

**RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF
JOHN W. ZARKER, PROFESSOR OF CLASSICS**

May 1st, 1989

*Adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
and placed in the Archives of
Tufts University*

When Professor Zarker was in England a year or two ago, heading up the Great North Road on his way to walking Hadrian's Wall, he stopped in a village that looked promising for Roman remains and asked a constable: "Are there any old ruins around here?" The constable scratched his chin for a moment and then replied, "Well, you could go down to the station and take a look at our sergeant." Classics professors likewise have sometimes been considered old ruins, even cracked pots, but Jack Zarker is the exact antithesis to this stereotype; a more dynamic teacher, colleague, and campus personality is hard to imagine.

Jack Zarker was born and brought up in Pennsylvania. After graduating from Franklin and Marshall College with election to Phi Beta Kappa in 1950, he moved to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to enter a Master's program in Classics. It was here that he met Katherine Lambeth whom he married in 1951; it was here also that he met the other great love of his life, teaching. As a part-time instructor at UNC he found his vocation and his life's work: to implant in others his own delight in learning. After training and service as an Intelligence Officer in the Navy, he entered a doctoral program in Classics at Princeton University as a John Howell Westcott Fellow, then as a Samuel Fels Fellow; this latter award was the largest scholarship in the humanities ever given out at Princeton University. After earning his Ph.D., his first full-

time teaching position was at the University of Texas in Austin, and from there he was appointed to an assistant-professorship at Dartmouth College. Two further awards took him to Europe for summer study: in 1960 he won the Prix de Rome of the American Academy in Rome, and in 1965 a Dartmouth faculty fellowship enabled him to study at Cambridge University. From 1966-71 he was an associate professor at Vanderbilt University, whence he was appointed to Tufts, to the chair of the Classics Department, in 1971.

The year before Jack took over the Classics Department, enrollments for the department totalled 451. The total last year was 1,743, an increase of almost fourfold. Furthermore, of New England colleges only the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has more students taking courses in classics. This growth in interest in Classics is directly attributable to Jack's personal philosophy and style. He has always felt that the humanities are central to the liberal arts experience and that the heart of the humanities is Classics. He has shown many generations of Tufts students that through study of a vibrant world of long ago one can free oneself from the parochialisms of time and place and comprehend the universalities of the human experience. As a result of his outreach very few students graduate from Tufts without taking a course in Classics. Some seniors have even seen the Big Z course, Greek and Roman Comedy, as the final privilege and reward for four years toil at Tufts.

Jack's influence also reaches far beyond this campus. For fifteen summers he has taught in our summer workshop for humanities teachers, the New England Classical Institute, inspiring teachers from all over the country with his love of learning. He keeps in touch with many of these teachers, visiting their classes on occasion to meet with

their students. He has also had more formal ties with secondary school education; for example, he has served as consultant on Advanced Placement and in 1984 he was on a three-person committee judging the National Latin Examination and awarding \$1,000 scholarships to those selected. The Classical Association of New England, a group of over a thousand school and college teachers of Classics, elected him their President in 1984. At the Association's meeting in the spring of this year many his former graduate students and teachers who had taken his courses were there to wish him a fond farewell.

As a teacher himself, Jack is irrepressible; he routinely takes on an extra teaching load, teaching five or even six courses though as chair his expected load is three. In his last semester, when one expects someone retiring to wind down a little, he has in fact chosen to wind up; at mid-semester, finding that there were many students who for one reason or another were doing only three courses, he offered a half-credit course in Greek Comedy so that they would not have time on their hands. He loves to offer new courses; for example, in 1985 after walking Hadrian's Wall he became so interested in Roman Britain that he took a van load of Tufts-in-London students on a tour of Roman remains in the north of England and then developed a course on Roman Britain which he has offered since on this campus.

Students exposed to Jack Zarker without previous warning tend to suffer a few minutes' culture shock; mouths agape, they are not quite sure what to make of his antics, his gestures, his outrageously thought-provoking sallies, his play-acting, his perfect timing, his ability to laugh at himself. Some are changed for ever by the experience, most are inspired to think, few remain unaffected. Jack ardently believes

that study must be enjoyable; the final goal listed on the first page of every course syllabus states: "Have fun while learning." But he still demands high standards. This philosophy has earned him his students' devotion, amply demonstrated recently when almost 200 took part in a week-long reading of Homer's Iliad in his honor. It has also brought large numbers to his classes; imagine, 40 enrolled in his Latin 3 course, wide awake at 8.30 in the morning.

As a scholar Jack has established his credentials with fourteen articles and reviews in Classics journals and a chapter in a recent book, The Teaching of Latin in American Schools. His initial contribution to scholarship, his dissertation, was in Latin epigraphy, but his subsequent work has focused on Latin literature of the Late Republic and Early Empire. One of his long-term interests, the subject we hope of a major contribution in the future, has been the relationship of Vergil's Aeneid to contemporary events in Augustan Rome.

In 1987 Jack Zarker was Tufts' nominee for the national Professor of the Year Award. He has also served the University in many capacities: as the Faculty representative to Tufts in London in 1986-87, as President and Secretary of the Phi Beta Kappa chapter for many years, as chair of the Fine Arts Department in 1972-73, as Adjunct Professor in the Drama Department, on committees too numerous to list, as a speaker for Admissions and for Alumni gatherings, and as invited speaker to many campus organizations; and, as most alumni will remember, his voice is prominent at Commencement reading the names of the graduates. And speaking of his voice, we might remember his enjoyment of choral singing, in the Nashville Symphony Chorus, in the Masterworks Chorale of Lexington, in various church choirs, and of course in

class.

Jack Zarker will be retiring to Raleigh-Durham, where he will work on his research and teach a course or two (or, knowing Jack, three or four) at Duke University; he and Kathy have built a house there not quite large enough to accommodate all five of their children and their two grandchildren at the same time. He will be missed across the campus, but most of all in the Classics Department where his inimitable laughter resonates. He will leave us many memories: the cluster of advisees around his door; the lines of students with their Comedy or Tragedy projects clutched under their arms; the dramatic flourish of his "presenting the department" at Orientation; the maniacal demonstration to new Faculty and Teaching Assistants, wig and all, on "How not to teach." More than anything we cherish and will miss his heart-felt concern for our needs and warm support for our ideas. Players in the Arena Theater will gratefully remember his magnificent audience-leading laugh. His bridge and ping-pong opponents will remember his outrageous nerve and cunning. The Primary Source will miss its favorite liberal. His colleagues on the faculty will remember his wit and enthusiasm. And many generations of students will remember their Classics professor who, in Horace's words, was compelled ridentem dicere verum, "to tell the truth with a smile".

On behalf of the Committee, I move that this resolution on the retirement of Professor John W. Zarker be spread on the permanent records of this faculty and that a copy of it be sent to Professor Zarker.

Presented by Professor Peter L. D. Reid

COMMITTEE

*Miriam S. Balmuth, Professor of Classics
Steven W. Hirsch, Associate Professor of Classics
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