Income Tax Administration*, an influential work at a moment when state governments were expanding across the country and seeking added resources. Governor Gaylord Nelson invited her to serve on a five-member blue-ribbon Governor's Tax Impact Study Committee in 1959, at a time of fiscal crisis when a sales tax was in the air. She and the committee majority opposed the sales tax in their 1960 report, but nonetheless this levy was enacted in 1961. Nelson's successor as governor, John Reynolds, invited her to serve as director of the Department of Revenue in 1963; Penniman declined, given her prior commitment to assume the department chair post in political science. State income taxation remained the major focus of her research throughout her active career; her major book, *State Income Taxation*, was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1980.

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In the mid-1960s, state officials pressed the university to create a post-graduate training program to provide skilled professionals for the state civil service. Penniman assumed the leadership in the design of such an M.A. program; she was the major architect and first director of the Center for the Study of Public Policy and Administration, launched in 1967 to offer the M.A. and encourage research in the public policy field. By the time that she stepped aside in 1974, what became renamed as the LaFollette Institute (later School) was an established and respected program.

Penniman served on a number of major committees reshaping university policy in those years, most notably the University Committee from 1971-74; she was the first woman chosen to chair the committee in 1973-74. The most explosive issue during her University Committee years was merger of the University of Wisconsin System, pushed through the legislature by Governor Patrick Lucey in 1971. She, like most faculty at the time, opposed the merger; however, she was appointed as one of two faculty (the sole from Madison) to serve on a 17-member implementation committee appointed by the governor to revise the University of Wisconsin statutes in response to merger. She was a vigorous and effective guardian of the distinctive mission and quality of the Madison campus. She also was one of the five members on the 1968 Crow Committee, which recommended a virtual end to en loco parentis policies.

She was as well an active leader in the community, state and discipline outside the walls of the campus. She was president of the Madison chapter of the League of Women Voters from 1956 to 1958 and thereafter for a number of years a member of the board of directors. During this period, the league was a crucial training ground for a generation of women leaders who emerged in the 1970s in local and state politics; Penniman was a key mentor in public policy analysis.

She was president of the Midwest Political Science Association in 1966-67 and vice-president of the American Political Science Association in 1971-72. She also served terms as president of the Wisconsin Political Science Association and the Madison chapter of the American Association of University Professors. She remained active in her retirement years; in 1999 the LaFollette Institute published a book she co-authored with a former student, Paula White, *Madison: An Administrative History of Wisconsin's Capital City*.

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