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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA KUO-P'ING CHOU

On 12 November 2000 Professor Kuo-P'ing Chou, Emeritus Professor in East Asian Languages and Literature, passed away in Kingston, Michigan where she had been living for the past several years. Professor Chou was born 2 August 1908 on the other side of the globe in the port city Ningbo on the southeast Chinese coast. At that time the last emperor of China had just taken the throne and the revolution was only three years away. Thus Professor Chou's formative years coincided with what has come to be called the May 4th Era, a period in which Science and Democracy--i.e., Western values--were highly prized. Her father both exemplified and contradicted this movement, serving as one of the few native Chinese Episcopal missionaries in Ningbo. Professor Chou's early education reflected this eclecticism. She later was admitted to prestigious Yenching University (1931-33), then received a League of Nations Scholarship, enrolling at Pembroke College, the then women's college of Brown University, from which she graduated cum laude with a B.A. in English in 1935. Her degree in hand, she returned to China, teaching English at Hangchow Christian College (1935-36) and then Yenching University (1936-1946), where she served as Acting Chair of the English Department in her final year there. Besides mentoring a number of the young men and women who would play a major role in the Chinese intelligentsia for the next several decades, Professor Chou spent these years organizing teaching materials for what she hoped would be her own missionary movement, the goal being the spread of English literacy in China.

With the end of World War II, Professor Chou decided to return to the United States for graduate study, enrolling at Yale University. She took her M.A. in General Studies in 1948, and had every intention of returning to China to continue her work as a propagator of English. The political developments in China in the late 1940s stifled her plans, however, and she was forced to spend the next year doing research and teaching in part-time positions at Harvard University, Laval University (Quebec), and the University of Michigan, while waiting for the situation in China to stabilize. When it became clear in 1949 that it would be impossible for her to return to her department at Yenching University, she enrolled in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Michigan, receiving her Ph. D. in 1952.

With Ph.D. in hand, Professor Chou joined Wayne State University as an Instructor in the Department of English for a semester before coming to Madison as an Assistant Professor in Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It was during these years in the mid-1950s that Professor Chou began her second career, that as a teacher of Chinese. She had been exposed to the thriving Yale Chinese Studies Program then under the tutorship of George Kennedy in the late 1940s and was familiar with the innovative pedagogy that had made Yale one of the centers of the military language programs during WW II. Now she applied what she had learned at Yale to the skills she had developed teaching English. Within a few years there was a burgeoning Chinese-language program in Madison. Thus when the University decided to establish a Department of Chinese in 1960, Professor Chou was the obvious choice to lead it. Within two years, she had convinced the University that Japanese should also be taught and helped to create the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature. She also served as its first chair (1962-67) and was instrumental in bringing Professor Emeritus Chow Tse-tsung and a host of younger, talented faculty and graduate students to campus. Some of these students came from Taiwan and helped her to set up the Chinese Language Program. Continuing the work that she began as an English teacher at Yenching University, Professor Chou designed the Chinese-language materials used in the first few years of the University of Wisconsin's Chinese program. Although not known as a scholar, she authored several important early studies of Chinese language in English. Most of her efforts, however, were given to produce what has been described as the "family-like structure" of the early Department of East Asian

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Languages and Literature. This structure was clearly matriarchal. Her teaching assistants remember her as a taskmaster who would treat them to lavish Chinese suppers while berating them on their pedagogy. One of these students still on the University of Wisconsin faculty, Professor Arthur Gwang-tsai Chen, and one of the young teachers Professor Chou recruited from Taiwan, Professor Tsai-Fa Cheng, obviously benefitted from this treatment, both receiving University Teaching Awards in recent years. The success of her students who have otherwise made their mark in professional circles in the United States rivals that of those she nurtured at Yenching University.

After her retirement, Professor Chou was awarded Emeritus status, one of the first women on the Madison Campus to be accorded this honor. She used her retirement years to become even more involved in community work, especially that of the Episcopal Church. She was also finally able to return to her earlier career as an English teacher in China, serving for a year as a volunteer teacher in Beijing. Over the past two decades, however, Professor Chou retained her commitment to the University of Wisconsin, donating generously to the establishment of the Computer Aided Instruction Program in Chinese language in 1982 and helping to set up one of the earliest Chinese computer labs in the nation. She also provided the funds for the Chou Kuo-P'ing Book Award (1979- ), given to four outstanding seniors in the Chinese Program annually. Thus through her years of teaching and administration at the University of Wisconsin, years that have seen countless students benefit from her missionary zeal, Professor Chou has left a strong tradition of Chinese Studies at the University of Wisconsin and a legacy that will continue to grow in the university community and beyond.

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