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# TUFTS UNIVERSITY

Secretary of the Faculties

June 24, 1987

Professor Charles E. Stearns  
381 Boston Road  
Billerica, Massachusetts 01821

Dear Charlie,

I am pleased to send you the enclosed resolution on your retirement from Tufts University adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences on April 27, 1987. We all missed you at the faculty meeting. Your colleagues endorsed the resolution with a warm and enthusiastic round of applause in recognition of your many contributions to the Tufts community, and particularly to the Department of Geology. The applause was genuine and, I felt, showed the respect and affection of your colleagues.

An extra copy of the resolution is attached. If there is anyone you would like me to send a copy of the resolution to, please let me know their name and address.

Warmest wishes to you for a most enjoyable, healthy, long and active retirement. Have a very pleasant summer.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Canny  
Secretary of the Faculty

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## TUFTS UNIVERSITY

Secretary of the Faculties

RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF  
CHARLES EDWARD STEARNS  
ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES OF  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY  
APRIL 27, 1987

Charles Edward Stearns, Henry Bromfield Pearson Professor of Natural Science - though hereafter known as Charlie - was born in 1920, the son of Dr. A. Warren and Frances (Judkins) Stearns. He was born in the handsome old house in Billerica where he still lives. Although his career has required him to travel widely, those who have seen Charlie in his ancestral home are reminded of some lines adapted from the Roman poet Horace, in praise of the tranquil mind:

Happy the man, whose wish and care  
A few paternal acres bound,  
Content to breathe his native air,  
In his own ground.

Continuing the family affiliation with Tufts - his father held a medical degree from Tufts and in 1927 had become the Dean of the Medical School - Charlie enrolled in the Class of 1939. For Charlie, and for his classmate and future wife, Helen L. Hurley, this was the beginning of more than five decades of active service to the University.

During his undergraduate years his early academic interests were in music and literature, but coursework in geology and a job as a summer field assistant turned his interest to geological processes, and an eventual major in geology. Upon graduating from Tufts he continued his study of geology at the California Institute of Technology and then at Harvard, where he received a master's degree in 1942, while serving as an instructor in the Department of Geology at Tufts. After three years as a naval officer in the Pacific during

World War II, he returned to Tufts as an assistant professor, meanwhile completing his doctoral work at Harvard. His dissertation, a regional study of the Rio Grande Depression, is of the highest order. The early publications he produced from it are now cited as classic studies by structural geologists, geomorphologists, and stratigraphers.

After he received his doctorate, he was invited to teach at Harvard, where he served as assistant professor of geology from 1951 to 1954; in 1954 Tufts returned the invitation, asking him to rejoin his alma mater as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. For twelve years, from 1954 to 1967, he served wisely as dean at a time when Tufts was in transition from a college to a university. In addition to his 'round the clock duties as dean, he still found time to teach an occasional geology course (for which generations of students are grateful), and to continue publishing highly original work (especially on the raised beaches around the Mediterranean) which won him an international reputation. He found time, as well, to work in Billerica on historical houses, and to play an important role in the First Parish Church. And there are other sorts of play, too; he plays the piano, and a wicked game of bridge.

At this point it is appropriate to mention that any statement about Charlie must also be a statement about Helen. When Tufts hired Charlie, it acquired Helen too, a gifted woman admired by all of the students and faculty members who knew her. We have spent pleasant hours with Charlie and Helen in Billerica, enjoying music, bridge, conversation, and silence. In addition five of Charlie and Helen's six children attended Tufts, two of whom have become professional geologists.

This recital of facts comes nowhere near to revealing the man. Yet whatever one says about Charlie Stearns, the sad part, for this committee, is that these words have meaning for only part of the faculty, those graying heads who remember what Charlie did for them, who call to mind - indeed, who feel on their pulses - a word which was given a special, a very special meaning by Dean Charles Edward Stearns, and that word is mentor. Today the idea of senior faculty serving as mentors to junior faculty may seem paternalistic or even arrogant. But those of us who sat with Charlie in his office, telling him of our problems, remember his probity and his warmth, his affection and his wisdom. We remember what it was to be mentored by Charlie Stearns. Quiet and sympathetic, yet firm and deeply insightful, he cared about each person who came to him for advice.

Charlie Stearns was always available; more important, he was and is a good listener; and, most important of all, he is a person on whom nothing is lost. What he hears, he thinks about; what he thinks about, he acts on, and the effects of his actions will never be forgotten by many of us sitting here today. The effects of his actions are felt, too, even by those of you who did not know him, for he changed the intellectual climate of Tufts. He brought to this institution many of the people who, in turn, brought here even the most junior people in this room. The great job which he accomplished as dean was, in short, that he made the college as good as the president said it was.

His colleagues thank him and wish him a healthy and active retirement - in Horatian words,

Quiet by day,  
Sound sleep by night; study and ease  
Together mixed; sweet recreation.

For the Faculty,

COMMITTEE:

Sylvan Barnet  
James Hume  
Sol Gittleman  
Kathryn McCarthy  
Robert Reuss

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Elizabeth Canny  
Secretary of the Faculty