

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA JOYCE ELINOR STRIBLING STEWARD**

On October 3, 2004, in Ellensburg, Washington, Professor Emerita of English Joyce Elinor Stribling Steward died at the age of 87. Steward's long career was marked by extraordinary intelligence, energy, vision, and generosity—generosity to her students, to her colleagues, to the teachers she educated and mentored, and to her profession. A renowned English teacher at both West and LaFollette high schools in Madison before joining the university's faculty, the founding director of the university's nationally influential Writing Laboratory (now the Writing Center), an award-winning composition and literature professor, an influential teacher of high school English teachers across the state and of university teaching assistants who went on to become faculty across the country, and a national leader in establishing and professionalizing writing centers and in creating the field of writing center studies, Steward had a profound and lasting influence on writing instruction across the university, the state of Wisconsin, and the United States.

Steward took an unusual path to the faculty at the university, teaching at the university level only in the later part of her teaching career. Steward was a native of Iowa, with an undergraduate degree in English from Grinnell College (Phi Beta Kappa), a master's degree from Drake University, doctoral studies in English at the University of Iowa and, as a John Hay Fellow, at Yale University. In the first half of her career, Steward was an English teacher at West High School in Madison (from 1951-1963) and then was the first chair of the English department at the new LaFollette High School in Madison (from 1963-1966). On the basis of her teaching record and her professional accomplishments, Steward was recruited to join the English department faculty at the University of Wisconsin in 1966, where she taught advanced composition and literature and administered writing programs and introductory courses until her retirement in 1982.

In her legendary English 309 course, a composition course for future English teachers, Steward prepared generations of future high school English teachers who, after their graduation from the university, taught in school districts across the state. Steward inherited this course from another equally distinguished teacher of teachers, her good friend, colleague, and mentor, Professor Ednah Shepard Thomas. In 1974, Steward proposed and taught the university's first course on women's literature (English 250). In recognition of her stellar teaching, Steward received the university's 1978 Steiger Award for Distinguished Teaching from Chancellor Irving Shain.

In 1969, Steward founded and became the first director of the university's Writing Laboratory, an innovative model for individualized writing instruction, a program originally located on the third floor of Bascom Hall, and she continued to direct the Writing Laboratory through its move and expansion into Helen C. White Hall until her retirement. She trained and mentored many graduate teaching assistants in the English department, who then in their faculty careers taught writing and established writing centers at colleges and universities around the country. She also contributed to the growth and professionalization of writing centers around the United States through her many invited lectures and presentations, through her consulting with many other universities, and through her many writing center publications. In 1977, for example, Steward published one of the first articles about writing laboratories in the MLA journal for English department chairs, the *ADE Bulletin*. Steward co-authored with Mary K. Croft, from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, one of the first books about writing centers, *The Writing Laboratory: Organization, Management, and Methods* (Scott, Foresman, 1982). In 1981, Steward and Croft proposed and led at UW-Madison a week-long summer institute for writing laboratory directors from around the country. Steward also co-authored numerous writing textbooks, including *Writing in the Social Sciences* (1984), co-authored with Marjorie Smelstor, which was a pioneering text in the field now known as "writing in the disciplines."

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Professor Steward was equally influential through years of service to her department, to the university, and to her profession at the state and national levels. In addition to directing both the Writing Laboratory and introductory courses and serving on numerous composition and English-education committees in the English department, Steward was secretary of the university's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa from 1969-1977. She served on numerous L&S and university committees, including committees on student financial aid, on academic appeals, and on equal opportunity programs. She also held numerous leadership positions in the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English and was active in the National Council of Teachers of English.

After retiring, Steward moved to the state of Washington to be near her family, living first on Bainbridge Island and then later in Ellensburg. In retirement, Steward continued to be a voracious reader. During an extensive oral history about her life and career conducted in 2002, which is part of the university's oral history archives and the oral history archives for the National Writing Center Research Project, Steward peppered her conversation with references to her current reading, mentioning such contemporary poets as Rita Dove and Billy Collins. She also continued to write and publish and lecture widely. In 1988, she co-authored, with Mary K. Croft, *The Leisure Pen*, a very successful book about writing for seniors. In 1989, she co-authored, with Eva M. Burkett, *Thoreau on Writing*. And in 1999, she published a delightful volume of her poems, *Lamps with Prisms*. As a resident of an assisted-living facility in Ellensburg later in her life, Steward generously helped student employees with papers they were writing for courses at nearby Central Washington State University, and she taught writing classes for seniors.

In his nomination of Joyce Steward for her distinguished teaching award, Professor William Lenehan, the chairman of the English department, captured the essence of Steward as a teacher and colleague and leader: "How does one get to be a distinguished teacher with this kind of national reputation? In Professor Steward's case, knowing one's discipline thoroughly, being an effective administrator, having apparently endless reserves of energy all help. But I am convinced that the real secret is a commitment to help the individual who needs help, whether that individual be the scared freshman facing her first assigned paper or the newly appointed director of Harvard's Writing Laboratory coming here to find out what he should do. A scene may illustrate this. I walked by the Writing Laboratory one night about 9:00. Professor Steward was still there. She had dropped by to make sure the staff members got out on time (8:30), and after they left, this boy came by with questions about the organization of a paper due tomorrow. She reported, 'I had to look at the paper. He needed help.' Joyce Steward's distinction as a teacher is that she responds to all of us who need help."

Joyce Steward is survived by a son (Chuck) and daughter-in-law (Peggy) of Ellensburg, Washington, as well as a grandson, great-granddaughter, and great-grandson.

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