

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

ON THE DEATH OF EMERITUS PROFESSOR JAMES S. WATROUS

IN MEMORIAM: JAMES S. WATROUS

Emeritus Professor James Scales Watrous died in Madison on Tuesday, May 25, 1999, aged ninety. A longtime chairman of the Department of Art History, he held the Oskar Hagen Chair at the time of his retirement in 1976. Born in Winfield, Kansas on August 3, 1908, he received his B.S. (1931), M.A. (1933), and Pd.D. degrees (1939) from Wisconsin, and joined the Art History Department faculty in 1939, before serving in the South Pacific as a lieutenant in the Navy during World War II.

Jim was a specialist in the history of prints and drawings, and was one of the first American scholars to create courses in this area. His best known books were The Craft of Old Master Drawings (c1957), and A Century of American Printmaking: 1880-1980 (1984), both published by the University of Wisconsin Press. The earlier book was a pioneering study bringing microphotographic enlargements to bear on the physical characteristics of line work drawn in the various media used by European artists. A valuable tool for use in accessioning and researching master drawings, as well as in recognizing forgeries, it is found in the working library of every major museum.

It was Jim Watrous who was most responsible for the fund-raising, planning and construction of the Elvehjem Museum Art, and also in large measure for collection development before the museum was opened in the Fall of 1970. At a time in the 1950's and early '60's when very few major U.S. museums maintained collections of graphic art, he wisely bought engravings and woodcuts by such masters as Dürer and Rembrandt on the University's behalf, signing the invoices "Educational materials." Then, when President Conrad Elvehjem died unexpectedly in his Bascom Hill office, Jim traveled far and wide with an architectural model of a hypothetical art museum made for him by a faculty colleague, Leo Jakobsen, raising three million dollars for the new museum to be named in Elvehjem's honor. With the aid of another colleague, Robert Grilley of the Art Department--a World War II veteran of the Army Air Corps-- Jim made a white-knuckle flight to examine new university museums, making notes on their most successful features and working up the specifications to be given to the architect of the Elvehjem, Harry Weese of Chicago.

Jim was a past president of the College Art Association of America (1962-63) and member of its Board of Directors (1961-2); a founder and President of the Mid-America College Art Association (1959), and a director and founding member of the Midwest Art History Society. He was the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant for study of mosaic techniques in Italy, and had designed and installed wall mosaics in Madison and St. Louis. He also exhibited oils and watercolors at the Walker Art Gallery (Minneapolis), the Carnegie Institute (Pittsburgh), and the Pennsylvania Academy (Philadelphia). He painted the Paul Bunyan murals in Memorial Union, as well as murals in federal buildings in Wisconsin and Minnesota under the New Deal. He received an Award of Merit from the Wisconsin chapter of the American Institute of Architects (1962), and was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Sciences (1982). Throughout an association with the university which encompassed more than 70 years, Jim Watrous personified distinctive qualities of university citizenship. As a student, he contributed to the undergraduate life of his times, particularly through his witty and deftly drawn cartoons which appeared in campus publications. His early demonstrations of artistic skill were later augmented by the works he created for the campus and those which can be found in other locations across the country. As a teacher, he inspired many talented student artists to pursue careers in art. Other

(continued)

former students went on to establish noteworthy reputations as critics, art historians, and arts administrators. His courses and public lectures gave insight into the ways in which art enriches our lives. His career also was characterized by a distinguished record of academic leadership at the university and national level. He was noted for his graciousness, forbearance, and his skill at building consensus. He also is remembered as a dignified and extraordinarily decent person who served as an exemplary role model.

Universities exist and endure because of the individual and collective acts of an amazing range of people who are committed to preserving and extending the best of past civilizations while they advance the frontiers of our present knowledge. Jim Watrous cast a long shadow during his rich and varied career. His legacy continues. Jim is survived by his wife, three children, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Memorial Committee:
Jane Campbell Hutchison, Chair
James M. Dennis
Arthur Hove