

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS NIELS INGWERSEN**

Niels Ingwersen, professor emeritus of Scandinavian studies, passed away in the HospiceCare Center in Fitchburg, Wisconsin, on November 14, 2009, after a short, but brave battle with cancer. Professor Ingwersen was born on May 18, 1935, in Horsens, Denmark. He studied Scandinavian literature at the University of Copenhagen, Stockholm University, and the University of Oslo, where he met an American student from Wyoming, Faith Boswell Sloniger, whom he married in Tybjerg, Denmark, in 1961. Together the two moved to the United States to study at the University of Chicago and then to Madison, where Niels joined the faculty of the Department of Scandinavian Studies as assistant professor in 1965. He moved swiftly through the ranks to associate professor in 1970 and full professor in 1973. He also served as visiting professor at the universities of Odense and Aalborg, Denmark, and the University of California, Los Angeles. Niels retired in 2004.

During his forty years of service to the Department of Scandinavian Studies, Niels taught a variety of courses. In addition to many seminars, his regularly taught courses included "Masterpieces of Scandinavian Literature," "The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen," "Kirkegaard and Scandinavian Literature," "The Scandinavian Tale and Ballad," "Survey of Scandinavian Literature," "The Folktale," "The Ballad," and "The Folk Epic." Several of the courses were crosslisted with the Folklore Program. By best count, Niels added eleven courses to the department's curriculum and taught more than 15,000 students during this time in the department. Niels was a magnet when it came to student enrollments, and his course on "The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen" in particular attracted hundreds of students. A multimedia version of this course was one of the first to be offered through the University of Wisconsin-Extension on public television. In the spring of 1988, the department did not limit the enrollment of "The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen," and close to 800 students signed up for it.

Niels received two awards for excellence in teaching: The William Kiekhof Teaching Award (in 1969) and the WSA Teaching Award (in 1969). In 1991, he was a recipient of a distinguished course award for his course guide, *The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*, by the National University Continuing Education Association. A Faculty Appreciation Award was bestowed upon him in 1992 by the Madison-Panhellenic Association, and he was voted best professor of the University of Wisconsin by WSA in 1992. In 1992, he was appointed Torger Thompson Professor of Scandinavian Studies. When asked about the secret to his success as a teacher, Niels replied: "I tell the students stories." Niels had a talent for storytelling, and this was a skill that he perfected during his teaching career. A Festschrift in honor of Niels published on the occasion of his retirement was very appropriately entitled *The Nordic Storyteller*.

In 1996, Niels received the Order of the Dannebrog by a representative of the Danish Queen Margrethe II. The order, established in 1671, is the highest distinction that can be given to Danish citizens, who in exemplary ways have contributed to the arts, sciences, or commerce. Niels received the Order of the Dannebrog for his promotion of Danish literature in North America, and he did not only promote Danish literature through teaching, but also through research and publications. Besides articles and reviews, Niels published eight books. Among the most sophisticated publications are without doubt two books, which Niels co-authored with his wife Faith Ingwersen: *Martin A Hansen* (1976) and *Quests for a Promised Land: The Works of Martin Andersen Nexø* (1984). Niels' last book, released in 2008, was on narrative folklore. Other books published by Niels include *Seventeen Danish Poets: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Danish Poetry* (1981). In addition to *The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*, books published through WITS comprise *The Shadow and Other Tales by Hans Christian Andersen* (1982) and *Tardy Awakening and Other Stories by Steen Steensen Blicher* (1997).

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Niels' service to the department and the university was exemplary. On three separate occasions he was chair of the Department of Scandinavian Studies. In addition to serving on the divisional committee and as a member of the board of trustees of the Midwestern Institute of Scandinavian Culture, the International Association of Scandinavian Studies, and many other boards and committees, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Folklore Program, directed the program for two years (1987-1989) and served on its executive committee from 1983 until his retirement. Niels was an energetic, innovative, and enthusiastic colleague when ideas had to be implemented, students had to be advised, and committees had to be staffed.

Niels was a prodigy of devotion not only to his profession, to his students and colleagues, but also to the University of Wisconsin mission and the field of Scandinavian studies in general. Niels devoted a good portion of his career to giving lectures all over Wisconsin on aspects of Scandinavian literature. For three years (1969-1971), he served as president of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, and for no fewer than five years (1985-1990), he and his wife, Faith, served as editors of *Scandinavian Studies*.

Niels is survived by his wife, Faith Ingwersen, in Madison; his brother Jørn; nephew Thomas; niece, Bianca; and grandnephew Magnus, in Denmark; as well as his sister-in-law, nieces and nephews in Colorado and Oregon.

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