

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS LAWRENCE L. THOMAS

Lawrence L. (Larry) Thomas, professor emeritus of the Department of Slavic Languages, died on February 21, 2013, in California.

Larry was born on March 15, 1924, in Butte, North Dakota. He attended high school in Bemidji, Minnesota, and served in the United States Navy from 1943 to 1946. After his naval service, he matriculated at the University of California at Berkeley, where he earned a bachelor's degree in international relations and subsequently both master's and PhD in Slavic languages and literature. He completed his doctorate in 1954 and remained at Berkeley, rising to the rank of professor.

Larry spent the summer of 1955 as a visiting lecturer at UW-Madison and returned under the same title for the 1963-64 academic year. He joined the UW-Madison faculty in 1965 with the rank of professor and served as the chair of the Department of Slavic Languages from 1968 to 1974. His research interests were wide-ranging, from East Slavic linguistics (both historical and descriptive), comparative Slavic linguistics and literatures, and Polish linguistics and modern Polish literature. His monograph on *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr* remains the definitive work on the subject. He was a major contributor to the Kosciuszko Foundation English-Polish and Polish-English Dictionary and (with F. J. Whitfield) the translation and condensation of V. V. Vinogradov's essays on *The History of the Russian Literary Language from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth*.

As a teacher, Larry was both extraordinarily demanding and extraordinarily rewarding. His students typically worked far harder than they expected and learned far more than they expected. He was known, for example, to cover the entirety of Polish grammar in the first ten weeks of his introductory Polish class and to require his students to begin reading scholarly articles in the language in the eleventh week. In the classroom, he held himself to the same high standards of rigor as he did his students, and on the rare occasion when a student would find an imperfection in, say, his close phonetic transcription of some phrase in his course on modern Russian orthoepy, Larry would be grateful for the correction and would share the student's pride – and astonishment – at the student's achievement.

He retired from the university in 1988.

Larry was a man whose gruff demeanor and unusually direct approach to communication were at times belied by a twinkle that escaped his eye. He was a meticulous scholar and a stern taskmaster who taught his students to be as sedulous as he was himself. It was a privilege to know him.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
Bruno Browning, chair
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