Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus James Stern

James Stern, age 98, Professor Emeritus of Economics and Industrial Relations, died in Sarasota, Florida, on December 21, 2018. Born in New York City on November 3, 1920, Jim grew up on the south shore of Long Island. He graduated from Antioch College with a degree in mechanical engineering. He entered the U.S, Navy in 1943, serving as chief engineer on a destroyer escort in the Pacific through the island campaigns up to Okinawa. After the war he was recruited for a staff job by the United Auto Workers but decided to work on an automobile assembly line in Hamtramck, MI, which he did for a year. He was then recruited by Walter Reuther as assistant director of the UAW Research and Engineering Department. Four years later he joined the Economic Cooperation Program (the Marshall Plan) spending two years in Paris as its chief of the productivity section of the European Labor Division.

He returned to academia at the University of California Berkeley where he earned a PhD in economics. He became a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1962 and was granted emeritus status in 1986. He served with distinction as Director of the Wisconsin Industrial Relations Research Institute in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For the next few years he alternated teaching here at Madison and at the University of Hawaii. In the early 1970s, Jim was a visiting research professor at the University of Warwick in England and also at the London School of Economics. After his retirement he taught and did research at both Macquarie and Monash Universities in Australia, and he held a Senior Fulbright Award at the University of Sydney.

Jim was a world recognized authority on labor relations, productivity, and the effect of automation on labor. He wrote extensively on these topics. He served as an officer in leading arbitration and industrial relations associations; he also received grants from the U.S. Department of Labor and Transportation, and also the World Bank. He served as an arbitrator in more than 600 disputes and as a special magistrate in Florida for public employee disputes, and he continued arbitrating into his 80s.

Jim was grateful to have two intellectual and beautiful and loving wives. In 1943 he married Joanne Alexander, with whom he had two children, Mark Stern and Nina Richter. Joanne died in 1985. In 1991 he married Judy Rose and gained two stepchildren, Michael and Steven Rose. He has been blessed with numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. Judy Rose died in 1999. Jim was a loving father; he teased everyone joyfully and brought the family together for many adventures and much fun.

Jim loved tennis and golf throughout his life and was also an avid bridge player and bird watcher. At age 89 and 90 he scored his age in golf, and in his 97th year, he still played nine holes, routinely scoring in the low 50s. Madison was Jim’s primary home for 50+ years where he thrived and much enjoyed his many friends, colleagues, and the community at large. He resided in Sarasota, Fla. in his later years and loved his time and dear friends at Bayport and Plymouth Harbor.

W. Lee Hansen, chair
Edgar L. Feige
Jeffrey G. Williamson