

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS IVAN L. PRESTON

Ivan L. Preston, emeritus professor of journalism and mass communication, died March 2, 2011. He was 79.

Professor Preston was the nation's foremost authority on and critic of deception and puffery in product promotion. *The Wall Street Journal* in 2003 judged him "the world's leading expert on 'pure baloney' in advertising."

Born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in 1931, Professor Preston grew up in Pittsburgh. He conveyed a gift for product promotion while in high school selling hot dogs at Pirates' games at Forbes Field. On Fridays during Lent, he boisterously announced that the Pope himself had provided special dispensation for tempted Catholic fans.

Preston earned his BA from the College of Wooster in 1953, then served two years in the U.S. Army. After several years in journalism, public relations and advertising, he did graduate work in communication arts at Michigan State University, receiving a PhD in 1964. He was a member of the journalism faculty at Pennsylvania State University before joining the UW-Madison journalism faculty as associate professor in 1968. He was promoted to full professor six years later.

Numerous scholarly articles and two books, *The Great American Blow-Up* (1975) and *The Tangled Web They Weave* (1994), established Preston's reputation. He judiciously but passionately attacked the common tendency of advertisers to issue unsupportable claims. Bayer's called itself "the world's best aspirin," even though by law all aspirin products contain the same amount of pain reliever. Although the courts and regulators had long excused such obvious "puffery," Preston argued that many consumers believed such claims to be true. He persuaded the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to introduce communication scholarship into its reviews of advertising. He was the first expert witness, with a background in communication effects research, to appear for the FTC and served as a staff consultant for the commission in 1979. He also served as an expert witness in other court proceedings involving advertising.

Preston, it should be noted, was not hostile to advertising as a field so much as to the hyperbole found in much ad copy. It was his straight-forward, if daunting, goal to make advertising more ethical. A forceful advocate of advertising instruction at Wisconsin, he headed the school's advertising sequence for thirty years and regularly taught its large lecture courses. In 1995, he was named the first Journal Communications/Warren G. Heyse Bascom professor of advertising. He retired in 1999.

Preston's research netted him many honors. He received the Outstanding Alumni Award from Michigan State in 1984. In 2001, he earned the S. Watson Dunn Excellence in Advertising Award from the University of Illinois and the Paul J. Deutschmann Award, given for outstanding research, by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Preston was president of the American Academy of Advertising (AAA), an association of scholars and advertisers, in 1996. He received the AAA's award for sustained and systematic contributions to research in 1992. The award was recently renamed in his honor. In 2005, he earned the AAA's Kim Rotzoll Award for Ethics and Social Responsibility for his lifetime commitment to advertising ethics.

Professor Preston will be remembered for his relaxed and friendly demeanor toward students and colleagues alike, and an often wicked sense of humor. He had a passion for opera and the arts, and remained, to the end, a devoted fan of Pittsburgh sports teams.

He is survived by his wife, Roberta (Robbie), and three daughters.

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