

RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF SHERWOOD COLLINS

Adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

May 16, 1994

The members of the Department of Drama and Dance, and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Jackson College of Tufts University, hereby record our warm appreciation for our retiring colleague, Professor Sherwood Collins. After thirty-three years of devoted service, our beloved Jerry (or "Doc," as generations of students affectionately call him) is ready to enter yet another phase of an already illustrious career.

After distinguished military service in World War II, Jerry returned to Kansas State University, graduating with a B.S. in Journalism and Radio in 1948. From 1951-55, he continued his studies at the State University of Iowa where he specialized in playwriting and received both his M.F.A. and Ph.D. in Drama.

In his six years at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, as an Assistant Professor in the Extension Division, Jerry worked closely with colleges, high schools and community groups throughout the state on projects and programs in drama and creative writing.

Despite serious health problems, Jerry has been an active member of the Tufts Faculty since 1961 and served as Chair of the Department of Drama and Dance for many years. With seemingly boundless energy, he has focused his efforts in three noteworthy areas: teaching, directing and administration. As a teacher, Professor Emeritus Kalman Burnim observed, he will be remembered as a "student's professor." Deeply committed to them and adored by them, Jerry has always developed strong personal relationships with undergraduate and graduate students alike. His concern and interest are palpable, not only in his role as mentor and advisor at Tufts, but long after his charges have left Medford to pursue advanced degrees and professional careers. A wonderfully effective communicator, Jerry has kept in constant contact with many of his former students and has almost singlehandedly created a vital network of Tufts Drama alumni. (More than two hundred of them returned to Tufts in April for a Gala celebration in Jerry's honor and the outpouring of affection for him was a joy to see.) Through letters, telephone calls, faxes and personal visits, his warm and charismatic presence radiates far beyond the University.

Jerry's field of expertise is American theater history, so it is not surprising that, as a director, his forte has been American realism. Most of the thirty-five plays he has directed at the Arena Theater have been American classics, including the first university production of Eugene O'Neill's haunting Long Day's Journey Into Night. From his moving interpretation of Clifford Odets' Awake and Sing to his lyrical evocation of Thornton Wilder's Our Town last season, Jerry has proven himself a director of sensitivity and imagination. Able to elicit compelling performances from student actors in challenging roles, he has always approached his work with modesty, integrity and humor.

As an administrator, Jerry has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Drama and Dance Department to enrich its course offerings and to strengthen its presence in the community. Our summer programs, especially those for children, have thrived under his supervision. Although Magic Circle ("New England's Oldest Summer Theater By and For Children") predates all of us, Jerry had the vision to initiate Creative Arts, a companion program designed for younger participants. Committed to educational theater at every level, he has frequently served as a judge at high school drama festivals throughout the region. In gratitude for his inspired leadership, the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild named him an honorary life member. Jerry has been a panelist, guest speaker and conference planner for such notable organizations as the Association for Theater in Higher Education and the New England Theater Conference, which appointed him to its prestigious College of Fellows. Perhaps his greatest administrative accomplishment, however, has been the construction of the Marston Balch Arena Theater. Determined to bring this daunting project to fruition, Jerry vowed to raise the support necessary for its successful completion and devoted his energies to the pursuit of this seemingly impossible goal. An eloquent spokesman for Drama at Tufts, he willingly played whatever role the project demanded of its most passionate representative. From fundraiser to architect to inspector (complete with hard hat), he served as resident trouble-shooter and, happily, saw his efforts rewarded.

A genial man with twinkling blue eyes and a soft Kansas drawl, Jerry can be irascible on occasion but never unkind. It is impossible to meet him and fail to be charmed by his gracious courtliness and ebullient humor. Affable and sociable, he loves a good joke and annually enthralled onlookers at Matriculation with his unlikely ensemble: his doctoral gown and a Jumbo-the-elephant hat! Never arrogant or officious, perhaps because he refuses to take himself too seriously, Jerry always has time for conversations with the colleagues, students and alumni who stream endlessly through his office door. Genuinely interested in their welfare, his unmistakable delight in their accomplishments and his words of gentle consolation in their disappointments make him a responsive listener whose

counsel is welcome and reassuring. While we probably will not miss the pipe smoke wafting from the Drama office, we certainly will miss its source and our inspiration.

We sincerely hope that retirement will allow Jerry more time to spend with his dear wife Julie and their family, and we wish him every happiness in this next phase of his life and interests. We know that Tufts University will always be particularly meaningful to him and he, in turn, will be inextricably linked to dramatic productions in the Arena Theater he made possible for years to come.

For the Faculty,

COMMITTEE

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