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## **Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison On the Death of Professor Emeritus Harald Næss**

Harald Næss was born on the 27th of December, 1925, in Kristiansand, Norway, and he passed away there on February 5, 2017 after a brief illness.

Professor Harald Næss, an eminent Hamsun scholar, was known to colleagues, students, and friends as, simply, Harald. In 1953, Harald's academic career began at King's College, at the University of Durham in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. During his six years in Newcastle, his colleagues included some of the great names in Scandinavian Studies: James McFarlane, Niels Lyhne Jensen, and Leif Sjöberg. In 1959, Harald came to Madison on a Fulbright, which happened to be just at the when Einar Haugen was being lured to Harvard. Haugen went to great lengths to ensure that Harald would take over as the fourth Norwegian professor in the Scandinavian Department's long history. In 1991, on the occasion of Harald's retirement banquet, Haugen said that hiring Harald was one of the smartest things he had ever done.

Harald was in place in the 1960s, when the Scandinavian Department expanded greatly, adding Dick Ringler, Niels Ingwersen and Kim Nilsson to the faculty roster, which already included Dick Vowles. Harald fully embraced the Wisconsin Idea and immersed himself in studies of Norwegian immigrants to Wisconsin, most notably Nobel Laureate Knut Hamsun. This made him a popular speaker for Scandinavian heritage groups across Wisconsin, and a font of fascinating information about Norwegian connections to Wisconsin. For example, a concert in Madison by the famous Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, raised money for some of the first books for the new Memorial Library. Knut Hamsun was brushed off by Rasmus B. Anderson, the first Norwegian professor in Madison, when he came seeking contacts in the Norwegian-American cultural world, forcing Hamsun to move on to working as a clerk in Elroy, Wisconsin.

Harald was a productive scholar, who wrote on a wide variety of topics and was greatly respected in his field. He was President of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study from 1967-69 and edited its journal, *Scandinavian Studies*, from 1973-77. He is the author of *Knut Hamsun og Amerika* (1969), and he produced a second book on Hamsun for the Twayne Series in 1984. Harald edited (and, rumor has it, mostly wrote or re-wrote) *A History of Norwegian Literature* (1993) for the University of Nebraska Press. In his retirement, he collected and edited six volumes of Knut Hamsun's letters, a scholarly landmark that will be a valuable research resource for years to come. For all of his many contributions to Norwegian culture, he was made Knight First Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olaf in 1986.

In a volume dedicated to Harald on the occasion of his retirement, the poet Rolf Jacobsen describes a poetry reading he gave in Madison in the mid-1970s, assisted by the American poet Robert Bly. Jacobsen recalled, "Never—neither before nor after have I had such an alert and engaged audience. The room was boiling with questions. I got the impression that many of the listeners knew more about modern Norwegian literature than I did. I realized that I was under the palms in an oasis...And the man behind it all was Professor Harald Næss."

Harald was a man of many parts: a musician, a skilled gardener, a master builder, a collector of antiques, a witty storyteller, a gracious host, a beloved teacher, and an occasional lumberjack and shepherd. He and his wife, Ann Mari, lived for several years on a historically Norwegian farm outside of Mt. Horeb, which was the site of many departmental celebrations. They eventually moved back to Norway in the mid-1990s in order to be closer to family, leaving behind an enduring legacy for the Scandinavian Department and the University of Wisconsin.