

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### JOHN W. DODDS (1902 – 1989)

John Wendell Dodds, retired Professor of English and former Jackson Eli Reynolds Professor of Humanities, died of lung cancer at his campus home on March 31 after an illness of more than a year. He was eighty-seven and had been retired twenty-two years. He is survived by his second wife, Marianne Arden, whom he married in the year preceding his death, and by two sons, John A. Dodds of Atherton and Christopher Dodds of Dayton, Ohio. His first wife, Marjorie K. Dodds, died at Stanford in 1982. They had five grandchildren. John Dodds was the brother of the late Harold W. Dodds, former president of Princeton.

Professor Dodds was born in Grove City, Pennsylvania, on July 20, 1902. He received his A.B. from the College of Wooster in 1924, followed by a Masters and the Ph.D. from Yale in 1927 and 1932 respectively, and it was there that he met another graduate student, Marjorie Jane Krantz, whom he married in 1928.

He began his academic career at the University of Pittsburgh in 1927 as an Instructor in English and rose to the rank of Associate Professor before he moved to Stanford in 1937 where he remained for the rest of his life. At Stanford he had a most distinguished career as teacher, scholar, and administrator. He served as Dean of the School of Humanities during and after the war years, and in 1948 he became the Director (and Founder) of Special Programs in Humanities, an administrative unit which his successor, Professor William Clebsch, called "the incubator for hatching many innovative programs in the University." Among these have been the Undergraduate Honors Program in Humanities, the Graduate Program in Humanities, Religious Studies, Geography, Latin American Studies, Pacific-Asiatic and Russian Studies, American Studies, Medieval Studies, and Values, Technology and Society. All but the last three of these were under the supervision of Professor Dodds during his nearly twenty years (1948-1967) of distinguished service as Director of Special Programs.

He was a gifted teacher, a trusted administrator, and an eloquent speaker, talents he generously shared with Stanford and with the world outside. He served as a trustee of Mills College (1943-52) and of Pomona College (1955-67); was a member of the board and later president of the Western College Association; served as chairman of the editorial board of the *Pacific Spectator*; was, from 1952 on, a senator for the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa; and beginning in 1954, was on the board of the Wenner-Gren Foundation (headquartered in Vienna). Not least among these multifarious and wide-flung activities was his work in the development and promotion of educational television. In 1955-58 he served as a Senior Consultant on Humanities to the Educational Radio-TV Center at Ann Arbor, Michigan; in 1957 he gave a series of programs on KQED and the NET network entitled "The Measure of Man"; he served on Governor Brown's Committee on

Educational Television; and in 1959-60 he took a leave-of-absence to write and produce twelve educational television films for the National Educational TV Center in New York, a series that was later published as a book, *American Memoir (1961)*.

Along the way, Professor Dodds accumulated many honors. In 1967 he was awarded one of the first grants issued by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and in the same year, the year of his retirement, he received the Dinkelspiel Award for outstanding service to undergraduate education, being praised by President Sterling "as teacher, scholar, and university officer, for his leadership and humaneness." A few years before, in 1964, he had received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree from Ohio Wesleyan University and in 1945 an honorary Litt.D. from his alma mater, the College of Wooster. In 1947-48 he was a Guggenheim Fellow.

At the heart of all these achievements and honors was his distinguished work as a scholar/teacher. Always interested in the theatre and himself an amateur actor, John Dodds' first book was *Thomas Southerne, Dramatist* (1933), on the eighteenth century playwright. Following this book, his literary interests focused on the Victorian period and resulted in two distinguished books, *Thackery, A Critical Portrait* (1941), and *The Age of Paradox: A Biography of England, 1841-51* (1952), the latter treating a critical decade of the previous century--and incidentally giving rise to a major exhibition of period books, papers, and memorabilia in the Bender Room of the University Library in 1972. After his retirement John wrote *The Several Lives of Paul Fejos* (1963), a biography of a colorful filmmaker, anthropologist, physician, and foundation director whom he had befriended while Fejos taught at Stanford in an army training program during World War II. In addition to these books, John published widely in numerous scholarly and popular journals, and was co-editor of three anthologies: *An Oxford Anthology of English Prose* (1935); *Types of English Fiction* (1940); and *British and American Plays, 1830-1945* (1947).

All his academic life John Dodds struggled to make the word "humanities" a living concept and to ensure that the study of literature did not descend into a narrow or pedantic professionalism. Literature for him extended beyond national borders and beyond departmental specialization, and that was one reason why Humanities Special Programs has ever since its founding been receptive to the cross-referencing of literature with the arts, religion, history, philosophy, and science in the belief, shared with Matthew Arnold, that we need to "see life clearly, and see it whole." Those who knew John in the '50s and '60s perhaps remember him best presiding over the big table in what is now the Freshmen English office, a handsome genial presence, always encouraging discussion, never dominating, and excellent listener, a man of deep learning and compassion. To work with him in the Humanities Program was, for a young faculty member, a vitalizing experience, for John Dodds was an object lesson in how to temper with generosity the severest critical judgment. He always preferred diplomacy to war, but he fought some tough administrative battles and made more friends than he lost. No doubt these were the qualities that, some years after his retirement, motivated his choice as caretaker chairman, for a year, of a University department that was unable at the time to resolve its problems. It is a tribute to his leadership that a faculty member in this department later dedicated to John Dodds a volume that has since become one of the most influential textbooks in that field.

And these are the qualities--warmth with toughness, wisdom with geniality, easygoingness with principle--that make the writers of this memorial wish that more people who worked with him were alive to share this testimony to one of Stanford's truly distinguished champions of the Humanities. One of his last public statements was a letter to *Campus Report* concerning the Reagan Library controversy. These were his closing words:

I find myself regretting the polarization of support and non-support that have developed in the university in connection with the policies of the Hoover Institution. I believe that in part, at least, this has been made possible by very poor public relations as promoted by the Institution. Its last annual report, which amounted to an uncontrollable glorification, in picture and text, of Mr. Reagan, was a simple academic disaster.

In any controversy, John Dodds came down on the side of the humanities, yet it was a word he was always having to define, as above, in the open arena. It was characteristic of John that, shortly before his death, he gave a talk on how he viewed the current state of the humanities before a gathering of old friends from a large variety of fields.

Wilfred Stone, Chair  
Frederic O. Glover  
Herbert S. Lindenberger  
Lawrence V. Ryan